

Westfield Musical Club Plans Feb. 7 Auditions

WESTFIELD - The Musical Club of Westfield has announced that auditions for active membership will be held on Wednesday, February 7, at 10:45 a.m.

Auditioning singers should be prepared to perform two memorized pieces, one from the Early, Baroque or Classical periods. Pieces from the Late, Romantic and Modern periods are also allowed. For more information and to register for an audition, please call Evelyn Bleeke at (908) 232-2173.

Veteran Actors Joe Nierle and Stan Kaplan Of Westfield to Star in Barefoot In The Park

CRANFORD - Westfielders Joe Nierle and Stan Kaplan will apply their seasoned skills as veteran actors to their roles in *Barefoot In The Park* at the Cranford Dramatic Club (CDC).

They will take the stage on Fridays and Saturdays, February 9, 10, 16, 17, 23 and 24, at 8 p.m. at CDC, 78 Winans Avenue in Cranford.

Mr. Nierle, who has performed in community or stock theatre in seven states, and on Showtime,

MTV, and PBS, will play Victor Velasco, Mrs. Banks' love interest. His character is affectionately named "The Bluebeard of 48th Street."

Formally trained with a Master of Arts Degree in Theatre from Pennsylvania State University, Mr. Nierle also trained at New York City's Circle in the Square and Actor's Playhouse. He is also the Theatre Teacher/Director at Westfield High School, where he is currently directing *42nd Street*.

Mr. Nierle's favorite roles thus far, include Roy Cohen in *Angels In America, Part 1* and Sam in *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*. The actor noted that he likes "extreme roles for the sheer challenge." He also directed *Barefoot In The Park* when the ink was barely dry on Neil Simon's page. His credits include directing *Chees*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Secret Garden*

at Chatham Playhouse. He has also served as Artistic Director for Millbrook Summer Stock Theatre in Mill Hall, Pa. Mr. Nierle is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

Mr. Kaplan will portray the telephone repairman in *Barefoot In The Park*. His acting credits include Solomon in *The Price*, a giant in *Brave Little Tailor* and Henry in *Lion In Winter*.

"I've always wanted to perform in Cranford," stated Mr. Kaplan, who has worked with the Westfield Community Players, Circle Players of Rahway, Woodbridge and Piscataway and the Scotch Plains Players, among others.

All tickets to *Barefoot In The Park* are \$15 each. For more information and ticket reservations, please call (908) 276-7611.



Second Annual 'Sweetheart Night' On Tap at Kuran Arts Center

FANWOOD - Fanwood's Cultural Arts Committee will hold its second annual "Sweetheart Night" on Wednesday, February 14, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center on Watson Road.

Approximately 15-20 selected members from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Repertory Theater will perform a variety of love songs in observance of Valentine's Day.

Coordinated by the Fanwood Cultural Arts Committee and Lindsey Davis, Vice President of the Repertory Theater and Student Musical Director, the Valentine's Day concert is open to all and is free of charge.

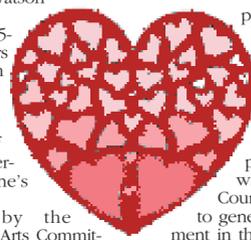
Donations to the Repertory Theater will be gratefully appreciated. Under the direction of Laurie

Wellman, Musical Director, and Diane McGovern, Dramatics Director, the Repertory Theater performs one musical each year at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

This year, the group will present *Anything Goes*. Four performances will be held on Friday and Saturday of the last two weekends in March.

The Fanwood Cultural Arts Committee is a Mayor's Committee comprised of nine volunteers who work with Borough Council Liaison Karen Schurtz to generate community involvement in the arts and to further develop the Kuran facility as a diversified center for creative and performing arts in Union County.

For more information about "Sweetheart Night," or the activities of the Fanwood Cultural Arts Committee, please call Adele Kenny at (908) 889-7223.



Original Woodstock Performer Havens Books Gig at The Crossroads

GARWOOD - Richie Havens, best known for his performance at

early 1960s with songs of brotherhood, personal freedom and unified social consciousness.

His music is both contemporary in sound and rooted in the folk/blues/pop tradition.

"My albums are meant to be a chronological view of the times that we've come through," said Havens, "what we've thought about and what we've done to grow and change."

