

A&E

Take the Stage

WITH KERRIANNE SPELLMAN CORT

Frankenstein, the Musical Has Enough Punch to Make It On Great White Way

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

EDISON — Years ago, when the theater community first heard that a new musical was in development about a jive-singing plant that eats people, people were skeptical. Roughly around the same time, the world of Broadway was buzzing with high hopes for a new musical that involved singing and dancing cats.

A plant that sings and eats people? Dancing cats? Move ahead nearly two decades, and *Little Shop*

School, and later, actor/writer Jeff Jackson joined Mr. Cohen and Mr. Baron, completing the team that would now seriously turn *Frankenstein, the Musical*, into a viable, legitimate production.

This past weekend, theater lovers were treated to an exclusive staged reading of *Frankenstein, the Musical*, at Plays in the Park in Edison. Directed and produced by Mr. Jackson, the reading was beautifully presented with a remarkable cast and professional, elegant drawings (by Joe Caramagna and



Kerrianne Spellman Cort for The Westfield Leader and The Times
SO GOOD, IT'S SCARY...Composer of *Frankenstein, the Musical* Mark Baron, right, and his friend Vito, man all of the operations during a reading of the production at Plays in the Park in Edison.

of *Horrors* and *Cats* are as much a part of one's theater vocabulary as *Oklahoma* and *The Sound of Music*. Surely, in today's ever-changing and highly judgmental world of theater, playwrights and composers must truly be innovative and diverse when it comes to creating that next big hit.

Often, a playwright may look to the classics for inspiration. The success of Broadway shows such as *Les Miserables* and the recent *Jane Eyre* prove that you can creatively expand on a piece that has been indelibly etched into our memories.

How about *Frankenstein*? With the success of such dark, Gothic musicals such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, why indeed, not *Frankenstein*? The beauty of music joined with one of the greatest horror classics of all time — the very notion has Broadway smash written all over it.

This is exactly what inspired Plays in the Park Producing Director Gary P. Cohen, to begin developing his very own take on the Mary Shelley tale. With a love of musical theater and also a fascination for the macabre, Mr. Cohen began his journey with *Frankenstein, the Musical* in 1997. Joined by composer, Mark Baron, the two men created the first draft a year later.

An introduction to the piece was first presented at Cranford High

Chris Yoo), that were projected on a screen above the performers.

A staged reading is often an exercise for the playwrights. Using trained actors, the authors view their work and see for themselves where there is need for improvement. What looks like one thing on paper can be very different when performed live, and the purpose of a reading is to see what is working within a piece and also what is not.

The staged reading of *Frankenstein, the Musical*, was professionally presented and had virtually nothing that I would have critiqued in my little feedback flyer that was inserted into the program. It is a work in progress, so a review from me at this point would be inappropriate.

However, I will say that there is enormous potential here, and Mr. Cohen, Mr. Baron, and Mr. Jackson are definitely on the right track.

The remarkable cast included Ed Carlo, Christopher Bentivegna, Susie Paplow, Nathan Parker, Gerard Lebeda, Zachary Cohen, Jackie Niell, Joe Vierno, Kathleen Campbell, Joe Riley and Michele Grefeld. Accolades to all.

Okay, I lied. There is one thing that I would have written on my little comment sheet. Please, please, please don't ever cast anyone else in the role of "The Crea-

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David Palladino's Music Corner

A Review of Local Concerts

Contrasts Highlighted During Latest Concert by Westfield Symphony Orchestra

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

WESTFIELD — Another dynamic concert was hosted by the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) under the direction of Maestro David Wroe this past weekend at the Union County Arts Center (UCAC) in Rahway.

In a well-assembled concert highlighting contrasting musical styles along with a special dance group, the WSO has offered yet another special event.

When attempting to throw a party where significantly contrasting personalities are present, one must use prudence. The party can either be a true event, or a total disaster. The careful thought and programming by Maestro Wroe however, paid off big time.

Contrasting pieces included Hungarian Franz Liszt's tone poem *Les Préludes*, the Symphony No. 4 in E Minor by the German Johannes Brahms and Frenchman Darius Milhaud's jazz influenced *La*

Création du Monde, which featured the Umoja Dance Company clad in African garb dancing their traditionally influenced rendition of the creation of the world.

In keeping with the theme of this season's program, "Space Odyssey 2000-2001," *La Création du Monde*, which is not performed often, was selected.

Composer Darius Milhaud visited New York City in the early 1920's and was exposed to jazz music in Harlem. Upon later receiving a ballet commission in France, which was to depict a scenario based on a story by Blaise Cendrars illustrating a primitive view of the African origins of life, Milhaud developed this jazz influenced piece.

The piece, orchestrated for just under 20 orchestral musicians including saxophone, lasted about 20 minutes. Normally performed in a more traditional ballet style, the African style dancing and colorful dress were fascinating to watch.

Maestro Wroe pointed out before the piece that the dance de-

picts the creation of the world from four lumps of clay earth, from which the vegetation and living beings were formed. The dance culminated in the last two beings completing a fertility "dance of desire."

More classically traditional, but certainly in contrast to the other two pieces in the repertoire, the orchestra turned to Franz Liszt and his tone poem *Les Préludes*.

The music of the tone poem, championed by Liszt, is a genre that attempts to depict a person, story or even an idea among other things. The genre was controversial when it first appeared on the scene and was vehemently opposed by the third composer of the evening, Johannes Brahms.

The orchestra, which waited in the wings during the first piece, was not quite warmed up for the opening of the Liszt. The writing in this large piece demands a big sound from the orchestra. The WSO made it happen, but the seams were slightly strained for various reasons.

Note that this particular work is a strong piece, which requires a strong orchestra — which Westfield has. Anyone familiar with *Les Préludes* or history, may know that the heroic strains were often heard during World War II in the German *Wochenschaun*.

So, if the piece is not played in a fashion similar to at least a Messerschmitt BF-109F-3 in shrieking hunt mode, no orchestra will pull it off convincingly. In fact, Russian orchestras often double many sections of the orchestra for this showpiece.

The four basses and six celli, along with the truncated upper string section did not seem like enough in the UCAC. Trumpets, who were pushing full force, were not received well in the hall due to the constraints of the acoustical situation on stage.

For specific example, the first major brass fanfare motif came through a bit stiffly because of the lack of resonance for the brasses in the hall. Because of this acoustical imbalance, due to placement of the shell, the high ceiling behind the orchestra, the heavy tap-estries in the proscenium, and lack of acoustical cloud to direct sound outwards, the musical phrases, performed correctly, sounded curt, with no resonance to fill the hall.

The full efforts of the orchestra and trumpets in particular, who

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Pen & Ink

Handmade Valentines: Scrap Board Or Rich Satin, They're All Heart

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

Just before Valentine's Day, my grandfather would rarely be found in a Hallmark store, picking out the perfect, overpriced card. Instead, he would hide himself in his basement workshop. Amid the sawdust, the jars of nails and drawers of tools, he would busily paint, calligraphy, cut and sketch.

On Valentine's Day, my grandmother and I would be presented with large cardboard hearts, rich in maroon, embossed with his meticulously scrolled messages and decorated with cherubs and arrows in silvery paint.

They were presents money could never buy.

Sometimes, however, Gram yearned for the store-bought variety with the puter-generated scrolling and the picture that looked like they had been sprinkled with fairy dust. But, for my grandfather, who valued every penny, there was no better way to say "I Love You" than to craft your own message.

"He would sign them, 'Your husband, Michael,'" my grandmother recalled this Saturday afternoon. She laughed, "Like I had another husband! He would be downstairs working away and I knew..."

All of those valentines are now bundled in folders with the rest of his letters and notes of advice. There are a couple of store-bought Christmas and birthday cards tucked in there too, but they don't mean a thing. Because, although he can't be here every Valentine's Day, he says "I Love You," over and over again each time we unearth the treasures.

I pass the cellar workshop as I retrieve some groceries in the

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com-
tures of roses

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Cheri Rogowsky for The Westfield Leader and The Times
HITTING THE BIG TIME...Local residents Maria Woodford and Alex Radus, collectively known as Duende, opened for the legendary Woodstock performer Richie Havens on Sunday, February 4, at The Crossroads in Garwood. The duo will meet up with Havens and Scotch Plains blues performer Al Madison in mid-March at The Crossroads.

