

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Wyland practices art of ecological awareness

"We don't manage resources. We manage people."
— National Marine Sanctuaries Report, 1997

With oil spills and pollution suffocating marine life, the suggestion from the Sanctuaries Report sounds like a simple, cost-effective solution.

The problem, however, is that trying to persuade people to respect the precarious ecological balance is like trying to capture a hurricane in a bottle.

Face it, not many people can manage themselves. Asking people to find the discipline to care for natural habitats is like asking a voyeur to look the other way — an after-thought at best.

There must be another way. And one artist has found it.

Through realistic — albeit romantic — depictions of whales and other sea life, an artist named Wyland is

appealing to the hearts and aesthetic sensibilities of not just those who've swum alongside dolphins and whales.

Beginning this Tuesday, the on-name ecological

awareness wonder will be painting a familiar sea-life form on the exterior wall of Joe Louis Arena — an octopus.

Over the next week, with the assistance of about 500 volunteers, including Red Wings fans and marine students, Wyland will transform cold concrete into a life-size reminder of those who inhabit another world.

Not occupants of a faraway red planet, but aquatic forms of the deep blue sea. A case of familiarity breeding fondness. After all, some parents concede, it works with children.

Fostering familiarity

January 1969 — Eyewitnesses to the oil rig explosion in the Santa Barbara Channel as "massive and inflamed." Cormorants and grebes drowned because their oil-soaked feathers prevented flight. Elephant seals, California sea lions and sea otters were awash in black muck.

A few years after that devastating incident, Wyland — who grew up in Madison Heights, and attended Lamphers High School and Center for Creative Studies — went on his first whale watch. Although he was only in high school at the time, he knew then he'd spend the rest of his life painting sea life.

Inspired by Jacques Cousteau, Wyland set out to work for the preservation and protection of the marine environment.

But Wyland didn't restrict himself to canvas.

After graduating from CCS, he moved to Laguna, Calif., where he painted his first mural on the Pacific Coast Highway. A few years later, he gained wide recognition for a 170-foot mural on a Laguna Beach wall.

"I didn't even think about the 'Wall of Jerusalem,' Wyland explained. "But the symbolism is con-

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DRACULA

AS SUEDE BALLT AU DIENES

BY FRANK PROVENZANO • STAFF WRITER

Imagining the famously fanged Count Dracula wearing tights and stepping lively to the music of fellow Hungarian Franz Liszt, plenty of crimson puns come to mind. Platitudes flow like blood in the Transylvanian River.

The most obvious banalities that bubble to the bloody surface are, of course: Is "Dracula" a ballet audiences can sink their teeth into? Could it be the perfect ballet where lovers can freely neck in public? Or, could frankly, will "Dracula" suck?

Cliches and puns aside, the Michigan Opera Theatre's upcoming presentation of the flying spectacle "Dracula" should rouse slumbering dilettantes and drive a stake in the hearts of those who thought American ballet died when federal funds were eliminated to the National Endowment for the Arts program for touring ballet companies in 1984.

Naysayers and disbelievers take note. Or better yet, come prepared with something more potent than a cross of cynicism and a high-neck steel collar.

The elaborate sets, costumes, lighting and special effects of "Dracula" provide much-needed sustenance for audiences hungering for thrilling ballet outside the traditional repertoire of "Swan Lake," "Giselle," and "Romeo and Juliet."

In his search to broaden the appeal of ballet for local audiences, second-year MOT director of dance Bradley Stroud realized the attraction of the

foot-loose caped count when he saw the critically acclaimed production at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles last spring.

"By bringing in a contemporary ballet like 'Dracula' many in our audience, who may not have seen classical ballet, will gain access to a broader world of dance," said Stroud of Birmingham.

Last April, the MOT produced "Blue Suede Shoes," a modern ballet performed by the Cleveland Ballet, set to the rockin' gyrations of Elvis Presley music. Whereas "Blue Suede Shoes" is clearly modern in step and form, "Dracula" draws more of an artful blend with classical ballet.