Opening for Havens will be the New Jersey-based acoustic duo, Duendé, featuring Westfielder Maria Woodford and Alex Radus.

The duo, which specializes in Americana music, just finished their 10-month tour of the country and has returned home to record another CD.

Tickets are currently on sale at The Crossroads, 78 North Avenue, Garwood. For more information, please call (908) 232-5666.



Richie Havens

Woodstock and 33 years of experience recording music, will perform at The Crossroads in Garwood on Sunday, February 4, at 7 p.m.

Mr. Havens first emerged from the Greenwich Village folk scene in the

Amy Watson of Fanwood

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ALW - Sometimes. It's fun. I just saw *Rocky Horror*.

WL - I'm still so surprised that you really haven't studied acting all that much. Do you have any desire to act professionally?

ALW - It's a thought. I've mostly been involved with theater for fun. I've done a lot of community theater locally and I was involved in theater at school. So far, it's really just been a hobby.

WL - Do you have a favorite role that you have played or a favorite theatrical experience?

ALW - Well, right now, it's Corie in *Barefoot*. I also loved playing Laurel in *Torch Song Trilogy*, and Sunny in *Last Night of Ballyhoo* was definitely a highlight.

WL - Do you have anything coming up after *Barefoot in the Park*?

ALW - Nothing yet. I think I'll take a short break. I don't think there are many auditions coming up. But you never know.

WL - You grew up in Fanwood. Do you have any favorite places or a special memory of living here?

ALW - I do. It's a nice town. I think we have a beautiful train station. And I remember playing in Slocum's Field when I was a kid.

WL - Where do you see yourself in five years?

ALW - What, am I being interviewed? (We both laugh) Let's see. That's a tough one. My college friends and I have often talked about starting our own theater company. I think everyone involved with theater has at some point thought of that. But it would be nice.

WL - Again, I think you really have what it takes. Any chances of acting professionally?

ALW - Let's just say that is a thought.

Personally, I think Ms. Watson should definitely think about it. She is talented, she is gracious, and I think the professional world of theater could only benefit from this lovely lady. I am looking forward to seeing her strut her stuff in CDC's upcoming production of *Barefoot in the Park*.

tale cliché. There's a personal note here. Wrestling with his past, Jerry's need for vindication is his most telling trait.

Granted, Detective Black may be an altruist. And remember, he did make that promise to the little girl's mom. But to what end will he go to get his man, or woman for that matter? Unfortunately, the length and breadth of his obsession begins to challenge the murder plot for control of the movie. And the story grows an ungainly new branch.

However, the heartfelt metaphor about a man's need to be useful and still deemed vital is nonetheless competently etched by Nicholson. Too bad the performance isn't surrounded by a better conceived film.

Also putting in a good turn is Robin Wright Penn as Lori, a potential love interest who just happens to be the mother of a blonde little girl who fits the killer's preference list. An abused waitress, she is the prototypical heroine of every country western song ever written.

Nevertheless, Wright Penn plays the rural heartbreak with refreshing confidence. Problem is, the relationship that ensues between Jerry and Lori implies much too outlandish a question about Jerry's crime-solving zeal. Draw your own conclusions.

The Pledge has plenty of tension. Oodles of it. But not the good kind. It doesn't seem to be the filmmaker's desire to have us successfully guess whodunit? There are no clues per se, just repetitive trips up numerous blind alleys with little satisfaction or conclusion. Like a bratty child, the movie has a secret, and it isn't telling. And since we don't get to see things through the fiend's eyes, this can be no psychological thriller either.

Instead, a planned paranoia grips the atmosphere. It could be anyone. Maybe even the person you came to the theater with.

In short, the tacit message being sent is that we are doomed. That we are defenseless in the face of evil forces. Somehow, it seems much more eloquent, if still not palatable, when Dostoevsky, or even Ingmar Bergman, tells us that bad news. From Sean Penn it just feels depressing. And that's reason enough not to vouch positive for *The Pledge*.

The Pledge, rated R, is a Warner Brothers release directed by Sean Penn and stars Jack Nicholson, Robin Wright Penn and Sam Shepard. Running time: 124 minutes.



MUSICAL FUNDRAISER...The Little Opera Company of New Jersey, along with The Baroque Orchestra of Boonton, will host "Opera D'Amore," a fundraising dinner and concert on Sunday, February 18, at 4 p.m. at Mezzogiorno, 450 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains. The concert will feature coloratura soprano Valerie Pineda, mezzo soprano Betsy Mackenzie-Stubbs, tenor Juan Pineda and others. The event will benefit the group's four May performances. Tickets are \$65 per person, including dinner and concert. For reservations and more information, please call (908) 654-2006. Pictured, left to right, Ms. Mackenzie-Stubbs and Ms. Pineda in *The Marriage of Figaro*, who will perform at "Opera D'Amore."

Jerseyaires Will Make You Swoon While Performing Singing Valentines

AREA - The Rahway Valley Jerseyaires, in conjunction with the Deans of Harmony, both Barbershop Choruses (non-profit musical and educational organizations) of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. (SPEBSQSA) has announced its eighth year of performing Singing Valentines.

This service will be available on Saturday, February 10, through Wednesday, February 14, at a cost of \$50.

A barbershop quartet, dressed in formal attire, will sing two love songs at a location of your choice (workplace, residence, restaurant, etc.) The recipient will also receive a special Valentine candy, a flower and picture



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certainly a long time in coming, was very much only to be experienced. Horns were strong and accurate in addition to the lower brass section. In fact, all sections of the orchestra performed well.

Upper, middle and lower strings sounded fantastic - a complete improvement from orchestral sound of merely one year ago.

The only upset came on the Sunday afternoon performance. Macal was not to blame for the absolutely blown attack from one of the trumpets in the finale, which unfortunately marred the ending of the final concert of the month-long festival.

This early fff attack came within the last four bars of music and just blared into the silence of the hall in one of the pregnant pause rests between the typically maddening staccato chords of the big "Tchaikovsky ending" (what ending is not big with Tchaikovsky? - well, the 6th Symphony, but evening that silence is deafening).

Salt in the wound however was to see some in the trumpet section grinning about it afterwards - but as musicians know, trumpet players are cut from a different cloth.

Principal horn player Lucinda-Lewis was not smiling after her two much more minor musical infelicities during the Friday night concert. She went on to perform flawlessly for both the Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon concerts.

But freunde, nicht diese Töne! Sondern lasst uns angenehmer anstimmen, und freudenvollere. Let the focus remain on the great success of this fantastic festival highlighting the great Russian composer Peter Illych Tchaikovsky and his mad, tormented and passionate life and music.

Next year, New Jersey audiences will be treated to more powerful music in a winter festival highlighting the great German composer Richard Strauss.

1 & 1/2 popcorns

Feeling too good of late? Think you need to have your head dragged a bit? Then take in Sean Penn's *The Pledge*. These are grim doings indeed. And they're certain to muddle your evening. But if that's not your goal, stand clear.

It would be all well and good if a distinct purpose for all this bleakness could be ascertained. That is, if there were some discernible wisdom hidden within this bitter pill. But as written by Jerzy and Mary Olson Kromolowski and interpreted by Penn, the redeeming story value is much too slight to justify the broad swaths of discomfort it perpetrates.

No doubt, the director has had the inspiring opportunity to work with a bunch of fine filmmakers. Because he seems hell-bent on incorporating their greatness into his own momentous moments. The imitative influence is apparent. Thus this dire tale about a serial killer specializing in little girls and the tormented retired cop (Jack Nicholson) who has pledged to catch him is loaded with recognizable nihilism and despondently familiar notes about the big bad world.

The harshness is piled high and inorganic, as if the director found a bottle of "Essence of Severe and Grave Movie" and splashed it about like a teen-aged boy trying his first application of after shave.

And despair unaccompanied by philosophical genius and at least a slight glint of optimism is just sheer masochism to witness. That noted, *The Pledge* does have its good points. Well, some at least.

The camera work, while also a bit derivative, is for the most part stylish. The imagery is often strong. The hopeless sterility of winter in the Sierra Nevada makes for a daunting backdrop. And Penn exhibits a Felliniesque penchant for American fringe types and oddballs, all of whom might be the murderer. Or not.

It's as if all of Norman Rockwell's small-town folk had suddenly gone bad. Although these trash culture weirdoes are imbued with an implied threat, they are occasionally diverting in a side show sort of way.

If they weren't, Ricki Lake and Sally Jessie Raphael wouldn't have TV shows. But the film's most elaborate characterization is the one fashioned by Nicholson. Playing his age, the famed thespian is gumshoe Jerry Black. You know the drill. Here he is, trying to close the book on a lifetime of illustrious accomplishment, and along comes the murder case of his career. Of course, Nicholson's troubled sleuth amounts to more than a detective

Three Bach Concerts Slated For Festival in Westfield

WESTFIELD - The public is invited to attend a concert series being presented in Westfield on the last weekend in February. The series, entitled the Westfield Bach Festival, will consist of three concerts of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The first concert consists of chamber music and is entitled "Brandenburgs!" Presented by the Ducal Chamber Players on Friday evening, February 23, at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the program will include Brandenburg Concertos 4 and 6, a trio sonata and a French Suite.

The second concert, "Pulling Out All the Stops: Bach Organ Marathon" is on Saturday afternoon, February 24, at 3 p.m. at First Congregational Church. The program, which will include many of the best known of Bach's organ works, will be presented by Mary Lou Stevens (3 p.m.), Rives Cassel (3:30 p.m.), David Drinkwater (4 p.m.), Trent Johnson (4:30 p.m.), and Barbara Thomson (5 p.m.). This concert is designed for attendees to come and go.

The final program, the Westfield Bach Festival Gala Concert, is on Sunday evening, February 25, at 7:30 p.m. at

The Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity. Featuring the Westfield Bach Festival Chorus, Soloists, and Orchestra conducted by Andrew Megill, the program will include a concerto for two harpsichords (Ms. Thomson and Mr. Cassel, harpsichordists), Cantata 51 (Laura Heimes, soprano and Don Batchelder, trumpet), and Cantata 80 (Bach Festival Chorus and Orchestra, Laura Heimes, soprano, Erika Dettra, alto, Nathan Davis, tenor, Curtis Kinzey, bass).

For further details, please visit <http://westfieldbachfestival.homestead.com>.

Tickets will cost \$50 for the series or \$20 each for the concerts on Friday and Saturday and \$30 for the concert on Sunday. Tickets for the complete series only will be available from The Classic Basket, Lancaster, Ltd., Periwinkle's, and Betty Gallagher Antiques, First Congregational Church, First United Methodist Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, The Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity, and The Presbyterian Church of Westfield.

Admission to individual concerts can be purchased at the door. This concert series is made possible in part by a generous grant from the Westfield Foundation.

Dynamic Earth at Newark Museum

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will be prompted to continue the science conversation and bridge it into the household.

Another area of the exhibit will focus on the continuing evolution of scientific research. Scientists will discuss their work and share their findings with visitors on topics such as amber found in New Jersey.

Public Relations Manager for The Newark Museum Lorraine McConnell reported that it took three years to organize the specimens with the holding cabinets for some of them funded by capital projects by the City of Newark.

Promoting exhibits like Dynamic Earth and the museum itself is central to changing preconceptions about Newark. Amid a cultural renaissance, treasures like the museum's programs and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center are quickly sprouting up and catching interest.

Director of The Newark Museum Mary Sue Sweeney Price told *The Leader* and *The Times* that the Museum has been frequented by 50 Westfield Girl

Scouts, the Westfield Women's Club, Tamaques, Washington and Franklin Elementary Schools in Westfield, and Roosevelt Intermediate School, which commonly borrows items from the museum.

Ms. Price stressed the importance of seeing Newark as "a hub" and "a lively, vibrant city" for the Metropolitan area. She added that by offering programs like Dynamic Earth, the Newark Museum hopes to prevent "leap-frogging" over Newark to New York City.

While the museum must obtain \$2.5 million of additional funding to finish the science initiative, Ms. Price indicated that the City of Newark, hosts of public and private donors, residents of New Jersey, membership and the Victoria Foundation have been integral in seeing the initiative progress thus far.

Museum officials expect to reach close to 400,000 school children with the Dynamic Earth program. To help fund the exhibit, please visit www.newarkmuseum.org, call (973) 848-8395 or write campaignforscience@newarkmuseum.org.

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