

## CONCEPTS &amp; THOUGHT



SIGNATURE MOMENT...On Franklin Elementary School's Visiting Author Day, author Elizabeth Raum autographs a copy of her Roger Williams biography for third grader Matt Ensin.

## Author Elizabeth Raum Visits Franklin Elementary School

WESTFIELD - Elizabeth Raum, author of eight biographies in the "American Lives Series" for young readers, spent February 15 and 16 visiting students at Franklin Elementary School in Westfield.

During both Visiting Author Days, which are sponsored each year by the Franklin Parent Teacher Organization, Ms. Raum spoke about the process of researching and writing a biography and held question and answer sessions with small assemblies of third, fourth and fifth grade students in the school library.

Prior to Ms. Raum's visit Franklin School librarian Debra Stern had introduced the author's books to the students. She also helped them define and understand what is typically

included in a biography.

Ms. Raum presented slides with historical photos and drawings, which emphasized a recurring theme in some of her books, "Women Who Changed America." The students participated in interactive discussions about Jane Addams, Clara Barton and Alice Paul, whose biographies Ms. Raum has written.

Following each presentation, Ms. Raum autographed copies of her books that the children had purchased. She also spent her lunch hours talking with groups of students specially selected from their classrooms to meet with her.

The Franklin Parent Teacher Organization has planned another Visiting Author Day for the spring.

## Union County to Participate In Magnet School Program

COUNTY - The Union County Magnet High School, in collaboration with the Union County Department of Engineering and Public Works, will provide students an opportunity to learn occupational skills

### Hessemer, Salisbury Named to Dean's List

SCOTCH PLAINS - Scotch Plains residents Allison Hessemer and Allyson Salisbury have been named to the dean's list for the fall 2004 semester at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa.

Allison, a junior elementary education major, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Hessemer. Allyson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Salisbury, is a freshman environmental science major.

### Local Students Spend Spring Term Overseas

WESTFIELD - Westfield residents Pamela Fried and Steve Krakauer, as well as Berkeley Heights students Jacob Di Iorio, Michelle Mumick, Silvia Munoz and Storey Pizzo, are spending the spring 2005 semester studying overseas through Syracuse University's (SU) Division of International Programs Abroad.

Pamela, a junior at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., is participating in the Madrid program.

A junior at SU's College of Arts and Sciences and S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Steve is participating in the London program.

Jacob, a junior at SU's Martin J. Whitman School of Management, is participating in the London program. Michelle, a junior at SU's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, is participating in the London program. Silvia, a junior at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa., is participating in the Madrid program. Storey, a junior at SU's Martin J. Whitman School of Management, is participating in the London program.



ICERS...The Duck Class from Wesley Hall Nursery School recently visited Bovella's Pastery Shop in Westfield for a tour of the shop, kitchen and storeroom. The pupils also decorated a cake with Duck Class father Ralph Bencivenga, which they ate during snack-time. Pictured, above, Mr. Bencivenga and Matthew Grossman put the finishing touches on their special cake.



## POPCORN™ Monkeying Around With the Oscars

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER

Folks who frequent this space may have become familiar with Muffin, the Yorkshire terrier who annually helped me predict the Academy Award winners. Did I say help me? Correction. It was more like he gave me the answers. And over the years, he did pretty well. Like the greats in any field of endeavor, he made it look easy.

Of course he inevitably teased me each year, informing that this time he wasn't going to bail me out. I'd just have to figure them out myself. It was his version of stealing a slipper and refusing to relinquish it, a dog-like pastime he never really did much relish.

Nope. It was the thrust and parry of verbal exchange that excited Muffin. And thus, picking the Oscars not only gave him ample opportunity to show his ken as regards the spoken word, but also served as an occasion to render one's master with a humbling, needed or not. Most of all, it was an opportunity for us to bond.

Come this time of the year, we stayed up late, had Chinese take-out and went over the nominations. He loved General Tso's chicken. No midnight Oscar handicapping skull session was complete without it. And while he admonished me for not eating the broccoli, he was glad to wolf mine down.

