

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

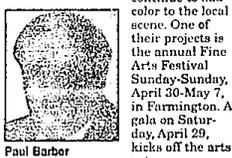


LINDA ANN CHOMIN

## Musical couple celebrate the arts together

**T**his Valentine's Day Fern and Paul Barber will not only celebrate their love for each other, but also their passion for the arts. In the last 33 years, this husband and wife duo have helped raise the awareness of music, dance, theater and the visual arts in the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills; and they have no intention of stepping.

Fern, who chairs the Farmington Area Arts Commission, and Paul, music coordinator for Farmington Public Schools, continue to add color to the local scene. One of their projects is the annual Fine Arts Festival Sunday-Sunday, April 30-May 7, in Farmington. A gala on Saturday, April 29, kicks off the arts extravaganza.



Paul Barber

"Take art, theater and dance out of the world and it would be a pretty drab place," said Paul Barber. "Art touches all of our lives."

## Whirlwind romance

It seems only natural that the arts would be instrumental in bringing the Barbers together. Fern and Paul met in Elizabeth Green's violin class at the University of Michigan, and wasted no time joining forces to instill a love of music in young and old alike. They graduated in May of 1966, married in August, and by September were teaching music in the Farmington Public Schools.

Somewhere in the midst of this whirlwind, they founded the Farmington Community Band. Since that time, they've been supporting not only music, but all forms of art in the Farmington area.

Fern, a former president of the Farmington Musicals, has served on the Farmington Area Arts Commission for 19 years. The commission, with funding from the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, is able to carry out a number of programs, including bestowing an annual artist-in-residence award since 1976. An Art to the Schools program allows teachers to choose an artist to visit students in the classroom. The arts commission also funds all of the awards for Farmington Artists' Club exhibits, student art awards, and an award given by the Farmington Historical Society for the best writing of historical information about Farmington. They also help support the Farmington Musicals scholarship awards.

"It's a wonderful experience to be involved with the arts," said Fern. "Either you're meeting some new musicians or teachers. I'm always learning something new."

Paul, in his position with the Farmington Public Schools, "has to keep 38 music teachers happy." But in addition to overseeing the installation of a new keyboard MIDI lab for music teachers, he was involved with building a state-of-the-art TV studio at North Farmington High School, and instituting a dance program, the first of three at Farmington high schools.

Paul also supports visual art and theater, and has worked as a partner with the Detroit Dance Collective for the last three years. He also initiated a fine arts camp for elementary and middle school students. The camp, which will be held July 10-21, will allow students to take five classes in art, dance, music or theater.

"Our music program's grown dramatically," said Fern. "Thirty percent of our students are involved with the arts. That's nearly three times higher than the 9 to 10 percent nationally. Dance will add another component. Students have another way of self-expression. It provides a wealth of



## Students Inspired by dance legend

Studying at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance made quite an impression on Melissa Poli — one she wanted to share with her students at North Farmington High School.

So when the opportunity arose to bring the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble to her school, Poli leaped at the chance. She wanted her students to experience first hand how the legendary choreographer transformed dance in America. Graham began her journey as a dancer and choreographer in 1916.

"It was a spiritual experience almost," said Poli. "I felt like we paid homage to Martha Graham at the school. You could just feel the history."

Rachel Zuckeman loved "The Lament," the second work on the program. "I thought it was really powerful and cool," said Zuckeman, a junior. "They showed a lot of expression," added sophomore Kathleen Bendick.

The contemporary dance performance was a first for students in the dance program at North Farmington High School. Since most were trained in classical ballet and tap, modern dance in a world filled with mys-

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STORIES BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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**D**ressed in body-hugging gold unitards, their bodies glinting under the spotlights — the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble dashes around the stage ceremoniously paying tribute to the sun and to the woman who founded the company in 1926.

The darkened auditorium soon erupts into thunderous applause as the electrically-charged surges of energy through the audience of students at North Farmington High School. The presentation was one of 13 outreach programs offered at area schools, including West Bloomfield High School and Abbott Middle School in Birmingham.

The programs are part of a two-week residency, which precedes four performances by the Martha

Graham Dance Company, Thursday-Sunday, Feb. 17-20, at Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts in Detroit.

"We've been getting great responses," said ensemble artistic director Kenneth Topping. "For the younger student, it's an art form we're trying to impart to them. This is a disciplined approach. This is an all-encompassing technique."

## Early morning

The dancers arrived at 7:20 a.m. to warm up before demonstrating the Graham technique to students, and performing three of the 181 works she choreographed. Topping began the program by explaining the rigorous training dancers go through to become a member of the ensemble or company. Graham used the principles of contraction and release as the foundation for her technique.

Topping learned them from Graham during the six years he worked with her while dancing

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Celebration of dance: "Appalachian Spring" is one of the classic works that will be presented by the Martha Graham Dance Company.

## Martha Graham dancers perform at Music Hall

BY NICOLE STAFFORD  
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Choreographer and dancer Martha Graham may not have the name recognition of, say, Martha Stewart, but she probably should.

