



Celebrating

Mother's Day

Get Outta the House

By CAROL F. DAVIS
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Take 60 characters, divide by eight performers, and factor in one script. That's what you'll end up with tonight and tomorrow night at 8 p.m., as well as Saturday at 3 p.m. if you can catch A.R. Gurney's *The Dining Room* at Union County College. The Theater Project, a group made of college faculty, staff, and alumni, will be joined by professional actors in this play about American social history. This timeless show spans a period from the Depression to the present. If you can make it tonight it's only \$7. The Friday and Saturday performances will cost you double, unless you are a student. Reservations are a good idea. Call them at (908) 659-5189.

Samuel Taylor's romantic comedy, *Sabrina Fair*, opens on Saturday night at the Westfield Community Players at 100 North Avenue. This modern version of *Cinderella* is set on Long Island in the early 1950's, and follows Sabrina's journey as she returns from five years in Paris to the home where her father is a chauffeur for the Larrabee family. Can her relationship with the younger son, who is aided in his love quest by his older brother, withstand the Frenchman who wants to marry her? It'll cost you 12 bucks to find out, and if you can make it on opening night, stay for coffee and dessert.

Have you always wondered how those oil painters do those fabulous landscapes? Watch a demonstration of the techniques used by artist *Eugene Maziarz* at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, May 16, at the Fanwood Community Center in the railway station. Mr. Maziarz, a member of the Polish Organization of Artists, has displayed his works at 15 solo exhibitions, and he has participated in 32 group shows. He is a professor and advisor in the Public School of Art in Jaroslaw, Poland. He just may be the one to inspire you to unleash your hidden talent. The demonstration won't cost you anything but some time.

Anna & The King the 1999 film starring Jodie Foster and Chow Yun-Fat (girls, this guy is s-e-x-y!), will be the feature at the Friday Film Festival at the Fanwood Memorial Library on May 11 at 7:30 p.m. A young widow and her son travel from England to Siam during the Victorian era to teach the children of the fruitful King. She and the King develop a unique relationship. Even if you did see it when it was released, you can still enjoy it for free on a large screen TV with friends and neighbors. It is a visual stunner. Bring your own snacks. Clean up your own crumbs — it's the library.

Also at the Fanwood Library, on Sunday, May 20, will be *Fanwoodstock*, a free lawn concert starting at 3 p.m. Bring your lawn chairs or blankets, refreshments, and friends and family to listen to the sounds of two bands: Skyline and The Booglerizers. Skyline has recently reunited after a career that included four albums and world tours. Their new acoustic music combines bluegrass, folk, rock and jazz for a delightful sound. The Booglerizers will perform their mix of New Orleans style jazz, country blues, and ragtime. Well, it's not exactly a mini-Woodstock, for those who remember the original, but it may just promote some peace and harmony.

County Arts Groups Invited To Network At 'Idea Exchange'

WESTFIELD — Union County arts organizations and groups that present arts programs are invited to participate in an "Idea Exchange" networking event on Wednesday, May 16, from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Municipal Building in Westfield.

"Responding to the request of many arts organizations in the county, the Union County Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs is planning a workshop to give organizations the opportunity to meet colleagues for a day of brainstorming, discussions and networking," said Union County Freeholder Mary P. Ruotolo of Westfield.

"Respected arts administrators will facilitate discussions on developing a Union County arts Web site, forming collaborations and audience development," reported Freeholder Ruotolo, who serves as Liaison to the county's Cultural and Heritage Programs Advisory Board.

Pianist Christopher Johnson

CONTINUED FROM PG 22

Featured soloist Christopher Johnson was in fine romantic form. The first movement in particular was especially well interpreted by Johnson. Articulation and phrasing were both excellent. Minor issues of phasing between soloist and orchestra at times.

The piano used for performance, the same one Johnson used in previous recitals, possessed a particularly dull sound this time — especially when set against the orchestra. Furthermore, the piano was most certainly not tuned to the high level that the concert required.

