Competition *from page B1*

closet for things, shoes – everyone relates to them. Just like dogs, shoes reflect their owner."

Monument to labor

Chris Churchill's *Detroit Pants II* mirrors his view of Detroit. The Bloomfield Hills resident came up with the concept for the assemblage after driving through the inner city. Churchill originally hails from the West Coast. Pants soaked in tar, a broom burnt then preserved with bee's wax, the assemblage tells a story of Detroit's decimated labor force.

"I was driving around and seeing these burned out buildings and refuse and wondering what it must have been at one time," said Churchill, a student in the fiber program at Cranbrook Academy of Art. "It's a small humble monument to the male worker of a certain labor force."

Helene Lubin's work while much more traditional still has a message if ever so subtle. Painted in oil from a photograph she took last year in Paris, *The Red Umbrella* shows an outsider observing a scene, savoring a moment in time.

Lubin is currently working on paintings for a group show about celebration at the Janice Charach Epstein Gallery in May. Since graduating with master degree in medical illustration from the University of Michigan, Lubin's worked for pharmaceutical companies and medical malpractice attorneys.

"What appealed to me is it's this dreary scene with this bright red umbrella and a woman taking it all in," said Lubin, a Bloomfield Hills resident. "I identified with her being an observer. I enjoy painting street scenes and people. I like to paint. It helps to get my feelings out. That's something you can't do with medical illustration."

Lizbeth Spink is looking forward to installing the work by the 53 artists. Not to be missed are Armin Mersmann's exquisitely executed pencil drawings, Curt LaCrosse's gripping stoneware portraits of elderly men, and Boyd Quinn's 60- by 70-inch mixed media work with black paint raining over rows of flag dropped coffins. It will be up to viewers to decide what Kim Maguire is trying to say with *No Racing*, a 6-foot sculpture of steel head-shaped forms, or Marie Wohnlido with her piece which strings so many fiber thumbs together.

"I'm looking forward to installing the show because of the various media and styles and sizes," said Spink, associate director of exhibitions. "Some of them are very large. It makes for a dynamic show.

Ice *from page B1*

pure figure skating, there's a different show aimed just for them: *Disney On Ice Toy Story 2* at Joe Louis through Sunday, March 3.

Skating mania lingers in metro-Detroit as the Olympics end and both shows are expected to be complete or near sell-outs.

"The shows have been packed every night," said Australian skater and comedian Kristian Ryan, a Flapjax Member in *Toy Story 2*, while he was in Boston. "All of *Toy Story 2* is funny, but the Flapjax takes the comedy to a different level."

The nearly five minute Flapjax scene wasn't included in the motion picture of *Toy Story 2*, it was created just for the show on ice.

"The Flapjax try to show what can happen to your luggage at the airport," Ryan said. "It's acrobatic and funny."

Ryan, who was also in *Little Mermaid* on Ice and a chorus member of *Grease* on Ice, said the show reaches a wide range of audiences. The story, of course, is about the toys from Andy's room — Woody, Buzz, Hamm, Slinky, Rex and others who are sent into a panic when they learn Andy's mother is going to have a yard sale.

Target Stars on Ice

While the Disney show is lighthearted and heartwarming, *Target Stars on Ice* is more formal with figure skating champs showing their best skills in choreographed routines.

"We've created our own niche," Olympic champ and co-producer Scott Hamilton said. "We've broken new ground. We're building something."

For Kristi Yamaguchi the show is a chance to bond with fellow skaters.

"As professionals, we're expected to be on — no matter where the tour takes us. Having such incredible backup and support makes it easy to go out on the ice with a smile."

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE BLACK

Owning the Ice: *Four-time World champion Kurt Browning joins the team where portions of proceeds help provide housing for families whose children must undergo medical treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis.*

Skating in *Target Stars* is very different from competition, Ruh added. While each performer skates solo, they also come together and skate as a team. Ruh, who grew up in Paris and Tokyo, has been skating since she was five and said the show is a career highlight. At age 8 she had a full scholarship to the Royal Ballet in London, but gave it up to pursuit skating. She doesn't regret it.

"It's so much fun, the energy is fantastic. At the show, it's a time to invent new positions and try new things and the audience has as much fun as we do," Ruh said.

COMPARING THE SHOWS

■ DISNEY ON ICE/TOY STORY 2

Audience: Families of all ages including children as young as 3

Theme: A light-hearted story reproduction of the animated film *Toy Story 2* and includes an extra scene by the Flapjax comedy team.

When: Show continues through Sunday, March 3

Where: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit

Performances: 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Thursday Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m. Friday March 1, noon, 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 2, 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Sunday, March 3.

Tickets: $15, $18.50, $25, $35, (248) 645-6666 at www.ticketmaster.com. For show information visit www.disneyonice.com

Highlights: Disney fans will see popular characters like Buzz Lightyear, Woody, Wheezy the Penguin and Andy as they re-create *Toy Story 2* on ice .

■ TARGET STARS ON ICE

Audience: Families. Anyone with an interest in professional figure skating.

Theme: A show where Olympic and World skating champs can display their skills. Professional skaters will skate solo and in teams.

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, March 2

Where: Palace of Auburn Hills

Tickets: $37-$62

Highlights: The line-up is packed with skating stars including Kristi Yamaguchi, Katerina Witt, Tara Lipinski, Kurt Browning and Denis Petrov who strut their skating stuff to music styles like tango and rock n' roll.

