

## Mountainside Actors Recount Theater Experience

By DEBBIE HOFFMAN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

MOUNTAINSIDE – Last month, Gabriel Rodrigues took his final curtain call at Governor Livingston High School. “After four years, it’s kind of sad,” the Mountainside resident said. “The last night was pretty emotional. I couldn’t have asked for a better cast to work with for my final high school performance.”

Gabriel, who starred in the school’s production of *Kiss Me Kate* along with high school junior and fellow Mountainside resident Danielle Fine, will be moving on to Montclair State University.

The two students sat down recently



Sherryl Pascal

### NJ Ballet to Honor Work of Sherryl Pascal

WESTFIELD – On April 18, the New Jersey Ballet at its 50th annual gala, held at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, will laud Mrs. New Jersey Globe 2009 Sherryl Pascal for her leadership in the areas of dyslexia and thyroid cancer awareness.

As a parent of a dyslexic child, the Westfield actress, who has appeared in the *Sex and the City* film and on “Gossip Girl,” “Ugly Betty” and “Lipstick Jungle,” works to make the public aware of the condition.

New Jersey Ballet has played a key role in the emotional and education development of her son, Spencer.

Her second passion, Thyca, Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association, was born out of necessity. She has survived thyroid cancer twice in six years.

To learn more, go to [sherrylpascal.com](http://sherrylpascal.com) or [mrsglobe.com](http://mrsglobe.com).

## WSO Presents Stars of Tomorrow, Jeffrey Briggs

WESTFIELD – On Saturday, May 2, at 8 p.m., at the Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) in Rahway, the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) presents the Grand Finale of a new initiative – the Stars of Tomorrow Tri-State Concerto Competition – where three young musical protégés will compete for a grand prize of \$3,000.

This competition, designed specifically to uncover the tri-state’s virtuosity of the future, will not only be judged by Maestro David Wroe and a panel of eminent musicians, the audience will also have the opportunity to vote and participate in the selection process.

Developed and created by Maestro Wroe and the WSO, the contest diversifies the search for young talent by identifying finalists from a variety of musical-instrument categories.

### WF’s Egert Sings At 16 Prospect, Tuesday

WESTFIELD – Westfield’s Karen Egert will sing alongside a guitarist at 16 Prospect on Tuesday, April 21, between 8 and 10 p.m. The mother of two has two CD’s out, the latest featuring John Pizzarelli on guitar. On Tuesday, she will perform jazz standards as well as Brazilian sambas and bossanovas.

### Aspiring Actors Can Meet Kenneth Horn

WESTFIELD – Kenneth Horn, director of the Westfield Summer Workshop Summer Stage Theater, will be at the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, located at 150-152 East Broad Street in Westfield, during Spring Fling on Sunday, April 26, between 11 a.m. and noon.



Kenneth Horn  
Director, Westfield Summer Workshop Summer Stage

Aspiring actors, in grades 6 through 12, who wish to enroll in the production of the Sci-Fi spoof *Little Shop of Horrors* this July can meet with the director and ask questions about the upcoming summer production.

The Summer Stage Theater will be held at Edison Intermediate School, located at 800 Rahway Avenue in Westfield, from June 29 until July 31. Production dates are July 29 and 30.

For more, see [njworkshopforthearts.com](http://njworkshopforthearts.com).

with *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* to discuss their experience starring in the musical.

“It was great forming new friendships,” Danielle said. “It’s an extremely hard show, and I think we (the entire cast and crew) handled it well.”

“The acting, the singing, the whole show-within-a-show concept is difficult,” Gabriel added. “Even the orchestra had trouble.”

“But,” Danielle added, “the satisfaction of it going so well was amazing.”

Hilltop Players Director Ivan Rushfield said, “Gabe manages to embody Fred’s massive ego and subtle vulnerability, and Danielle’s range as an actress and vocalist is uncanny. No one else could have sung those parts, and these two have a fantastic chemistry together.”

Both Gabriel and Danielle began acting in school plays and musicals at Mountainside’s Deerfield School. Gabriel starred in a school production of *The Music Man*. Danielle played the witch in a school production of *Oz*.