Tempo set by Maestro Pautza were spot on, but the orchestra tended to push the tempo faster at times. For example, the orchestra was pushing the beat in the first movement on several occasions — particularly in several attacks by the upper strings.

While the violinists bowed to the best of their ability, the orchestra needs to heartily bolster this section — especially the First violins. The concertmistress and a strategically placed seventh chair First violin played most heroically, but could hardly cover for the volume and accuracy lacking from many of the rest.

The orchestra possesses some fine individual musicians. The second movement highlighted a beautiful flute solo from Principal Leslie Pruess, highlighting excellent intonation and projection.

The string basses should be noted as one of the strongest sections of the orchestra. This section of four produced a full, solid and warm sound. The generally flabby acoustics of the church actually work in favor of the string basses.

Third movement saw some intonation problems within the first major theme of the strings as well as the tempo throughout the climax of the piece. Even though quickening the tempo here allows the orchestra to better "stay together," it rather works to steal vital lifeblood and impact from the climax. Thus, the final moments of the work were, for the musically savvy, harried and somewhat choked.

The Mussorgsky was a bit more rough. Numerous and devastating trumpet cracks in the opening segment set the heavy work in motion. A panic-stricken second trumpet should not have drawn further attention to the recurring infelicities with borderline hysterical Kopf-gesticulation to help communicate the Principals agony. Next time, God forbid, eyes forward, straight face.

First horn solos by Richard Goodman soon recaptured the lost momentum of the brass section but it was lost again when trumpet cracked again in a promenade section further along down the row of "pictures." The saxophone solo was well performed.

An original Helicon tuba in F (highest member of the tuba family) from 1880 was used by David Grego to perform the solo for the ox-cart section of the work. Regular tuba parts were played well on a supreme sounding large tuba.

The woodwind section, their sound sometimes lost amongst the din, excelled as an ensemble in the "baby chicks" section of the work.

It is difficult for this orchestra to find a local venue which is absolutely perfect acoustically. Even the top level ensembles of the area find it difficult to create a perfect acoustical environment.

Outside of the balcony section of the State Theater in New Brunswick, there is no acoustically "ideal" place. Acoustics in the church are not ideal for orchestra, with its cavernous, stone space and no shell to direct and focus sound.

That said, the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian venue, certainly not lacking in beauty, is far more desirable than a high school hall or gymnasium.

This area is ultimately lucky to have the dedicated musicians of the Plainfield Symphony. An outstanding effort by the musicians in the Plainfield Symphony Orchestra, Maestro Pautza and Christopher Johnson.

These musicians worked together

Molly Rock Receives Max Fischer Drama Award

WESTFIELD — At the 116th graduation ceremony of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts held on the Broadway stage of the Majestic Theatre in New York City on Thursday, April 26, Molly Rock was named recipient of the 2001 Max Fischer Memorial Award.

The award is presented to the student who, in the opinion of the faculty, has demonstrated the most growth as an actor during his or her time at the Academy.

Max Fischer was a member of the Academy's faculty for many years. He was passionate about acting and conveyed that enthusiasm to his students. He was tough, worked hard at teaching and expected his students to work just as hard. Mr. Fischer enjoyed seeing his students grow in skill and confidence.

Molly graduated from Westfield High School in 1994. She previously attended Union County College in Cranford and Providence College in Rhode Island. She was also elected by the Academy class of 2001 to speak as its female representative at the graduation ceremony.

Richard Easton, the main speaker



Molly Rock

for the occasion, was introduced by the new President of the Academy, Roger Croucher. Mr. Easton is currently starring at the Lincoln Center Theatre on Broadway in *The Invention of Love*.

Molly is the daughter of Drs. David and Cathy Rock, school administrators from the area and former long-time Westfield residents.

Since the graduation ceremony, she has been invited back to the Academy as a member of its prestigious "Company" for 2001-2002. The Academy is a select group of the Academy's graduates. They will showcase four major play productions in New York City during the coming year.

POPCORN™ Driven Stepson of Grand Prix

By Michael S. Goldberger

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

2 popcorns

If *Driven* weren't so derivative, if only it fired on a few cylinders of its own, then you might justifiably call it *Son of Grand Prix*. But alas, that honor can't be bestowed. A spin through the first few scenes of this visually colorful but dramatically *drab* racing film soon informs that *Driven* couldn't shine the knock-off hubs of that 1966 classic.

It is a step-child at best. Sure, the undercarriage is similar, blatantly lifted from the vastly romantic paradigm starring Yves Montand; the gal was Eva Marie Saint ("Jean Paul, Jean Paul? ...remember?"). But this is the meat 'n' potatoes variation on the theme.

It serves up Sylvester Stallone as the blue-plate hero while the wide-eyed love interest in Speedwayland is Stacy Edwards. She's the perfunctory, novice-to-racing journalist assigned to get an inside look as legendary driver Joe Tanto (Stallone) makes his return to the Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) circuit.

Estella Warren plays Sophia, a track pretty who takes up with rookie Jimmy Blye (Kip Pardue) when German driver Beau Brandenburg (Til Schweiger) gives her the gate. No kidding.

For starters, a supporting role doesn't look good on Stallone, even if he does hog most of the road. The purposely less than glamorous truth is, Sly's character has been called out of exile by wheelchair-bound car owner Carl Henry, an invective-spewing autocrat of the first magnitude, to steady young Blye who's in the hunt for the championship. Joe owes Carl, big time, and Carl reminds him of that ad nauseam.

You see, like Tom Hanks's fallen ballplayer-turned-manager in *A League of Their Own* (1992), Tanto threw it all away. This is his chance for redemption. The audience, on the other hand, has no chance at all. Not with a script this trite.

Defenders of director Renny Harlin's fast-paced, cliché-stuffed soap opera might be quick to note that *Driven* updates the genre via its cutting edge FX quotient. And 'tis true. It's glitzy and hyperkinetic. But after all the tire smoke settles, the telltale smell of mispent efforts remains.

Caution: The images in these rear view mirrors are hardly larger than life. And it's a shame, especially for racing enthusiasts who'd like some cinematic fiction to complement and sing a paean to their passion. The pickins' remain slim. The last decent auto racing flick to make the grid was the Shirley Muldowney biography, "Heart Like A Wheel" (1983). And so like the Chicago Cubs fan waiting for his team to be in the World Series, the patience of Job is standard equipment.

It all boils down to the writing. Filmmaking 101. Gosh knows, if David Mamet can find truly seductive and provocative drama in a real estate office (*Glengarry, Glen Ross*), surely the inherently exciting sport of auto racing should be a cake walk. Too bad Mr. Mamet isn't a fan of open-wheeled competition. One must wonder what Stallone, who gets the writing credit (Is this really the reason for the

screenwriters' strike?), really knows about motor sports, let alone the ins and outs of CART.

The generally illustrious organization has had its share of challenges in recent years, not the least of which has been to lose the Indianapolis 500, formerly its premier event, to the rival IRL. But Stallone doesn't see fit to take us into the garage, let alone make us privy to the woes of the board room. Not one revving engine do you see. Neither a solid nor a hydraulic valve lifter serenades us. In fact, the only metal you hear is the heavy kind provided by the rock score din. And save for some fairly decent pit stops, mechanics play no part in this film. Thus, in an insulting underestimation of the viewing public, the audience is fed a full throttle of stereotypical pap instead of being apprised of what really goes on behind the scenes.

Still, how you judge this movie may depend on where in the grandstand you sit. For example, fishing zealots contend that a bad day of angling is better than a good day at work. Hence, for auto racing fans who feel the same way about their hobby, *Driven* is better than nothing.