Alas, as the dedicative subtitle here implies, Muffin went to that bottomless dog food bowl in the sky only a couple months after supplying his predictions for the 76th Academy Awards. Not having someone to crib the Oscar winners from is the smallest part of my loss. He was a gentleman, a scholar, a raconteur and my favorite gourmet. But perhaps his most cherished accolade, he was a good boy.

But oh how he chortled at the Oscar picking process. How he made fun of the contorting rationalizations that these-called pundits went through in deciding their choices.

And thus I thought of how he'd probably poke his nose this year before tendering his picks for the 77th Academy Awards. It might go something like this: "Mike...follow this rationalization for the Achievement in Directing award. Clint Eastwood (*Million Dollar Baby*) has already won. And they won't give it to Alexander Payne for *Sideways* because it's a small, practically artsy movie. But the real reason is that they owe Martin Scorsese big time. And they feel guilty, like when they gave it to Paul Newman for *The Color of Money*. They were really rewarding him for *The Hustler*. They should have given it to Scorsese for *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*, and probably a couple of others. Now, they want to sleep in good conscience. So they'll give it to him for *The Aviator*."

More than once Muffin opined, "Such are the politics we surmise go into the electing. The truth is probably even stranger. Yet maybe it's because we are moviegoers. We expect a just and happy ending, even in our award ceremonies, no matter how twisted the logic."

As related in Muffin's will, he made it clear that, in his absence, he didn't want the falling into the above-exemplified quagmire of speculation. The specific passage reads as follows: "Now, insofar as the Oscars are concerned, I know what a source of consternation they've always been for you. And I don't want you chasing your tail (ha, ha) in anguish every year. 'Til not. It's not worth it. Next to cats, picking the Oscars is life's greatest absurdity."

"However, since I'm certain you'll carry on anyway, I want you to have help. Hence I refer you to the hypothesis of the monkeys, which suggests that if you put one hundred monkeys in a room with 100 typewriters, one of them is bound to write the Great American Novel. Well, if they can do that, making the Oscar picks should be easy. So get 100 monkeys."

Unfortunately, gathering 100 monkeys, even for just a short time, isn't that easy. Some zookeepers were suspect: "You want them for what?" Circus asked less questions, but more money. And then, getting a suitably sized room for 100 monkeys is no simple task either. As one hotel manager dourly instructed: "Listen buddy, no one's going to let you put 100 monkeys in a banquet room."

It became expensive. And I wasn't sure if this was how Muffin wanted some of his fortunes spent. But resolved to see it through, in a tough section of town I purchased an abandoned warehouse with possibilities. This then led to the permit process. Looking for a little help, I sought out a local politician. His response? "Hey...I'd really like to help you out. You seem like a nice guy. Give me a call when monkeys get the vote, pal."

Trudging on, at long last the place was made habitable, including several code requirements, like adequate off-street parking, which didn't seem to make any sense. And, on January 26, just one day after the nominations were announced, the monkeys began arriving. I was gratified to see that a few of them used the parking facilities

for their unicyles. Following orientation and a banana split luncheon, each monkey was shown to his or her computer. And for the most part, they set about their work. But then on the second day, the first inkling of trouble arose.

A committee of three approached me in the cafeteria. They said that while they were thankful I hadn't stuck to the strict letter of the hypothesis and supplied them with computers instead of typewriters, they felt the regular PCs bound them to their desks. They suggested that laptops with wireless Internet connections might afford the sort of freedom they needed to explore the full length and breadth of their creativity. Otherwise, one subtly hinted, they might see the need to organize their fellow monkeys.

The laptops were purchased. But it didn't matter. They unionized anyway and shortly thereafter bargained for a better health plan, a shorter workweek, and the complete creative rights to any and all novels that might result from their random keystrokes.