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Project by Michelle H. LePoidevin
By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Creating loveable figurines like Valentine Victoria with Sculpey clay has limitless possibilities. You can turn her into a pin or a necklace charm. But, Victoria has found her home leaning on a gel candle on my desk here at *The Westfield Leader and The Times*.

This clay figurine is an ideal craft project for Valentine's Day, which will make it's appearance next week. Don't panic. There's plenty of time to buy flowers and candy, but making a Victoria for your sweetheart is priceless and a timeless keepsake.

- You'll Need:**
Sculpey III Clay in the following colors —
- *Lt. Pink Pearl 1102
 - *Lilac Pearl 1004
 - *Red Hot Red 583
 - *Yellow 072
 - *White 001
 - *Black 042
 - Black Seed Beads
 - Clear Nail Enamel
 - 1 pin

1. Begin by molding a quarter-sized ball out of the Lt. Pink Pearl clay for the head. Form two smaller balls for her hands. Set them aside.
2. Use the Lilac Pearl for the body and arms. For the body, mold a pear-shape. For the arms, mold two smaller pear-shape pieces. Set them aside.
3. For the socks and buttons, use the White clay. Form two thin bands for the socks. For the buttons, two tiny balls to fit in the center of her dress.
4. For her shoes, use the Black clay by forming two medium sized balls.

Artist of the Week



Christy Turlington (1969-)

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

Model Christy Turlington's beauty was so striking to officials at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City that they insisted on using her visage to create 120 casts of it for their mannequins.

Born in Walnut Creek, Calif., Turlington was always riding high — on horseback, that is. The supermodel, who is engaged to actor/director Edward Burns, was discovered by a photographer while participating in a horseback riding competition.

While her parents were uneasy about giving the reigns over to the modeling industry, they eventually relented and Turlington landed her first job with store chain Emporium Capwell. Catching the eye of Eileen Ford of the famed Ford Modeling Agency in New York City, she was sent to Paris under a contract. Unfortunately, she was not received well.

Ford refused to give up on the then 16-year old Turlington. Before graduating from high school, she graced *Vogue* magazine in the U.S. and gained worldwide recognition with her ads for Calvin Klein's Eternity fragrance and Maybelline Cosmetics.

More than just a pretty face, Turlington earned a degree in philosophy and literature, with a concentration in Eastern philosophy. She is also a shrewd business woman, partnering with fellow supermodels to establish worldwide eatery *The Fashion Café*.

Opening up in an anti-smoking commercial during which she recalls her father's death from lung cancer, Turlington also captures the consciences with her participation in other worthy organizations.

Proceeds from her calendars go toward the American Foundation for El Salvador which aids the country's poor. Turlington also speaks on the behalf of Fashion Targets Breast Cancer and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Keepsakes

A Craft Project Guide

Valentine Victoria

5. Affix the white bands atop the black shoes.
6. Piece together her dress, arms and hands at the end of the dress sleeves. Put the buttons in the center of the dress.
7. Put the socks/shoes at bottom of the dress and her head at the top of the dress. (See figurine to the left).
8. Begin forming very thin, long pieces of the Yellow clay. Twist the clay gently to make curly looking hair. Arrange atop her head until a full head of curly hair is formed.
9. Using more Lilac Pearl, form a bow to fix atop her curls.
10. Finally, use the Red Hot Red clay and form a small ball. Indent the top of the ball with your index finger to form a heart. Place it in her hands.
11. Using the pin, affix black seed beads on their side (not like this -o) to make the eyes.
12. Create ridges and decorative dots around the heart and dress to give the piece texture.
13. Place in 265-degree oven for 10 minutes to cure and harden the figurine. Don't worry, it won't hurt her!
14. Once piece is finished and cooled, glaze with enamel.
15. To make a pin, attach a jewelry pin to the back before placing in the oven.
16. To make a necklace, thread a thin cord through her neck and form a loop before baking.

How to Reach A&E

A&E Editor
michelle@goleader.com
Classical Music Correspondent
davep@goleader.com
Theatre Correspondent
kerrianne@goleader.com
Modern Music Correspondent
andy2gold@bome.com
Food Critic
bill@goleader.com
Film Critic
screenbear@aol.com