Graham's dance technique, based on body contraction and release, transformed modern dance. More importantly, her artistic approach and sensibility helped shape 20th century expression in the larger realm of modern art. Graham, who died in 1991, sits beside the likes of Picasso, Stravinsky, Frank Lloyd Wright and other artistic forces of the time.

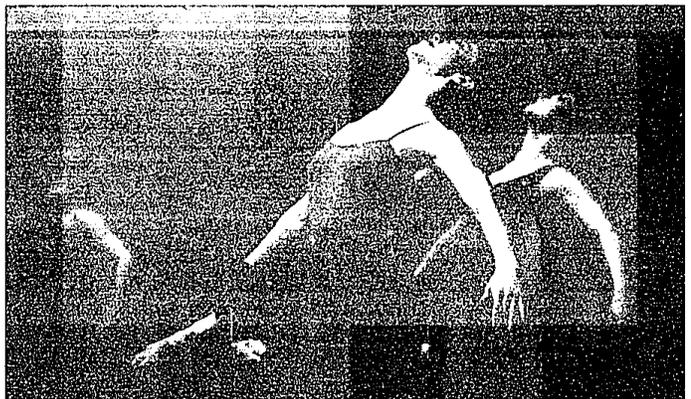
"Her work is almost a self-contained history of modern art," said Christine Dakin, associate artistic director and principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company, which is scheduled to perform several of the Pennsylvania-born choreographer's classic pieces Feb. 17-20 at Detroit's Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts. "Martha's work spanned 50 years, during which time she was in the forefront of modern art," says Dakin, who grew up in Ann Arbor and studied dance at the University of Michigan.

Not only did Graham create 181 ballets in her lifetime, she also collaborated with a wide range of artists, including musical composers Aaron Copeland and Samuel Barber, sculptor Isamu Noguchi and actor and director John Houseman.

That's one of the reasons why anyone with an interest in modern art ought to experience Graham's choreography firsthand, says Music Hall President Peggy Tallet. "If you enjoy newer music, if you enjoy modern art — what Graham really does is like mobile sculpture — you'll definitely enjoy this."

True to form, the company's Detroit performances will showcase mostly Graham pieces. Among them, her well-known *Appalachian Spring*, which is set to a Pulitzer Prize-winning score by Copeland, and *Errand Into the Maze*, which takes the Greek myth of Ariadne

Please see PERFORM, C2



Modern dance: (Top photo) Students in Melissa Poli's dance classes at North Farmington express their excitement over seeing the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble perform. (Middle photo) Sebastian Sabatier-Curial and Penny Diamantopolou cool down after a performance at North Farmington High School. (Photo above) Members of the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble demonstrate the legendary choreographer's techniques.

## CONCERT

### "All That Jazz"

**WHAT:** The Plymouth Symphony Orchestra blends classical with the sounds and rhythms of jazz.  
**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19; 7 p.m. preconcert chat with director Non Warburton and conductor Harold Farberman. Afterglow hosted by the Outback Steak House, 42871 Ford Road, Canton.  
**WHERE:** Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, 1150 Pennington, Plymouth.  
**TICKETS:** \$12 adults, \$10 seniors/college students, free for students through grade 12. Call (734) 451-2112 for more information.

## Plymouth Symphony brings jazz to church

**BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Pete Siers rarely plays with an orchestra and never in church. But he'll do both when the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra presents its "All That Jazz" concert at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on Saturday, Feb. 19.

An instructor at Washtenaw Community College and the Ann Arbor Academy for the Performing Arts, Siers will shine on Harold Farberman's "Concerto for Jazz Drummer." Siers, who plays regularly with the Bird of Paradise Orchestra, emerged on the jazz scene during his undergraduate years at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids. A native of Saginaw, he moved to Ann Arbor in 1986 to join the Eddie Rues Trio. Throughout the years, he's played with jazz legends such as Mulgrew Miller and Mose Allison. In addition to his

own trio, Siers has become a vital member of the Ron Brooks Trio and the Beas Bonnier Quartet. His first CD "Those Who Choose to Swing," released last April, is a hard hitting jazz record in the style of Oscar Peterson.

"The concerto is very different texturally," said Siers. "It was originally written as a collaborative work with Louie Bellson. Although I've never performed the piece, I was excited after hearing it. I'm a huge fan of Louie Bellson."

Farberman's four movements run the gamut of musical styles from classical to jazz.

"The third movement is cow bells, wood block and toy drum," said Siers. The fourth movement has lots of cadenzas and a big drum solo at the end. It's a major piece. The concept for writing it is to have interaction with the orchestra with definite room for the drummer

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**WHAT:** Martha Graham Dance Company's American Graham Tour 2006, featuring classic Graham pieces — such as "Appalachian Spring," set to a Pulitzer Prize-winning score by Aaron Copeland.  
**WHERE:** 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Feb. 17-19, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20.  
**WHERE:** Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit.  
**TICKETS:** \$30-40, available at the box office, (313) 963-2366 or Ticketmaster outlets, (248) 645-6666.



All that jazz: Pete Siers plays Harold Farberman's drum concerto with the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra.