

## ARTISTIC IMPRESSIONS



LINDA CHOMIN

## Start an oral holiday tradition in your family

When Corinne Stavish was a child in the 1950s she saw only Christmas decorations all over town, not Hanukkah during the month of December. Today, she says the holidays are "recognized as a time of year when all people's stories should be told." Traditions established early in her children help spread the word about the Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights.

Daughter Nicole, now age 31, took a menorah to work when the holiday began Dec. 9 so she could share it with others.

"We would always tell the story of Hanukkah, light the candles on the menorah and dance around the table and sing *Oh Hanukkah*," said Stavish, an instructor at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield. "Hanukkah celebrates the defeat of the Assyrian Greeks by a small band of Jews and the miracle of the oil lasting 8 days. As a child I would never have felt comfortable to bring out a menorah and candles and share our tradition. In the 1950s and 60s it was not a diverse society."

The Interpersonal Communication class Stavish teaches at the university in Southfield is proof times have changed.

"The class covers cultural diversity and teaches students to navigate the world. Today you need to know about other people's cultures," said Stavish, a long-time professional storyteller. "Tonight each student is bringing a dish and we'll end talk about our tradition."

"Storytelling is one way to pass on our history. I think of stories as bridges that connect our past and future. All holidays are great times for family stories. It's an opportunity to pass on the traditions of culture, religion and family."

### Storytelling tips

One way to do that is to begin with the elders of the family.

"Introduce storytelling by telling about when I was a little girl or boy, how we celebrated when we were little. What are the differences. Shopping malls are different. The abundance is different. I'm 66, an end of the war Baby Boomer, and grew up at a time when a pair of socks was a great gift. My 10 year-old granddaughter received a guitar this year."

Stavish suggests the holidays are a perfect time for bringing out photographs and thereby establishing an oral history or tradition.

"I do workshops in collecting stories and photographs. We take pictures every year but forget to take them out and tell the stories of those still with us and the stories of the people who are not," said Stavish.

"Tell about how we celebrated with stories of foods, clothing, decorations, climate. If anyone in the family has emigrated, what it was like then? Music — most families have different songs. Talk about special ritual objects — the story of ornaments, where they came from. Most families have more than one menorah from aunts and other relatives. It's a way of starting a tradition."

### Celebrating Christmas

Barb King's family shares their favorite moments of Christmas past every year while decorating their live tree, a tradition started long ago.

"Storytelling comes out around our Christmas tree," said King, co-chairperson of the Storytelling Festival coming Saturday, Jan. 27 to Summit on the Park in Canton. For details, call (734) 394-5193.

A member of Canton Project Arts, the township's official organization to support the visual and performing arts, King moved to Canton from Stratford 2½ years ago.

"When we put up our Christmas tree we tell all of the stories about decorations, ones the kids have made, others people have given to us, and

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STAFF ARTIST RANDALL MARTIN

# Magnificent!

Arts moved and soothed audiences all year long

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
AND STEPHANIE CASOLA  
STAFF WRITERS

Looking back on 2001 Americans can't help but feel sad about all who died in the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11. Our features staff wanted to pause to remember those men, women and children but also to celebrate the healing that visual and performing arts bring to those participating in them.

Here's a list of some of the events which brought brightness to our lives and in some cases helped us deal with our grief this year. Sadly, at the very end we lost former Beale George Harrison who brought us sunshine with his songs.

**Best photography exhibit:** *Reflections in Black*, an all-encompassing collection from the Smithsonian documenting African American history from 1842 to the present.

**Best attempt to sort through our feelings about Sept. 11:** Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange which worked with University of Michigan students to create a work addressing the roller coaster of emotions left behind after the tragedy. It premiered as part of the University Musical Society series in Ann Arbor.

**Best historical exhibit on architecture:** *Albert Kahn: Inspiration for the Modern* at the University of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor. Kahn was a driving force behind the implementing the first automobile assembly line at Ford's Highland Park plant.

**Best festival with heart:** Southeast Region Committee's VSA Artability Festival at Wonderland Mall. The festival gives disabled children and adults the opportunity to perform and exhibit their art. This year's event takes place May 3-4.

