

Thursday, March 14, 2002

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with music, dance and shamrocks

I'm not Irish but my wolfhound is—I guess that's as good a reason as any to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. It seems on March 17 everyone tries to find a connection to the Emerald Isle even if it is farfetched. The lively music and dance cheer us during the last gray days of winter. In years past however it was difficult for families to find events to experience a wee bit of the magic.

This Sunday two venues offer traditional Irish music and step dancing that won't ruin your budget. At the Southfield Centre for the Arts there's a family rate; at the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland adults are \$10, kids free.

Irish Spectacular

Conductor Craig Strain and the Motor City Brass Band kick off the festivities in Southfield with a set that includes Phil Coulter's *Farwell to Inishowen* and a medley Strain based on *When Irish Eyes are Smiling*. Fiddler Kelly Garver-Nieto, Celtic Renaissance, and Tyler Duncan follow. Duncan is the reigning bodhran (drum) champion and the first American to win the Irish National Championship playing the uilleann pipes two years in a row.

"Being Irish myself, I think the music is so wonderful," said Strain, Motor City Brass Band music director and a Farmington Hills resident. "I'm excited that we have such talented guests. We had Kelly and Tyler last year and they brought the house down."

"The finale is *Vive La Hache*, which was the name of a ship coming over from France with Wolfe Tone, a famous Irish patriot in the 1700s, and reinforcements to help the Irish fight England. It's very up-tempo, happy music you would relate to *Rivendence*."

Irish Fest

Colleen Ross loves dancing to jigs and reels because the music is festive, and because she's good at it. The nine-year old has already won more than 20 medals and her mother Ann couldn't be prouder. She'll be in the audience at the Hellenic Cultural Center on Sunday watching her daughter dance.

Colleen began studying step dancing four years ago at the O'Hare School of Irish Dance in Birmingham. Last St. Patrick's Day 90 children and teens

Please see CHOMIN, B3



Chulrus: Tim Britton (left), Paddy O'Brien and Pat Egan perform traditional Irish music on St. Patrick's Day.

POWERFUL Women

Images reflect women's struggle for recognition

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

The newest exhibit at the University of Michigan Museum of Art shows not much has changed since the 1000s in regard to artists manipulating the viewer. Imagery controlled popular opinion about women back then as it does now.

Women Who Ruled: Queens, Goddesses, Amazons 1500-1650 documents the struggle of women to attain

respect in arenas normally reserved for men even though an unprecedented number of women ruled states and kingdoms in Europe during that time. These powerful women chose to fight society's stereotypes by promoting themselves as strong leaders, equal to men.

Be forewarned, several men lose their heads in the nearly 100 paintings, prints, sculpture and decorative objects gathered from 50 collections around the globe. Organized by Annette Dixon, the museum's curator of Western Art, *Women Who Ruled* tells the story of wealth, seduction and deception. Judith with the head of Assyrian General Holofernes appears more than once. Dixon originally intended the show to focus on paintings about biblical characters Judith and Salome but found the scope too narrow. As she began her research, Dixon discovered the period of Baroque and Renaissance paintings that depict women breaking gender barriers. Porcelain skin and pearls abound especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

Establishing power

"Women and artists at the time were creating and coming up with new ways to depict powerful women," said Dixon. "Rulers would show themselves as semi-divine, depicting themselves as goddesses or Olympians. They were trying to establish their power."

"I hope the viewer will come to see these old master works in a new way, as objects very similar in the way media represent women today, to see

them as conversations that took place between sitters and the artists about how they would be portrayed."

Early on in the planning stage, Dixon realized the limitations of presenting an exhibition of this scope. After looking through museum collections, catalogs and hundreds of books on representations of women, the final decision rested on what works were available and what went well thematically.

"We knew we wouldn't be able to represent every female ruler in this era but we tried to represent all artists," said Dixon who began organizing the show three-and-a-half years ago.

"Noticably absent is Artemisia because of exhibits planned to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 2003."

"What we gathered are not just paintings but works that show how imagery permeated all spectrums of the culture. We wanted to show many media, the entirety of visual culture as it existed, what different views would have been seen. The

Women Who Ruled

What: 100 masterworks of queens, goddesses and heroines by artists from 1500 to 1650

When: Through Sunday, May 5. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 9 p.m. Thursday, and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday

Where: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 South State St., Ann Arbor

Tickets: \$8, no charge for students in the State of Michigan with ID. Call (800) 585-3737. For information, call (734) 764-0395

Related event: Four choreographers present work inspired by Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth, women warriors and other images in the exhibit—8 p.m. Saturday, March 16 and 5 p.m. Sunday, March 17, in the Apso. No charge

ture as it existed, what different views would have been seen. The



Wives and mothers: "Eleanora of Toledo and Her Son" is the first state portrait to show the dual role of women rulers.



Regal pose: George Gower used the traditional symbols of male monarchs to paint this portrait of Queen Elizabeth I. Completed in 1588, the oil is from a private collection courtesy of Peter Nahum at the Leicester Galleries, London

exhibit attests to certain attitudes, how women were viewed at that time.

"This was a period where there were more women ruling than before or since. In the 1400s there was a literary controversy about women, for and against women in power and stepping out of domestic roles."

Wives and mothers

Divided into five sections, the first, *Wives and Mothers*, greets visitors with a familiar image, the portrait of Eleanor of Toledo and her son from the Detroit Institute of Arts. The oil on panel pays homage to the wife of Cosimo I de' Medici of Florence as ruler and her role in the continuation of the dynasty. The first state portrait to depict a mother with her son, Agnolo Bronzino's painting stressed the idea she offered so much more as a monarch.

"These are women who excelled in traditional roles, to be chaste and faithful to your husband, and the chief role—to bear children as heirs,"

said Dixon. "The material, a creme brocade with cut black velvet, never existed. The painter imagined how it would conform to her body. It shows his power of imagination. You see his fluidity with the brush."

The first two sections definitely provide a feast for the eye. Paintings of women dressed in lush fabrics and dripping with jewels show the mastery of the artist portraying power, especially George Gower's oil portrait of Elizabeth I, Queen of England. A lace ruff frames a mask-like face befitting a ruler of any gender.

"Pearls were fashionable then. They'd discovered pearl beds in the New World. Pearls were a symbol of virginity and chasteness and wealth," said Dixon. "The second section focuses on The Virgin—Queen Elizabeth I. She never married because she knew she'd lose her power."

Elizabeth wasn't about to let that happen. She came to the throne nei-

Please see WOMEN, B3

THEATER

Bloomfield Players brings families together for fun

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

Jane Dittus loves playing Frau Schmidt in *The Sound of Music*. Granted, rehearsals run long on some nights, but her husband, Ian and daughters Katie and Kristen are there to share the agony and ecstasy. For this Bloomfield Township mother that's a rare opportunity. It's not often the family

spends quality time together, they're usually on the run to extracurricular activities for the kids.

"It's been a wonderful experience over the years," said Dittus who serves on the Bloomfield Players board. "It's something all four of us can do together as a family or appeal to the kids' activities that they do on

Please see FAMILIES, B3



Family affair: Jane (left), Ian, Katie and Kristen Dittus appear in the Bloomfield Players production of "The Sound of Music."

Olympia Dukakis brings one-woman show to Temple Israel

Allan Elias called Olympia Dukakis' agent on a lark last spring.

Elias, program director for Temple Israel, wanted to bring the Oscar-winning actress and her one-woman show, *Rose*, to the West Bloomfield synagogue.

"I had seen her in New

York. I thought it would be perfect to bring here. It had Jewish content. It's a Jewish woman telling her life story," Elias recalled. "The agent said, 'she might do a few lines from it, but I'm sure she won't

Please see SHOW, B3



One-woman show: Olympia Dukakis is bringing a shortened version of her show, *Rose*, to Temple Israel in West Bloomfield.