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CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

North Oakland an attractive venue for arts groups

Far from the pulsations of the urban streets and glitzy downtown entertainment venues, Tina Collins is pasting together a season schedule at the Lake Orion Performing Arts Center.

Sounding like she's reciting a motto from a bullish brokerage firm commercial, Collins admits that until community interest grows along with ticket revenue and funding, they'll have to build a season "one concert at a time" at the new venue.

"Right now, we only have about five people pulling (the center) together," said Collins, whose background in public relations and theater gives her a practical understanding of how to make a nonprofit arts organization succeed.

"We just need to get a season under our belts, and have a good fund-raiser."



PHOTO BY RICK SUMM

Soaring: Gregory Patterson is a featured performer at Eisenhower Dance Ensemble's holiday dance concert.

Of course, that line could be uttered by nearly every arts organization in North America.

But in the proud northern suburb that boasts, "Where Living Is A Vacation," there are signs that Collins and the Lake Orion Performing Arts Center just might get their wish.

Future partnerships?

Since last May's inaugural concert featuring the Detroit Chamber Winds, the Greater Orion Performing Arts Council has struggled to find out how the state-of-the-art venue could not only provide a stage for Lake Orion High School students, but a spotlight for local arts groups.

The council might have filled the next slot on the schedule while discovering the type of partnership that could round out season schedules for years to come.

On Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12-13, the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble will perform new and reworked dances in its annual "Holiday Extravaganza" concert.

After performing the last two years at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus and in the intimate space inside OUA's Warner Hall, EDE was looking for a bigger venue.

With 840 seats, the Lake Orion Performing Arts Center certainly fills that requirement.

Building an audience

EDE is one of the area's most acclaimed dance companies. Not only are they entrepreneurial with a marketing savvy, they offer education and outreach programs to schools and communities throughout metro Detroit.

In recent weeks, EDE held auditions to find two dozen local dancers, ages 10-18, to perform in "Holiday Extravaganza."

And although EDE has a loyal following, they, too, realize the realities of sustaining an arts organization in

Please see CONVERSATIONS, C2



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JARRELL

On the edge: Irene Hofmann, associate curator at Cranbrook Art Museum, has assembled three exhibits that reveal the look and feel of 21st-century communication.

Designing the Millennium

CRANBROOK'S EXHIBITS FEATURE LATEST IN DESIGN, VIDEO ART

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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Futurist author Alvin Toffler long ago predicted the "future shock" of living in a high-tech, frenetically paced world.

Take a deep breath. Look around. "Future shock" arrives daily with digitized impact.

Don't believe it? Feel the anxiety rise when you beach your internet surfboard, pull the batteries on the portable phone, or try to keep up with the latest computerized innovations.

What lies beyond the shock waves of terminal change? And, how does a culture that disregards speed bumps in the name of progress influence creators of the iconographic landscape?

Three complementary exhibits at the Cranbrook Art Museum offer plenty of clues. And, by all accounts, the future will be as mysterious, fantastical and strange as the inexplicable past.

Uncharted communication

With the video artistry of Bill Viola, a collection of work from cutting-edge new media designers, and a conservative sampling from the portfolio of Studio Dunbar — one of the world's leading design firms — Cranbrook's latest exhibits reveal a brave, new 21st-century world of uncharted forms of communication.

Apparently, it's the type of technologically augmented communication that blurs the lines among fine art, design and marketing.

"We're going to see more of this kind of imagery in all aspects of our lives," said Irene Hofmann,

associate curator at Cranbrook.

"If people are curious about where design is going, it's all about technology."

Which, of course, also begs the post-modern question: Will the tools of mass communication help to cultivate or destroy honest individualism?

There are no easy answers. Just shock waves.

Emerging from the deep

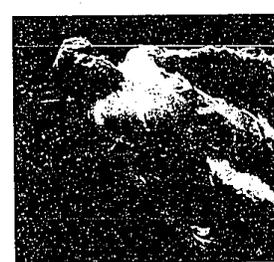
Clearly, Viola's work is the most thoughtful and artistically compelling of the three exhibits.

In the face of rapid-fire imagery and multi-media assaults on the senses from TV and film, Viola's video installations of the last decade have charted a fertile path for the relatively new medium.

In his latest work, "The Messenger," — originally installed in 1996 at Durham Cathedral in northeast England — Viola presents a slow-moving figure emerging from an undulating blue-black void.