Aside from a dramatically inordinate number of crackups, the actual racing sequences are top notch, the views from the cockpit exhilarating. And except for an utterly preposterous chase scene through the streets of Chicago, manhole covers-a-flying, it's a lot less hokey than earlier examples of the phylum. You know, movies like *The Big Wheel* (1949), wherein Mickey Rooney stars as a wrench who rises to champion ("You're driving tonight, kid"). The other drivers proudly sport monikers like Crash, Smudgy and Gearbox.

All shiny and bright but ultimately a clunker, *Driven* sputters across the finish line out of the points, long after the checkered flag has waved.

It is a mere also ran of its day. The elan of "Grand Prix" has been replaced with the desperate special effects and overworked computer graphics of the here and now. And an obnoxiously pedantic score suffuses everything. MTV invades CART. You might as well put water in the fuel tank.

Driven, rated PG-13, is a Warner Brothers release directed by Renny Harlin and stars Sylvester Stallone, Estella Warren and Kip Pardue. Running time: 109 minutes.

John Cossolini Joins Exhibit at St. Peter's

FANWOOD — Artwork by Fanwood resident John Cossolini, a senior at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City, will be on display as part of the school's seventh annual student art exhibition from Sunday, May 20, to Wednesday, May 23, at the Case Gallery. The facility is located at 80 Grand Street in Jersey City.

The exhibit will feature over 50 works by 34 art students from St. Peter's Prep. There will be an opening reception on May 20 from 1 to 3 p.m. The Case Gallery is open from 3 to 5 p.m. from Monday to Wednesday. Admission is free.



David Palladino's

Music Corner

NJ Philharmonic Orchestra Excels at Beethoven

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

NEWARK — New Jerseyans had the chance to hear a stellar all-Beethoven concert this past Sunday afternoon in the large Prudential Hall of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). The beautifully programmed repertoire included the Fidelio Overture, the Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major featuring Lee Luvisi and the formidable Symphony No. 7 in A Major.

Music Director George Marinier Maul has put together a great ensemble. Sporting a full orchestra (with eight basses), and several exceptional Principals, the ensemble and soloist offered two beautiful interpretations.

Repertoire selection is absolutely paramount and programming all Beethoven is not only highly aggressive, but certainly not for the weakly constituted. It's not done all the time, and one of the reasons is because the music of Beethoven is just so direct and intense, both for orchestra and audience. One can liken it to playing with the fire and energy that God created in making the universe.

Initially, the orchestra did not come out like wild fire from the starting gate, they worked themselves up into a confident performance.

While, the ensemble was a bit hesitant in the opening overture, Fidelio, they played up to the premier hall by the end of the concert. Overture attacks were cautious, horns had a tentative beginning and intonation among woodwinds was slightly less than steady. Flute and clarinet lacked resonance and timpani sounded hollow and thin. For the size of the orchestra, they initially sounded on the light side. The overture was concluded respectfully.

The entrance of veteran pianist Lee Luvisi of Kentucky however, acted as the catalyst to inspire the orchestra. Luvisi entered with typical border-state fire and accomplished finesse. For everything that the overture wasn't, the concerto was.

The orchestra either turned around and became more confident with their settings.

Guest pianist Lee Luvisi has had a long career as both a soloist and chamber musician performing with virtually all of the major orchestras in America under such great conductors as Bernstein, Ormandy and Marinier. He has also collaborated with many of the worlds most famous musicians including Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zuckerman, Richard Stoltzman and Frederica von Stade.

Luvisi's Beethoven 5 was almost picture perfect — a mature performance of extreme confidence and finesse. Opening attack was primo among any interpretation that has been heard. Commanding chords and respectable tempo set the stage for a wonderful movement.

While opening tempo of second movement was spot-on, entrance of piano in second movement was not exactly supported fully by the orchestra — ensemble pushing tempi a bit, leaving Luvisi minor slack to work his rubato magic. Although the transition into the third movement was downright exciting — the horn player nearly out of breath holding the note before the onslaught of the aggressive tripler meter explosion.

