

POPCORN

LBJ

Offers Hope from the Past
3 popcorns

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

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
film critic

Viewers uninterested in politics and American history probably won't enjoy the insight and philosophical ruminations ventured by director Rob Reiner in his savvy biopic, *LBJ*. Detailing the momentous ebb and flow of the times just before and after the ascension of Lyndon Baines Johnson to the presidency of the United States in 1963, Mr. Reiner, working from a script by Joey Hartstone, studiously puts forth a thesis worthy of an honorary master's degree. If it had new information about the man behind the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I'd of considered a Ph.D.

Now, I won't attempt to pull away those who would much prefer the couch, the football game, a six-pack, a family size bag of barbecue potato chips and speculation as to who will and who will not kneel when the national anthem is played. I like a good bowl of chips myself...preferably with a bottle of grape soda. But pity is, they'll miss an eye-opening epiphany or two that just might make them better citizens. While Reiner paints a responsibly accurate portrait of both the man and the era, it's in the clever subtext where he realizes the true and noble purpose of history.

You see, just in case you don't remember or you weren't yet a taxpayer, good old Lyndon wasn't, well, quite the genteel sort of person we were accustomed to seeing in the oval office. In fact, to underline his legendary crassness, the movie makes a point of including the storied toilet scene. However, before you cite the present day and the greatest crassness the world has ever seen, note that the movie winkingly knows what you're thinking. For all his earthiness, there is never a moment when we doubt that *LBJ* was a devoted American.

True patriotism should of course be a given. So as *LBJ* switches from human steamroller to devious finagler to charmer-in-chief to get his humanitarian legislation passed, it is refreshing in that his ego is put to traditional heroic use, and not just in service to himself. It is end-justifies-the-means politicking in its finest form. Embodied in a superb performance by Woody Harrelson, we witness the talented governing experience, knowledge of history and gifted touch of altruism it takes to be a real dealmaker.

It is entertainingly reminded that we Americans have worn quite a story for ourselves...a sort of Greek myth wherein the Founding Fathers bestowed this light of liberty it has become incumbent upon us to keep

burning bright. Not just for ourselves, mind you, but as a hope for the world. Call it an international version of looking out for the other guy. Even those sworn to tear us down would be sad to see the ideal they secretly envy dashed upon the scrap heap of virtuous ideas.

It is our vision, our chutzpah, our conglomeration of heritages and all that corny good stuff that they covet. If it never existed, you'd have to make it up, to give the human spirit something to hope for in the face of authoritarian rule. Hence it is sadly painful when the film details the tragic event that led to LBJ's near impossible challenge. Many Americans felt they were standing on a threshold of a dream, and then it was stolen from them. JFK was killed, and his seeming antithesis was charged with mending a wound that to this day has never really healed.

Reiner deals with the tragedy of Dealey Plaza via flashbacks and fast-forwards ominously interspersed into the scenario. It is the portion of the oral epic poem that has assumed its place in our consciousness. Though we still don't really know anything, except that conspiracy theorists have made a veritable career of it, it was doubtlessly the same Bad that has been trying to oust Good right from the beginning.

Harrelson sublimely etches Johnson's understanding of the resultantly complicated domestic agenda that would ultimately define his presidency. He is the master carpenter who, faced with a structure nearly shaken from its foundation, rolls up his sleeves and gives us a tutorial in social reform that might have even impressed Mr. Machiavelli. That it is all realized in the shadow of a grand heartbreak and, like Roger Maris's 61 homers, wasn't completely appreciated until history said so, further impresses upon us the fickleness that attends the human pageant.

Unfortunately for us and Lyndon Baines Johnson, life, as my Mom oft inversely noted, isn't all cream and peaches. After the printed epilogue affirms the President's great domestic legacy, it alas notes his failure, as Washington had warned, to beware of foreign entanglements. Almost 60,000 Americans died in Vietnam. Relating these facts and letting them fall where they may in the service of history, *LBJ* is A-OK.

