

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

## Love inspires salesman to sing for others

During Valentine's Day weekend Jim Paravantes will be singing songs of love at Andiamo Italia West and thinking about his wife of 31 years.

Marilyn Paravantes is the reason Jim's been singing at the Bloomfield Hills restaurant since April. Four years ago, she bought her husband a karaoke machine so he could practice songs by the Gershwins and Porter in the privacy of their Canton home.

While Paravantes isn't ready to quit his day job as a salesman for a software company to croon ballads and swing tunes — he definitely has stars in his eyes. The 49-year-old singer is secretly hoping to make the big time with a CD to be recorded this spring on Trident Records. It will feature standards from the 30's and 40's as well as original music by Arnold Olenich of Massachusetts.

### It Had to Be You

"It's just great to be able to do this," said Paravantes. "All the songs are basically about love and continue to be popular. People listen to them the same as back then. My wife enjoys coming up to the restaurant. Most of the songs I sing, I think of her."

Don't let Paravantes' "It's all been a lot of fun" attitude fool you. He's had to practice constantly over the last four years to land the weekend gig where he's accompanied by bass player Ron Anderson, drummer Tim Mysek and pianist Wayne White.

Jeffrey Allen's book and CD, "The Secrets of Singing," taught Paravantes the vocal exercises necessary to improve his singing skills but he had to do all the work. That included taking lessons with Allen after Paravantes corresponded with him over the Internet.

"My three grown daughters think it's really cool," said Paravantes. "My wife isn't as impressed because she knows what it took to do it."

It was while Paravantes was in LA on business for the Canton computer company that he had his first singing break. Paravantes' job calls for frequent travel so during the long nights he would visit the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Burbank for entertainment. One evening, pianist Joanna Ezrin asked if anyone wanted to come up and sing a song. Paravantes couldn't resist the call of the bright lights.

"People seemed to like it and it became an addiction," said Paravantes. "It's a lot of fun for me and I do it as much as I can so it fits in with my life."

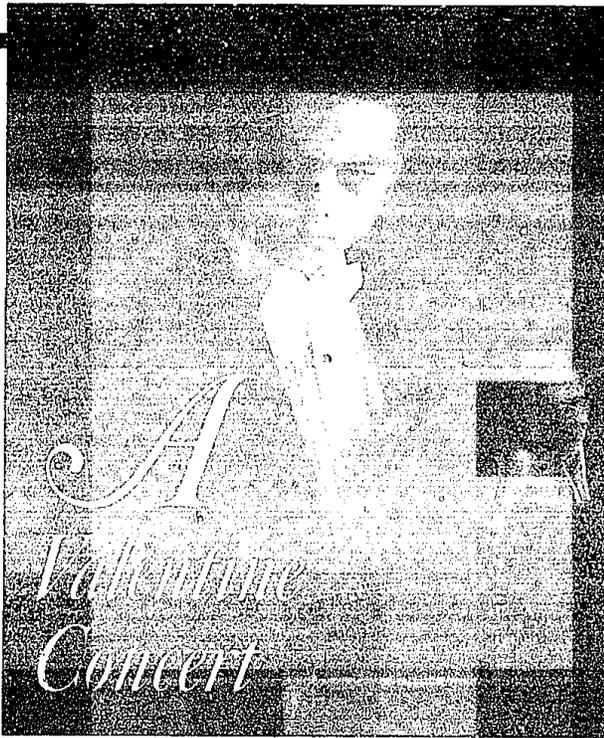
Like many kids, Paravantes was forced to take piano lessons. The experience colored how he felt about performing music for many years. "I wasn't that Paravantes didn't love music. He originally planned to become a disc jockey after studying broadcasting at Lee Allen's school."

He worked briefly for WPON in Pontiac on the board before deciding to enroll in computer programming courses at Schoolcraft College and Macomb Community College. The computer studies led to his job in software sales. It's all relevant to his singing today.

"The sales is getting up in front of people," said Paravantes. "It's an evolutionary process. You learn each time you do it."

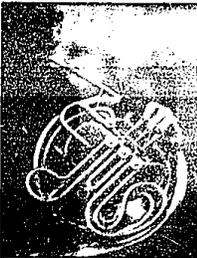
Paravantes admits the first few times he sang at Andiamo Italia West were unimpressive.

"It was scary," said Paravantes. My wife and many of my friends were there for support. It's gratifying to get up and do it but it's also stressful. The tragedy of performance is that you depend on people's response to continue."



Kiang Gao

## Livonia Symphony puts heart into their romantic program



Musical chairs: (Above) Conductor Valodmyr Schesniuk lays down his baton to play violin with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra. (Center photo) Carl Karoub of the Livonia Symphony Orchestra.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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The Livonia Symphony Orchestra is getting in the mood for Valentine's Day by presenting a chamber concert in the Livonia Civic Center Library Auditorium on Sunday, Feb. 13.

Concerts are usually held in the 900-seat auditorium at Churchill High School. The more intimate setting will allow the audience to savor every note of the romantic program. Along with music by Borodine and Haydn, the ensemble, which is composed of 14 orchestra members, will perform Tchaikovsky's "Theme from Romeo and Juliet" and Andrew Lloyd Webber's "All I Ask of You" from "Phantom of the Opera."

