



*Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times*  
**MORE THAN MUSIC...** A colleague has called him one of Westfield's "Most Eligible Bachelors," but Scotch Plains resident Trent Johnson feels that being a scuba diver, composer and music director just make him a regular guy.

## Johnson Still Strikes Common Chord With His Audiences

By SUSAN M. DOUGHERTY  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

**SCOTCH PLAINS** — An artist stares at the pristine, white canvas. A writer sits in front of the blank computer screen in solitary contemplation. What gives them inspiration, impetus and drive to create?

For Trent Johnson, Director of Music and Arts and organist at the

reach ministry and "a gift to the community."

The scheduled concerts are free and open to the public and offer a wide range of musical tastes.

"Our congregation has diverse taste, so our music reflects that." He refers specifically to the Sunday services, concert series, as well as the special musical presentations which last year included "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

"We could never do all of the musical things we do around this church if it weren't for the volunteers who make it possible," he said. "For example, we couldn't do our Friday Night Concert Series without Jack Panosh who is our volunteer in charge of PR."

"Working here at this church, there are so many behind the scenes people. I seem to get the credit, but it is a church family effort," he said.

Johnson's church job is only a part of the musical work he has undertaken for the last 10 years in this town. Simultaneously, he is Director of the Oratorio Singers and Orchestra in Westfield. Although they meet in the church's choir room, the group is an autonomous one that raises its own funds to pay the orchestra, which is made up of members of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and freelance instrumentalists.

The choir itself is composed of many of the United Methodist Church's adult choir members, others from the community who also volunteer their time for the concert they perform annually, and a few paid soloists. The main focus is a major concert in March, during Lenten season.

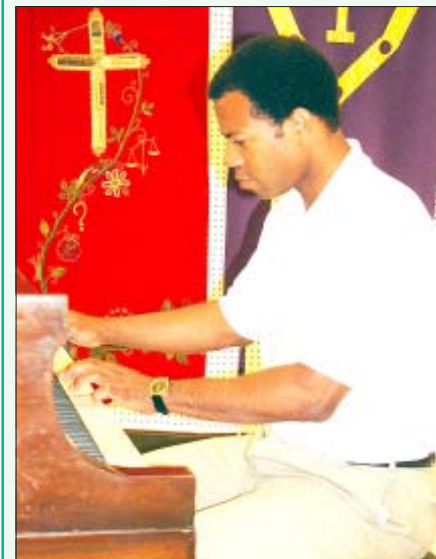
"We've been performing for 20 years," he said, although he has been holding the baton for only half of that time. He proudly displays the massive group shots of 100 or more choir members that adorn the choir room.

"Lots of people come together — it's a collaborative effort between so many people with Sally Girdon pulling it all together," he said. "She is tremendous to work with."

Johnson, the man, is just as interesting as the composer, organist, and director. Raised as an "Army Brat," until he was 13, he lived overseas while growing up, specifically in Greece for a few years, and all over the United States. That's when his family settled down in the Baltimore area. And that's when Johnson first studied the piano.

"I really started music very late," he said, "but at age 15 I knew I wanted to make music my career," he told *The Leader/The Times*.

He didn't have a typical high school experience. He was an out-



*Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader/The Times*  
**PIANO MAN...** Composing for piano and many other instruments is a passion for Director of Music and Arts at the United Methodist Church of Westfield, Trent Johnson.

United Methodist Church of Westfield, the creative process of composing music is very personal.

"That process of creation is the most stimulating aspect of producing music," Johnson told *The Westfield Leader and The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*.

"Composition has really gripped me and I often find myself working late into the night," he said. "You get an idea of what the movement might be — a combination of hearing things in your ear, seeing colors for harmony, and knowing what the instruments can or can't do. Then you put them together in your own individual way."

It sounds simple when Johnson explains it. Maybe that's because he has been creating orchestral pieces and works for various instruments for well over 10 years. He has written works for piano, organ, chorus, string orchestra, chamber music and orchestral music.

This Scotch Plains resident and a 2001 and 2002 recipient of *Meet the Composer Grants*, admits to studying orchestral scores for fun.

His most recent composition, a *Saxophone Quartet*, will be premiered at the Westfield church's Friday Night Concert Series 2003 in October.

Many people in Westfield know Johnson in a slightly different venue than that of composer. Having served at the United Methodist Church for over 10 years, he is known for his directorial work with children and adult choirs, ensembles and instrumentalists. He oversees the Friday Night Concert Series that he feels is an out-

# Arts & Entertainment



## Get Outta The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

**The Town Book Store of Westfield** is back for the season with authors for you to meet. On Saturday, September 6, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lauren Baratz-Logsted will promote her new novel, "The Thin Pink Line," an outrageous comic tale involving a single, non-pregnant woman. Then, from 2 to 4 p.m., meet Carrie Kitz, author of the children's book, "We See the Moon." It's a great tool for families who have adopted a child. If you can't come, call and reserve a signed copy of either. For more information, call (908) 233-3535.

