

Arts & Entertainment

NJ Symphony Orchestra Draws Large Crowd for Park Performance

By KATIE ROGERS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Concertgoer Rosemary Topar of Westfield said she expected nothing less than a great performance from the orchestra.

Ms. Topar said. "It's great to be able to see a world-class ensemble for free."

Joao Nolau, a Roselle Park resident, said he sees the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra as many as 12 times each year.

"I really enjoy them," Mr. Nolau said. "It's a great night just to come here and listen to this music in the background."

Cranford resident Muriel Burns said she enjoyed the Broadway songs but liked the orchestra's encore closing piece best.

"My favorite has to be 'The Star Spangled Banner,'" Ms. Burns said.

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra performance was held as a part of the Union County Summer Arts Festival 2008. Upcoming performances include Latin rockers De Sol and The Rick Cantor Band, a classic rock group. All concerts are free, and will be held Wednesdays in Echo Lake Park at 7:30 p.m.



THE SOUND OF MUSIC...The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra played a selection of semi-classical and popular pieces on a perfect summer night, July 2.

lilted through the air. Fans, new and old, of all ages, turned out July 2 to hear what promised to be a stunning performance from the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

The ensemble kicked off its first half with a tribute to America, just days before the Fourth of July, playing staples such as "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful." Led by conductor Jeffery Grogan, the orchestra had fans hanging onto each note, clapping and even dancing in their seats.

New Providence resident Don Giles said he greatly enjoyed the selection from the first act.

"I'm a Navy man," Mr. Giles said. "I've been coming here for about a dozen years."

Mr. Grogan wrapped up the first act of the show with "The Thunderer March" by Sousa.

"The last couple of nights, the weather has been so good to us, so this is [for] him," he joked to the packed lawn.

The second half of the show was dedicated solely to Broadway pieces from Gershwin, Rodgers and more.

De Sol to Perform Free Concert at Echo Lake Park

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Union County Summer Arts Festival concert series continues on Wednesday, July 16, featuring De Sol and their blend of Latin rhythms and American rock/pop music. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders invites the public to attend this free concert, which begins at 7:30 p.m. in Echo Lake Park.

Attendees should bring blankets or lawn chairs to better enjoy the performance.

The Union County information van, along with representatives from the Runnells Specialized Hospital of Union County and the Union County Bureau of Planning and Environmental Conservation will offer information about programs available to Union County residents.

The other free concerts in the Union County Summer Arts Festival series include:

July 23 - The Rick Cantor Band (classic rock);

July 30 - Jobonanno and the Godsons of Soul (rock);

August 6 - The British Invasion (Beatles tribute band), Runnells Specialized Hospital "Party in the Park." Purchase tickets in advance;

August 13 - The Nerds (Jersey Shore party band), sponsored by the Union County Democratic Committee;

August 20 - The Ed Palermo Big Band with Rob Paparozzi (blues and jazz);

August 27 - Verdict (reggae and soca), sponsored by the Union County Education Association.

All Summer Arts Festival concerts are held on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Avenue end of Echo Lake Park in Mountainside. Famous Dave's Bar-Que will have a food concession, along with an ice cream and snack vendor, which will be available at approximately 6:30 p.m.

In case of rain, concerts will be held at the air-conditioned auditorium at Cranford High School, on West End Place, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (908) 527-4900 or visit ucnj.org/parks/summerarts.html.

Saturday's Elvis Tribute Leaves Rahway 'All Shook Up'

By ERIC NIERSTEDT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

RAHWAY - The Union County Arts Center was transformed into equal parts Memphis and Las Vegas on Saturday night, as the venue hosted the finals of the New Jersey Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest. This marks the first time the contest, one of the few impersonator shows officially licensed by the Elvis estate, has taken place in the Garden State.

A Las Vegas native won the contest - part of a three-day festival that marked the 50th anniversary of the recording of Elvis' debut single - and took home \$3,500 and a chance to compete in the semi-finals of the Ultimate Elvis contest in Memphis. Ironically, Elvis' debut single, "That's All Right (Mama)," was not performed in Rahway.

CBS-FM radio host Bob Shannon entertained the crowd with musical facts and banter in between performers. He told stories about Elvis' songs, including how "Hound Dog," a blues original

of the King six times, called Mr. Church "simply unbelievable."

Both Mr. Church and Mr. Barone, who placed second and third, respectively, put on excellent performances, with Mr. Barone's receiving the loudest applause of the evening.

The other performers each gave similar levels of energy as the night went on. They shook, rattled, rolled, crooned and gyrated, and when they weren't doing any of the above, they gave away a boatload of scarves to women in the audience. Between a few performances, young students of the New Jersey Dance Academy came out and danced to three Elvis songs.

Many performers chose to portray the "Jumpsuit Elvis," with only a few performers selecting attire from different periods of the King's career.

The only true negative came from the somewhat-redundant choice of songs. The performers were told to perform only their best songs for the judges, which resulted in certain songs being

covered by Elvis, had its lyrics censored for radio. He also mentioned how "It's Now or Never" was based on an Italian love song.

But the main attraction was the contest. Many in attendance held signs proclaiming the greatness of their Elvis of choice and proceeded to discuss the contestants' merits with each other.

