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Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105

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'Musica Viva!' showcases a world of talent

"Musica Viva!" Concerts Buick International Series 1991-92 opens 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 5, at the Smith Theatre — Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus (Orchard Lake Road, south of I-696) Farmington Hills. For ticket information, call 473-2228.

By Keely Wygonik
staff writer

MUSICA VIVA!" Concerts-Buick International Series 1991-1992 brings the world to Michigan and Michigan to the world with a series of five concerts featuring prominent local artists with international guest artists.

"The theme is 'Festival of Nations through Music,'" said Ginka Gerova-Ortega, of Bloomfield Hills, flutist and artistic director. "Our artists come from various cultural backgrounds including Spain, China, Japan, Estonia, Armenia, and Argentina."

Juan Serrano, whom critics acclaim as "the greatest flamenco guitarist of our day," will open the series with the Los Flamencos Dance Theatre, 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 5, at Smith Theatre — Oakland Community College Oak Ridge Campus.

"Last year's concert was sold out, so reserve early," said Ortega.

SERRANO WAS born in Cordoba, Spain, the heart of the flamenco country. The son of a professional guitarist, he has played for presidents and kings throughout the world.

Among his numerous awards is the Gold Medallion from the Spanish Academy of Fine Arts. He has recorded 22 record albums and written two music books on flamenco, which include the history of the art form.

"The name of the concert, 'Flamenco Body and Soul,' is the actual name of Serrano's new book," said Ortega. "He has a worldwide following, and is a former Detroit resident. He presently divides his time between Spain and the University of Southern California where he is a professor."

ALSO PERFORMING will be the Oak Park based Los Flamencos Dance Theatre which offers a blend of traditional Spanish music and dance with works by international choreographers.

Under the artistic direction of Christina, who began her career in Spain and the United States after years of study with noted flamenco artists, the 12 year old company has performed all over the state. They draw dancers from throughout the metro Detroit area including Birmingham, Southfield, Garden City and Farmington Hills.

CLASSICAL GUITARIST Ernesto Bitelli is making his Michigan debut 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 21, in a concert at Smith Theatre. Argentinian born Bitelli is hailed as the "star of the guitar," and a "first rate virtuoso."

"With over 23 recordings, he is the most sought after guitarist of today," said Ortega.

Los Flamencos Dance Theatre will perform a blend of traditional Spanish dances at the opening night of "Musica Viva!" on Oct. 5 in Farmington Hills.

'Crossing Delancey' is nicely staged

Performances of the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of "Crossing Delancey" continue through Oct. 6 at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road in West Bloomfield. For tickets, call JET at 788-2900, visit any Ticketmaster outlet or call 645-6666.

Cathie Breidenbach

Bubbie, the grandmother in Susan Sandler's comedy "Crossing Delancey" is a character actor's dream role, and Sylvia Kauders wrings every iota of humor from the part in a performance likely to set a standard for this theater season.

Kauders created the role in the original New York production and brings her inimitable Bubbie to the Jewish Ensemble Theatre in West Bloomfield. One part chutzpah, one part doting, cooking, worrying, loving grandma, and one part smart mouth — that's Bubbie.

WHEN she sets her mind to finding a nice, Jewish man for her contentedly single granddaughter, Izzy, she's a tactical genius. Bubbie only looks like a harmless, diminutive old lady wearing an apron and sensible shoes. She's really a tiger in camouflage.

In "Crossing Delancey" the romantic comedy plot line offers no profound revelations. "Delancey" tells delightfully the old boy meets girl story, and affirms belief in love and marriage, in family ties, and Jewish tradition underscored by a sprinkling of Yiddish lines in the script.

"Boy" sells pickles on New York's lower East side; "girl" sells books Uptown. Boy woos girl with help from Bubbie and from Hannah, a wheeling and dealing matchmaker with a big mouth, a bigger appetite, and a fondness for bright, brazen floral prints that are as colorful and as lacking in subtlety as she is. Elizabeth Weiss brings Hannah to full blown life.

DIRECTOR MORTON Zieve keeps the schmaltz of the plot line in balance with the zing of humor, and the utterly non-saccharine characters of Bubbie and Hannah. David Fox plays down the role of Tyler, the author who infatuates Izzy. He's a pompous egotist whose charm shines in her daydreams far more brilliantly than in life.

Both romantic leads, Carol Lempert as Izzy and Thom Galasso as Sam project a convincing sincerity that makes their eventual pairing a satisfying conclusion — two good people who deserve each other. Lampert with her anchor woman deep voice and modern attitudes is, thankfully, no cloying ingenue. And Galasso is no schlemiel at the hands of manipulating women.

The un-presupposing open-walled set gives the play a sense of place without stealing scenes from the characters — not that any set anywhere could upstage either Kauders or Weiss — and food on Bubble's table looks luscious enough to make any good grandma proud.

An original clarinet theme threads though the action and echos Klezmer music as it recalls the modern story's ethnic roots. Black and white photographs of New York on the backdrop give particular time and place to this nicely staged boy meets girl story.

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

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