

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Arts council 'Escapes to the Caribbean'

Sollia Greene is dreaming of traveling to some place warm to chase away the Michigan winter blues. Since that's impossible right now, she's looking forward to escaping to the Caribbean at a dinner/auction fund-raiser for the Plymouth Community Arts Council Saturday, March 11.

"We're trying to create an atmosphere," said Greene, the arts council's new development director and chairman of the event committee. "Auctions can become pretty routine. We're stepping into the islands for the evening. The auction items will be displayed in an open marketplace with people dressed in island costume. We're encouraging people to wear island or cruise ship attire or dressy."

Bahamian musician Ya Tafari will provide the steel drum music known as Junkanoo before dinner. Auction items capitalize on the theme with several escape packages from spa to sporting events and condos in tropical locations.

"Junkanoo music is indigenous of all the islands," said Greene. "People want to dance so after dinner we're having swing music by The Couriers. People really enjoyed them last year. Our swing dance classes have been popular over the last year. We anticipate the teachers will be there to get people moving."

What: A dinner/auction to benefit the Plymouth Community Arts Council. Dancing until midnight to the swing music of The Couriers. **When:** 6 p.m. Saturday, March 11. **Where:** Mayflower Meeting House, Plymouth.

Tickets: \$55. Call (734) 416-4278. **A Pre Auction Party** to view more than 80 items and enter the first bids 5:30-8 p.m. Friday, March 3 at the arts council, 774 N. Station, Plymouth. No charge.

80 items. It's underwritten by Beards, so the event is free.

"Other successful auctions have done this," Greene said. "It gives people a chance to support who might not be able to attend the dinner/auction. It's also the first opportunity to see the items. We'll take sealed proxy bids up to the amount you choose to bid." Greene is hoping to top the more than \$20,000 raised at last year's dinner/auction by moving the event back to downtown Plymouth to the Mayflower Meeting House. The arts council expects to accommodate 20 percent more people there. Starting ticket sales before Christmas is one more way the arts council hopes to increase the amount of money the dinner/auction brings in.

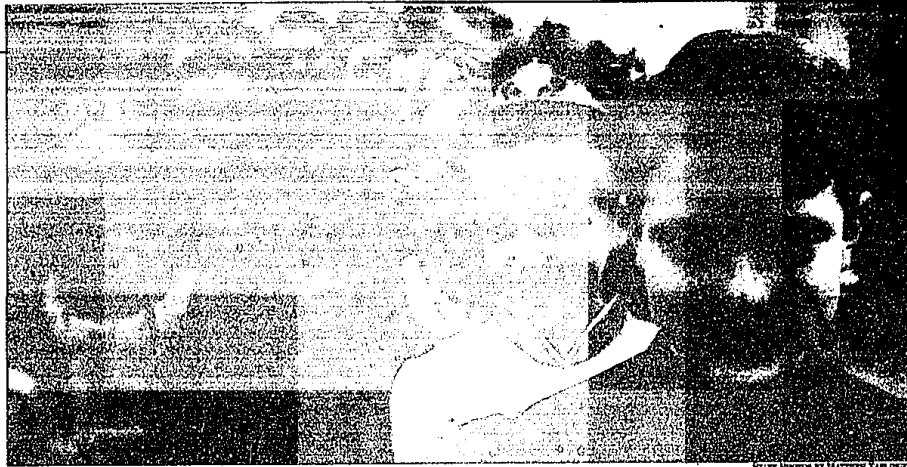
"This is our major fund-raiser," said Greene. "Membership and this fund-raiser is the way we support all of our programs. We provide arts programming for the community 300 and some days a year. This is the one day a year we ask the community to give back to us."

The arts council stretches its \$160,000 annual operating budget a long way to provide on-going exhibits, concerts and lecture series, a cultural diversity series, the arts volunteer program that brings art and culture into the school system, and the "Mem-

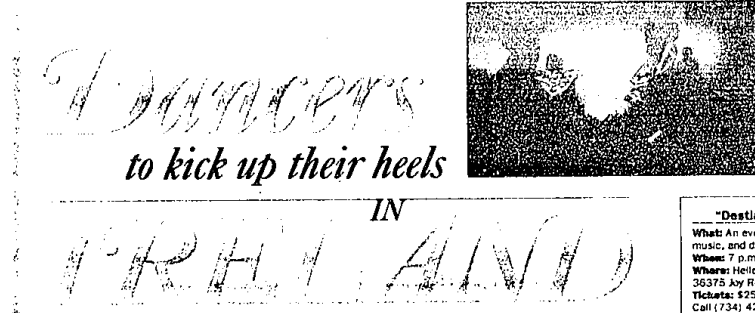
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Evening escapes: The Couriers will play swing music for dancing at a benefit for the Plymouth Community Arts Council.



Steppin' out: Michael Hool (front to back), Kelly Mrzyglod, Tauri Rothermel, Hillary Schwarb, Jimmy Ward, and Meghan Doran are on their way to Belfast.



By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Whirling and kicking their way across a hardwood floor, Michael Hool, Meghan Doran, Hillary Schwarb, Tauri Rothermel, Kelly Mrzyglod, and Jimmy Ward rehearse their steps for the All-Ireland World Championships taking place in Belfast in April.

It's taken hundreds of hours of practice and classes several times a week for the Irish dancers from the O'Hare School of Dance in Westland to qualify for the championships.