"I like sometimes to have a smaller audience to play from heart to heart," said symphony conductor Valodmyr Schesniuk.

Please see VALENTINE, C2

**"A Valentine Concert"**  
What: The Livonia Symphony Orchestra presents a chamber program of music ranging from classical to Broadway.  
When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13.  
Where: Livonia Civic Center Library Auditorium, 32777 Five Mile Road, east of Farmington Road.  
Tickets: \$10, call (734) 464-2741 or (248) 645-6666.

## Musicians ready to serenade audiences

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
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Romance is in the air as Valentine's Day approaches, and the Farmington Community Band and Redford Civic Symphony Orchestra are getting ready to serenade audiences.

### Farmington Community Band

"Here's that Rainy Day" has a great trombone part and Dave Londal is looking forward to playing it Friday, Feb. 11 at the Valentine Dinner Dance sponsored by the Farmington Community Band.

"It's a highlight of the year," said Londal. "It's challenging to play for three hours, but enjoyable. There's 12 or 15 new pieces in our folders, and we're throwing in a few polkas too. People really enjoy the polkas, and that's kind of fun too."

"Volare," and the "Anniversary Waltz" may be old to you, but they're new tunes for Londal and the Farmington Community Jazz Band, the 20-piece group, made up of Farmington Community Band members that will be playing music for dancing.

The evening at Glen Oaks Country Club in Farmington Hills begins at 6:30 p.m. with a cash bar cocktail hour, followed by a buffet dinner at 7:30 p.m., and dancing until midnight to the Big Band sounds of the Farmington Community Jazz Band. They'll be playing music from the 1940s to the 1990s, said Fern Barber who founded the band with her husband Paul in 1966, and plays first clarinet.

The jazz band has been rehearsing for three weeks to get ready for the dance.

"It's an opportunity to keep playing," said Londal of Farmington Hills. An accountant, Londal played trombone in high school and college, and has been a member of the band for the past 23 years. "I enjoy doing it, it's relaxing and forces me to play at least once a week."

The band rehearses on Mondays 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Farmington High School. Visit the Web site [www.fcbmusic.org](http://www.fcbmusic.org) or call (248) 489-3412 for more information about joining the group.

### Redford Symphony

The Redford Civic Symphony Orchestra will take audiences on a musical tour of Austria, Hungary, and Romania at a concert on Sunday, Feb. 13 that includes a Valentine's Day Sing Along.

The choral and instrumental ensembles from the Redford Union Music Department will be joining the orchestra for this special concert at Hillbert Junior High. Doors open 2 p.m. and the concert begins at 3 p.m.

Assistant conductor Robert Zimmerman will lead the orchestra.

**Valentine Dinner Dance** — sponsored by the Farmington Community Band, 6:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 11. Glen Oaks Country Club on 13 Mile Road (between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads), Farmington Hills. Tickets \$40 per person, reservations a must, call (734) 261-2202, or (248) 489-3412.

**Family Concert** — presented by the Redford Civic Symphony Orchestra, 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13. Hillbert Junior High School, 26440 Purinton, (east of Inkster Road, between Five and Six Mile roads). No charge.

EXHIBIT

## Polish history shapes sculptor's work

**WHAT:** Marian Owcarski exhibits his stainless steel sculptures.  
**WHEN:** Through Wednesday, March 1. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Tuesday; until 9 p.m. Wednesday; until noon, Thursday-Friday.  
**WHERE:** Joanne Winkelman Hulce Center for the Arts, 774 N. Sheldon St. Junction, Plymouth. Call (734) 416-4278 for more information.

**Related event:**  
"Modern Polish Art and Culture," a lecture by St. Mary's College President Thaddeus Redzowski 8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 9, at the arts center.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Marian Owcarski left Poland many years ago but the country's culture and history live on through his sculpture.

Owcarski was only 7 when he witnessed the devastation that resulted from Hitler's bombs. When World War II ended, he was the only surviving member of his family. Owcarski worked his way through schools in Szczecin, Siedlce and the Academy of Art in Lodz before completing graduate studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Afterward, he and other artists and craftsmen took part in a nationwide restoration effort.

Before leaving Poland in 1971 to teach art at St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Owcarski

helped restore seven churches. Today, he is artist-in-residence and director of the Galeria at St. Mary's.

Owcarski's hard line and rough finishes accentuate the character of Polish heroes throughout the last six centuries. His stainless steel portraits of men and women such as Marie Curie and Zbigniew Brzezinski along with figurative works continue an exhibit at the Plymouth Community Arts Council through Wednesday, March 1. The exhibit is part of the arts council's Cultural Diversity Series which is celebrating Polish culture with displays of amber jewelry, crystal, costumes, and contemporary art.

"I try to bring faces and



Polish pride: Marian Owcarski displays his sculptures of historical Polish figures Pope John Paul II (left) and Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a hero of the American Revolution.

Please see HISTORY, C2

STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL BRONKOWSKI