“It’s been fun doing theatre all of these years with the same people. So many people have grown,” Gabriel said. “I’ve worked with them, and we’ve all grown together as people and as actors.”

Both students shared the opinion that “every student who makes the play enjoys it,” adding that nearly half the actors who tried out did not make the cut.

“[On] the first night of the play, the adrenaline was rushing,” Danielle said. “I was so excited and so nervous.” She added that the nerves subsided “as soon as I stepped on the stage.”

“It’s a [rush] when you get on that stage,” Gabriel said. “As soon as I get in the moment, it’s a high. That’s why I do this.”

Closing night brought a rush of emotions for both students. “I broke out into tears knowing that I’d never do the show again with the same cast,” Danielle said. “It was heartbreaking.”

“I was dreading the last night,” Gabriel said. “I burst into tears as soon as the curtain closed. I felt proud of myself, the cast, the experience. I’m going to miss this a lot.”

“I must admit,” said Maestro Wroe, a native of Great Britain, “that I was inspired by the BBC’s Young Musician of the Year competition, which works so well because it is set up to give as broad a scope as possible to diverse instrumental families, thereby guaranteeing that no single instrumental group can dominate.”

Panel judge and WSO principal clarinet William Shadel said, “The pool of talent, both in terms of quality and quantity, appearing in the preliminaries and semi-finals is the most extensive I have seen in a long time.”

On May 2, each finalist will perform a movement of their chosen concerto with the WSO. A panel of four jurors and a collective single majority vote of the audience will judge the finals.

Members of the public are strongly encouraged to come to the finals and cast votes for their choice of winner. Should the jury be deadlocked, the audience vote will be decisive.

The May 2 concert will also present a world premier, *Celebration*, by contemporary composer Jeffrey Briggs. Mr. Briggs has written extensively for both video games and film, and videogame aficionados are familiar with his music in the game *Civilization*.

The evening culminates with a WSO presentation of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 7*. With its sweet strings, bright brass and energizing rhythms, the Seventh makes performances both inspirational and entertaining.

Tickets may be purchased directly from the WSO office (224 East Broad Street) or by calling the box office at (908) 232-9400.

Tickets are also available at UCPAC, located at 1601 Irving Street in Rahway; The Town Book Store in Westfield, and Martin Jewelers in Cranford. For further information, call (908) 232-9400, e-mail [wso@westfieldsymphony.org](mailto:wso@westfieldsymphony.org), or go to [westfieldsymphony.org](http://westfieldsymphony.org).

### SPF Arts Assoc Presents 2009 Members’ Show

SCOTCH PLAINS – The annual Scotch Plains and Fanwood Arts Association Members’ Show will be held from April 27 to May 9 in the downstairs gallery of the Scotch Plains Library.

Paintings in different media, graphics, sculpture and photography will be exhibited during regular library hours.

The public is invited to view the works in the gallery, which is handicapped-accessible.

Judging the show this year is Julie Friedman, owner of Artspace Studio and Gallery, a working studio in Morristown where artists can come together as a group to share creative energy.

She is a signature member of the Pastel Society of America and teaches pastel classes at her gallery. Her web site is [juliefriedmanart.com](http://juliefriedmanart.com).

Artists will be accessible to the public on May 9, when a reception will be held at 11 a.m. prior to the presentation of awards at noon.

For more information, contact Tom Yeager at (908) 322-5438.



Tom Chapin to play Coffee With Conscience

## Maros Relives Decade of Coffee with Conscience Series

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

WESTFIELD – Everyone enjoys different things with their coffee – milk, cream, sugar, flavored syrups, even ice. Those who like their coffee served with a slice of music need not look further than the Coffee with Conscience Music Series, a local concert special that brings in a variety of artists who entertain while their audience enjoys both their music and the finest coffee.

The series, begun by Westfield resident Ahre Maros, actually began years ago in Summit.

“I opened my own coffee shop in 1992,” Mr. Maros recalled. “And we just had all kinds of live entertainment every night – folk, jazz, poetry, you name it. It got so popular that even after we closed in ’97, I was still getting requests from artists who wanted to play.”