LBJ, rated R, is an Electric Entertainment release directed by Rob Reiner and stars Woody Harrelson, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Richard Jenkins. Running time: 98 minutes



NJPAC PREMIERE...The cast on stage for the Act I Finale of Trent Johnson's opera *Kenyatta* at NJPAC. The Opera will premiere on Sunday, November 19.

Trent Johnson's Opera *Kenyatta* Premieres at NJPAC

NEWARK—Trent Johnson, known by many concert goers and classical music enthusiasts as the conductor of The Oratorio Singers of Westfield and also as an accomplished organist, steps into a new role as opera composer when his full length opera *Kenyatta* will be presented on Sunday, November 19, at 7 p.m. at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark.

Commissioned by Trilogy: An Opera Company, *Kenyatta* is based upon the true life story of Jomo Kenyatta, freedom fighter and the inspirational first President of the Republic of Kenya. Kenya gains its independence from Great Britain in 1963, but the new president soon realizes that his vice president, Oginga Odinga, has some very different views on how the country should be run. Conflict, intrigue and a struggle of wills ensues on stage!

American opera singer Kevin

Maynor, known for his sonorous deep voice and compelling stage presence, will perform the title role in this production.

For *Kenyatta*, acclaimed Newark-born librettist and playwright Richard Wesley (*The Talented Truth*) has created a text that depicts the struggle between the two leaders to find the most effective approach to fostering freedom and equality - a conflict that runs between two noted families--Kenyatta and Odinga--and one which causes all of Africa and the world to hold its breath and watch.

This world premier production also features Tony Award Winner Trazana Beverley (*For Colored Girls...*) and maestro Julius Williams, who acts as both director and conductor. For the convenience of those who wish to attend, Tickets are available by calling (888) GO-NJPAC or on line by visiting www.njpac.org/events/detail/kenyatta.

Holiday Program Planned By Opera at Florham

MADISON—Opera at Florham continues to celebrate its 35th Anniversary season with its Holiday Program "Mingle and Jingle" at Lenfell Hall, The Mansion, Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison on Sunday, December 3 at 2 p.m.

This year the Chorus of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, will join Opera at Florham's singers: Theron Cromer, tenor, and Daniela Di Pasquale, soprano, accompanied by Mary Pinto, noted vocal coach. It will be an afternoon of traditional holiday music and song concluding with a sing-along with the audience.

The venue, Lenfell Hall (located in Hennessy Hall), was the drawing room of the Vanderbilt-Twombly family's gilded-age estate when they lived in the 100-room mansion. Lenfell Hall is handicap accessible and free van shuttle service from parking lots will be available to our attendees.

The FDU Chorus will render all three numbers in a cappella arrangements of

"Angels We Have Heard on High" (Robert Shaw), "Shabbat Shalom" (Allen Cohen), and "He's Gone Away" (Edmund Najera), under the baton of Director of Music Program, Allen Cohen, Professor of Music.

Theron Cromer and Daniela Di Pasquale will offer a selection of traditional carols, religious and other beautiful holiday duets with holiday medleys. Members of the audience will be invited to the stage to mingle with Theron and Daniela by joining them in singing some carols. The second half will include Mary playing some jazz themed- holiday music and ending in a singalong with the audience.

Tickets for this event are \$30 for adults, \$25 for seniors, \$5 Students and \$20 for groups over 10.

Children under 12, accompanied by an adult, are admitted free. Make check payable to Opera at Florham, P.O. Box 343, Convent Station, NJ 07961. Telephone (973)-443-8620 or purchase tickets online at www.OperaatFlorham.org.

New Issue of *Exit 13* Poetry Magazine Now Available

FANWOOD—Two dozen local poets lead the way in the new issue of *EXIT 13 Magazine* as they write about journeys to places near and far-away. The Garden State poets find inspiration in all sorts of places, whether it's a graveyard in Ireland or a desert road in Arizona. They also write about Jersey snow and swimming pools. The emphasis is on geography and the fertile ground of imagination.

Since 1988, editor Tom Plante of Fanwood has carefully selected poems for publication in *EXIT 13 Magazine*, an annual collection of contemporary poetry from around the corner

and around the world. The new issue reflects the landscapes and adventures of 24 New Jersey poets plus 19 contributors from other states.

Local poets in this 23rd issue of *EXIT 13 Magazine* include: Adele Kenny of Fanwood and Nancy Lubarsky of Cranford.

EXIT 13 Magazine, #23, is available from *EXIT 13 Magazine*, PO Box 423, Fanwood, New Jersey 07023. For more information or poetry submission guidelines for the 2018 issue, e-mail Exit13magazine@yahoo.com; or visit www.facebook.com/Exit13Magazine.

Celebrate the Holiday Season With NJ Festival Orchestra

WESTFIELD—From traditional to pops, choral favorites to renowned tenor fare, the winter season of NJ Festival Orchestra concerts will fill the entire family with warmth and cheer.

On Saturday, December 9 at 7 p.m. at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey Festival Orchestra kicks off the holiday season with a bang and plenty of bling with Return of the Holiday Tenors, a family festival of traditional and contemporary songs and music, sing-alongs and more.

The concert features last year's darling, award-winning tenor Cody Austin, who returns with friends to celebrate and captivate with a dazzling selection of renowned tenor classics. Traditional carols, signature versions of familiar fare and a host of wintertime curiosities are also sure to delight.

"We are thrilled to welcome The Three Holiday Tenors - each more talented than the next - to help us welcome in the Holiday season," said Maestro David Wroe. "We believe there is something for everyone in this performance. Our concert is a vessel for children, parents, grandparents and friends -- indeed the entire community -- to come together through music at this unique time of the year."

This seasonal stroll of timeless classics and sentimental favorites, sure to bring joy, smiles, and distinctive holiday memories to one and all, has been made possible in part by a Union County Heart (History, Education and Arts Reaching Thousands) grant, and support from The

Westfield Foundation.

After the Saturday, December 9 concert, the performance is repeated on Sunday afternoon, December 10 at 3 p.m. at The Concert Hall located in The Dorothy Young Center for the Performing Arts at Drew University in Madison. Ticket prices range from \$28 to \$76 for adults and there is a special discount price of only \$15 for students K-12.

Tickets are also available for NJ Festival Orchestra's New Year's Eve musical celebration, one of New Jersey's much anticipated and most popular New Year's Eve events.

This year's performance, "Puttin' on the Ritz," promises a superb revue of American musical theater classics from stage and screen presented in glorious symphonic splendor featuring renowned guest vocalists direct from the Broadway stage and beyond.

Tickets range in price from \$42 to \$70. A special discount price of \$15 is available for children under 18, making this event (which starts at 7 p.m. and ends at 9 p.m.) a perfect way for the entire family to welcome in the New Year together. Patrons are advised to purchase tickets well in advance as this concert has been a sell out for the past five years.

Tickets for both concerts are available online at www.njfestivalorchestra.org. Tickets may also be purchased by calling (908) 232-9400 or by visiting the office at 224 E. Broad Street, Westfield (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Patrons are advised to purchase tickets online to avoid all ticketing and handling fees.



Cody Austin

Retired Westfield Teacher Publishes Poetry Book

WESTFIELD—Carol Nolde, a Westfield English teacher for thirty years, has published her latest collection of poetry *Things Live After*. Published by Finishing Line Press, an award winning poetry publisher, the poems in the chapbook reflect Mrs. Nolde's sense of history and how objects left behind connect us to lives lived before us. Pictured on the book's cover is the family homestead built by her great-grandfather at the turn of the twentieth century. It is here that growing up, she developed a deep connection to family history and to the life lived in this small farming community.

Well known poet Molly Peacock writes, "Carol Nolde calls out to a rural past in her chapbook crafted as expertly as a hand-made table. With warmth Nolde rebuilds a heritage."

Mrs. Nolde and her husband Frank are retired Westfield teachers and long time residents of Westfield. Sullivan County, New York natives, they have maintained a home in the hills where Nolde's family once farmed. The sense of the history of the region drives much of her poetry.

As award winning poet Charlotte Mandel describes the work: "In her exquisite chapbook titled *Things Live After*, Carol Nolde takes us from 'wheel rutted streets of Pompeii' to a farmhouse on an auctioneer's block

where once treasured possessions 'scatter' like dandelion parachutes in the wind.' One after another, the poems transport us to lives past and present, by means of sensory details and subtly controlled language that recall the pastoral invitations of Robert Frost."

As a writing teacher, Mrs. Nolde encouraged her students to submit work for publication. In fact, it was the success of her students' being published by *Merlyn's Pen*, a national magazine of student writing, that resulted in Mrs. Nolde's being asked to work as an associate editor at the magazine.

Things Live After can be ordered online from Finishing Line Press.

International Beverage Expert to Sign Books

WESTFIELD—The Town Book Store will be hosting a Meet & Greet for international beverage journalist and expert Jeff Cioletti, author of *The Drinkable Globe: The Indispensable Guide to the Wide World of Booze* on Saturday, November 18 from 2 to 4 p.m.

A great gift for anyone who enjoys a good beverage, Jeff Cioletti explores the tradition, consumption, and production of alcohol on every continent.

The Town Book Store located at 270 East Broad Street in Westfield (corner of East Broad and Elmer Streets).

Watchung Arts Center Hosts Annual Holiday Concert

WATCHUNG—The holidays are coming to the Watchung Arts Center (WAC), and what better way to celebrate the season of "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men" than with the music of Amani, whose name means "peace" in Swahili. The Center's Annual Holiday Concert, on Saturday, December 9, will begin at 8 p.m. and will be followed by a dessert reception with an opportunity to meet the musicians and enjoy some holiday cheer.

Amani was formed to share the concept of peace through music, performing for people of all ages, races, and religious affiliations.

The members of the group are veteran musicians: Marty Eigen on

sax and flute; Fred Fischer on piano; vocalist Stephen Fuller; guitarist Flip Peters, bassist Ben Rubens and Nick Scheuble on drums. This will be the 14th annual Holiday visit to the WAC by Eigen, who has been a frequent contributor to the center's "JaZZ in the Gallery" series, with his Beacon Hill Jazz Band as well as with other noted jazz performers.

Tickets are \$18 in advance, \$22 (\$20 WAC members, \$10 students) at the door. Tickets may be purchased online at watchungartscenter.eventbrite.com.

The Watchung Arts Center, located at 18 Stirling Road in Watchung on the Watchung Circle.

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Pharmacy News

by Mitul P. Patel, PharmD., RPh.
Pharmacy Manager

ADMINISTERING FIRST AID

While most injuries don't require a trip to the doctor or emergency room, even those that do are usually preceded by the need to administer first-aid treatment. It is therefore really necessary to have a first-aid kit on hand, both at home and in the car. Because they can be quickly picked up and transported outdoors or wherever they are needed, well-supplied first-aid kits are far preferable than simply having bandages, tape, antibiotic creams, etc. in various places in the bathroom, medicine cabinet, and closets in the house. In addition to having a first-aid kit on hand, it pays to read the accompanying manual and have some knowledge of first-aid techniques. Preparation goes a long way in avoiding a crisis.

Most pharmacies sell ready-made first aid kits, but first aid kits can also be tailored to specific medical needs or activities. First aid kits usually include bandages and topical antibiotics to treat common minor problems such as cuts, scrapes, burns, abrasions, stings and strains. Some kits also contain analgesics, antihistamines and anti-inflammatory. To learn more, please call our pharmacy. We make it our business to provide you with complete information about your prescriptions, expiration dates, storage instructions and insurance coverage.

HINT: In addition to having a first-aid kit readily accessible, parents, grandparents, and babysitters should have poison hotline phone numbers clearly posted in the home or on cell phones.

Fanwood Pharmacy

246 South Ave., Unit 4 • Fanwood, NJ • 908-680-6936

Please email your questions to: Mit@FanwoodPharmacy.com or visit our website at: www.FanwoodPharmacy.com