Ever-so slowly, the naked male figure rises to the surface. With each moment, he becomes more discernible. Upon emerging from the uncon-

Emerging: (Below) The video artistry of Bill Viola and the new media designs included in "WhereisHere" demonstrate the mesmerizing effectiveness of technology used by contemporary artists.



scious sea, the male figure bellows incoherently, then slowly submerges until he becomes a swirling abstraction.

The process is repeated ad infinitum with mesmerizing effectiveness. And while the metaphor of "emerging from the unconscious well" is perhaps cliché, Viola's flawless technique and the intriguing unfolding of the human figure is transfixing.

Indeed, projected on a large screen in a spacious darkened room, "The Messenger" is a lush animated painting that engages the viewer to consider the nature of consciousness.

Along with video artists Gary Hill and Bruce Nauman, Viola is integral in elevating the medium of video much in the same way that photographers pushed their medium to be accepted as a fine art a century ago.

Whereas Viola's work is purposeful and historically significant, the new media designers work in "WhereisHere" appears more like a rushing catharsis of curiosity without limits.

Age of obsession

The work in "WhereisHere" is impossible to locate — literally.

"The originals don't exist, except for on a computer screen," said Hofmann, who noted that the exhibit is located on a website and the many images taken from online designs assembled in a book.

The exhibit has been compiled by Laurie and Scott Makela, heads of Cranbrook's design department.

Basically, the Makelas sent out a "call to entries"

Please see MILLENNIUM, C2

New Exhibits at Cranbrook Art Museum

■ "The Messenger," a large-scale video projection work by Bill Viola

■ "WhereisHere," new media design, a book and website by a collection of international designers

■ "Behind the Seen: Studio Dunbar," graphic designs from The Netherlands based firm

Where: 1221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills
Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tuesday-Sunday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday; (248) 645-3323

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

Symphony goes home for the holidays

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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For many, hearing the words to "Little Drummer Boy" or "Sleigh Ride" triggers images of cutting out cookies, decorating the tree and caroling with family and friends.

Preparing for the Livonia Symphony Orchestra's Dec. 12 concert of holiday music brought back a lot of memories recently when conductor Volodymyr Schesiuk and Bloomfield Township flutist Ervin Monroe shared some of their traditions and cultures. The two take to the stage with the orchestra, Alexander Zonjic & Friends, and the Churchill High School Choir to ring in the "Sounds of the Season" for a piper's holiday of songs.

Schesiuk smiles as he remembers the sounds of carolers and street performers knocking on doors in Ukraine on Christmas Eve to tell of the Three Kings coming from the East. Dressed in costumes, the merrymakers went from house to house singing traditional holiday songs and wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the new year. Full, after a dinner of not less than 12 special dishes cooked by the lady of the house, Ukrainian families living in obscure villages and in the mountains waited until the sun went down to light candles in their windows as a sign for the groups to let the



A piper's holiday: Alexander Zonjic (left) and Ervin Monroe will play holiday favorites with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra.

festivities begin.

In celebration of his new life in the U.S., Schesiuk brings the warmth of his homeland to the holiday music popular with American audiences in the concert at Churchill High School Auditorium in Livonia. While there won't be any Kutya, a Ukrainian dish of whole wheat cereal dressed with honey and nuts, guests Monroe, principal piper with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Zonjic join the Livonia orchestra along with the Churchill High School Choir for a wide array of selections including John Williams'

"Sounds of the Season"

What: The Livonia Symphony Orchestra celebrates the holidays with a concert featuring Ervin Monroe, principal flutist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Alexander Zonjic & Friends, and the Churchill High School Choir. An art exhibit of reindeer and Santas by elementary students from Livonia Public Schools will be showcased in the lobby during intermission.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12.

Where: Churchill High School Auditorium, 8900 Newburgh, (north of Joy Road), Livonia.

Tickets: \$15 adults, \$8 children age 12 and under, call (248) 645-6666. (734) 421-1111 or (734) 464-2741.

music from the movie "Home Alone."

After intermission, Zonjic will be joined on stage by his jazz ensemble for favorites such as Chuck Mangione's "Bellavia" and "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer." LSO flutists Robynn Rhodes, Stephanie Ault-Justus and Teri Rae Martin will be featured with Monroe and Zonjic in "Tambourin for Cello, Double Bass and Flutes" by Jean Philippe Rameau.

"On Christmas Eve, it's like folk theater with kids

Please see SYMPHONY, C2