In the past, MOT produced a few ballets per season. Within five years, Stroud expects as many as eight in a dance schedule that features contemporary, modern and traditional works along with master

See D2



Dancing edge: Bradley Stroud, Michigan Opera Theatre's director of dance.



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POETRY

Poet Hooper listens to the secret sounds of language

By FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

As a literate society, we throw around words much too loosely. But thankfully, Patricia Hooper stands like a centurion at the gate of English, teaching through her crystal-clear literary passages how language can clarify emotion. How a precisely chosen word can illuminate ambivalence, or deepen a feeling.

The poetic verse from the Bloomfield Township resident may not resound in common parlance like the lyrics of famous pop songs, but in the age of dime-store wordsmiths, Hooper carries an authentic poetic license.

During the last 20 years, she has quietly become one of Michigan's literary treasures. Her 1984 book, "Other Lives" was awarded the Norma Farber First Book Award of the Poetry Society of America.

Hooper will read selections from her recently published book of poems, "At the Corner of the Eye," on Monday at The Community House in Birmingham.

The poetry reading is part of the YMCA's Writer's Voice, a new program to foster the arts and humanities in southeastern Michigan. The program has begun this fall at YMCAs in Birm-

What: Writers Alive in Birmingham — The Poetry of Mark Doty & Patricia Hooper presented by the YMCA's Writer's Voice Program
When: 7:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 6
Where: The Community House, 380 S. Bates (next to Baldwin Library), Birmingham (248) 644-5832
Books by Mark Doty: "Atlantis," "Furtive," "Swan," "Bethlehem in Broad Daylight," and "My Alexandria."
Books by Patricia Hooper: "At the Corner of the Eye," "Other Lives," and children's books — "A Bundle of Beasts," and "How the Sky's Housekeeper Wore Her Scarves."

ingham, Farmington, Livonia, Wayne and Westland.

Joining Hooper at the reading will be poet Mark Doty, who lives and teaches in Provincetown, Mass. Doty is past winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award and a finalist for the National Book Award.

On the verge

The roots of Writer's Voice began in the early 1980s at a YMCA on the west side of New York City. An entrepreneur poet, Jason Schinder, thought the YMCA would be an ideal place for poetry readings. So, the well-connected poet called on a few friends to help.

In a few years, there were hundreds

attending poetry readings by American poetry legends such as Alan Ginsberg and E.L. Doctorow.

Then in the early 1990s, Schinder saw a broader role for the arts and humanities. He pushed for a curriculum of art programs to be offered through local YMCAs. Ten centers across the country, including Detroit, were selected to pilot the program.

Finally, last year the national YMCA agreed to support a program in facilities throughout North America.

Hooper was one of six poets across the United States to receive the Writer's Community Award from the National Writer's Voice Project. The award, which includes a financial grant for conducting a writing workshop, is given to mid-career writers with a promising publishing future.

"Patricia's on the verge of national recognition," said M.L. Liebler, a professor of English at Wayne State University and the region's incomparable ambassador of poetry.

Liebler, considered one of the most recognized poets in the Midwest, is director of the Writer's Voice in Metro Detroit. Appearing in a beak-like tan and chest-length white beard, Liebler

What: "Dracula," performed by the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, presented by the Michigan Opera Theatre
When: 8 p.m., Thursday and Friday, Oct. 9-10; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 11; 2 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 12
Where: Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway at Madison Avenue, Detroit
Tickets: Range from \$21 to \$155; (313) 874-7484

Caped cravings: "Dracula" features elaborate sets, costumes, lighting, pyrotechnics and special effects like flying vampires. The ballet has won praise from critics from coast-to-coast. High-neck collars are suggested attire.



Deep art: Wyland has had a dramatic effect on preservation efforts.



Naturally poetic: Poet Patricia Hooper of Bloomfield Township has been called one of Michigan's literary treasures. Her recent book, "At the Corner of the Eye," is filled with poems that "transform ordinary event into startling revelations."