Michael Belvitch, a Plymouth dancer, won first place in the senior boys division in 1998 and 1999. This year he will compete with junior men, ages 17-19. This will be Belvitch's last year competing because after graduating from Plymouth Salem High School in June he'll be on the road with "Riverdance." Belvitch is a member of the group's "flying squad" and dances when needed in various cities around the country.

Belvitch and the rest of the dancers were among the 1,600 kids who competed in Pittsburgh in the Midwest Championships to qualify for the World Championships in April. In 1992 Erin Curtis became the first O'Hare dancer to win the world championship. Tim

O'Hare, owner of the dance school, won it in 1975 and 1976. Twenty-five of O'Hare's students who attend his schools in Westland, Chicago and Akron are going to the championships.

"I'm really looking forward to it," said O'Hare. "Belfast is a really beautiful city. The Northern Ireland dance teachers are excited about having it there because this is the first time. It's special for me because I have so many young kids going."

"It's the most we've ever had," said Beth Hool, Michael's mother. Michael placed second in the Midwest Championships. "Usually only two or three go. This year we had 10 from the metro Detroit area but only nine are going because Michael Hurt of Northville is unable to make it because of injury."

Hool is coordinating an evening of Irish dance, music and food on Friday, March 10, at the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland to help raise money to pay for the trip to Ireland. In addition to performances by champion dancers from the O'Hare School, those attending will be treated to Irish music by the first O'Hare dancer to win the Detroit Group of Grupa Choeil. A raffle for

Waterford crystal, an autographed Red Wings hockey stick, and a watch will offer a variety of ways to help the dancers.

"We hope to raise enough to get the kids air fares paid for," said Hool, a Livonia resident. "The kids are representing the U.S. There are so many kids from England and Ireland that qualify. The judges come from all over the world."

Things have changed from when I took Irish dancing years ago. Now that "Riverdance" and "Lord of the Dance" have come out, it's exploded in popularity."

Dancers will perform a hard shoe and a soft shoe. Then if they qualify, only one-third do, they go on to do a set dance.

"It's kind of like ice dancing," said Hool. "It's very popular. It's the Olympics of Irish dancing."

Many of the award-winning dancers, including Rothermel, Pat Quinn and Christina Ranum, began dancing as young as age 4. And most, like Doran, have a stage in their homes to practice on. Doran, a 14-year-old from Bloomfield Hills, came in fourth in the Midwest. Last year, the entire family went to Ireland to watch her compete.

High kickin': Irish dancers Tauri Rothermel (left) and Kelly Mrzyglod rehearse for the All-Ireland World Championships.

"Destination Ireland"
What: An evening of Irish dancing, music, and dance.
When: 7 p.m. Friday, March 10.
Where: Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy Road, Westland.
Tickets: \$25, available at the door. Call (734) 422-7635.

"It was big, it was exciting," said Doran, who began dancing at age 6. "I like seeing other people dance, but it takes a lot of effort."

Ward, 13, a Northville resident, competed at the world championships in Ireland for the first time last year.

"It was a bigger competition than I was used to," said Ward, who placed third in the Midwest.

Nancy Ward, Jimmy's mother, is excited about returning to Ireland. "A lot of it was like you would picture with the hills," said Nancy Ward. "They got a taste of what it was like without a McDonald's on every corner. This year even grandma and grandpa are going. They're in their 80s and have never been out of the country."

Hillary Schwarb is more enthusiastic about going than her mother. The Troy dancer placed ninth in the Midwest.

"My mom's afraid of flying and it's scary with the championships being in Belfast," said Schwarb. "It seems every other day there's a bombing."

John Mrzyglod, father of Kelly, worries as well about U.S. location.

"As long as nothing major flares up we're going," said John Mrzyglod. "The kids would be disappointed if we didn't. You can see that they all really love the dancing and that's the key if they're going to excel in it."

THEATER

Picasso meets Einstein for fun-filled evening

"Picasso at the Lapin Agile" through Sunday, March 5, Curtain 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday. **Where:** Performance Network, 408 W. Washington, Ann Arbor. **Tickets:** \$18. **Day:** Saturday, 8:15 Thursday and Sunday; \$3 discount for seniors for all performances. Call (734) 963-0681.

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Imagine the sparks that would have flown if Picasso and Einstein had met in a Parisian cabaret on the eve of achieving their successes in art and science.

Rob Sulewski thinks that premise is what makes the play "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" such an entertaining evening. A Plymouth actor and professor, Sulewski and the Performance Network cast present the one-act tribute to absurdity in Ann Arbor through March 5.

Written by comedian Steve Martin, the play debuted in 1993 at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. Located in the Montmartre section of Paris, the Lapin Agile was a favorite of artists such as Picasso. His oil "At the Lapin Agile" was

painted shortly after the imagined meeting, as was "Les Femmes d'Alger," the Cubist painting which laid the groundwork for the entire movement.

"I think it would have been a stormy friendship because they're very passionate about what they do," said Sulewski, who earned a doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Michigan. "Martin sets the play in a Bohemian bar in Paris in 1904. This was before Einstein's Theory of Relativity was published. He was a nobody working in the patent office. Picasso is somewhat known and working in his blue period. It's a good time, not very deep. It's what you'd expect of Steve Martin. It's kind of funny."

Dara Seitzman, a West Bloomfield resident



PHOTO BY PETER SMITH

Meeting of minds: Actors Dara Seitzman (left to right), Rob Sulewski, Carla Milarch, Paul Riopelle, and Dan Kenny spend an evening together at the Lapin Agile cafe.

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