"Charlotte's Butterfly Walk" is a new garden at Summit's Reeves-Reed Arboretum, and it officially opens on Saturday, September 6, at 10 a.m. Learn how to attract butterflies to your own garden. That is, of course, unless you have a cat, who, like one of mine, likes to jump four feet straight up into the air to try to capture them. Also that day, Monarch butterflies raised at the arboretum will be tagged for their migration to Mexico and released into the new garden. The happenings are free. For more information, call (908) 273-8787.

The Jewish Community Center of Middlesex County will hold its annual *Carnival* at 1775 Oak Tree Road, Edison. Take the kids for rides, games, food, and more fun than you can stand. It's on through Sunday, September 7, and don't even think about showing up on Friday. For information, call (732) 494-3232, extension no. 613.

You've gotta go to at least one Italian Festival each year, and why not *Hoboken's extreme Italian weekend*? The wide variety of entertainment begins tonight with the Nerds (and more) and ends on Sunday, the 7th. Friday night's soulful tributes to Barry White and Aretha Franklin should have you crooning, while Saturday is filled with pasta, religious ceremonies, and fireworks. It ends with a grape-stomp contest, a raffle drawing, and even more entertainment on Sunday. If you're driving there, remember River Street is now Sinatra Drive. See what I mean?

Belvidere's *16th Annual Victorian Days* celebration will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 6, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on the 7th, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Activities will include house tours, garden parties, live entertainment, antique, craft and food vendors, the Gentlemen's Picnic Auction, Ladies' Teas, a vintage era baseball game, antique/vintage car show, vintage fashion shows, and Victorian era demonstrations. You will delight in strolling through a quaint town that evokes memories of a bygone era. For directions, log onto <http://www.victorianbelvidere.com/directions.htm>.

## Artists Invited To Participate In Show, Sale

**WESTFIELD** — The Westfield Art Association (WAA) has invited area artists to participate in the "Art in Westfield" Side-walk Art Show and Sale presented by the WAA, and co-sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation and the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

The show will be held on Saturday, October 11, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with an October 18 raindate, on the sidewalks in downtown Westfield.

Artists will display their original fine art of paintings, sculpture, graphics and photography in a wide range of media including oil, watercolor, pencil, stone, glass, metal, pen and ink, acrylics and hand pulled prints. Prizes over \$1,500 will be awarded. For a prospectus, call (908) 789-9444, (908) 233 2021 or e-mail the Westfield Art Association at [waa@westfieldnj.com](mailto:waa@westfieldnj.com).

### Coming Soon:

- Catching up with artists Mary Paynter, and Peter and Mary Hovance.
- Pen & Ink continues.
- Paper Mill's *Misbehavior*

## Chester's Gallery

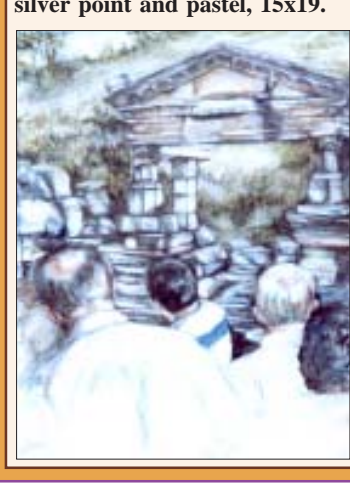
All Photos Courtesy of Roseann Chester



"Brother," Roseann Chester, pastel, 11x14.



"From of Old," Roseann Chester, silver point and pastel, 15x19.



## Support of WAA, Husband Keeps Chester's Art Fresh

By MARYLOU MORANO  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

**WESTFIELD** — A class trip to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City when she was 10 years old is still inspiring the artwork of Edison resident and Westfield Art Association (WAA) member, Roseanne Chester.

Now a days, however, it is her artistic rendition of a more recent vacation that is garnishing her awards.

Chester won Honorable Mention at this year's WAA 2003 SALON Exhibition for her colored pencil creation, "Start of Vacation." The piece is what Chester calls a "vacation portrait" and depicts Chester's husband, Paul, her brother, and a friend on vacation in the Bahamas.

The self-taught artist began exhibiting her work two years ago after joining the WAA.

In addition to vacation scenes, Chester also creates portraits of people and animals. She works in watercolors, mixed media, oil paint and pastels when creating her art.

