

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

A heaven-ward climb finds resurrected carillon

Dennis Curry gets to play and practice his art in a space about as close to heaven as you can get.

And if the ride to eternity is anything like the steps leading up to the top of the Kirk in the Hills bell tower where Curry sits at the keyboard of the world's largest carillon, then a few words of advice for anyone expecting



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACARSON

Resounding: Kirk in the Hills Music Director Glenn Miller, (left), and carillonneur Dennis Curry inspect the reinstallation of the carillon.

to ascend—exercise and wear comfortable shoes.

The path is indeed narrow and treacherous. But the sight at the top, oh my. No wonder when the bells sound notions of heaven come to mind.

Worried that perhaps you might not be 100 percent dead when you get to the pearly gates? Forget it. The climb heavenward is designed to put you out of your misery.

How steep and narrow? If you wear a size seven shoe, your feet are too big for the nearly 100 swirling steps. Apparently, the cliché is true: modesty will take you a long way.

The calling

Today, Kirk in the Hills will rededicate its carillon after the completion of an eight-month project to replace the keyboard and mechanisms controlling the 77 bells that weigh about 68,000 pounds, including "Roy," a gargantuan 11,200-pound ringer.

Atop the tower overlooking Island Lake, an immaculately landscaped columbarium and the rolling hills of Bloomfield rests the world's largest carillon, consisting of six octaves and enough tin and brass to stretch back to Holland where it arrived in perfect pitch back in 1959.

A few days before the rededication of the 40-year-old carillon, the chords and pulleys were still being attached. For those not used to the power of

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Creating a Balance

EDUCATORS DEBATE 'CORE' OF ARTS CURRICULUM

Editor's note: In response to the American Canvas Report published by the National Endowment of the Arts in October of 1997, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers regional team inaugurated a series of roundtable discussions with representatives of the arts community. The American Canvas Report considers the impact of reduction of public funding for arts on aging audiences; cuts in arts education programs; and the "elitist" attitudes of some artists and cultural institutions.

On Tuesday, we held our sixth discussion at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, "Opening the Book: Educators spell out the importance of arts education and nurture talent and audiences for tomorrow." Serving on our panel were — Janet Davison, Avondale High School art teacher; Nancy Koski, fine arts teacher, Bloomfield Hills School District; Gail Mack, director of the Creative and Performing Arts Program at Churchill High School in Livonia; Daisy Newman, director of education, Detroit Symphony Orchestra; Linda Pallas, curriculum director, Redford Union Schools; Patrice Pedersen, choral music director, Central Middle School, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools; instructor Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp; Jack Pierson, executive director, Michigan School Band & Orchestra Association; Cheryl Poole, education coordinator, ArtServe; and Richard Zecchini, arts teacher, Southfield Lathrup High School.

Prior to the roundtable, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers conducted an informal survey to learn the "State of Arts" education in the school districts the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers cover (see related story on page C2).

By KEELY WYAGONIK
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Just because the arts sometimes get less attention in public schools than math, science or English, Linda Pallas doesn't think they're less important.

"The state is putting demands on us to do more to achieve in the core curriculum," said Pallas during the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers roundtable discussion on Tuesday, May 18. "Why aren't the arts more a part of core curriculum? We're looking to give it more attention, but it doesn't quite balance. It doesn't mean we don't value it, but we give it less attention."

"Reading, writing, and math," are subjects that have measurable value and are tested in fourth, fifth, eighth and 11th grades. The MEAP—Michigan Educational Assessment Program test sets the benchmark for what the state believes students in Michigan need to know.

"It does take weight over other things," said Nancy Koski. "We have every other day music programs. If this was core curriculum, it would not be meeting half the time. If it was part of the core, it would be given the same priority as math."

Jack Pierson believes that people who teach arts need to sell their importance to state legislators, those empowered to make changes in what gets taught in Michigan's public schools.

"We're not selling our product," said

Pierson. "We have to get the legislators involved. Every Memorial Day is an opportunity to sell legislators on what the key issues are. Corner that individual."

