



GRAHAM BEAL

DIA director welcomes visitors

When I arrived here to take the position of Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts people asked me, "What made you move from Los Angeles to Detroit?" Two-and-a-half years later I'm still fielding the same question, still usually asked with the same tinge of incredulity that I should have left all that sun and Hollywood style for an environment simultaneously colder and less "cool."

The answer is easy: It was the DIA itself and, most particularly, the extraordinary collection it houses. As I talk to groups and individuals around the region I regularly encounter astonishment at my assertion that the DIA has one of the finest art collections in the country—arguably in the top half dozen. The strength and depth of our holdings in African, American, and European art especially are amazing, providing a regional resource that is unmatched in all but a few cities across the country. This is, of course, not "news" at least, not in any headline grabbing sense. But when a wealthy U.S. museum pays tens of millions of dollars for a single painting by Van Gogh, we can take quiet pleasure in the knowledge that the DIA already has four—and that's just one example

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of many I could give.

Irreplaceable resource

Simply put, the DIA's collection is the product of many decades of endeavor and commitment; an irreplaceable resource that no amount of money can reproduce today. And, our collection is not a treasure unto itself. Many art museums around the world regularly seek to borrow artworks from the DIA. This, in turn, gives us a kind of informal quid pro quo that allows us to request works from them and present such blockbuster exhibitions as the 2000 Van Gogh: Face to Face or the Degas and the Dance opening this fall.

Magnificent though the collection is, it is far from the complete DIA story. I was also motivated to come here to see what could be done about making the institution more accessible to a broader public—to find ways to make the museum a more vital part of the region's fabric. No longer essentially a passive repository for like-minded people to visit from time to time, art museums in America have been exploring ways to involve themselves with a wide range of related activities—from engagement with school curricula to the presentation of various kinds of music. In 2000 the DIA opened a special studio in Pontiac so that students can regularly participate in our Art Discovery program. Last October we began opening an hour earlier, at 10 a.m. instead of 11

Please see DIRECTOR, B6

SERIOUS ABOUT

DANCE

Acclaimed American choreographer is making a comeback

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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No light-hearted conversation for Twyla Tharp when it comes to dance. She's serious about her work. Now beginning her sixth decade of life, Tharp's built a legacy as a choreographer in the world of modern dance. But she doesn't spend time worrying about being a legend. Tharp says, "making dance is her problem."

She works out five to six days a week in a gym, and then at the barre before the six members of her dance company arrive for rehearsal.

And she's not about to slow down. Twyla Tharp Dance will perform Saturday-Sunday, March 23-24 at the Power Center for the Performing Arts in Ann Arbor, the final stop of a 25-city national and international tour. The troupe has begun rehearsing for a Broadway show opening this fall in New York. Set to the music of Billy Joel, the production is "a huge undertaking," said Tharp. She's also working on a book, *The Creative Habit*, due out this fall.

"It's in defense of the working artist," said Tharp in a phone interview from New York. "Art is not lightning bolts from the heavens."

Tharp should know. It's taken her nearly 35 years to choreograph more than 125 dances, premiered in the



Eclectic repertoire: Twyla Tharp Dance company performs one of their recent works.

U.S., Europe and Australia. Asked to describe her choreography, Tharp says, "It's eclectic and what I feel is appropriate for a piece."

Program

Two vastly different works—Mozart *Clarinet Quintet K. 581* and *Surfer at the River Styx*—are on the Ann Arbor program. Tharp premiered both works at the American Dance Festival in North Carolina in the summer of 2000. The performance marked a comeback for Tharp's dance company which she directed from the mid-1960s to 1988.

Tharp is brief when mentioning she joined her company with American Ballet Theatre in 1988. "When things didn't work out" she did freelance choreography. Tharp's created dances for the Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, London's Royal Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre. She re-established Twyla Tharp Dance with veteran dancers Alexander Brady,

Twyla Tharp Dance

What: University Musical Society series spotlights recent work by the renowned American choreographer

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, March 23, and 3 p.m. Sunday, March 24
Where: Power Center for the Performing Arts, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor

Tickets: \$20-\$40, call (734) 764-2538

Please see THARP, B7



Twyla Tharp

THEATER

Blithe Spirit

What: Schoolcraft College Theatre presents Noel Coward's comedy

When: 6:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 22-23, March 29-30 (dinner theater), and 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 5-6 (performance only)

Where: Liberal Arts Theatre on campus, 18600 Hagerty, between Six and Seven Mile roads, Livonia

Tickets: \$21 for dinner theater, \$10 performance only, call (734) 462-4400, Ext. 5457

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Jim Hartman warns actors before beginning a Wednesday night rehearsal to keep the energy up. The dialogue in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* moves at a fast pace.

Even though Hartman edited the farce for length, the cast needs to go through the entire three-acts in the next hour and 46-minutes. Only a few rehearsals remain before *Blithe Spirit* opens Friday, March 22, in the Liberal Arts Theatre on campus. A couple of spirits add to the

fun and difficulty of producing the play.

"It moves very fast, lots of humor, lots of humorous movement," said Hartman director of the theater program at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. "Then there's the challenge of trying to do a play with spirits. Charles Condomine's first wife comes back after a séance and the husband can only hear and see her."

"We're in the seventh week of rehearsals and I still find myself chuckling after listening to the lines. It's hysterical and very well written. Noel Coward writes so beautifully. It's a wonderful farce or exaggerated comedy."

To hold the interest of audiences, however, Hartman knew he would have to edit the script written in the early 1940s. The first time he staged the play it ran almost three hours.

"I edited the work to remove anything not essential to the main plot, references to era," said Hartman. "I felt for contemporary audiences it would be more enjoyable to present a shortened version."

"It's a small cast and community people are leads," said Hartman. "The husband and wife who play the leads are

Please see THEATER, B6

Schoolcraft Theatre conjures up Noel Coward farce



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACKFIELD

Scared silly: Linda Pelliccioni, Carol Lipinski and Sabrina Sanchez rehearse a scene from Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit."