

## CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

### Luck of the Irish? Callaghans, Lynches call it a blessing

When the Callaghan and Lynch families get together, it's not just a reunion. It's a ready-made society.

In the finest Irish Catholic tradition, both families give a whole new meaning to "go forth and prosper." The Lynches number nine children. At one time, the Callaghans could've fielded two baseball teams, and probably needed name tags during family trips when the 18 children were together.

Coming in at number 14 on the chart is Mary Callaghan Lynch, one of the premier sopranos in the region. Perhaps Lynch is best known as the vocal coach for the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, who is making a foray into recording arena.

This afternoon, Mary will be joined by her husband, daughter, father and brother-in-law, author Thomas Lynch, in the highest, hallowed celebration for the Irish, and all those who want to be green for a day.

The scaled-down version of the sprawling clan will be featured performers in their Eighth Annual St. Patrick's Day Concert at St. Regis Church in Bloomfield Hills.



Familial sound: Mary Callaghan Lynch and daughter, Caitlin.

Patrick's Day Concert at St. Regis Church in Bloomfield Hills.

### Across the Atlantic

Whenever the Lynches sit down to dinner, Patrick Lynch recalled the usual pre-meal prayer: "We'd say, 'Remember our relatives at the mouth of the Shannon River in Ireland.'"

Loyalty runs as deep as Irish pride. Each year, the Lynches travel back to the village in Ireland where their great-grandfather lived before he crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life.

"Our ancestors struggled through famine and religious persecution," said Patrick.

"Through it all, they sang their songs, read their poetry and had a good time." The Callaghans and Lynches certainly would make their ancestors proud.

Indeed, there's something "old world" about their passion for family, performing and their life's purpose. "We believe that when you're blessed with talent, it's your obligation to share it," said Patrick Lynch, a burly baritone, and the third of nine children.

For Mary and Patrick Lynch, life isn't reducible to a career choice or social status.

In their way of thinking, everyone has a calling. And anyone who knows them would realize that they're answering the call.

**Irish love affair**

Twenty five years after they first met, Mary and Patrick Lynch have maintained a certain mystery about the inevitability of their relationship. They relate the story about how Mary's father was Patrick's first vocal teacher, and how Patrick knew many of her brothers but didn't meet his future wife until after graduation.

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## ART

### MAKING ART MATTER

# FACING THE MUSIC

## New audiences bring new challenges to Roundtable

**Editor's note:** On Tuesday, March 9, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers hosted its fifth roundtable discussion — "Facing the music: Orchestras, chamber and vocal music groups make overtures to attract a changing audience, pay their piper and build an audience for tomorrow," at the Southfield Centre for the Arts.

Serving on the panel were — Volodymyr Schesluk, conductor, Livonia Symphony Orchestra; Carla Lamphere, executive director, Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra; Don Soenen, president, Plymouth Symphony Board; Tim Hamann, board member, Detroit Oratorio Society; Maury Okun, executive director, Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings; and Charles Marks, president, Southfield Symphony Orchestra.

These discussions have been our response to the American Canvases Report, published in October 1997 by the National Endowment for the Arts. The report recognizes the important role art — visual and performing — plays in enhancing the communities we live in. It also cautions that arts organizations are in danger of extinction because many Americans "fail to recognize the direct relevance of art to their lives."

Attracting a younger audience that will sustain them in the future is the biggest challenge arts groups face. When the discussion turns to classical music, alarm bells go off. Most of the people attending concerts are in their 50s.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER  
lchomin@oe.hometown.com

Running a symphony orchestra, chamber ensemble or choral group isn't easy. Despite decreases in government funding, corporate giving, and, in some cases, lower attendance, representatives of groups attending our March 9 roundtable discussion are optimistic about the future of classical music in metro Detroit.

A number of factors spoil trouble for the groups, not the least of which is an aging audience. The lack of an all-classical music radio station in Detroit and recording companies cutting fewer classical CDs further darken the art form's future. Guest panelists didn't seem to think so, though. Since most don't compete for the same audiences these classical music lovers believe they can overcome the odds by working together.

### Challenges ahead

"I'm looking forward to a bright but challenging future," said Maury Okun, executive director of the Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings. His group, in existence for 15 years, has collaborated with St. Hugo of the Hills and Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Hills to produce the successful Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival every summer.

"The best organizations always have the best boards," said Okun. "We like to have people on our board who like to attend our concerts. In smaller organizations it is the quality of the board that counts."

Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings "spends a great deal of time" looking for board members. "A good board member begins in the heart of the member," said Okun. "You want people who can do things for your organization, people who can bring stuff to your organization. You want to have people who get along. It's a real pleasure to work with people you like. It brings other people together."

### Dwindling board

The Southfield Symphony, now in its 37th year, has gone from 33 board members to seven working on 23 committees. Southfield Symphony president Charles Marks is attempting to lead the effort to raise funds and public awareness for the group but said, "community orchestras can't do it without a board."

"We have board members who have never come to a concert," said Marks. "They're only interested in raising money. If we had all the money we needed, I don't know how we would run it. There's not a residential community in Southfield that supports the symphony. We have musicians who come from 38

communities. Only four or five are from Southfield."

### Building an audience

Overall, panelists agreed that building an audience is one of the biggest challenges classical music groups, professional or semi-professional, must address if they hope to exist in the 21st century. Thanks to a generous grant from board president Don Soenen and his wife, Colleen, the Plymouth Symphony, in partnership with public and private schools in Plymouth and Canton, is introducing third and fourth grade students to classical music with hopes they will develop an appreciation for it. Soenen believes the board hasn't "done a very good job of developing an audience at an early age."

"Students need the opportunity to meet real musicians," said Soenen. "Kids need to get to know musicians and learn how to make music a key part of your life. Make room for music in your life."

### Laying blame

Although panelists agreed educating the young on the finer points of classical music is the ticket to creating future audiences, several of the panelists said it's not their responsibility. Unfortunately, who's responsible for the lack of interest in classical music won't matter two decades from now when there is no one in the audience.

"Our immediate audience building won't take place in the schools," said Okun. "It may happen, but it's a long-term investment. If we believe ourselves to be curators of a certain type of music, then it's our responsibility to take it to the community."

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony, along with educational outreach, is employing a number of strategies to increase audience size from encouraging tickets holders to bring their grandchildren to hosting young artist competitions. Offering guest passes to season ticket holders and gift certificates to nonprofit arts organizations such as the Oakland Youth Orchestra acquaints prospective audience members with the BBSO. Board executive director Carla Lamphere admits 66 percent of the BBSO audience is over age 50, and that's why the orchestra is "trying to build an audience for the future."

When someone attends a concert for free 10 times, Lamphere calls and asks them to buy a ticket to one of the concerts. Other strategies include offering singles a group rate. All seem to be working as BBSO audiences have grown over the last five years.

"When WQRS stopped we had to buckle down and find out what the people wanted," said Lamphere. "We passed out questionnaires. We are one of the best deals in our community. The buzz word is kids. Foundations and large corporations won't look at you if you don't have kids involved."

### Funding

Funding is critical when costs for a concert can range from \$15,000 to \$25,000 in musician and rental fees depending on the group. In addition to raising ticket prices and approaching business on one-on-one for sponsorship, Soenen thinks educational programs go a long way in garnering financial support.

In the last four years the Plymouth Symphony, now in its 53rd year, raised its budget to \$220,000 from \$100,000 and initiated a \$200,000 endowment fund. Much of the funding comes from the community. Now, the orchestra is returning the favor with educational programming such as the two free concerts the orchestra performed for fourth grade students in February at Plymouth Salem High School. Not to miss a beat, parents in the audience received free tickets for an upcoming concert as enticement to continue enjoying the music.

"Our success gives us reason to be optimistic," said Soenen. "Reaching out to the community through education can be a theme that helps with funding and building community interest. It's an opportunity to give something back to the community."

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JIM JAGDFELD



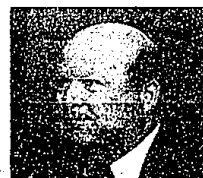
Maury Okun  
Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings



Charles Marks  
Southfield Symphony Orchestra



Tim Hamann  
Detroit Oratorio Society



Don Soenen  
Plymouth Symphony Orchestra



Volodymyr Schesluk  
Livonia Symphony Orchestra



Carla Lamphere  
Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra

## FILM

# Festival showcases 'reel' adventurous films

**What:** Ann Arbor Film Festival. Six days of 16mm experimental films. This year 107 films will be screened. **When:** 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 16; 7 and 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 17; 7, 9:30 and 11 p.m. Thursday, March 18; 7 and 9:30 p.m. Friday, March 19; 2, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday, March 20; winners screenings 5, 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday, March 21. **Where:** Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. **Tickets:** \$6 per screening, \$4 for 11 p.m. and 2 p.m. shows; \$45 for series pass. **Tickets on sale one hour before showtime at the Michigan Theatre box office.**

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER  
hgallagher@oe.hometown.com

Vicki Honeyman was calm, cool and collected on the day of the press screening for the Ann Arbor Film Festival, more than a week before Tuesday's start.

Usually at this time, Honeyman is still screening films, still getting out publicity and still scrambling. This year every thing has fallen into place ahead of schedule, giving the festival's director a little breathing space.

The Ann Arbor Film Festival at the Michigan Theatre has become the independent film festival. You won't find Hollywood blockbusters here or Hollywood wannabes either.

### Adventurous spirit

The 16mm films shown at the Ann Arbor Film Festival are as diverse as the human imagination in style, content and technique. But they all share an adventurous spirit, and most of them share a disdain



**Hopal: Swirling oil animations combine with black and white live action and the rhythms of Brazil in Laura Magulies' 'Hopal'**

for most of what comes out of the commercial film industry. Though, ironically, many of the visual experiments that begin with these films eventually find their way into commercial films.

Honeyman holds the casual press screening in a small room behind her hair salon in Ann Arbor. This tiny space is the nerve center for reviewing the 355 films sent from around the world. This year's entries come from Austria, Australia, Scotland, New Zealand, Germany, England and elsewhere. A screening committee selects the films for presentation.

A panel of three will select several films for a variety of awards and the award winners will be presented on Sunday.

### Heidelberg Project

But one of the most interesting films being presented (scheduled for 9:30 p.m. Friday, March 19) is about something just around the corner, Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project. Filmmaker Nicole Cattell's

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