This led to Mr. Maros starting the first Coffee with Conscience Series, in Summit’s Unitarian Church. “Their minister, Jeff Markay, was looking for a way to attract new parishioners, and this seemed like a good idea,” Mr. Maros said. “They asked me to be on the planning committee and to provide coffee. We also worked it out so that the money would go to charity, which is something we still do today.”

The series was a success, but church renovations in 1998 forced Mr. Maros to hold the next event in Springfield, where a group of Westfield residents convinced him to bring the series in their hometown as well.

“The Methodist Church sent over some people to check us out, and they were blown away,” Mr. Maros said. “They consulted with me, and soon, I was on a new planning committee.”

A 10-show schedule was booked between Westfield and Summit, but after a few years, Mr. Maros noticed a discrepancy between the two.

“Basically, people were just not going to Summit,” Mr. Maros said. “Westfield drew more, and it got to be a booking problem because I had to give the artists a good audience, and I just couldn’t do it in Summit. Plus, the church there was sadly losing members, so I just booked five shows there and put 10 in Westfield. And soon, that even stopped.”

Since then, the concert has gone on for nine seasons, with its 10th currently being booked. Mr. Maros has become a committee unto himself; he funds the show, with help from the Westfield Service League, books the artists and provides the coffee.

He also continues to attract artists whose music falls under the heading

“acoustic pop,” though many might call it “folk.” Mr. Maros himself generally dislikes the label that people put on folk artists.

“Folk isn’t just one type of music; it’s defined as a person singing their own songs,” he said. “Folk can be soft; it can be jazzy, it can be rocking. So, I always try to include different kinds in the lineup.”

Booking the lineup is a bit easier on Mr. Maros, as years of folk festivals have given him personal contacts with many different artists.

“I get all these friendly relations, instead of just calling people and asking if they’ll come. My favorite friend-artist is Tom

Persada-Rao, and he brings so many guys with him,” Mr. Maros said.

“He’s always got someone for me to hear. It’s like, ‘Ahre, you have to hear George, he’s incredible.’ And they always are.”

Currently, the series is preparing for the April 18 arrival of legendary musician Tom Chapin, younger brother of the late folk legend Harry Chapin.

The younger Chapin has been touring and recording for the last 30 years, in both adult and children’s music, though his show will cater to his older audience.

“I always try to get a few popular artists every year, to help bring the audience,” Mr. Maros said. “It helps to balance out some of the lesser-known artists.”

Thankfully, Mr. Maros has an excellent long-time staff of local Westfielders to help him prepare for the show.

“A woman named Lenore Silver has been working in the kitchen for the last three years, and she gets help from Pamela Orbach,” Mr. Maros said.

“Mrs. Sabina Dowell and her husband, Chip, help with the actual setup; they’ll come in at 3 p.m. to set up for a 7 p.m. show. Mr. Dave Schneider and his girlfriend, Donna, take the tickets. And Kevin Sipe films it for (local affiliate) TV 36. He’s been doing it for three years, even after he went to college,” Mr. Maros said.

Having been able to book such well-known and beloved artists such as Tom Chapin gives Mr. Maros a tall order for next season, even with the help of his staff. But he is steadily booking away, already scheduling acts like Judy Collins and an a-cappella group the Bobs, a band he calls a personal favorite. And from there, the quality of the music may only be surpassed by the quality of the coffee.

Tickets for the Chapin performance on April 18 at the Westfield Methodist Church can be reached through [coffeewithconscience.com](http://coffeewithconscience.com).

## NJWA Rockin’ Jazz Band Holds Benefit Concert

WESTFIELD – The New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA) Rockin’ Jazz Band, including members of Venturing Crew 150, will present a benefit concert on Sunday, April 19, at 2 p.m. at Redeemer Lutheran Church, located at 229 Cowperthwaite Place in Westfield.

The concert, called Jazz and Blues, will feature swing, jazz, rock and blues music of the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s. The intergenerational band will be conducted by NJWA’s own jazzman, Ted Schlosberg.

