

## CONVERSATIONS

FRANK PROVENZANO

### Three words sum up Stone's years in gallery business

Given 24-hours notice before an on-the-record interview, Elizabeth Stone said she would definitely "give some thought to the meaning of the past 10 years."

The topic: Lessons learned in the first decade of her gallery in Birmingham.

It's only fair to give Stone time to come up with some deep thoughts. Her gallery of original, limited-edition lithographs and prints of children's book illustration is only one of



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

**Soul food: Elizabeth Stone, (left), and artist Cyd Moore are dedicated to stories and illustrations that have a timeless influence.**

three in the country.

The other two galleries are in LA, a.k.a. LaLa land, where illusion is reality, and reality is based on the findings of a marketing strategy.

The strategy at Stone's gallery is refreshingly simple, and quite different from Every Picture Tells A Story and Storyopolis book stores in LA.

#### Feed your soul

There aren't books derived from Disney formulas or other gimmicks on the shelves at the Elizabeth Stone Gallery.

For Stone, if the story and illustrations resonant like those classic tales that are read again and again from generation to generation, then it finds a place on the shelf.

At the Elizabeth Stone Gallery, the person whose name is on the business also serves as critic and curator.

"The gallery is a jewel," said Cyd Moore of Beverly Hills whose illustrated books include "I Love You, Stinky Face."

"What better way for a child to get turned on to art. This gallery is about books that feed your soul."

#### State of mind

Apparently Stone is feeding the souls of more than the art collectors in metro Detroit. Her reputation has spread world-wide. Thanks, in part, she said, to her web site.

Because of her in-depth knowledge of children's book illustrations and her first-hand grasp of today's most compelling artists Stone is also a popular speaker at schools and conferences.

Actually, if anyone can be considered as a diplomat of the art form, and a crusader for the civilizing influence of the stories and images of illustrated books, it's Stone.

Don't mistake Stone's warmth, friendliness or choice of promoting "children's art" as reasons to believe her tastes are maudlin or that she's a sofpy.

You don't stay in the art gallery business for 10 years simply because of pretty pictures.

The art on the walls and on the pages of books could be considered as

Please see CONVERSATIONS, C2

## Bloomfield Hills resident stars in MOT opera

# Samson and Delilah

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
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On an unexpectedly cool, blustery afternoon in late May, Irina Mishura sits demurely in the Madison Lounge on the first floor of the Detroit Opera House. Rehearsal has ended early, and the mezzo-soprano whose passionate performances in "Carmen," "Aida" and "Madame Butterfly" won her international critical praise settles in to a reflective mood.

There's a little hint of the defiant seductress, Delilah, who Mishura will portray in Michigan Opera Theatre's "Samson and Delilah," opening this Saturday.

Not long ago, Mishura may have been content to just sit in the lobby of any opera house and talk about her aspiration for the stage.

So much for inevitability.

For the last three years, the Bloomfield Hills resident has strapped her career to a rocket headed to the operatic stratosphere, performing in opera houses in San Francisco, Toronto, Vietnam, Lisbon and Brussels. Next fall, Mishura will make her debut at the Met.

Ask her about her schedule for the next six months, and in her heavy Russian accent with near-perfect English diction, she'll explain that she'll have to get back to you.

Busy? There's probably an itinerary just to schedule the itinerary. Mishura has just returned from trips to Helsinki and Munich. After her upcoming Detroit Opera House performances, she'll head to Lisbon to perform "Aida."

For the moment, however, Mishura is content to be home — both in Bloomfield Hills and the Detroit Opera House, where she initially performed three years ago at the gala opening celebration, which featured Luciano Pavarotti.

"That was one of the most amazing moments of my life," she said. "Watching Pavarotti sing, I had tears rolling down my face."

Wait until you hear Mishura.

#### A bad-hair day

In February of last year, Mishura first performed the role of Delilah in Tel Aviv as part of the 50th-year celebration of the state of Israel. She has also performed the role earlier this year at the New Orleans Opera.

The allegory of Samson is ideally suited for the extravagant spectacle of opera. The myth, mystery and passion finds a seductive expression in Camille Saint-Saens' opera, first performed in France in 1890.

As the curtain rises, the Philistines in Gaza are forcing the Israelites to work. Rousing his fellow Jews from the depths of despair, Samson rallies the Hebrews to resist their oppressors.

Samson, endowed with the strength of 10,000 men, overcomes the onslaught of the Philistine army, but falls prey to the most seductive Philistine maiden, Delilah.

