

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Youth conductor comes full circle

The Livonia Youth Philharmonic of Michigan probably doesn't have a more enthusiastic cheerleader than Derek Weller. He began playing with the youth orchestra back in the 1970s and today serves as music director of the nonprofit organization as well as conductor of the Livonia Youth Philharmonic Orchestra.

Founded with the goal of furthering musical talent and knowledge, LYPM consists of four orchestral levels based on students' abilities. The Philharmonic Orchestra, the highest degree of achievement, requires young musicians to have a minimum of four years playing experience, including band and orchestra. But students with as little as six months of training are able to play in the Advanced and Concert Strings. However, all are required to take private music lessons and participate in their school music programs if they exist.

"The Livonia Youth Philharmonic gives students an opportunity to play in a group larger than a public school and was first founded by public school teachers who wanted to have an organization for serious students in public and private schools," said Weller, principal bass with the Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra.

Weller, who travels once a week to teach bass at the Interlochen Arts Academy, first became interested in music at around age 6. Weller was inspired by his vocal teacher at Rosedale Gardens Presbyterian Church, Shirley Harden. Her grandson Wesley Harden now plays under Weller's direction in the orchestra.

"The Livonia Youth Philharmonic is important because these students are the cream of the crop," said Weller. "They're serious to get up on a Saturday morning to start rehearsing at 9 a.m."

David Bernard is one of the dedicated LYPM members. The 14-year-old trumpet player is now in his fourth year with Livonia Youth Philharmonic of Michigan and currently plays with the Philharmonic Orchestra. He began playing trumpet in fifth grade because he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, both of whom are trumpeters.

Bernard's now a student at Holmes Middle School in Livonia. Although he lives in Livonia, it is not a requisite to join LYPM. Students from as far away as Wixom and Milford play with the youth music organization.

"I wanted somewhere else to play besides the school band, to enrich myself," said Bernard. "It's been great."

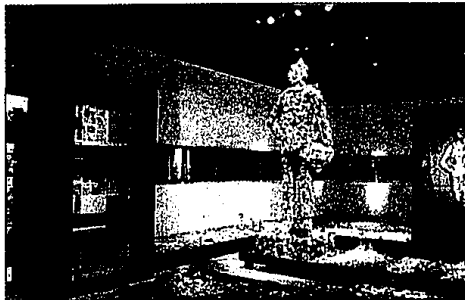
Please see EXPRESSIONS, C2



Young artists: Derek Weller leads a rehearsal for the Livonia Youth Philharmonic of Michigan.

Visions of DETROIT

Artists take on the city



Blackout: Mike Kelley revisits the days he spent growing up in Westland by creating an 11-foot sculpture of astronaut John Glenn after a work at his old high school.

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@ee.homecomm.net

Walking through the latest exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts brings to life the history of the city, literally. Joseph Weller encourages visitors to experience rowing down the river as French explorers did 300 years ago. Videos placed on the floor and wall ease onlookers into a state of tranquility as they watch the single car moving through the water.

Mike Kelley and the Destroy All Monsters Collective lure viewers into the Great Hall with murals of pop culture figures like John Sinclair and Johnny Ginger while Scott Hocking and Clinton Snider revisit the city's past through relics taken from abandoned buildings.

Artists Take on Detroit: Projects for the Tricentennial takes visitors on a roller coaster of emotion, especially those who have lived here many years. For those who have not, the journey reveals the dark days during the 1967 riots in a structure Tyree Guyton constructed on site as well as recent bright spots of people helping people in an installation Riches of Detroit by Deborah Grotfeld and Tricia Ward.

Organized by the museum, the exhibit features a total of 10 installations by 14 artists, all with their own views of the city. Visitors can get to know the artists previous to seeing the exhibit by going to an online catalog at www.dia.org.

"The title Artists Take on Detroit is kind of a pun," said MaryAnn Wilkinson, DIA curator of modern and contemporary art. "It's artists stepping up to the challenge. It's their opinions, attitudes, their take on the city."

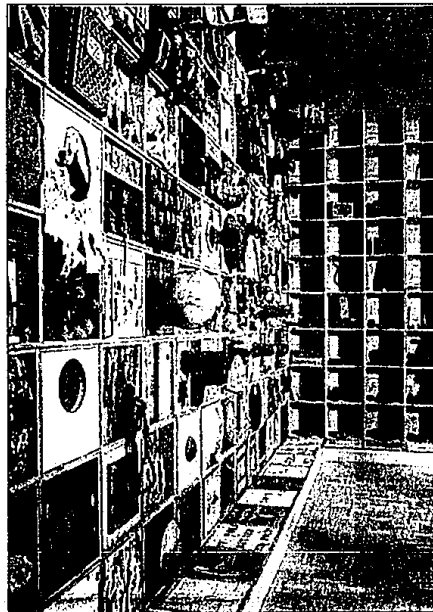
It seems like Tyree Guyton adds stuff everyday," said Wilkinson of Open House, a collection of posters, shoes and dolls housed in a see-through structure.

