

Buddha from page C1

travels with her Romanian immigrant parents. She considers her art as simply a way to tell mundane and transcendental stories about the dilemma of tangled hair, angels lurking at the corners of her life, nature and world peace. Her explanation of the idea behind each painting is displayed next to the work.

"The reaction that I want when people look at my art is a smile or a tear," said Nechita.

"I never take anything for granted," she said. "My art has helped me overcome my fears and to speak for others. It's taught me not to be afraid of showing emotion."

The biggest "story" of Nechi-

ta's paintings might be how such a young artist can evoke a depth of emotion and possess a sophisticated sense of composition while most kids her age struggle with the ambivalence of adolescence and grapple to "fit in."

For better or worse, the label of prodigy invokes both legitimacy and cynicism about Nechita's work.

Art in the balance

Overflow crowds squeezed into the Peleg Gallery for the opening of Nechita's exhibit 10 days ago. The gallery expects an unprecedented high turnout throughout the month.

"There's a wide fascination

with Alexandra because she's developed a certain style at such a young age," said Andy Peleg of the Peleg Gallery.

"Sure some people are skeptical, but once people see her work, they realize there's no way to prepare a child for this depth of expression."

A testament, said Peleg, that Nechita is the real deal.

Indeed, there is a sense of destiny about the girl from Whitlir, who shares a hometown with former President Richard Nixon. Nechita arrived in the U.S. shortly after her parents fled the scourge of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

As a toddler, she was coloring

books while other kids were probably wondering whether to color the walls or themselves with their crayons. And by 8, she had her first art show at the Wittier Library.

While Nechita's sense of color, composition and mood are highly advanced for a 13-year-old, there are both signs of her youth, and promise of greatness in her paintings.

One of the one hand, the narrative ideas behind the imagery often overshadow the compositions. In other words, the explanation of the painting deflates the mystery. Some of the images — hearts, doves, the sun and moon — could be culled from a school girl's diary. And while the

emotion is well-focused in many of the paintings, it isn't necessarily expansive. In general, the pervasive emotion is bright, cheery and optimistic, much like Nechita.

When Nechita hits her mark, with such paintings as "A Vortex of Love," inspired by a pressman at Mouritz Ateller, which publishes her lithographs, or "Silent Water Lily," she reveals a subtle yet complex sensibility and layers of emotion.

As Nechita matures and experiences a wider range of emotion, there's plenty of reason to believe her canvas will continue to be a conduit for her feelings.

At 13, she possesses the rare combination of humility, limit-

less curiosity and honesty. Qualities that transcend technique, and may one day, lead her to create a style of expression that isn't derivative of cubism.

On a recent tour to the van Gogh Institute in Auvers, France, the director of the gallery showed Nechita the landscape that inspired the famous painter.

"He asked her, 'Are you inspired by van Gogh,'" said Yarger, who accompanied her on the trip.

"She said, 'I'm inspired by what inspired van Gogh.'"

Even skeptics would've been impressed.

Conversations from page C1

Three Tenors coming to Detroit. Insiders claim that Pavorotti's close friendship with Stella cemented the deal.

How about the debate over casino gaming? Stella served on the City of Detroit's first commission to study the issue.

How active has Stella been in shaping the cultural landscape? He's served presidents from Nixon to Clin-

ton, ambassadors, governors and mayors WHILE running an international business.

Stella's biography reads like a quilt of recent American history. His photo album resembles a modern-day Zelig.

There's Frank with his arm around Pavorotti, smiling at Sophia Loren, sharing the dais with President Reagan, sharing a laugh with President Bush, counseling President Clinton,

having a somber moment with Pope John Paul and having a word with Mother Teresa.

Heck, there's Frank with Fabio, and posing alongside John Travolta.

Are we sure there's only one Frank Stella?

Chairman of the board

Tickets to the Stella-appreciation party are a tongue-in-cheek measure

of friendship. Great friends: \$1,250 for a table of ten. A really, really good friend: \$125. A good friend: \$75.

Apparently, the man known by presidents, popes, world-famous celebrities, martyrs and the man on the street doesn't make mere acquaintances.

"What do you look for in a friend," asked Johnson. "Loyalty and a someone who keeps his word. That's Frank

Stella."

Perhaps next Monday's dinner is a good time to make it official. The metro area's "chairman of the board" also answers to the name of Frank.

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Lightfoot from page C1

modity they are today. American record producers just weren't going after singers from north of the border. Although he would have liked to be the first to record his "For Lovin' Me" it wasn't realistic to expect anyone to take a chance on an unknown. Instead his agents, Grossman and Court, gave the song to Peter, Paul & Mary who went on to make it No. 1. Eventually, Lightfoot had his own hits, paving a smoother road for musicians such as Bryan Adams, Sting, Sarah McLachlan, and

Celine Dion.

"For a Canadian in the States to get a contract was difficult," said Lightfoot who credits the Juno Awards for changing the way American record producers view Canadian artists. "That and the popularity of Celine Dion, I contribute that to the Juno Awards," Canada's version of the Grammys.

