

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Laugh and learn with playwright Kitty Dubin

Who doesn't have an Aunt Boodie? You know, the independent-minded elderly relative who'd just as soon shake hands with their maker than lose an ounce of their autonomy. Playwright Kitty Dubin — always one to recognize a good story — saw something universal in the idiosyncrasies of her 91-year Aunt Boodie,



Recognized: Playwright Kitty Dubin's short play was a finalist in a nation-wide competition.

Two weeks ago, Dubin of Birmingham flew to New York City to watch the performance of her play, named one of the top three in a competition that attracted 250 submissions from around the country.

No doubt it made her Aunt Boodie proud. **Impressive NYC debut** Of the 10 finalists, Dubin was the only playwright from outside of New York. Before she left the Big Apple, producers from a half-dozen theaters had requested to see copies of her other plays.

New Yorkers discovered what local playwrights have known for the last 10 years — Dubin is hardly an outsider when it comes to constructing plays. In a series of full-length plays performed locally at Purple Rose and the Jewish Ensemble Theatre over the last decade, she has explored the deli-

especially in the older woman's proclamation, "I'm done with my life, I'm ready." Ready for what? Apparently, ready to be used for material in Dubin's winning play, "Mimi and Me," a finalist in the Turnip Theatre's Fifth Annual 15-minute play festival.

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O&E hosts roundtable discussion

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers is hosting its fifth roundtable discussion — "Facing the Music: Orchestras, Chamber and Vocal Music Groups make overtures to attract a changing audience, pay their pipers and build an audience for tomorrow," 6:30-9 p.m., Tuesday, March 9, at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, 24350 Southfield Road (south of 10 Mile Road, north of the Lodge Freeway) in Southfield. You're invited to attend this discussion about the role music plays in enhancing the communities the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers serve. If you belong to a music group, we invite you to bring your members, and information about upcoming concerts. You'll have an opportunity to ask questions and participate in our discussion.

Panelists include Don Soenen, president of the Plymouth Symphony Board; Louis G. Spioto, president of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; Carla Lamphere, executive director of Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony; Christine Bonner, executive director of the Detroit Oratorio Society; Maury Okun, executive director of Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings; and Volodymyr Schesliuk, conductor of the Livonia Symphony Orchestra.

Please call Kelly Wyman, (734) 953-2105, Linda Chomin, (734) 953-2145 or Frank Provenzano, (248) 951-2557 if you have any questions.

TROY PREPARES FOR HISTORIC CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN HYZANZANO

On the point: Troy City Manager Jim Bacon contends that Troy will make the transition from a "growth city" to a "mature city" with the passage of upcoming bond proposals and development of the civic center complex.

Editor's Note: This article is an ongoing series examining the civic center complex development in Troy.

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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For a suburb known for its malls, corporate headquarters, village-like subdivisions and quality schools, the name "edge city" doesn't seem to fit the image of Troy.

Then again, "edge city" shouldn't be confused with "edgy." The name is given to those cities incorporated after World War II that have had sustained economic and population growth along with an identity distinct from a larger metro area.

With a \$3.7 billion tax base — second largest in the state — and proposed major developments that would broaden the perception of Troy, tomorrow's paradigm edge city may look nothing like yesterday's growing suburb.

Apparently, the immediate key to Troy's future is an April 5 city vote to raise \$47 million in bonds to expand local roads (Crooks, Dequindre, Livernois, and Long Lake), update the municipal public service facilities and preserve open land.

Most eyes, however, are on the proposed public-private development (estimated as high as \$167 million) of the 124-acre civic center complex, an area just east of I-75 adjacent to the city offices.

The most controversial component of the development could be a \$40-\$50-million, 3,000-5,000-seat theater that would rival The Fox, Music Hall, Detroit Opera House, and The Fisher Theatre, not to mention The Palace, Mcombi Center and Meadow Brook Theatre.

Coming to terms with legacy of growth

On March 26, the city will receive formal proposals from four private developers to transform the site.

Clearly, the hope is that Troy will become a regional destination center. The preliminary talk has already stirred a citywide debate, and caused tremors throughout the local entertainment market.

In the final analysis, Troy City Manager Jim Bacon hopes that residents will judge the bond issues and private development proposals on the facts, not hearsay.

Eccentric: What was the impetus for the proposed development of the civic center complex?

Jim Bacon: It goes back to a survey called Troy Futures (in the early 1990s), where the community started to talk about how the 124 acres should be developed.