It's a very interesting piece, a departure from Tyree's work with the Heidelberg Project where he works with an existing structure. Here he worked with Youth Build Detroit to construct a frame for a house that was built in sections then put together in the museum.

Guyton incorporates sound into the structure. Visitors can listen to him talking about the history of the city while perusing posters from past political campaigns alongside one that reads "Got Ronch-er?" for an exterminating company. In addition to the July 19, 1967 issue of the Detroit Free Press displayed in the house, headlines tell of accomplishments such as man landing on the moon.

It's the most overly political piece he's ever done and the one that's sculpture," said Wilkinson. "Visitors are amazed. They spend a lot of time reading and listening to what's going on inside. That's the nature of installation art — to spend time."

Visitors could spend an entire day treasuring the



Relics: Scott Hocking and Clinton Snider collaborated on this installation for the DIA's Artists Take on Detroit: Projects for the Tricentennial.

images in Relics. At least that's what Hocking and Snider were hoping for when they first thought about assembling the 2-foot-square boxes lining the walls. Inside, found objects tell the story of a once vibrant city. Hocking spent several years living in Detroit while attending College for Creative Studies (formerly Center for Creative Studies). Both artists now have studios in Hamtramck where they assembled the boxes containing toy soldiers, duct work, old pop cans, and a plastic rocking horse.

"It's an archaeological reference to objects created by man — a building, painted wall, tools gathering rust for decades," said Hocking, a graduate of Stevenson High School in Livonia. "Back at CCS I started using found objects because that was my environment and I didn't have any money for art supplies. I began collecting objects in March by going to places where homeless wouldn't even venture, but I see the beauty in them."

Please See DIA, C4

OPERA

MOT brings Armenian tragedy to stage for second time

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@ee.homecomm.net

Gerald Papasian reminisces about the first time he directed Anoush when the Michigan Opera Theatre performed the Western world premiere in 1981. He's back in Detroit to stage the

Armenian tragedy, this time in Armenian, and that's no easy task even though he's working with the same conductor, Raffi Armenian.

The Michigan Opera Theatre production about two star-crossed

lovers continues to Sunday, Nov. 18, at the Detroit Opera House. Armenian soprano Hasmik Papian sings the title

role. Canadian soprano Aline Kutun alternates as Anoush.

Papian debuted with the American and Metropolitan Opera as Aida in 1999 under the direction of Plácido Domingo. Kutun recently sang the role of The Queen of the Night in the New York City Opera production of The Magic Flute.

"It's tough," said Papasian, whose parents live in Southfield. "Twenty years ago everyone knew exactly what they were saying because it was presented in English. Now it's more difficult. There is more time dedicated to explaining things."

"But for me being an Armenian, besides the fact I love opera and directing opera, I love being able to see the opera staged with the best singers."

In addition to presenting Anoush in Armenian, Papasian is working on an unfamiliar stage. Last time, the opera was performed at Music Hall when Michigan Opera Theatre was just a fledgling company.

"It's like a homecoming," said Papasian. "The challenge in doing it 20 years later is the world has changed, but it's very exciting, a new challenge. It's not a well-known opera apart

from Armenians who have traveled to Armenia, so there's the obstacle of presenting an opera not known but one I think the audience is familiar with. It's a classical story of how hatred destroys young innocent love, almost like Romeo and Juliet, where two families fight. Set in the Caucasus Mountains of Armenia, it's a sad tale. They have very rigid codes of honor. Anoush's brother and lover do a wrestling match. The lover wins the match and from that moment onward the brother swears revenge and eventually kills him. I'm trying to tell the story through the point of Anoush, almost like a flashback through the point of her madness."

The story is a favorite of Alice Haidoutian of Bloomfield Hills. She initiated the first production 20 years ago by inviting MOT director David DiChiera to breakfast. Haidoutian discovered Anoush while researching opera for a master's degree in music literature at University of Michigan School of Music. Before long she was playing a recording of Anoush for DiChiera, then accepting the responsibility of raising



Armenian tragedy: The Michigan Opera Theatre perform Anoush, a production about ill-fated lovers.

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