"I enjoy drawing more so than painting. I love to work with colored pencils because they blend so well. They also work well as a base," she explained, adding that she sometimes she applies watercolors, pastels or oil paint over the colored

pencil base.

Born in Pennsylvania, Chester came to New Jersey as a child. She was raised in Elizabeth, where she applied the techniques learned in her high school elective art classes to creating her own artistic style.

Chester's studio is a guest bedroom in her husband's family home where she and Paul have lived for 30 years.

Currently, she is at work on a pastel, silver point and colored pencil piece started a while ago, and inspired by a tourist scene in Ephesus, Turkey. "I prefer to work in the evenings," she said, noting that she finds this time "easier to paint."



Roseann Chester of Edison, above, is a multi-media artist with multi-faceted interests. Pictured, above, the Westfield Art Association member shows off one of her pieces.

In addition to art, Chester crochets blankets, which she donates to agencies that help underprivileged babies. She also enjoys gardening.

Calling her fellow artist members of the WAA "a wonderful group," Chester also credits her artistic success to the emotional support she receives of her friends and family.

Although he is not an artist, Chester's husband attends all of the WAA meetings.

"It's really nice to have this type of backing," said Chester.



## Pen & Ink:

With Michelle Le Poidevin

### Burning Bush in GQ Issue Scalds Religious, Non-Believers Alike

By MICHELLE H. LE POIDEVIN  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

Michael Elins is an ordinary guy. There is no valid reason folks should run at him with flaming torches because he superimposed President George W. Bush's head inside of the Sacred Heart of Jesus image for *GQ* magazine. He was only doing his job and obeying a directive from magazine executives who gave him the venerated image and commissioned him to do what he does best — flawlessly convert computer pixels into painted masterpieces.

Should the beef I have with Elins, the suits at *GQ* or was I being oversensitive? I certainly considered the article, "George W.'s Personal Jesus" by Guy Lawson to be brilliantly written, well researched and balanced. It was the image of Bush as Jesus that stuck in my craw. They could have placed Jerry Falwell or the Pope's head in there and I would still have steam coming out of my ears. Handling the magazine page made my fingers tingle with disgust, like when I was forced to write a book report on boa constrictors and had to use an encyclopedia with a color photo of the snake with its fangs seemingly protruding from the page.

So, part of me wanted to hear Elins try to wiggle himself out of an imaginary paper bag, while the artist in me struggled to understand that he was just doing his job — surviving as an artist — carrying out an assignment. In other words, don't shoot the messenger.

"Yes, I did anticipate the backlash," Elins told me in a phone interview last Friday. He had just returned from vacation and didn't want "to put his foot in his mouth." Before insisting that he must phone the powers-that-be at *GQ* for permission to agree to the interview, he said he was "very open to speaking with me" and believed strongly in the freedom of speech and expression.

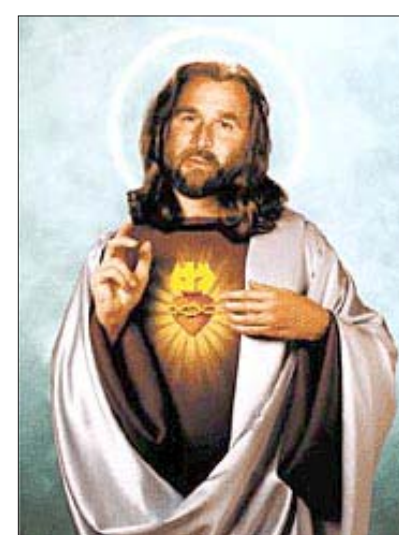
When he phoned back, one-half hour after trying to contact the magazine reps, which had flown the coop for the Labor Day weekend, Elins had the courtesy to indulge my questions, which I posed as a journalist seeking both sides of a story, and, later off the record as a Roman Catholic insulted by his photo illustration.

"This was not a personal thing for me," Elins informed when asked if he hesitated when weighing the sacredness of the image. "When I'm given an assignment, I do the best job that I can." The artist added that *GQ* proffered the Jesus image and "he went from there." So, that answered my question about why he didn't opt for a different background or image to paint Bush as a religious figure.

Consider the playful barbing done in parodies and political cartoons, Elins gently suggested. What was the difference between what he had done with the Sacred Heart image and Bush, Jr.?

For this answer, I turned to my friend in Boston, who has been a painter and craftsperson for several years. It is the weight of the image, she said, that an artist must seriously consider before using it as a backdrop. These days, artists use images like the Sacred Heart or other "shells" and backgrounds as freely as clipart swiped off of the Internet,

*Continued on Page 17*



**WHERE THE BLAME LIES...** Blame the image-giver, not the image-maker? Photo illustrator Michael Elins expected the backlash from the image he generated for the September issue of *GQ* magazine, pictured above.

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