By the 1970s, Lightfoot was riding high on chart-topping hits such as "Sundown," "If You Could Read My Mind" and "The

Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" along with albums "Cold on the Shoulder" and "Endless Wire." Nothing prepared him for the changing musical winds of the 1980s. After working a year on the album "East of Midnight," Lightfoot was especially disappointed with depressed sales, and the fact that it came in 166th on the charts. It was a sign of the times.

"Michael Jackson unleashed an album and The Monkees were No. 1," said Lightfoot. "You don't let that discourage you. Writing and recording, I checked it once or twice but I couldn't stay away from it."

Persistence on Lightfoot's part is what led to his being recognized as a living legend. He

chuckles at the notion, his voice blushing through the phone wire. But legend he is. In the 1970s he was declared Canada's male singer of the decade. As if that wasn't enough, 1988 brought one of his most cherished honors as he was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, by no less a legend than Bob Dylan. The two had become friends through the years.

"It's the desire to succeed, the love of the craft," said Lightfoot. "I like being able to play the guitar and stand up in front of folks. It's like a hockey player who practices for the game."

Lightfoot has "practiced" plenty for the game of becoming an international recording star. Based on the number of hits

recorded by other people alone, Lightfoot's batted a thousand. He feels "it's definitely helped" him that "If You Could Read My Mind" was covered by more than 100 performers and that people such as Elvis ("Early Morning Rain") and Barbara Streisand recorded many of the songs he sings on the four-CD box set.

Pristine beauty

Many of the tracks reveal his love of nature. Lightfoot's canoe trips account for some of the most prolific times in his songwriting career. Six-hundred mile paddling trips through The Rockies gave him plenty to draw on.

From the country sounding "Remember Me (I'm the One)" of 1962 to the 1998 title song from "A Painter Passing Through," Lightfoot appeals to the every-one from baby boomers to the younger generation, sure to learn a lot about the values and beauty once held in esteem.

Lightfoot credits Rhino Records executive Thana Tierney with making the retrospective

project, including the release of previously unpublished tracks, run as smooth as it did.

"The '62 cuts were done with a studio orchestra in Nashville. We'd come down from Toronto to Nashville. Chet Atkins lined up the musicians," said Lightfoot. "My favorites in terms of rarities, there's 18 of them, are the ones I dug up in Toronto studios and a storage company. Of those, Warner's Bros. only found four."

Family man

At 60, Lightfoot seems in no hurry to burn up the charts. As long as his health holds up, he'll continue to write and record songs for the 40 to 60 shows he performs a year. His focus is on family now. But he does have some advice for up and coming songwriters.

"Persistence, keep on writing. I wrote 50 songs before I wrote one that meant something. Then songwriters Bob Gibson came along and Bob Dylan and made me write better songs with deeper feeling."

Six Strings Series

Live Performances

Paco Peña and Inti-Illimani
Friday, October 8, 8 P.M.
Michigan Theater
MEDIA SPONSOR: **WVAZ**

Bill Frisell's New Quartet
Bill Frisell, guitar
Greg Leisz, pedal steel guitar
David Pittch, bass
Kenny Wollesen, drums
Thursday, October 28, 8 P.M.
Pawnee Center
MEDIA SPONSORS: **WEMU** **WDET**

Paco de Lucia and His Flamenco Sextet
Friday, November 19, 8 P.M.
Hill Auditorium
SPONSORED BY: **CHRYSLER** **AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM**
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The Romeros
Sunday, January 9, 4 P.M.
Rackham Auditorium

Sharon Isbin, guitar
Susanne Mentzer, piano
Thursday, April 15, 8 P.M.
Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre
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Tap Fest from page C1

at the Southfield Westin Hotel with Sunday afternoon's headliner concert at the Music Hall in Detroit.

Perhaps the best evidence that the "Detroit Tap Festival" is catching on is the dramatic increase of participants. Last year, 35 dance schools enrolled in the master classes in ballet, tap and jazz. This year, more than 100 schools from throughout the state will participate.

"Our objective is to bring more rhythm tap to our community," said Smith, a dance instructor and co-founder of Artistry In Motion of Southfield.

To spread the word about tap, Smith has created a way to explore contemporary trends through master classes while honoring the tradition of the art form in a "legends of dance" concert on the last day of the festival.

Bringing in Glover is an ideal way to bridge the past and present. "Because of the mass popular-

ity of 'Bring In Da Noise' and his other work on Broadway ("Black and Blue," "Jelly's Last Jam"), a lot of people are familiar with Savion, but many people don't know about his teachers," said Smith. Glover made his Broadway debut at age 12 in "The Tap Dance Kid."

In many ways, the tradition of tap runs through to Glover from Hines to legendary hoofers Cholly Atkins, Henry Letang and Jimmy Slyde who will all share the stage in Sunday's concert.

■ 'Our objective is to bring more rhythm tap to our community.'

Gwendolyn Smith
Dance instructor and co-founder of Artistry In Motion of Southfield

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