**Best jazz festival featuring local musicians:** Michigan Jazz Festival held in July at Schoolcraft College. Last year more than 170 jazz artists played everything from Big Band to Dixieland.

**Best visions of Detroit:** In honor of the city's 300th birthday, *Artists Take on Detroit* brings to life the history and heart of the city.

**Best new digs:** Arctic Ring of Life, 4.2 acre home to (seven) polar bears, seals and snowy owls at the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak.

**Best redos:** The new Detroit Science Center re-opened in July with a planetarium, traveling displays and educational activities for all ages.

**Best timely theater:** Planned long before Sept. 11, the JET the-

ater production of *Romeo and Juliet* featured an Arab Romeo and a Jewish Juliet. It was part of the Campaign Stop Hate Partnership.

**Best local soprano hits big time:** In addition to portraying Carmen in this year's MOT production, Bloomfield Hills resident Irina Mishura performed with all three tenors in the past year — opposite Placido Domingo in *Samson and Delilah* at the Metropolitan Opera, with Luciano Pavarotti in *Aida* at the Detroit Opera House, and with Jose Carreras at a private function.

**Best un-ow-e-sual art:** Rochester's Ewe Revue brought a host of visitors to the city this summer. The fiberglass sheep were painted by various artists and auctioned at the end of the summer.

**Best arts promoters:** Southfield's John Bloom, a gracious gentleman, and executive director of the Fancub Foundation for the Arts, which raises money for arts education programs in the Detroit area.

**Best arts philanthropist:** Maggie Alleneo who made possible the Sol LeWitt wall installation at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, and is a champion of the arts.

**Best host:** Dame Edna at Music Hall in March. That plucky, puckish and purple-

haired gal showed the Detroit audience just why she earned a Tony award for her one-woman show.

**Best acquisition:** Cranbrook Art Museum's acquisition of modern contemporary works from the collection of Dr. John and Mrs. Rose M. Shuey. The works are on display through April 7. Most hyped movie of 2001: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

**Best venue for emerging electronic-based artists:** Though steeped in controversy as its originators, DJ Carl Craig of Planet E Communications and Producer Carol Marvin of Pop Culture Media, cut ties this year, the Detroit Electronic Music Festival continued to be a viable and exceptionally hip place to see the latest in electronic music.

**Most talked-about CD release party by a local band:** Though sadly now-defunct, electro-pop rockers Blush got the local rock community to strap-on roller-skates last summer to celebrate the debut of the band's delicious first and last record, *Amy, Phil, Carey and Weaver*, we'll miss you.

**Best re-issue:** Matador Records re-released *The Soft Boys* influential *Underwater Moonlight* along with a previously unreleased CD of outtakes.

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## EXHIBIT

# Michigan Surface Design artists weave color into fabric

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Fiber. Americans take it for granted just like they do in India according to Boisali Biswas, who moved to West Bloomfield from India 12 years ago. Biswas first became acquainted with the art of decorating surfaces while living in her homeland. There painters leave no area untouched. "It's so traditional in India. It's quite common what I do — painting on fabric," said Biswas, one of the

Michigan Surface Design members exhibiting fiber art through Thursday, Dec. 27, at the Plymouth Community Arts Council.

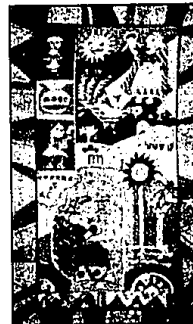
"India is very rich in textiles and fiber tradition. When I came to this country I discovered fiber has an all together different direction. In India, it's commercial. They've done this for ages and are not open to experimenting like over here where they're experimenting like crazy. Fiber in U.S. is not mass produced. It's a medium of art. There it's not consid-

ered an art."

Biswas' *Homage to the Mithila Painters* honors a long history of Indian artists by mirroring their folk paintings. Her diptych wall hanging on hand-loom cotton from India is colored with Broccotton, a fiber-reactive dye.

"It was screen printed then hand painted with bleach," said Biswas, who earned a master's degree in fiber from Bowling Green State Uni-

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Fiber art: Boisali Biswas screen printed this cotton fabric with bleach then hand-painted the images paying homage to northern India painters.