Proceeds from the concert will benefit The Music Connection, tuition-free family instrumental music program by NJWA for special-needs families. The program is designed for special-needs families who include stu-

dents, ages 6 and above, who are neurologically, developmentally and/or physically handicapped.

Each special-needs student has a music partner or parent who learns to play the same instrument and practices and performs with him/her. Current students are studying violin, viola, trumpet, piano, clarinet and snare drum.

Benefit admission for the concert is \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and senior citizens. Tickets are available at the door. Donations to The Music Connection program are gratefully welcomed.

For additional information, call the NJWA at (908) 789-9696 or visit the studios at 150-152 East Broad Street in Westfield.

## UCC Art – Peppito

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“no more what?”

Like most of the pieces in this Tomasulo Gallery exhibit, “No More” is full of mystery, and as good art should, it invites the viewer to unravel the clues and personalize the interpretation.

An overarching theme encompassing all of Ms. Peppito’s work is the artist’s knowledge that in a society where consumerism is rampant, everything we own will eventually become trash.

The pièce de résistance of the exhibit was “Trying Not to Die,” a ceiling-high leafless tree, its branches strewn with found objects like small toys, scraps of fabric, plastic water bottles and even jewelry.

The tree’s trunk grows out of a pair of black pants and a black sweater positioned flat on the floor in a manner that mimics the chalk outline of a

murder victim.

The debris, intertwined within the branches, reminds the viewers of the conflict between people’s obsession with shopping and the effect unnecessary objects have on the environment.

“Julie Peppito turns the castoffs from our consumer-driven society into magical and thought-provoking works of art,” said Valeri Larko, director of the Tomasulo Gallery.

“She gives new meaning to the concept of recycling, turning our everyday trash into treasure,” she added.

The next exhibit scheduled at UCC’s Tomasulo Gallery will be the “Architecture Show,” a display consisting of works created by UCC students, which will run from April 24 to May 6.

For more information, contact the Tomasulo Gallery at (908) 709-7155.



## Vic’s Picks

Q: What do Vic’s Picks and Alyssa Milano Have in Common?

A: Baseball.

What do baseball and a music column have in common? Admittedly, not much...but then again, Picks is rarely your average music column.

Next week, we’ll return to your sporadically scheduled music reviewing. But spring is here, no matter what the thermometers says, and spring brings Opening Day, which unfailingly brings a new crop of baseball books. Yup, today we’re going literary, and that brings us back to this column’s titular question.

Vic’s Picks never really thought she and Alyssa Milano would have much in common, but it seems the intoxicating nature of America’s pastime spreads far and wide. Fans have probably noticed the actress’ clothing line of women’s baseball fashions in stadium stores. Women who like to rock their team colors without having to wear boxy shirts no doubt are grateful for her enterprise. But when this diehard Mets fan heard that Milano would be joining TBS’s postseason baseball-reporting roster, she was rather suspicious. An actress makes a clothing line and gets clubhouse access? Does she even understand the sanctity of the game?

Apparently, I wasn’t the only one to ask that question. My daily scouring of MLB sites led me to something that made me regret my skepticism. Milano has a blog on MLBlogs.com, and she wrote a staunch defense of her love for baseball for the benefit of doubters like me. She had me at “I hate when the count is 0-2, and the pitcher throws that ball low and away [because] the batter knows just as well as we do that it’s coming...”

But I digress. The actress released her first (clearly baseball-themed) book just before Opening Day. And this now-avid Milano convert devoured it in a day and a half.

As its jacket says, the book is a love letter. Not to Carl Pavano or Barry Zito (though we must note that her taste in baseball boyfriends tends to involve pitchers who can’t pitch), but to the world’s greatest game.

She finds a way to reconnect her father to his Brooklyn past and to tether them both to a life in Los Angeles. She finds a way to (unintention-

## The Brasil Guitar Duo To Perform At Scarmolin

SUMMIT – The Scarmolin Chamber Concerts announced that the second concert of its 2009 season features the Brasil Guitar Duo, winners of the 2006 Concert Artists Guild International competition. The concert takes place at Temple Sinai, located at 208 Summit Avenue in Summit, on Tuesday, April 28, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The duo is comprised of guitarists João Luiz and Douglas Lora. Their repertoire combines classical guitar duos with traditional music of Brazil (samba, mixixe, choro and baião).