Luvisi slammed the keyboard with accuracy, helping to infuse vigor and intensity right through to the end of the work, when soloist and

timpanist ended in perfect interpretive sync.

Noticeable individual orchestral excellence was exemplified in concertmaster Peter Winograd, who does a fantastic job at leading the section. He not only produces excellent sound but his phrasing, which is never cut short, is exceptional.

The Beethoven 7th Symphony was really the orchestra showpiece of the evening — here, we were able to see just what the orchestra could do in its own element.

Once again, the commanding opening chords set the stage for what was to follow highlighting driving lower basses and cello who provided the undercurrent flow for the intensity of the movement. The conductor was correct to highlight undercurrent as well as the major themes.

Maul is a refined conductor with a passion for his work. One of his supreme attributes is that he can clearly identify, highlight and make sense of the beauty of the melodic lines of a work.

While third movement began with a rough attack, and saw some sluggish timpani, tempos settled in well and much quick-witted string and wind performance was highlighted here. People in May of 1809 certainly thought that Beethoven was a madman when they heard his fourth movement with off beats highlighted and explosive writing — pure intensity for the height of the intense Napoleonic age.

A truly beautiful performance — this orchestra also seethes with potential. In order for the orchestra to reach the next level, the individual sections need to show more aggressiveness. They are focusing on achieving an overall ensemble effect, while they do not yet know themselves well enough.

Aggressiveness is the key to the door of the next level. If the sections have to fly out of their seats a few times, then do it.

Sometimes this is difficult to achieve when one is constantly contracting new players into the picture who are not familiar with their fellow musicians.

Also, as to ensemble playing, dynamic control need to be brought much more tightly under reign. The orchestra hovered around the center not achieving spectacular fff considering the size of the group, nor intimate piano.

Additionally, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra achieves a better blend and fuller sound in the hall by spacing out the musicians. For example, strings should be slightly more separated, and brass should be lined up directly against the back wall (but certainly not shot) in order to better project their sound.

Despite having eight string basses, they need to overcompensate when playing in full ensemble, not in solo sections, for the somewhat bass-deficient acoustics of Prudential Hall.

Finally, in a perfect world, risers would be installed for the woodwinds and perhaps horn section, whose sound only projects well when they are placed near the rear wall, but not at next to it. Furthermore, sound produced from timpani drums was somewhat hollow.

Kudos to the Philharmonic Orchestra of New Jersey. It is no small thing to recognize that God has shed his glory and light upon our state. How great are we in the arts? We are fortunate to have such ensembles — all of New Jersey should have been there. Let's work on getting them there.

The Philharmonic Orchestra can be reached at (908) 226-7300.

"At The Edge Of The Watchung Mountains"

WEDDING DREAMS COME TRUE

- 5 Hours Open Bar
- Cocktail Hour
- Full Course Dinner
- Tiered Wedding Cake
- Silver Candelabras, Flaming Jubilee Show,
- Private Bridal Rooms
- Specializing in White Glove French Service

from **\$35.95**

MOTHER'S DAY BUFFET \$23.95

- Shrimp
- Clams, oysters,
- Chef Carved Turkey,
- Prime Rib, Ham, Lamb, Viennese Table and Fresh Fruit

ALA CARTE DINNERS FROM \$10.95

LUNCHES FROM \$5.95 CHILDREN FROM \$3.95

UNBEATABLE GREEK SALAD BAR

OFF ROUTE 22 AT PARK & MOUNTAIN AVE., SCOTCH PLAINS

908-322-7726

Visit our web site: <http://www.weddingsatpantagis.com>

For your listening & dancing enjoyment make your dinner reservations in advance

The Jimmy Ray Band

Friday May 25, 2001

at 8:00 P.M.

Playing some of the "golden oldies"

-NO COVER CHARGE-