

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Valerie Yova shifts into a higher gear

It doesn't take long to realize that when Valerie Yova talks, she's holding back. Not emotionally, but vocally.

Her voice shifts gears. There's a slow, even modulation. A lighter, higher-pitched expression. Then, of course, there's aural nirvana.

That's when she rides a deep breath and pushes a sound from her lungs through her lips that must be the exact tone of a note as they direct traffic to the nearby gates.

Singing, for the operatically-trained Yova, isn't a pursuit for profit or acclaim. It's been a calling since she was 4. "I sing because I have to. We take so much from the world. This is my way of giving something back. For me, it's a spiritual issue."

Over the last 15 years, Yova has learned what a person does when time, fate and desire intersect. She's stood at the proverbial crossroad where time engaged in painting art is replaced with time spent thinking about art and planning performances for other artists.

The lesson learned well, Yova is moving on. Getting back to her spiritual roots. Shifting into a higher gear.

Practical realities
Since winning the prestigious Metropolitan Opera Auditions, in her last year as a grad student at New England Conservatory, Yova's spirit hasn't flown as much as she would've liked.

Practical realities dictated that she pursue jobs outside of singing. In the late 1980s Yova toured with regional opera companies, including the Pittsburgh Opera Company, where she performed the Countess in "Marrage of Figaro."

Feeling a bit burned out, she moved from her home in Akron, Ohio, and took a job as music director at St. George Romanian Orthodox Cathedral in Southfield.

At the time, she was also auditioning for singing roles. An audition before Fedora Horowitz, founder of the Lyric Chamber Ensemble, proved especially fateful.

Shortly after winning the audition, she was asked to join the Lyric's administrative staff. That was eight years ago.

Since then, Yova has handled the myriad administrative chores of operating a nonprofit on a shoestring budget and a perfectionist sensibility.

"Now that I've been on the other side - hiring - I know how important

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

If you're thinking about calling two of this season's early fall art fairs "quaint," just a few words of homespun advice: *Forget about it.*

Neither the elegant "Art in the Park" in downtown Birmingham nor the sprawling "Art & Apples" in Rochester - both ranked among the top 20 art shows in the country by *Sunshine Artist* magazine - could be considered as weekend folly or a mere stroll through the park.

Both art festivals will be held Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 12-13. Arguably, "Art in the Park" and "Art & Apples" offer insight into how art festivals can bring together a community and raise funds for local nonprofit organizations.

The 33rd annual "Art & Apples" is the single largest event in the Rochester area, with most proceeds going to the organizing agency, Paint Creek Center for the Arts.

Meanwhile, this year, money raised during "Art in the Park" will be shared among several Birmingham-based nonprofits and Common Ground, a county-wide service organization that provides crisis intervention, drug education and victims assistance programs.

Until this year, Common Ground, which has organized "Art in the Park" for the last 27 years, used funds generated at the art fair to cover costs to operate its crisis line.



Earthy: The unglazed, colored porcelain figures by Carolyn Dulin are featured in "Art & Apples," held in Rochester Municipal Park.



Earlier this year, however, the Birmingham City Commission held up Common Ground's permit to hold the art fair in Shain Park. Reportedly, the commission yielded when Common Ground agreed to share part of the funds raised with local nonprofits.

Yet another strange case, perhaps, of politics mixing with art.

Rite of passage
Over three decades, these two art-for-the-masses festivals - always held on the weekend after Labor Day - have become so widely anticipated that organizers proudly claim a role for their respective events in the annual rite of passage into fall.

"There's a feeling that people just expect (Art in the Park)," said Nancy Clark of Bloomfield Hills, chair of the event, which fills Shain Park and adjoining streets with 170 artists booths, live entertainment and food vendors.

"We've considered a kick-off to fall, a celebration of the closing of summer and the beginning of autumn."

Several miles away in Rochester, where "Art & Apples" began in the mid-1960s as a way to promote the season of apple-picking, cider-making and pie-baking, the "rite of passage" has become a full-fledged tradition for Oakland County residents.

But what may change to include residents of Wayne County. In recent years, more than 80 percent of the upwards of 100,000-person two-day crowd has come from the county.

This year, "Art & Apples" has

Mark your calendar

Art on the Green, Franklin, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Sept. 7, on the Franklin Village Green, (west of Franklin Road between 13 and 14 Mile Roads). Admission free, (248) 644-5832, Ext. 449 - The 18th annual art fair features 78 artists and live entertainment by one-man band Renée Kaufmann and guitarists Sean Blackman and John Arnold (latin, folk, blues). Proceeds benefit Very Special Arts Michigan, Birmingham Groves High School art programs, and children's art activities for Franklin's "Holy Day" in December.

Art in the Park, Birmingham, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, until 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, Shain Park, (north of Merrill, east of Gates St.), downtown Birmingham. Admission free, (248) 456-8150 - The 24th annual fair includes 170 artists, children's art activities based on "Seascapes" theme, live music, and an exhibit of artwork by students with disabilities from the Kennedy Center, benefits Common Ground.

