

A&E

Newark Museum's 2002 Exhibit 'Dynamic Earth' Will Breathe Life Into Saga of Science

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

NEWARK — Within the confines of a temperature-controlled room at The Newark Museum, Curator of the Natural Science Collection Sule Oygur stands guard over trays and cabinets of painstakingly categorized rare plants, insects, butterflies and other precious specimens.

Down the hall, Director of the Science Department Dr. Ismael Calderon details the secrets of science behind endless tables of specimens, a cougar ready to pounce and a mineral waiting to glow.

In total, 70,000 of these scientific wonders are waiting for March 2002, when they will become part of a 5,000 square foot "classroom" within the Newark Museum's "Dynamic Earth: Revealing Nature's Secrets" exhibition.

While the word "exhibition" conjures up images of roped off displays and untouchable curiosities, Dynamic Earth promises to be a hands-on experience meant to fulfill the museum's goal in combining science, art and education.

Prototypes of the exhibit, which was designed by award-winning architect Michael Graves, were open to the press and other guests earlier this month, garnering praise and anticipation for the official 2002 unveiling.

The \$12 million project, which is separated into varied components, was originally meant to be one giant room without such variety. However, Dr. Calderon pushed for a diverse layout in order to give visitors a more comprehensive education and appreciation for science.

"We want visitors to do science as science does science and let it be more hands-on," said Dr. Calderon, while showing a rock embossed with fossilized raindrops.

Advisory Committees comprised of science teachers, Museum trustees, and researchers provided input into designing the exhibit's components.

Dr. Calderon called the collaboration with teachers a reciprocal process, allowing both groups to bring ideas to the table and learn some new ones during the brainstorming.

Dr. Calderon reported, "We did market research about what potential audience would visit and what kind of space would be needed."

He further explained that scriptwriters for Dynamic Earth worked to interject "cliffhangers" throughout the exhibit, which is meant to read like a story of science.

The fluid and brilliant render-

ings for the exhibits by Bruce MacPherson are works of art in themselves. The components en-

display of Palisades Rocks found only in Morocco and New Jersey — proving that the two continents



David Palladino for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Director of the Science Department at the Newark Museum Dr. Ismael Calderon and Public Relations Manager Lorraine McConnell discuss a model of the Dynamic Earth exhibit with A&E Editor Michelle LePoidevin.



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Director of the Newark Museum Mary Sue Sweeney Price and Public Relations Manager Lorraine McConnell during a tour with The Leader/The Times.



David Palladino for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Dr. Ismael Calderon explains the intricate fossil impressions left in one of the rocks to be included in the exhibit.

titled, "The Diversity Sweep," "Dynamic Earth," "Life Adapts to Change," "The New Jersey Highlands," "Life in a Cave," and "Discovery Field Station," are well-conceived and sure to lure visitors into learning.

During an informative tour of the specimens, Dr. Calderon discussed energy in terms of light given off from a rock found in the Franklin Mines in Franklin Lakes. To the wonder of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*, Dr. Calderon exposed the rock's fluorescence before moving onto a display of walrus skin. He also offered a

were once united.

To keep the exhibit eye-catching and near-magical, the "Life in a Cave" component will use a chemical known as "pepper's ghost" to transform the skeletal form of a bat into the full creature in order to teach anatomy to children.

Dr. Calderon said, "The objective is to start a science conversation, to start asking yourself questions and communicate. We don't want to overwhelm the public with science concepts."

One of the more interesting facets in this program involves the tie between Dynamic Earth and the Core Curriculum Standards (CCS) for public school students driven by the State Department of Education.

Dr. Calderon pointed out that the CCS requirements connect with the exhibit to help pupils "gather and analyze information and become familiar with the scientific process through a hands-on inquiry driven curriculum."

Part of that hands-on experience will involve a tented area where discovery boxes and interactive activities will spark students' and visitors' imaginations. Throughout the exhibit, specific space will be provided for families to discuss what they have learned and exhibit-related Internet sites

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Beyond Slocum Field, Fanwood's Amy Watson Blossoms As Actress

By KERRIANNE SPELLMAN CORT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

FANWOOD — Since moving to Fanwood two years ago, I have continually been impressed by the amount of talented individuals who reside in this charming little Hamlet.

Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood are all home to an incredible amount of interesting, creative people. We have authors, actors, painters, screenwriters, singers and playwrights who either live in Union County now, or hail from here originally.

As the Arts and Entertainment Theater Correspondent for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*, I have the opportunity to attend local theater and to view firsthand some of the finest work one can ever hope to find in a nonprofessional venue. In fact, many of the productions that I have attended are indeed of professional caliber, and it is wonderful and inspiring to see the stars of tomorrow getting their proverbial feet wet on our local stages.

I had the pleasure of attending *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* at Westfield Community Players (WCP) this past fall and I was so completely delighted with the production and its level of professionalism. The directing was superior and the actors were exceptional. Chief among them was Fanwood resident, Amy Lane Watson.

Ms. Watson played the role of Sunny Freitag, an educated and kind young woman who is caught in the middle of a family dilemma that brews with religious tension. As Sunny, Ms. Watson turned in a remarkable performance that was elegant and understated. I was thrilled to hear that Ms. Watson will soon be starring in *Barefoot in the Park* at Cranford Dramatic Club. Performing in plays since she was eight years old, Ms. Watson is a member of a true "showbiz" family. Both of her parents are teachers who are involved in the arts, and her mother, Marsha Watson, directed Amy in her very first play.

A graduate of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Ms. Watson received her degree in Theater Production from the University of Delaware. After college, she worked for The New Jersey Shakespeare Festival and she is currently employed by Prism Production Services, a Prop Company in Rahway that builds scenery for Broadway shows.



