

ARTS & LEISURE

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32737 West River Road
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Noteworthy inside

Sunday August 19, 2001

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Cornish choir brings family, friends together

If you love choral music, the kind that's sung with vigor, Ken Allen says you won't want to miss Tuesday's performance by the Holman-Climax Male Voice Choir from Cornwall, England.

Allen and his wife Ruth could be the choir's biggest fans, more than likely because they're both of Cornish descent. In fact, their fathers were born in the same village in Cornwall. And Ruth's cousin's husband was a member of the choir for many years. The first time they heard them sing was in Massachusetts 20 years ago and then in 1983 on a trip to Cornwall.

"They don't sing quietly," said Ken Allen, a Livonia resident. "When they sing, they sing. It's their enthusiasm. They enjoy doing it so they sing out. They're a very good, vigorous male chorus."

The Allens, who've spent the last year planning the concert at Rosedale Gardens Presbyterian Church, think that a lot of Cornish people will attend the concert which features popular and classical choral music, folk songs from many traditions, especially Cornish, and sacred music with an emphasis on traditional Methodist hymns.

The 55-member choir, directed by Roger Wills, a graduate of the Royal School of Music in London, will be accompanied by Agnes Jane. "The relatives in England are writing to us here that they're coming," said Ruth. "There's a lot of Cornish in the area. St. Paul's Methodist Church in Highland Park was a gathering spot for Cornish years ago."

"There's also a lot of Cornish people in the UP because of the mining," added Ken. "Mining has gone on for hundreds of years in Cornwall. Some settled in the UP because of the mining, others in South Africa because of the diamond mines, others settled in Detroit during World War II because of the jobs here in the plants."

According to Agnes Jane, Baker, tour organizer and longtime choir member, "singing in Cornwall started back in the mists of time with miners and fishermen. The miners in particular had the opportunity to sing in large underground caverns, which themselves had good acoustics, that combined with a Celtic soul and a Methodist Chapel background was enough to set them singing."

Baker began singing around age 7 in church and school choirs. He became a member of the Holman-Climax Male Voice Choir in the early 1990s but the history of the group goes back more than 60 years.

The choir was formed by two workers at the Climax Rock Drill and Engineering Works after they saw the fires burning in Plymouth, some 70 miles away, after a World War II bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe. They planned to raise funds to alleviate the distress of some of the victims by holding concerts. More than six decades later, the choir has raised thousands of pounds for charities and churches. They perform around 20 concerts a year in chapels, churches and concert halls, and have recorded numerous records and tapes. Their current CD, *The Diamond Collection*, will be available at each of the five stops on their tour.

"Singing both with the choir and as a soloist, gives me considerable enjoyment; personal satisfaction in learning something new," said Baker who restores and sells AGA cast iron stoves for a living. "The camaraderie, and a sense of sharing with others is a tradition that is hundreds of years old and keeps me wanting more. Just wish I'd started 10 years earlier, when I first arrived in Cornwall."

Even though singing with the choir is his first love, Baker is especially

Please see EXPRESSIONS, C3

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Multimedia: Philip Glass and his ensemble will celebrate 25 years of film Oct. 31 to Nov. 3.

University
Musical Society
What: Opens its
2001-2002 season
with *Shockheaded
Peter*, a dark
comedy about the
naughty
children

When: 8 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday,

Sept. 12-14; 7

p.m. and midnight

Saturday-Sunday,

Sept. 15-16

Where: Michigan
Theater, 803 East
Liberty, Ann Arbor

Tickets: \$14, \$26,

416-1240, ext. 734

764-2538

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Ken Fischer was at a California airport, waiting for his flight to be called when we caught up to talk about the new University Musical Society season. You could hear the enthusiasm and pride in his voice.

At a time when classical music and theater are taking a backseat to pop culture, UMS is moving full speed ahead to present *Shockheaded Peter*, a dark comedy, Sept. 12-16. "I'm excited about UMS bucking this conventional wisdom to present less orchestral music because there's not an audience. We're presenting the San Francisco Symphony (Feb. 15-16). Touring is not dead and we're offering education programming to go with concerts like the Berlin Philharmonic."

"Many have said vocal recital is dead, not true. You just need an appropriate venue like the Mendelssohn Theater. We want to encourage that new generation of singers."

it relates to everything from the classic 1931 *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi to new shorts by contemporary filmmakers.

"For many series, there's a trend to do less classical music," said Fischer, president of UMS which opens its season with *Shockheaded Peter*, a dark comedy, Sept. 12-16. "I'm excited about UMS bucking this conventional wisdom to present less orchestral music because there's not an audience. We're presenting the San Francisco Symphony (Feb. 15-16). Touring is not dead and we're offering education programming to go with concerts like the Berlin Philharmonic."