Art & Apples, Rochester, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, until 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, Rochester Municipal Park, (north of University/Walton, between Main Street and Ludlow), downtown Rochester. Admission \$3, seniors/children under 12 free. Free shuttle service from Rochester High School, University and Livermore, and Sanyo International Machine Corporation, Rochester Road at Avon, (248) 651-4110 - Founded 33 years ago, the festival, presented by Paint Creek Center for the Arts, spotlights 100 artists, live entertainment, and children's art activities.

Plymouth Community Arts Council's Artists and Craftsmen Show, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 12-13 at Central Middle School, Main St. at Church St., Plymouth. Admission \$2 adults, \$1 seniors/students, (734) 416-4ART - Celebrating its 27th year, the indoor show features nearly 100 artists and craftsmen. Proceeds fund arts council programs in the community.

A Painter's Potpourri, 1 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 11, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, Plymouth Cultural Center, 525 Farmer. Admission, \$1, (313) 386-9727 - An exhibit of decorative painting by 30 members of the Village Painters. Highlights include a Tea Room serving home-baked goods, and a raffle featuring a large, hand-painted trunk.

Into autumn: An international list of 170 artists will help kick off the beginning of fall at "Art in the Park." Featured artists include Laura Stroue (top), William Munoz, and Bruce Migdal of West Bloomfield.

tried to appeal to out-county residents, although it isn't clear exactly where they would fit in the already packed Rochester Municipal Park.

"It just keeps getting bigger and more sophisticated," said Sally Matteson of Rochester, first-year special events coordinator at Paint Creek.

"From year to year, we have the basics in place," said Matteson, who began planning the

Please see FALL, C2

MOVIES

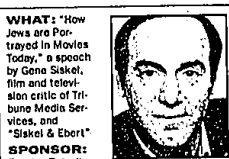
Siskel's speech to examine stereotypes in films

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Shortly after President Clinton ordered the bombing of a terrorist camp and a chemical plant in response to the U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa, the comparisons to "Wag the Dog" were immediate, and, perhaps, inevitable.

It's not just conspiracy nuts who find connections between reality and make-believe of the silver screen.

For many Americans, movies are an escapist delight, and a means to interpret history. Or with "Primary Colors," "Wag the Dog," and "The American President," some might argue, also a Hollywood backdrop for current events.



WHAT: "How Jews are Portrayed in Movies Today," a speech by Gene Siskel, film and television critic of Tribune Media Services, and "Siskel & Ebert"

SPONSOR: Greater Detroit Chapter of Hadassah

WHERE: 1 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15 Temple Israel, 5725 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield

COST: \$25 for speech; \$36 for luncheon and speech. Luncheon begins 11:30 a.m., call (248) 683-5050

in films. His speech, "How Jews are Portrayed in Movies Today," draws an omniscient conclusion.

several examples of pejorative images of Jews in recent as well as older movies.

The luncheon and speech is sponsored by the Greater Detroit Chapter of Hadassah, a group of Jewish women who promote health education and social advocacy.

Siskel has developed an unprecedented following in his 30 years as a film critic for Tribune Media Services and "Siskel & Ebert."

A simple thumbs up or down is enough to give a film a box office boost, or send it directly to video purgatory.

In the last three decades, Siskel's commentary has offered a common man's understanding of the entertainment and compelling aspects of movies.

"It comes down to this: If I friend asks me if he or she should go see the film would I say, 'Yes' or 'No.' Negative reviews - as anyone knows who has watched "Siskel & Ebert" -

ron't more difficult than a glowing recommendation.

"It's payback time for wasting two hours of my time," said Siskel.

On average, Siskel screens 5-6 movies per week. Typically, he doesn't want to know what movie he will be reviewing so he doesn't have any preconceptions about the film.

"Roger and I are just two guys who love films," said Siskel. "After seeing a film like 'Fargo' it gives me so much joy that I can sit through 2-3 months of bad films."

Ironically, as a self-described reporter who covers the movie beat, Siskel is quick to rail against the media for hyping box-office blockbusters, rather than recognizing quality films.

"(Box office) lists are too easy of a way to categorize movies," he said. "I wish people would see a movie because it's good, not because it's popular."

Please see YOVA, C2

WHAT: 10th Anniversary Concert Celebration, presented by the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan

FEATURING: Valerie Yova, soprano; Jack Morris, tenor; Jan Raa, soprano; Dino Vella, baritone

WHEN: 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20

WHERE: Italian-American Club of Livonia, 39200 Five Mile Road, Livonia; (734) 591-0346

Lyric Chamber Ensemble's 1998-99 Season

- "Tango Fest," Gem Theater, Sunday, Sept. 27
- Alexander Zorille, Gem Theater, Sunday, Oct. 25
- "Sacred Scenes from Opera," Sunday, Dec. 13
- Valentino's Day Concert, Hammel Music in Bloomfield Hills, Sunday, Feb. 24
- Piano Festival, Orchestra Hall, Sunday, March 7
- "French Salon," featuring St. Clair Trio and soprano Valerie Yova, Hammel Music, Sunday, April 25

Full-season subscription: \$100, call (248) 357-1111