*Classical Guitar Magazine* has said of the Brasil Guitar Duo, “The maturity of musicianship and technical virtuosity displayed...is simply outstanding.”

Their CDs include “Bom Partido,” a disc of Brazilian repertoire, and “João Luiz e Douglas Lora,” of which *Classical Guitar* said: “One would be hard put to think of a finer way to enter the world of recorded music.”

The third Scarmolin concert, scheduled for June 2, features New York Philharmonic Violinist Vladimir Tsypin and Argentine pianist Patricia Vila in a program featuring music by Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, John Sichel, and Anthony Scarmolin, the composer for whom these concerts are named.

An additional bonus event will be offered on June 14, given in collaboration with the National League of Performing Arts, Inc. (NLPA). This concert, which will be offered free to season subscribers, will feature winners of the NLPA’s Chamber Music Auditions for young performers.

The Scarmolin Chamber Concerts are sponsored by the A. Louis Scarmolin Trust, formed by the New Jersey composer Anthony Louis Scarmolin, and feature young and local artists in performances of music from the classical tradition, both old

ally) show up male costars in the baseball-statistics-dropping department. Baseball keeps her grounded in a world of actors – she has full access to the stars of the Hollywood scene, yet the person she name-drops most often is 81-year-old Dodgers announcer Vin Scully.

She finds a kind of family in the other Dodgers season-ticket holders in her section – watching the kids in seats around her grow up, bonding with other diehard fans, shouting creative insults with her brother (see: calling the light-hitting, out-of-shape outfielder Andrew Jones “Snacks”).

I don’t think she’s harsh enough on steroid users, but she tackles the subject with a sweeping review of cheating through the ages, asserting that the “pure” era of baseball we long for never really happened.

She peppers the book with sidebars recounting wacky, sobering and mammoth games or players. She shows that she knows her stuff in a relaxed, breezy manner, making drive-by references to past greats or moments of great implosion (see: Rick Ankiel’s infamous wild pitching performance).

It’s the kind of discourse one might spout when digging into a baseball discussion with an old friend – knowledgeable, but not trying to impress.

But the real pleasure in this book is not about the stats or the history or the Dodgers; it’s about the joy and the passion with which Milano discusses them. It’s the literary opportunity any true fan would die for – the chance to just pour your heart out about the game that has captured it.

It’s not cheesy, but it is a love story. “If I were a less emotional person, I wouldn’t have booed and screamed at my television every time Barry Bonds stepped to the plate,” Milano writes.

She continues that she wouldn’t have seen former drug addict Josh Hamilton’s Home Run Derby performance “as the most astonishing act of redemption...the most vivid example of the human spirit’s resilience and beauty.” Without that emotional investment, that human connection, baseball is just a sea of stats, and she knows it.

“How can a sport save someone?” Milano asks at one point. Her book shows readers a pretty good answer.

## God’s Favorite Comes to SOPAC

SOUTH ORANGE – Seton Hall University Theater will present its final production of the 2008-2009 season, Neil Simon’s entertaining version of the Book of Job, *God’s Favorite*, beginning April 23, at the South Orange Performing Arts Center (SOPAC). Professor Deirdre Yates directs the all-student cast.

Set in contemporary Long Island, *God’s Favorite* presents a modern version of the trials of Job, when a messenger of God tells a pious and God-fearing Joe Benjamin that he is God’s favorite, and all he needs to do is renounce God.

Simon poses some large questions about life when Joe refuses and therefore, with little help from his family, must endure a series of extraordinary, but hysterical, tests of faith.

Performances are at 8 p.m. on April 23, 24 and 25, and 2 p.m. on April 25 and 26.

Prices are \$15 for general admission, \$12 for alumni and senior citizens, \$8 for students (with a valid ID), faculty and staff, and \$5 for student rush tickets sold a half an hour before curtain.

For more information, see [arts.ci.shu.edu/artsouncil/tickets.htm](http://arts.ci.shu.edu/artsouncil/tickets.htm) or shu.edu.