A few sued, saying that expecting them to pick Oscar winners in less than one month was not only demeaning, but specifically violated rights provided them in the Law of the Jungle. Both sides brought in lawyers. The monkeys had some real sharks.

I found myself in negotiations at least 10 hours a day. And on and on it would have gone had it not been for changes in their Ape Assurance (their form of Social Security) that the monkeys themselves had engineered. Seeking to realize a greater return on their money, the monkeys demanded that they have the right to make and direct their own investments instead of accepting a perhaps lower but guaranteed amount. Which not only took them away from their keyboards most of the day as they gambled and schmoozed with stockbrokers, but also bankrupted them. A pall likened to Black Friday spread over the warehouse.

Animal behaviorists were brought in as grief counselors. And slowly but surely all the monkeys were repatriated to their former places of occupation and residence.

Surveying the damage, I pondered the experiment. Did it fail? Most of the computers were missing, or broken, or appeared as if they had never been turned on. But then, cleaning up banana peels, I heard a stirring in one of the rooms. It was Wentworth, a rather quiet, studious sort I hadn't gotten to know. "Just checking that I didn't leave anything behind before heading back to the institute," the bespectacled monkey informed. "Oh...maybe you could use these," he offered politely whilst handing me a sheet of paper. "It's my picks."

I said thanks. And as I began to peruse the document, he leaned over and enthusiastically elaborated: "See...in the Best Actress category, Hilary Swank was great in *Million Dollar Baby*, however she's already won an Oscar. And then who knows who either Imelda Staunton (*Vera Drake*) or Catalina Sandino Moreno (*Maria Full of Grace*) is? So Mike, the way I figure it, it's a shoo-in that..."

Following are Wentworth's picks: Best Picture, *The Aviator*; Best Director, Martin Scorsese for *The Aviator*; Best Actress, Annette Bening in *Being Julia*; Best Actor, Jamie Foxx in *Ray*; Best Supporting Actress, Laura Linney in *Kinsey*; Best Supporting Actor, Thomas Haden Church in *Sideways*; Best Foreign Language Film, *The Sea Inside*, Spain; Best Animated Feature, *The Incredibles*; Best Original Song, "Learn to Be Lonely," from *The Phantom of the Opera*; Best Original Screenplay, Charlie Kaufman for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; Best Adapted Screenplay, Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor for *Sideways*; Best Documentary Feature, *Born into Brothels*; Best Original Score, James Newton Howard for *The Village*; Best Cinematography, Robert Richardson for *The Aviator*; Best Visual Effects, *Spider-Man 2*; Best Art Direction, *The Phantom of the Opera*; Best Costume Design, *The Aviator*; Best Editing, Paul Hirsch for *Ray*; Best Makeup, *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*; Best Animated Short Film, *Gopher Broke*; Best Live Action Short Film, *7:35 in the Morning*; Best Documentary Short Subject, *Sister Rose's Passion*; Best Sound Editing, *The Incredibles*; and Best Sound Mixing, *Ray*.

## Divya Sood

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then by all means, find a way to get it done by yourself. Persistence is what separates someone who makes it from someone who doesn't."

"Maya" is available at Barnes and Noble, Borders and most other retail stores. You may also purchase the novel online at [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.borders.com](http://www.borders.com).

For more information on the author, please visit [www.divyasood.com](http://www.divyasood.com).

## 'Intersections' March Exhibit Slated at Watchung Arts Center

WATCHUNG - The Watchung Arts Center, located at 18 Stirling Road, in Watchung will present "Intersections," the unique collaboration between two highly regarded regional photographers, from Tuesday, March 1, to Wednesday, March 30.

A special reception will be held on Sunday, March 13, from 1 to 4 p.m. James Ting will exhibit his geometric and sometimes abstract images, while Tim Lee will offer his personal expressions in this presentation.

"As far back as I can recall, geometric structure has always intrigued me," said Mr. Ting. "I remember as a student, working on school magazines, instead of taking the usual action sports shots, I would often return with abstract black and white images such as a basketball hoop in total silhouette, juxtaposed with a metal backboard against a bright white sky."