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Nurturing talent

UMS strives to nurture new talent like dancers in Twyla Tharp's company and present established performers such as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra led by Wynton Marsalis (Oct. 14). Over its 123 year history, the UMS series expanded from a single concert by the UMS Choral Union to this season's 69 performances of 52 different productions and more than 150 educational events.

And the offerings are always changing. For the first time last year UMS added classical theater to the series. Performances of *The Gate* Theater of Dublin and the Royal Shake-

Classical:
Conductor
Claudio
Abbado and
the Berlin
Philharmonic
return to Ann
Arbor on Oct.
12 for an all
Beethoven
concert.



pare Company's *History Cycle* sold out. Spurred on by the reception, UMS is offering the Guthrie Theater's production of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness* and *Theatre de la Jeune Lune* in Molier's *Tartuffe*.

Celebrating diversity

"We're making an attempt to present outstanding classical theater, not Broadway," said Fischer who's also excited about the diversity of the season. "The UMS series celebrates the diversity of cultures - from the African American dance company of Renée Harris to Latin. For the Afro-Cuban Dance Party with Celia Cruz, the queen of Salsa, we're holding it at the EMU Convocation Center (April 6) so we can let people dance down on the floor."

Along with presenting a diversity of works, UMS works equally hard at promoting the creation of dance and music. Fischer is especially excited about the co-commissioned works on this year's series including William Bolcom's *From the Diary of Anne Hastings*, a work by Dorothy Donegan based on poetry by Joseph Brodsky, *A Solo Evening* with Laurie Anderson, and *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Peter Sparling Dance Company, Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union Nov. 9-11.

"We put on *Orfeo ed Euridice* in May

Please see UMS, C2



Tragedy and triumph: The Peter Sparling Dance Company join with the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and UMS Choral Union to present Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" Nov. 9-11.

Photo by Dave Sarno

AWARD

Local actor receives accolades for off Broadway role

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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David Burkha seems like he's on top of the world in spite of the fact that it's 10 in the morning. His latest off Broadway role keeps him up late most nights, but Burkha is enthusiastic and eager to talk about his career. And why shouldn't he?

Burkha has worked with Edward Albee and Woody Allen, and in July received the Actors Equity Association's Clarence Derwent Award for promising talent, on and off Broadway. The crystal trophy is given to one male and one female deemed the brightest new actor each theater season. Past winners include George C. Scott, Gene Hackman, James Woods, Christopher Walken, and Morgan Freeman.

Big honor

"It's a very big honor to receive this award and playing boy in Albee's *Play About the Baby* is a role of a lifetime," said Burkha, 26, a graduate of Plymouth Salem High School. "I'm very lucky to have come this far. It's beyond

anything I would have dreamed for my career."

Burkha's biggest challenge now is keeping his 260th performance as fresh as when he first played the role of boy at the Alley Theatre in Houston in spring. Since then, *Play About the Baby* opened off Broadway at The Century Theatre.

"Edward Albee's fantastic to work with," said Burkha. "You hear stories about how he's intimidating, how difficult he is. He's a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner. He always wanted us to ask questions. He was very soft spoken. When he does talk, it's pretty poignant."

"The biggest challenges were learning the language of Albee and the rhythm," Burkha continued. "It's almost like learning a whole concerto. It's very musical. Also, every single night by the end of the play I have to have tears streaming down. That's difficult but I just try to think about what's going on in my life. I learned to keep it fresh. It's a living breathing art form. Depending on how an actor feels that day they bring something new to it."



Off-Broadway: David Burkha is currently performing in Edward Albee's "Play About the Baby" at The Century Theatre in New York.

Opportunity knocks

Each day seems to bring some new offer of work into Burkha's life. Once the play closes on Sept. 1, he's planning to move to Los Angeles, to be around the film industry, an opportunity New York doesn't offer. Burkha fell in love with the big screen while working on Woody Allen's new movie with *Tee* Leoni. It's scheduled for release this fall.

"Woody Allen probably said 12 words to me," said Burkha. "He's another brilliant master. We were done in four takes. Hopefully, it will be in the movie and not end up on the cutting room floor."

Even if it does, Burkha surely won't let his dreams die. After all, he knew from his first production at age 12 that acting was in his future. And besides that he'd finally found a place to fit in.

Community of friends

"I was in *Peter Pan* at the Marquis Theatre in Northville," said Burkha. "It was my first paid professional job - \$15

Please see BURKHA, C3

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