

Mysteries

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Whether it's determining if a bronze is from the Renaissance period, the type of veneer used in a piece of furniture, or the conservation of textiles from an excavation, having a background in art history, art conservation and chemistry helps the staff unveil the mystery. Contemporary works present their own problems especially when artists use incompatible or unstable materials.

Since 1970, the Detroit Institute of Arts Conservation Lab has not only worked to authenticate a VanEyck painting and Etruscan lamps, but also lent their services to state museums and institutions including the Toledo and Indianapolis Art museums. They're currently working on an analysis project of Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village. The round, domed house is made of aluminum alloys.

"When we make an acquisition

we evaluate," said Heller. "My analogy is we're like a detective investigating a work of art, a doctor who does a diagnosis and then prescribes a correct course of treatment, and like an artist we must match color and discover the artist's intent."

Awaiting reinstallation

Nearby the Foppa, a vibrant painting of animals in a Franz Kline landscape awaits reinstallation. The work was to have traveled to Japan as part of a year-long exhibition of the Tannahill Collection but was determined "too fragile" to travel. The conservators are now in the final phases of treating about 100 paintings and drawings before their departure for the Far East.

The museum plans exhibitions three-five years in advance. They're currently organizing a Medici show, in collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago and Florence, Italy, for spring 2003, and preparing for the

installation of the American Federation of Arts exhibition of Degas' dancers in 2002-2003. In addition to these, the conservation staff is hard at work on a variety of smaller projects.

Gate gift

John Steel, associate curator of objects, is about to begin cleaning and treating a new gift, a set of four gates from the Guardian Building. The Art Deco cast metal objects will be installed in the American Galleries.

"We work as a team on the exhibit, set standards for light levels," said Heller. "For the recent 'Punch's Progress' exhibition, over half of the puppets needed treatment. Some of the strings were broken. There was flaking paint and fabrics that needed to be treated, and one had its wings sewn on upside down.

Thanks to the renovations, the puppets will now be stored horizontally in drawers instead of



Pulling strings: Carol Forsythe, conservator of sculpture and decorative arts, prepares puppets for the exhibition "Punches Progress."

control light, moisture, heat and storage conditions."

But one at which the DIA's conservation staff are expert.

Coach

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edition, while studying at Neighborhood Playhouse with Sanford Meisner. He's used it successfully at workshops he conducted in Reno, Salt Lake City and Miami.

"The repetition game is where they repeat back and forth. It enables people to connect," said Michaels. "That's the foundation of acting to make that connection with other people."

In addition to covering the foundations of acting, Michaels will offer tips for cold reading scripts at an audition. It's one of the most difficult problems actors encounter. Presenting the right head shot for the audition is another important element in

the process.

"New York and LA are completely different," said Michaels. "A head shot may look a little more theatrical in New York but it's totally different in LA. You have to know how to get the right head shot or you'll look like an amateur. You also want to look like that head shot when you walk in the room."

Michaels should know what it takes to land jobs in the entertainment industry. He spent seven years on the stages of New York before moving to LA where he's worked in films such as "The Lost World," "Air Force One," and "Texas Rangers"

scheduled for release in mid-April. His advice — if you want to do film, go to LA, and don't worry if you're resume doesn't show a lot of experience.

"One of the best things beginners have going for them is their lack of experience because they're always looking for actors who can also be discovered."

Nonetheless, writing the perfect resume is one of the subjects Michaels will talk about during the workshop. Students should come prepared to work on a monologue. That means memorizing at least half of it. Being prepared is one of the things Michaels preaches over and over. It's the one constant that has kept him on the job as McDermott's personal acting coach for the last five seasons. Michaels is up at 5 a.m. so he's on the set when the camera rolls at 7 a.m. Being late is a no-no if you want to work.

"We usually cover 7-8 pages a day," said Michaels. "On a big budget film they might do 1 to 12 pages. For us, it's really grueling but exciting at the same time. Every episode there's a different director. He might see it one way. Dylan might have another idea and I put my two cents in. That's the most difficult part of the process. My job is to get Dylan to be relaxed and then bounce lines back and forth to get the timing down."