Mr. Ting said the goal of his work is

"to capture unassuming and ordinary scenes and transform them into absorbing images via the endless relationships played out among the myriad shapes, lines, planes and very importantly, space (or void)."

A New York-based photographer, whose career has spanned 15 years, Mr. Lee's efforts have covered the streets and playgrounds of Harlem to "high society" photography that has unveiled images of such luminaries as Joan Rivers, Regis Philbin and Diana Ross.

One of his more powerful series in "Intersections" is a collection of photos that represent the experience of the community in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, where Little League baseball unites children from all ages and spectators from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

For more information about the exhibition, please call the Watchung Arts Center at (908) 753-0190.

## Arts & Entertainment

## Little Opera Company Will Stage *Così Fan Tutte* in March

WESTFIELD - The Little Opera Company (LOC) of New Jersey, a division of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA), will present two performances of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* (*Women are Like That*) on Saturday, March 5, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, March 6, at 3 p.m.

The costumed and semi-staged production will be performed in English at The Presbyterian Church of Westfield, located at 140 Mountain Avenue.

The second production of the LOC's 2004-2005 season, *Così Fan Tutte* will be performed by a cast of professionals, which will include baritone Don Sheasley in the role of Don Alfonso, the old philosopher who plots to prove his theory about the infidelity of women.

Mr. Sheasley, who also played the role of Renato in the LOC's recent production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*, made his Lincoln Center debut as Pizatto in *Fidelio*. He was a winner of the New York Vocal Artists Competition, has been heard in Cami Hall and is a lead baritone of Opera International.

Soprano Dauri Shippey will portray Fiordiligi, the fiancée of Guglielmo, whom she believes has gone off to war. Ms. Shippey, a graduate of the Julliard School, appeared in the title role of last season's LOC production of *Turnadot*. She has been a finalist in numerous international competitions and has been a soloist at Alice Tully Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Merkin Hall, Constitution Hall and the Paper Mill Playhouse.

Dorabella, Fiordiligi's sister and the fiancée of Ferrando, will be played by Betsy Mackenzie Stubbs. A former vocal teacher at NJWA's Music Studio, holds a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Westminster Choir College in Princeton. She has performed with the Westminster Opera Theater, VOICES, the Musical Club of Westfield, the Trenton Civic Opera, and participates in recitals throughout New York and New Jersey.

Guglielmo, the officer who returns disguised as an Albanian to test his fiancée's fidelity, will be played by baritone Charles Schneider. Also a cast member of LOC's *Turandot*, Mr. Schneider has toured the United States with the National Opera Company, where he also played Guglielmo. His additional credits include performing with the Anchorage Opera, Opera Iowa, the Lyric Opera of Cleveland and the Des Moines Metro Opera.

Ferrando, the second officer and fiancé of Dorabella, will be portrayed by tenor Timothy Linwood. A performer in concerts throughout France, Germany, England and the United States, Mr. Linwood took part in the first gala fundraiser in Paris for the reconstruction of the Dresden Cathedral (Frauenkirche), and has appeared at the Trocadero, the French Historic Society, the Theatre Mirabeau and the American Cathedral in Paris. In the 2002-2003 season, he also sang the role of Ferrando in *Così Fan Tutte* and more recently performed in Handel's *Israel in Egypt*.

In the role of Despina, the ladies' maid who is a catalyst in Don Alfonso's plot, will be soprano Valerie Pineda, co-founder of the LOC. A vocal music teacher at the Music Studio, Mrs. Pineda is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music. She has directed many LOC productions, as well as musicals for the Westfield Summer Workshop and is the advisor to the Light Bulb Players.

The orchestra for the two-act opera will be conducted by Robert Butts, who was recently honored as Arts Professional of 2004 by the Arts Council of the Morris County area. Mr. Butts is also principal conductor of the Baroque Orchestra of North Jersey. He made his operatic conducting debut with the LOC in the year 2000 in performances of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, with international star Celeste Holm as narrator. He has conducted with the Philharmonic de Stat Botasani in Romania and was guest conductor for the Philharmonic Society of St. Petersburg in Russia. He has arranged his own compositions and is often a lecturer throughout New York and New Jersey.