"He's as good as the real Elvis," proclaimed Jerry Sorce of performer Jimmy Barone, a Westfield resident. "I've been an Elvis fan for years, and I've never heard anyone sound that close to him. I was gonna have him sing at my daughter's wedding."

Bayville resident Tom Carreno agreed with Mr. Sorce, calling Mr. Barone "the best in the world."

Others gave praise to Doug Church, saying that "if you close your eyes, you think that it's Elvis singing." One woman, a longtime Elvis fan who saw

ber of the legendary Jordanaires, who put backing harmonies on many Elvis tracks.

Mr. Walker discussed how Elvis had been a true joker in the studio, doing whatever he could to interfere with his vocal recording. Mr. Walker then performed with Shawn Klush, the current "Ultimate Elvis."

Afterwards, Mr. Shannon announced the top five performers of the evening, with Donny Edwards, one of the few dressed as "early Elvis," being announced as the winner.

Mr. Edwards celebrated by dedicating "It's Now or Never" to his wife before performing with the tribute artists.

The event was produced by Ren Media Publishing, Inc. For more information about the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest, visit elvisnj.com or call (732) 382-6815.



COURTESY OF REN MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC. AND CHRISTINA L. WILSON
WESTFIELD IS KING...Westfield's Jim Barone earned third place honors at the recent Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest. Mr. Barone walked away with \$1,000.

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Hudson Co. to Present King John in Kenilworth

PERFORMING THE COMICAL PLAY *King John*, the Hudson Shakespeare Company will return to Stratford Library with the second offering of its 2008 Shakespeare in the Parks festival on Thursday, July 17, at 7:30 p.m.

The performance will take place on David Brearley High School's football field, at 401 Monroe Avenue, in Kenilworth. If there is inclement weather, the show will be held in the Kenilworth Library, located at 548 Kenilworth Boulevard.

Shakespeare's play, set in the early 12th Century, tells the story of King John (James Pravasilis), brother of the late Richard the Lionheart, as he mounts a force against his nephew, the 12-year-old Prince Arthur (Kindel Ingham), the rightful heir to the English throne.

Each season, Hudson Shakespeare Company produces one or two lesser-known Shakespeare works that are often overlooked.

All shows are free to the public. It is recommended that attendees bring lawn chairs or blankets to better enjoy the performance.

For more information, visit hudsonshakespeare.homestead.com or call (973) 449-7443.

Union Catholic Teacher Wright Wins Book Award

AREA - The Catholic Press Association (CPA) of the United States and Canada awarded Union Catholic High School teacher and author Allan Wright first place in the "Family Life" category for his book "Jesus in the House: Gospel Reflections on Christ's Presence in the Home."

The CPA presents the Catholic Book Awards each May at its annual convention.

The book offers insights and practical applications on how to bring faith into homes and families. Mr. Wright has been teaching at Union Catholic for more than 20 years and is a frequent contributor to the Catholic News Service.

Alphorn Society Celebrates Dr. Ruth's 80th Birthday

WESTFIELD - On June 4, alphornists Ted Schlosberg and Martina Struck performed a concert at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan to celebrate the 80th birthday of Ruth Westheimer, also known as "Dr. Ruth."

As the audience entered the concert hall, the alphornists, accompanied by Dr. Ruth's grandchildren, performed "Edelweiss," and a special performance of "Es Burebuebli," a Swiss favorite of Dr. Ruth.

The International Alphorn Society Alphorn Ensemble is a division of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts

vice, *Church Magazine* and a number of other periodicals. He volunteers with the Contemplative branch of the Missionaries of Charity in Plainfield by teaching scripture once a week and is an adjunct professor at Assumption College for Sisters in Mendham.

He is a member of the Newark Archdiocesan Commission for Interreligious Affairs and a speaker throughout the diocese, presenting parish retreats, Catechetical Conventions, evenings of reflections and Confirmation retreats.

His book is published by St. Anthony Messenger Press. For more information, view allanwright.org.

(NJWA) Music Studio. The ensemble was initiated in 1999 by Dr. Schlosberg, founder and executive director of NJWA, and is represented by Leonard Talent Associates of Tinton Falls.

The alphorn ensemble, whose members include Ms. Struck, William Carter, Walter Metzger, Dana Sylvander and



DR. RUTH TURNS 80...Ruth Westheimer, a.k.a. "Dr. Ruth," center, was serenaded on June 4, by Swiss alphornists, played by Ted Schlosberg, left, and Martina Struck, right, members of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts International Alphorn Ensemble, on the occasion of her 80th birthday.

Dr. Schlosberg, will present free public concerts on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9 p.m. beginning July 2 through August 6. All performances will be on the steps of the First Presbyterian Church in Westfield, located on East Broad Street and Mountain Avenue.

Each concert will include a solo, duet, trio and quartet, featuring the music of Switzerland, international folk songs, jazz, classical and marches. In the event of rain, the concert will be cancelled.

During the 15-minute intermission, a brief workshop in alphorn playing will be available for audience participation. Lawn chairs and blankets are suggested.

For more information, call (908) 789-9696 or log on to njworkshopforthearts.com.

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