

**POPCORN**

*The Grinch*  
Will Do In a Pinch  
2 & ½ Popcorns

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

By Michael S. Goldberger  
film critic

If there be 25 days of Christmas,  
All around the world and even  
Through the isthmus,  
Of Panama that is,  
Then we still don't have a *Grinch*  
movie  
For each day,  
Is what I mean to say,  
For with this latest just so-so example,  
Number 5, including the 1966 television  
special and the live action film from  
2000,  
We have but a small sample  
Of the Grinches, I believe, there will  
Be by the year 3000.

There'll be one for you and one for me,  
And surely a green, curmudgeonly  
Grinch for every Who,  
Just wait and see,  
To be the kiddy lit takeoff on Dickens's  
*Scrooge*, decrying Christmas and all its  
joys, and doing His Grinchiest best to  
keep long awaited toys  
Out of the hands of all the little girls  
and boys.

In this latest  
Colorful and cute, but not as astute,  
permutation  
As the version with Jim Carrey voicing  
the Grinch,  
Benedict Cumberbatch is OK in a pinch  
As the symbol of Christmas  
Devastation.

But while this newest Yuletide killjoy  
hates Christmas well enough,  
He isn't as funny in his total  
Rebuff,  
Of Santa, reindeers, sugar plums and  
the whole deal, a problem doubtless  
caused by the  
Writers, who could have done a better  
Spiel.

When the script directly quotes  
Dr. Seuss's original work it's of course  
fine,  
Whereas the in-between connecting  
stuff lacks ingenuity, and sometimes  
Doesn't even rhyme.

Yet for little Peggy, Dave and Bruce,  
who don't yet know about Whoville, the  
Grinch and all that they entail,  
This version won't totally fail  
To tell the tale,  
At least until Mom and Dad avail  
Of the  
2000 iteration either through Netflix  
or the mail.

That said, where credit is due, the  
moral lesson is intact, and it's a cinch  
That perspicacious  
Moppets viewing this newest  
Adaptation  
May spot the almost  
Gracious  
Way in which the Grinch treats his  
loyal dog Max,  
A hint that he might not be beyond  
Salvation.

But sad to say,  
Most of the music, like the graphics, to  
our  
Dismay,  
Is perfunctory

At best,  
'Cept for Tyler The Creator's nomina-  
tion-worthy rap song, "I Am The Grinch"  
At the closing credits, which is totally  
high-test.

All of which might hint that a little  
more creativity  
For the mean one just this go-round,  
Mind you,  
Might have made for nuance  
Newfound,  
Rather than simply singing a paean  
To the standard out of duty bound.

But hark, Grandma and Grandpa,  
Never mind my harsh  
And foppish criticism, written  
Somewhat to  
Prove my witticism.  
For it's being with you and lax rules  
That accompany, the free-flowing  
Candy and gift of money, that  
Zoey and Liam treasure more  
Than what's showing.

So if of a mind, take 'em and enjoy  
Anyway, tomorrow or today,  
Out and about with the hoi polloi.  
Because while the newest Grinch may  
be

Just a little Mediocre, what really counts  
is the caring,  
The kindhearted message of  
Joy, charity and goodness, all worth  
sharing.

...  
*The Grinch* rated PG, is a Universal  
Pictures release directed by Yarrow  
Cheney and Scott Mosier and stars the  
voices of Benedict Cumberbatch,  
Cameron Seely and Rashida Jones. Run-  
ning time: 86 minutes.

**NJIO to Perform Free  
Family Concert Sunday**

NEW PROVIDENCE -- New Jersey  
Intergenerational Orchestra (NJIO)  
will present a free holiday  
concert for the whole family entitled  
"Sleigh Rides!" on Sunday, December  
9, at 3 p.m. at New Providence  
High School. The music will be fol-  
lowed by an instrument petting zoo  
where children can touch and try the  
instruments they heard. Admission is  
free.

NJIO's Symphony Orchestra will  
perform selections from *The Nut-  
cracker* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sergei  
Prokofiev's *Troika Sleigh Ride*, Jeff  
Manookian's *Improvisations on Ar-  
menian Folk Songs*, Leopold  
Mozart's *Musical Sleigh Ride*,  
Frederick Delius's *Sleigh Ride*, and  
Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*.

Warren Cohen and Brian McGowan  
will be the conductors for the Inter-  
mezzo and Symphony Ensembles  
playing together. The concert will be  
followed by an Instrument Petting  
Zoo where young people can try out  
orchestra instruments and meet the  
players.

**Musical Club of Westfield  
Offers Free Concert Dec. 12**

WESTFIELD — The public is in-  
vited to attend a free concert given by  
The Musical Club of Westfield on  
Wednesday, December 12, at 1:30  
p.m. This is the December offering in  
a year-long series of events spon-  
sored by the Musical Club and will be  
held at the First Baptist Church of  
Westfield located at 170 Elm Street in  
Westfield.

The concert will begin with  
Angelsong, written in 2014 by noted  
contemporary composer Gary  
Schocker. The piece has four move-  
ments: I. Cassiel, Angel of Tears II.  
Phaniel, Angel of Hope and Repen-  
tance III. Hesindeil, Angel of Benevo-  
lence, Mercy, Freedom IV. Netzach,  
Angel of Eternity and will be per-  
formed by Jenny Cline, flute and  
Beverly Shea, harp.

Baritone Stephen Tasy, accompa-  
nied by pianist Helen Ryba, will con-  
tinue the program with Italian art songs  
by Giordani, Scarlatti and Pregolesi  
and two operatic arias, "Il Lacerato  
Spinto" from Verdi's *Simon Boccan-  
era* and "Madamina! Il Catalogo e  
Questo!" from Mozart's  
*Don Giovanni*.

Robert Romano, clarinet, and  
Carolle-Ann Mochernuk will close

the concert with *The Poulenc Clari-  
net Sonata*, composed in 1962. One  
of the last pieces written by Francis  
Poulenc, it was premiered by Benny  
Goodman, clarinet, and Leonard  
Bernstein, piano, two-and-a-half-  
months after the composer died. Al-  
though Goodman commissioned the  
work, Poulenc dedicated it to the  
memory his old friend, Swiss com-  
poser Arthur Honegger, who, like  
Poulenc, was a member of Les Six, a  
group of composers living and com-  
posing in Paris in the 1920s.

There will be a reception with light  
refreshments immediately after the  
concert where audience members will  
have the opportunity to meet the per-  
formers.

The Musical Club of Westfield is a  
non-profit organization whose mis-  
sion is to foster and encourage good  
music, provide performance oppor-  
tunities for local musicians and sup-  
port young musicians from Union  
County with college scholarships. It  
also sponsors the Junior Musical Club  
for students in grades 8 to 12 from the  
surrounding communities. Additional  
information about the club can be  
found by visiting  
musicalclubofwestfield.org.



FROM RENAISSANCE TO RAGTIME...Majestic Winds, the professional wind band of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, will present a fall concert at the Ehrhart Gardens, located at 100 Francis Court, Union, on Thursday, December 13, at 7:30 p.m. Their musical offerings range from Renaissance to Ragtime.

**Majestic Winds in Concert  
At Ehrhart Gardens, Dec. 13**

UNION — Majestic Winds, the  
professional wind band of the New  
Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA),  
will present a fall concert at the Ehrhart  
Gardens, located at 100 Francis Court,  
Union, on Thursday, December 13, at  
7:30 p.m. The ensemble will be di-  
rected by Howard Toplansky, an  
NJWA staff instrumental instructor.  
"Our musical offerings are geared to  
please a variety of musical tastes and  
range from Renaissance to Ragtime  
favorites," stated Mr. Toplansky.

"The Pirates of Penzance" Overtu-  
re by Sir Arthur Sullivan, High-  
lights from "My Fair Lady" by  
Frederick Loewe and Galop from  
"Genevieve de Brabant" by Jacques  
Offenbach will be the main selections  
on the first half of the concert. "Golden  
Sunset Waltzes" by John T. Hall,

"Broadway One-Step" by Karl L.  
King and "Strenuous Life" by Scott  
Joplin will also be featured on this  
program. Several fine marches will  
also be performed, which include  
"Children of the Regiment" by Julius  
Fucik, "In Storm and Sunshine" by J.  
C. Heed and "U.S. Army Ambulance  
Corps" by John Philip Sousa.

Additional numbers included in this  
concert are: "Deep River" and "Arioso"  
by J. S. Bach. Also featured on this  
program will be "Pizzicato Polka" by  
Johann and Josef Strauss and "After  
You've Gone" by Creamer and Layton.  
This event is open to the public.  
Admission is free and contributions  
will be gratefully accepted. For addi-  
tional information about NJWA or  
Majestic Winds, call (908) 789-9696  
or email njwaband@att.net.

**Amani Brings Holiday  
Message of Peace**

AREA — The Watchung Arts Cen-  
ter (WAC) will celebrate the rich and  
joyous sounds of the season with its  
15th Annual Holiday Concert by  
*Amani*. The performance, on Satur-  
day, December 8, will begin at 8 p.m.  
and will be followed by a dessert  
reception with an opportunity to meet  
the musicians and enjoy some holi-  
day cheer.

*Amani* was formed to share the  
concept of peace through music, per-  
forming for people of all ages, races,  
and religious affiliations. This con-  
cert features seasonal sounds that  
capture the joy and love of the holi-  
day season. *Amani*, the word for peace  
in Swahili, performs hits from a vari-  
ety of genres including The Great  
American Songbook, Gospel, R&B,  
Jazz, Bossa Nova, Broadway and a  
selection of holiday favorites. The  
members of the group are veteran  
musicians led by Marty Eigen on  
woodwinds, vocalist Stephen Fuller,  
pianist Fred Fischer, guitarist Flip  
Peters, bassist Gene Perla, and Nick  
Scheuble on drums.

Tickets are \$18 in advance, \$22  
(\$20 WAC members, \$10 students) at  
the door. Tickets may be purchased  
online at  
watchungartscenter.eventbrite.com.  
To obtain more information about  
upcoming performances, classes and  
workshops, and monthly art exhibi-  
tions, please visit WatchungArts.org  
or call (908) 753-0190.  
The WAC, located at 18 Stirling

Road in Watchung on the Watchung  
Circle, is a multi-disciplinary arts fa-  
cility serving Watchung, the surround-  
ing communities and the tri-state area.

**Dance Show Examines  
Body Image**

UNION - Kean Stage will present  
D.I.S.P.L.A.Y.E.D by Heidi Latsky  
Dance on Friday, December 7, at  
Wilkins Theatre, 1000 Morris Av-  
enue, Union. It is a commentary on  
the human body as spectacle and  
society's obsession with body image.  
Ms. Latsky incorporates dancers with  
disabilities in order to redefine beauty  
and show the performers' unique at-  
tributes to diverse audiences. The  
dancers may be old or young, large or  
small, any gender and in any physical  
condition. Some may be amputees,  
burn victims, deaf, blind or in wheel-  
chairs. The performance turns a cast  
of diverse and extreme bodies into a  
human sculpture court, in which the  
dancers are the sculptures. It will be  
part dance and part performance art.  
D.I.S.P.L.A.Y.E.D has been staged  
at Lincoln Center, the Whitney Mu-  
seum, the High Line, Times Square,  
the ReelAbilities Film Festival and  
Disability Arts International.

Tickets are \$20 and are available  
at the Kean Stage Box Office in  
Wilkins Theatre, by phone at (908)  
737-7469 or online at  
www.keanstage.com. Get 50% off  
with promo code: ONDISPLAY.



YOUNG STARS...The Pingry School's Drama and Music Departments presented *Peter and the Starcatcher* in November. It is a pirate story that explores the events before a young, nameless orphan becomes the boy who never grew up—Peter Pan. Among the cast and crew were local youth Grace Brown '19 of Westfield, Nicholas Grimaldi '19 of Scotch Plains, Ainsley Ellison '22 of Westfield, Corbey Ellison '20 of Westfield, Lydia Gargano '19 of Westfield, and Alex Kaplan '21 of Westfield.

**Improv Comedy To  
Perform Saturday**

GLEN RIDGE -- There's Black  
Friday, Cyber Monday and now Silly  
Saturday as Lunatic Fringe, New  
Jersey's longest performing profes-  
sional improv comedy troupe, takes  
the stage for its pre-Christmas show  
on December 8 at 8 p.m. at the Glen  
Ridge Train Station. Now in its 22nd  
season, the group's secret to longevi-  
ty is simple: fast, witty and insightful  
humor as the comedians draw on  
music and audience suggestions to  
create a show that's different every  
time, but always funny. "Holiday time  
is stress time," says Deb Maclean,  
director, "so it's a really good idea to  
break up the season with a few laughs.  
And we're pretty sure our version of  
Santa will show up with some ridicu-  
lous gifts." Lunatic Fringe perform-  
ers in the show include: Maclean,  
Harvey Chipkin, Susan Korn, Paul  
Murphy, and Gary Van Lieu. Rodney  
Marfil improvises on piano. Tickets  
to the December 8 Lunatic Fringe  
show at Glen Ridge Train Station  
(228 Ridgewood Avenue, near  
Bloomfield Avenue) are \$10 with  
reservations, \$12 at the door. For  
reservations, call (973) 429-1527.

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Sun-2:00pm

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