Kids, creatures shine in Wizard of Oz

■ THEATER REVIEW

BY PAMELA JOY MCGOWAN

The Plymouth Theatre Guild/Spotlight Players' production of *The Wizard of Oz* is dedicated to the young at heart, but would not have been possible without those who are just plain young.

The musical stays pretty true to the classic movie we all know and love. But to keep it fresh, Director C.J. Nodus has thrown in a few pleasant surprises: a Lion King reference, taunting crows, singing trees and dancing Jitterbugs. The play is like a box of Cracker Jacks — it's all pretty good, but finding a surprise makes it even better.

Of course, all our favorites are there too. Dorothy Gale is played by the extremely talented Sarah Wiercioch. The 13-year-old performs as though she was born for the role, singing and acting so beautifully that even Judy Garland herself would have been impressed.

The Scarecrow (Dan Guberinich), Tin Man (Jim McNiff) and Cowardly Lion (Toby Booker) are brought to life in a manner keeping with the movie, but with more dimension and humor. These three actors have obviously done their Oz homework, or at least grew up watching it, like so many people. They make Dorothy's three friends very real and very lovable.

And what would Oz be without its witches. Cynthia Lewandowski successfully plays the Wicked Witch (and Miss Gulch). She has mastered the witch's blood-curdling cackle and she commands the stage whenever she appears to torment the innocent Dorothy. Colleen Meade drifts in and out as Glinda, the good witch of the North, and Dennis Brunzell plays a wonderful Wizard of Oz (and Professor Marvel).

But how does a director handle the challenge of putting a dog on stage for a live performance?..He casts Kelsey Tomei, 7, as the beloved Toto. And Kelsey does a remarkable job barking, running on all fours and hitting every cue.

There are many challenges in bringing a well-known movie to the stage, but the cast and crew seem to have overcome every one of them.

Tornadoes, the magical switching of the shoes, hot air balloons, and almost 30 children (most of which play multiple roles) appear to be no match for the talent involved in this production. Everything, including the costumes and set, were superbly done. And it cannot go without mentioning the hard-working orchestra, which tackled not only the wonderful music, but also the sound effects as well.

The Wizard of Oz is a timeless story for all ages. In the production by the Plymouth Theatre Guild/Spotlight Players, the characters that move up and down the aisles will draw you in and the music will spin you around. It makes for a terrific family night out, and you can finally learn what the *March of the Winkies* song means.

The play continues at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 1-2 at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of Northville Psychiatric Hospital, 41001 Seven Mile road, west of Haggerty. (248) 349-7110

Pamela Joy McGowan is a Livonia resident who writes about theater for the Observer & Eccentric.

Chomin *from page B1*

ipate in as professionals," said Wilkins who is buying a home in West Bloomfield in March. Wilkins currently is in his eighth season as resident conductor of The Florida Orchestra where he now lives.

"It's not only an entertainment choice but a career option. There's something about people doing things who look like you. It goes a long way in the hearts and minds of young kids. Adults, it reminds them that what was deemed a Western European tradition belongs to all of us."

Spiritual oratorio

In addition to Saint-Saens *Violin Concert No. 3* with White, Wilkins is especially looking forward to conducting Moore's composition based on the life of assassinated Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The spiritual oratorio was written in the late 1970s.

"It's a major work dedicated to Martin Luther King and calls for narrative, soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass, and chorus," said Wilkins. "The Brazeal Dennard Chorale will be joining us on stage."

It's fitting Dennard's chorus is on the program. Dennard is being honored at a gala celebration on Saturday for his dedication to the Classical Roots concerts he helped found. Moore will be honored with a lifetime achievement award. Daughter Mary Easter will receive the honor for the late composer.

The second annual gala celebration on Saturday will raise money for the DSO's African American educational and music programs. Last year's event helped fund the DSO's re-release of the *Black Composers Series* featuring the DSO, conducted by Paul Freeman, assistant conductor of the orchestra for many years. Originally recorded in 1974, the Sony CD features the music of Hale Smith, George Walker, Adolphus Hailstork, and Roque Curdero.

Goal

Newman hopes this year's gala will raise enough money to record works commissioned through the African American Composers Program founded by the DSO in 1989. The program assists African American composers financially and encourages them to write with the goal of performance. Composing is a solitary endeavor. Oftentimes composers become discouraged not knowing if their work will ever be played.

"The music of African Americans has been neglected in the orchestral world," said Daisy Newman, DSO director of education. "The Detroit Symphony Orchestra stepped out on a national platform to highlight the music during a subscription season. It was a commitment made by our board of directors as well as African Americans in the city who have an interest and the wherewithal to research the music and offer it to the orchestra management Rare pieces have found a hearing. Brazeal Dennard spearheaded the effort for researching the repertoire all through the years."

Along with commissioning and performing works by African Americans, the DSO offers a fellowship or internship for musicians. The recipient plays one to two years with the orchestra while auditioning all over the country with the goal of landing a position with a major orchestra. Seven of the eight fellows have become members of orchestras around the U.S. Two are principals.

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call Observer & Eccentric arts reporter Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-2145 or send e-mail to lchomin@oe.homecomm.net.

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