Eventually, Delilah learns of the secret source of Samson's strength. Soon, Samson suffers the ultimate

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PHOTO BY SCOTT BALZMAN

**Hair today, gone tomorrow: Irina Mishura, (left), performs the role of Delilah in all six performances of MOT's "Samson and Delilah." The role of the long-haired Samson will be performed by Mark Lundberg, (right), and Ian Denolfo.**

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Please see OPERA, C2

## A masterpiece of fascinating rhythms

BY ALICE RUZIN  
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His work has the symmetry of classical style, the warmth of folk art, and the simple approach to form and content that is primitivism.

Yet Andrew Lidgus said his artwork is simply his way to tell a story.

His "American Popular Music Series" at Birmingham's Masterpiece Gallery runs through July 10. The exhibit pays tribute to the stories and songs of America's greatest composers including George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen and Duke Ellington.

Using layers and strips of hand-made paper, oil pastels, crayons and panels of rich wood, Lidgus weaves elegant collages, or more appropriately, musical montages.

"I love to tell stories," said Lidgus, who is also an accomplished pianist.

I did my own storytelling of what I thought the lyricists and composers were trying to get across.

In "Fascinating Rhythm" Lidgus evokes nature's

rhythm with undulating waves, forest and sky. In another nod to Gershwin, his "Summertime" shows fish jumping and a man reaching out of the water towards the sun in reference to the classic "Fury and Bess" refrain about spreading your wings.

For Duke Ellington's "Day Dream," Lidgus used patterns based on Ashanti textiles to show a man floating between two castles walls.

His tribute to Harold Arlen's "It's Only a Paper Moon" shows the entrance to a tent and, of course, a paper moon, sailing over a forest of trees.

"I use a lot of trees. Nature is a big theme in my work," said Lidgus, who grew up in a Chicago neighborhood, one of eight children.

"It's one of the few things in this world that is honest. We can't corrupt it. We can, in terms of the environment, but a tree is still a tree."

And a rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet. Lidgus also draws heavily on classic literature, including Romeo and Juliet. In his largest work, a four-panel folding screen 12-feet wide and 7-feet high, Lidgus captures the

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**Literary Montage: Andrew Lidgus's four-panel screen depicts Romeo and Juliet at the moment after they were married.**

## ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

# Detroit Women Writers celebrate a 'Century of Voices'

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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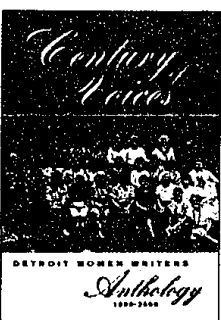
Alice Ellnor Bartlett would have gasped in horror over the graphic language and sexual descriptions in Julia Grice's suspense novel "Jagged Light."

In 1905, Bartlett, a founding member of Detroit Women Writers, was writing flowery poems about the parson coming to tea.

Ninety-nine years to the day, the Detroit Women Writers will kick off a year-long celebration of their 100th anniversary with a literary evening.

The Birmingham Village Players and Cranbrook Writers Guild will present both works along with selections by Margaret Hillert, Elizabeth Kane Buxton, Naomi Long

Madgett, Kathleen Ripley Lee, Joyce Carol Oates, Linda Nemec Foster, Ruth Ryan Langan, and S.K. Wolfe of Livonia.



**Century of Voices: The Detroit Women Writers celebrate their 100th anniversary with the release of an anthology and the literary evening "Authors on Stage."**

Bob Carington's job is to put the authors of the Detroit Women Writers recently published anthology "Century of Voices" on stage and "make it entertaining." As director of the Birmingham Village Players production with his wife, Jerri, Carington realized his biggest challenge was to trim the selections chosen for "Authors on Stage" Saturday, June 5. The book stands on its own when it comes to taking the reader through a roller coaster of emotions from laughter to surprise.

"There's everything from tough hard-hitting stuff to fun things. From soup to nuts, there's a lot of variety," said Carington of Bloomfield Village. "We're making them into little one acts. From Julia Grice's hard hitting 'Jagged Light' to a poem by the first president (Bartlett) that's very old-fashioned and charming. We try to mix the evening up."

#### Evolution of a project

Originally "Century of Voices" was intended to chronicle 100 years of Detroit Women Writers history. Marion Tuttle Marzoff had been taking oral accounts from older members for a decade when Carolyn Vosburg Hall, who calls herself an idea person because of the 12 published crafts books she's orches-

Please see WRITERS, C2