

PETER MAX
FROM PAGE B1

"It was an amazing life of spirituality," he said. "We lived in a Pagoda house set inside a park that was surrounded by Sikh, Chinese and Mongolian monasteries. At four to five in the morning, chanting would begin. I thought every little European boy lived like this."

"I learned about America one day when I was 6 years old when I went to work with my father. It started to rain and he started pulling me to walk faster when we passed a panhandler displaying colorful things. I wanted the books. He said no, so I started to cry. We walked back and he bought all of them. They were full of color. When we arrived at our destination, I found myself with 125 American comic books."

Max learned to read English in British kindergarten. Soon Tom, Mike and Superman became friends. His sensitivity for a little boy with polio soon earned him another.

Max would walk him home from school each day, until one afternoon his mother invited him to see a movie. For the next four years, he watched a film every day.

"I became totally knowledgeable about American iconography," Max said. "I started following all the stars like Spencer Tracy, Henry Deady, Keyserling. I loved American for its invention. I feel I'm more American than Americans, even though I came to America at 16. Americans take everything for granted, but they're the most creative, generous. America's given freedom to every race. They're the most inventive. We invented outer space with Buck

Rogers 100 years before we even knew it existed."

INFLUENCES

Those comic books and early years definitely influenced Max's art. Even though he dreamed of becoming an astronomer, his mother's urgings for him to draw won out. Max expects to return from his opening at Park West Gallery with between 40 to 240 drawings.

"I tried to get to wonderful gallery openings, so I bring mixed media with me like colored pencils," Max said. "I'm drawing in the back of the limousine, at dinner. What I've discovered is the drawing wants to draw itself. Just let it go to the park - you don't think about taking one step then another step. As a young artist I would put a line here, a line there. It takes deep practice - practice, practice, practice. You're working and it's automatic. I sometimes become a voyeur. I'm into yoga, meditation and creativity all day long. I don't say, 'Today I'm going to paint flowers.' I paint without preconceived discipline. I stand in from of the easel. It's almost a holy place, a shrine. I watch my hand move, I see my image, I see myself, I see myself. I just go and I paint. I'm painting what comes out. I let it occur. It's my highest high."

Max compares his painting to playing blues and jazz on keyboards, a recreation he enjoys. He says, "I'm painting myself. But that's another story, as are the posters he's designed for the Grammys, Super Bowls and World Cup. Next time you look up in the sky, look for the colorful Boeing 777 wide-body jet he created for Continental Airlines."

Max is a fascinating man and artist. He usually tells you when he walks away from the easel he is

Peter Max, the animal protection and human rights person, the environmentalist. It would take pages to recount all of his good works and achievement. And his new book, *The Art of Peter Max*, published by Larry Abrams, does. Most recently he painted portraits of the 306 firefighters killed in the World Trade Center then donated them to their families. Proceeds from a series of six Statue of Liberty prints (on sale on his Website www.petermax.com) went to several of the funds set up for survivors of the victims. Over the years, Max has donated his serigraphs to PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). Of course who would expect less from a man living with five cats and a German shepherd dog.

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call Observer & Eccentric arts reporter Linda Ann Chomlin at (734) 953-2145 or send e-mail to lchomlin@oe.com or oe.com.net

Pianist guests with Livonia Symphony



Greene

The Livonia Symphony Orchestra begins the new year with a concert featuring guest pianist Arthur Greene performing Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 Saturday, Jan. 18, at Churchill High School Auditorium in Livonia.

The concerto has become one of the favorites of both classical music audiences and the public. In the 1940s it was popularized by the song *Full Moon and Empty Arms* and later in the fantasy sequence of the movie *Seven Year Itch* starring Marilyn Monroe. It is also a favorite of Livonia Symphony Orchestra conductor Yekaterina Shesink and Greene, a professor and chairman of the piano department at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor.

Greene's dynamic performances have won him acclaim in concert halls throughout the world. He has appeared with the San Francisco and Utah symphonies, Czech National Symphony, Tokyo Symphony, National Symphony of Ukraine, as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Chopin Festival, and has toured Japan 12 times. Greene earned his degrees from Yale University and The Juilliard School in New York City.

Also on the program are Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony*, sometimes referred to as his "Fate" symphony, and Karl Maria von Weber's *Waltz for Strings*.

LIVONIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

What: The Touch of Classics concert features pianist Arthur Greene performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18

Where: Churchill High School Auditorium, 8900 Newburgh, north of Joy, Livonia

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