*Così Fan Tutte* will be directed by LOC co-founder Juan Pineda. A vocal music teacher at the Music Studio, Mr. Pineda is also the instructor for NJWA's Musical Theater Workshop and the Westfield Summer Workshop musical theater productions. He was a long-time member of the Broadway cast of *Miss Saigon* and an international cast of *The King and I*. His opera credits include roles in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

In November, Mr. Pineda performed at Lincoln Center at The Concert of Excellence and most recently in the New Jersey Concert Opera's *Rigoletto*.

The mission of the LOC is to create new artists and audiences for the art of opera. It brings together critically acclaimed professional casts to perform

in local communities. It also offers a Young Artists Program to train young people in voice, language, acting, stage movement and set design, and gives them an opportunity to work with professional opera singers.

Tickets for *Così Fan Tutte* are \$30 for adults, \$25 for senior citizens, and \$15 for students under 18 years of age.

For more information, please visit the NJWA office at 150-152 East Broad Street or call (908) 789-9696. Additional information is available at the website [www.njworkshopforthearts.com](http://www.njworkshopforthearts.com).

## Hazel Finck

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The artist was best known for her abstract landscapes and still life oils on canvas.

One of Mrs. Finck's greatest artistic achievements was having several pieces of her art in the American Artist Exhibit at the 1939-1940 World's Fair, which was held in Flushing, N.Y.

Mrs. Finck exhibited her work widely. The Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, the National Arts Club and many other organizations were her venues. She was also a member of the National Association of Women Artists, where she was a regular exhibitor until 1951.

Mrs. Finck also taught at the State Teachers College in DeKalb, Ill. Many examples of her art are still exhibited there today.

At the time of her death in 1977, she was a resident of South Hampton, Long Island, N.Y.



## Get Outta The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

On Friday, February 25, and Saturday, February 26, the Class of 2005 of the Lincoln School in Garwood will present the Broadway musical *Footloose*. Curtain times: 7:30 p.m., and the play will be held in the school gymnasium on Second Avenue. For additional information, please call (908) 789-0331, extension no. 3.

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The Plainfield Symphony Orchestra will feature a recital by pianist **Christopher Johnson** on Sunday, February 27, at 4 p.m. in the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church. Single tickets are \$25 to \$45, and subscription packages are available. For information, please call (908) 561-5140 or visit [www.plainfieldsymphony.org](http://www.plainfieldsymphony.org).

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There will be a **Winter Waterfowl Walk** at Liberty State Park's Interpretive Center on February 27 from 10 a.m. to noon. Pre-registration is required, so call them at (201) 915-3409 or e-mail [lspic@superlink.net](mailto:lspic@superlink.net). It's free, and you may even see ruddy ducks, grebes, buffleheads, or mergansers. Bring binoculars and dress warmly.

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Lauren Shub will perform her cabaret act **"Isn't it Romantic?"** on February 26 at 8 p.m. with the Hal Hirsch Trio. "Isn't it Romantic?" is a celebration of the greatest composers and lyricists of the 20th century, from Irving Berlin and Duke Ellington to James Van Heusen. It will take place at the Watchung Arts Center, and tickets are \$15. Reservations can be made by calling (908) 753-0190 or via e-mail at [WACenter@aol.com](mailto:WACenter@aol.com).

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The Rutgers Theater Company's world premiere of **Death in Venice** by Thomas Mann will be at the Philip Levin Theater from Friday, February 25, through Saturday, March 5. It's perfect if you're grappling with the age-old question of love and loss. In the hero's case, it's obsession. The theater is in the Mason Gross Performing Arts Center at 85 George Street (at the intersection of Route 18). For information and tickets, please call (732) 932-7511.



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