The conclusions (in the report) included the desire for a fine and performing arts facility, a conference center as well as a new community center, and improved police and fire facilities.

Eccentric: If this major theater venue is built, how will it change the perception of Troy?

Bacon: Troy will be seen as a more regional place. Whether we're seen as an entertainment center or not is an open question. I don't define ourselves that way.

The very things that people like about Troy in our growth stage are the things that we are challenged to sustain in maturing as a community.

Eccentric: The proposed private venture component is more than building a new theater.

Bacon: There are four parts to the proposals: a fine and performing arts center; a conference center; housing; and, a support-retail component.

The idea is for this space to be used all the time, as a place for people to be, not something that's just event-driven.

The powerful idea is that private sector money can fund things that are essentially public purpose activities.

Eccentric: Like Comerica Stadium where the Detroit Tigers (owned by

Mike Hlitch) will play.

Bacon: That's a good parallel. **Eccentric:** Sounds like the project could turn into something like a downtown in suburbia.

Bacon: That was last year's false impression. Troy has a clear notion of its downtown. It's nontraditional. It's the Big Beaver corridor from the Kmart headquarters to John R.

Eccentric: Why is the theater/entertainment component of the proposed development in the hands of the private sector?

Bacon: That was a recommendation from a (75-member) citizens task force. Troy has a long history of financial conservatism. There's a feeling that if the private sector would provide the facilities, then we could take advantage of that.

Eccentric: Some believe that the proposed development is already a "done deal."

Bacon: Interesting. The Troy Arts Council made an appeal to have the theater publicly funded. Their basic argument was that only public funding would provide the range of venues. I don't happen to agree.

Look, four developers were invited to submit bids, and we won't even know what those ideas are until March 26.

(The developers are: The Farberman Group, REDCO Inc., Schestak Brothers & Co., and Hines Interests Ltd.)

Then, by April or May when the DDA has been able to analyze the proposals, we'll be able to look at them critically.

Talk about what this is going to look like and who's going to be developing it is just idle speculation.

Eccentric: What are some of the

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THE ART OF HELPING

Masks reveal faces of homelessness



Colorful creations: Celebrities, artists, politicians and students painted ceramic masks for the Coalition on Temporary Shelter's MASKorAIDE auction to benefit programs to change the face of homelessness in Detroit.

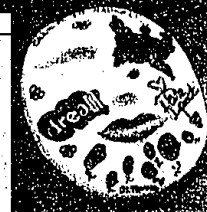
BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Imagine owning a mask painted by skater Thra Lipinski, Gov. John Engler, The Temptations, or the University of Michigan football team. MASKorAIDE, an auction to benefit COTS (Coalition on Temporary Shelter) makes it possible to hang one of more than 100 ceramic masks created by politicians, business owners, media personalities, and artists such as Gilda Snowden and Carlos Diaz, chairman of the photography department at Center for Creative Studies and a former Livonia resident.

Celebrities from Jeff Bridges to Rosie O'Donnell, Detroit Red Wing Brendan Shanahan, and Mary Wilson (The Supremes) also lent a hand. Wilson grew up in the Brewster Projects and would have ended up homeless if not for the help of others. That's the reason the singer decided to paint a face on homelessness when COTS asked.

Modeled after a Denver Hospice Society fund-raiser, MASKorAIDE will treat guests to dinner, live music and a silent auction of the life-size masks. COTS hopes to raise \$50,000 through the event.

"We're really excited about the response to painting the masks," said Molly Higgins, mask committee co-chair and a Birmingham resident. Husband Dr. Robert Higgins, surgical director of thoracic transplants at Henry Ford Hospital, co-chairs the auction with Beth McKeown. "The auction is important to raise awareness of the homeless, what a prevalent problem this is. COTS is a wonderful cause. When you hear the stories; these were productive people who are now homeless. COTS helps them help themselves by providing education, housing and even childcare until they can get back on their feet."



"MASKorAide for COTS"

WHAT: Celebrities, artists, business owners, politicians, and media personalities paint masks for an auction to benefit the Coalition on Temporary Shelter. Raffles for ski vacation in Swiss Alps, and a one-year lease on a BMW Z3 Roadster. Only 300 tickets (\$100 each) will be sold for BMW raffle.

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. to midnight Saturday, March 13.

WHERE: Alhambra Hotel, International Banquet Center, Grosse Pointe Woods, Detroit.

Tickets: \$100 per person, call (313) 831-3777.

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