Art programs, including vocal and instrumental music, and drama are electives in most school districts. Because they're not part of the "core" curriculum, they aren't given the same priority as math, English, social studies and science.

Education priorities

When she hears the word "core," Patrice Pedersen cringes. "I refuse to be excluded," she said. "I am a core subject. I keep preaching the gospel. I am living math, dividing time and space, taking math to a new dimension. Mozart was all about math. Einstein arrived at the theory of relativity through music."

Pedersen points to studies that have shown children who learn how to play a musical instrument at an early age have increased brain capacity. The brain itself is altered by performing music.

Parents are an important part of the equation that equals a successful arts program. "You can't underestimate the power of parents," said Cheryl Poole. "Michigan recognizes the autonomy of local school districts. It's the parents who carry the responsibility. They're the only ones school districts respond to."

"We have to catch them up," said Koski. "It takes a lot of hard work, but

once you get local support (for arts) it's the beginning of getting more legislative support."

The good news in Redford is that parents are doing extra funding so more arts programs are available in the Redford Union School District. "But it's still called extracurricular," said Pallas. "Yet those (arts classes) touch kids differently than math. Legislators look at measurable results. They don't have time to ponder but put pressure on scores."

Participation

Without exposure to the arts, students don't know what they're missing. It's not a question of money. Even in affluent Oakland County there are students who have never been to the Detroit Institute of Arts or to hear the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"Less than one third of my students have been to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra to hear a live performance," said Koski. "We take all of our seventh grades to a DSO Coffee Concert."

Experiencing the arts firsthand makes it real. Richard Zecchini took a group of students to see Tyron Guyton's Heidelberg Project and asked them to decide if it was art or junk.

"It piqued their interest," he said. "There was the whole notion of an artist in the community trying to do something."

Making the arts relevant is something arts teachers work to do. Not every musician will be a virtuoso nor every actress famous, but you don't have to "starve" to be an artist.

In addition to artists, musicians and actors, Poole believes schools should invite web designers and people who do sound for musicals "so students can

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Janet Davison



Gail Mack



Daisy Newman



Linda Pallas



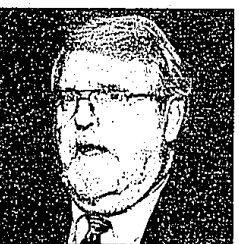
Cheryl Poole



Richard Zecchini



Patrice Pedersen



Jack Pierson



Nancy Koski

EXHIBIT

Students expose inner self through photography

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Carlos Diaz points with pride to the works of students in the photography department at Center for Creative Studies College of Art and Design. As he walks through the 2,500 piece exhibition, Diaz enthusiastically relays stories of each of the students in the photography department. Many are searching for themselves. Art is the catalyst for resolving their questions.

"That's what art is all about—self expression," said Diaz, a longtime Livonia resident now living in Brighton. "We're allowing for the student's voice to be reflected in the final presentation."

New directions

When Diaz took over as photography department



Perceptual Entitles: Aaron Metis created the 16 color prints in this work about how people process information.

chairman in the fall of 1996, he refined the program. Diaz doesn't see a line between students hoping for a career as a commercial or fine art photographer. So he merged the two separate curricula. He also rebuilt the studio and bought color enlargers, along with other equipment, for the department which serves 100 students.

"I thought it was important for students to study both," said Diaz. "The commercial was involved with technical—lighting and such. The fine arts area students were clearly working with sophisticated concept, critical theory and contemporary history. A lot of discussion about the creative process was only with fine art students. A good photographer has technical knowledge as well as in-depth understanding of the creative process and is far better prepared for the professional world."

Skill of lighting

Carolyn Carleton in her quest for a bachelor of fine arts degree honed the commercial skill of lighting. Diaz talks about the Bloomfield Village student's series of 12 black and white (gelatin silver) prints titled "Fashion is Form." Carleton, he said, "has become very adept at using light."

"I pre-visualize the images before creating them through the camera," said Carleton. "The series revolves around using design and form to accent the human form," said Carleton. "I use a man's handkerchief as a woman's shirt."

Carleton has been hooked on photography since studying the subject for four years at Birmingham Seaholm High School. While attending Michigan State University, Carleton

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