Courtesy of The Cranford Dramatic Club

MAKING LEAPS AND BOUNDS...Amy Watson of Fanwood gets a boost from fellow cast members Alan Niebuhr of Belleville and Joe Nierle of Westfield during rehearsal for *Barefoot in the Park* at the Cranford Dramatic Club.

I had a chance to chat recently with Ms. Watson and she is every bit as charming as I thought she would be.

WL - How long have you lived in Fanwood?
ALW - For most of my life.

WL - I saw you in *Last Night of Ballyhoo* at WCP. You were terrific in that.
ALW - Oh, thank you so much. That was really a great experience. Especially since I came in towards the end. Someone else had been cast, but wasn't available due to another play she was in. The director, Joe Vierno, called me and asked me if I could do it. We had worked together in a show before.

WL - I understand you will be playing Corie Bratter in *Barefoot in the Park* soon. How is that coming along?
ALW - It's coming! (laughs) Actually, we just got off-book this past Monday, so we are getting there.
WL - Did you rent the movie yet?
ALW - I did! Before auditions, I rented it.

WL - Very smart. That's always a good idea, not to try to "copy" a performance, but just to get a basic impression of the piece. Where did you train?
ALW - Well, I really haven't "trained" in acting much. Just a few basic classes in college.
WL - You'd never know it.
ALW - Most of my experience has just been from community theater in the area.
WL - You work for a scenic design company. What shows have they worked on recently?
ALW - *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Jane Eyre*, and the upcoming *Producers*.
WL - That must be interesting. Are there any perks to working for a company like that? Do you get to see the shows?

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Artist of the Week



Eric Clapton (1945-)

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

One of my fondest college memories involves the original version of "Layla" by Eric Clapton. During the 7 minute tune, we would do the karaoke thing while drinking a couple of beers and looking toward the future. One of my saddest memories after college involves Clapton's "Tears in Heaven." I had just gotten the call that one of my best friends died in Arizona. In short, if a soundtrack was made of my life, Clapton would be on it.

Born in Ripley, Surrey, England to Patricia Molly Clapton and Edward Fryer, Eric (nicknamed "Young Ricky") was raised by his grandparents.

A young Clapton became captivated by the sounds from a guitar while watching a Jerry Lee Lewis performance on British television, but kept his focus on stained-glass design at Kingston College of Art in Surrey.

Clapton's grandparents bought him an electric guitar, sparking his inclusion in bands such as The Yardbirds, Cream, and a solo career. Unfortunately, he succumbed to the cliché of drug use often associated with being in a band, battling heroin throughout the 70s.

Though he is a musical genius, the double Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member is also a model of survival. He has been struck with the death of crew members in a helicopter crash and just a few months later, the death of his son.

While his original goal of piecing together shattered shards of glass as a stained glass designer did not pan out, he pieces together spirits with the sounds of his magic guitar.

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David Palladino's Music Corner

A Review of Local Concerts

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Brings Tchaikovsky Festival To Crashing Close

By DAVID PALLADINO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

NEWARK — The Tchaikovsky Festival of the past three weeks, which has included concerts, films and a symposium, has been a great success for the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO).

This achievement was due to the efforts of the orchestra, administration and Joseph Horowitz — the writer, educator and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He was brought in to help as NJSO's festival consultant.

The concluding concert of this past weekend at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark included the Piano Concerto No. 2 with German pianist Gerhard Oppitz, the Tchaikovsky/Taneyev arrangement of the Romeo and Juliet Love duet featuring soprano Sally Wolf and tenor John Daniecki, and finally the orchestral showpiece Francesca da Rimini.

The Second Piano Concerto, performed far fewer times than his First Piano Concerto, certainly has great merit. It includes virtually a triple concerto for piano, violin and cello during the second movement. Featured with pianist Gerhard Oppitz, were NJSO concertmaster Eric Wyrick and Principal cellist Jonathan Spitz.

Herr Oppitz, who has played with the leading orchestras of the world, Berlin, Boston, Cleveland, London and Vienna, provided a highly polished yet aggressive Tchaikovsky.

Highlighting excellent keyboard

control and technical articulation, Oppitz also blended well with the orchestra — taking his cues from them well both musically and dynamically.

Supportive roles in the piano concerto from concertmaster Wyrick and principal cellist Spitz were handled well. For example, both exhibited sensitive, lyrical accompaniment and virtuosic playing. General volume and dynamic control from soloists was good in the acoustically live NJPAC Prudential Hall.

Outgoing Maestro Zdenek Macal was also in finer form this past weekend. His style was certainly more aggressive this past weekend, but still somewhat vague on cueing attacks for the orchestra, which led to a few ragged intros.

The next piece featured was the love duet from Romeo and Juliet. Voices were of particular note. Sally Wolf, who has sung with leading companies throughout the world including the Metropolitan Opera and the Vienna State Opera, offered a strong and beautiful voice throughout her whole range.

John Daniecki, who has recorded with the San Francisco Symphony and sung at the Chicago Lyric and New York City Operas, provided a powerful and refined sound. The two voices were in full complement to each other.

The final showpiece, Francesca da Rimini, was sure hellfire. In fact, it tells the tale of the condemned souls of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta in the second circle of the Inferno, as described by Dante — "Sweeping the ravaged spirits as it rends, twists and torments them... they suffer here who sinned in carnal things, their reason mastered by desire, suborned."

As one can imagine, Tchaikovsky was musically convincing.

Tearing through NJPAC, NJSO blasted the walls with an augmented brass section of five horns, four trumpets, two trombones and tuba. This justifiable use of force,

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