McDermott believes the reason the two work so well together is

because of their long-standing friendship. He agrees with Michaels that "the hardest thing in the world is to audition."

"We went to acting school together," said McDermott who never had to audition for "The Practice." "We speak the same language. We're very good friends and I trust him. Acting application is the same as mine. He shows me how to get to where you want to go, how to attack a scene."

Bottom line — If you want to become a successful actor like McDermott, you have to pass the audition. Michaels' workshop covers all of the basics for landing a role plus how to study scenes after you do. Using material from "The Practice" and "Ally McBeal," Michaels will share "minor tricks" you can learn that make all the difference in the world.

"The most important thing is you have to be prepared," said Michaels. "When you get material, go in and work on it. And follow your heart. That goes for people of all ages. There's an enormous amount of adversity in this business but you can't let that stop you. And never tell anyone your age. They'll limit you."

"There's no big secret to becoming an actor. If you really feel in your heart you have something to say and work really hard, it's all here."

Expressions

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"The works are so much fun to see. It's why I spend 80 hours a week working for the symphony. It's the way you feel when you hear the music."

Washburn, now in her second full year as conductor, has programmed a musical time journey that will take listeners to a series of real and imaginary places. Along with envisioning pelicans and tortoises, the audience will experience the 1874 display of paintings and sketches by Victor Hartmann, portrayed in Musorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," and the mythology and classical style of Beethoven's "Prometheus Overture." Both were written long before Picker's 1983 "Encantadas."

Viva Verdi

If the romance and passion of the 1800s is still in your blood after hearing the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra, you won't want to miss the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan concert on Sunday, March 25. Presented by Canton Project Arts, the program features duets and arias that span the career of Giuseppe Verdi.

John Zaretti, president and co-founder of the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan, will talk about the music, life and times of the Italian composer beginning at 3:15 p.m. He gave a similar presentation at the Detroit Opera

House in January.

"It's an all-Verdi program because this year is the 100th anniversary of Verdi's death," said Zaretti, a Canton resident. "It's being commemorated all over the world. The Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan worked with the Michigan Opera Theatre to bring in acclaimed basso Michele Pertusi and the Parma Opera Ensemble from Verdi's hometown for a concert on Jan. 27, the day Verdi died."

Dino Valle, baritone; Dorothy Duensing, mezzo soprano; Jack Morris, tenor; Steven Henriksen, baritone and original cast member of "The Phantom of the Opera" in Toronto, as well as coloratura soprano Kimberly Swan, a Livonia resident, will sing selections ranging from the stirring "Erani" to Verdi's masterwork "Otello." Among the highlights are arias and duets from "Rigoletto," "Aida" and the "Requiem."

"It's an unusual program of stirring music that will provide listeners with an overview of how Verdi's music grew and why he is so loved to this day," said Zaretti.

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call arts reporter Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-2145. Send e-mail to: lchomin@ex.homecomm.net

Meadow Brook presents comedy

The Meadow Brook Theatre performance of "The Ride Down Mt. Morgan" marks the first time that playwright Arthur Miller has granted rights to the Broadway version since closing its run in 2000.

Miller rewrote the comedy for its U.S. debut at the Williamstown (Mass.) Theatre Festival. Patrick Stewart starred in the Broadway version when it opened in 1988.

David Regal, who portrayed Willie Loman in MBT's production of "Death of a Salesman" stars as Lyman Felt, a 50-something super-salesman and bigamist. Also appearing in the production are Tracy Copeland, Wendy Barrie-Wilson, Kelly Komen of Livonia, Carey Crim and Mark Rademacher.

Previews are at 8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, March 21-23. Opening night is 6 p.m. Saturday, March 24. The play runs through April 15. Tickets are \$21 to \$37.50 and are available at the Meadow Brook Theatre Box Office at Oakland University (248) 377-3800.

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