

# Take the Stage

WITH KERRIANNE SPELLMAN CORT



## Sabrina Fair at WCP Aches for Jumpstart

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

WESTFIELD — *Sabrina Fair*, a romantic coming-of-age comedy by Samuel Taylor is probably most recognized by the two successful film versions, entitled, *Sabrina*. The original Billy Wilder directed version based on Taylor's play first hit screens in 1954 and starred Audrey Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart.

The heartwarming Cinderella story tells the tale of Sabrina Fairchild, the daughter of a chauffeur who works for a wealthy family that owns a beautiful home in the elegant Hamptons.

The Sydney Pollack remake of the film was quite successful and starred Harrison Ford and Greg Kinnear as the two Larrabee brothers that become entangled in lovely Sabrina's web. The Paris-educated Sabrina is searching for true love and hoping to find it at home, yet is still, admittedly, drawn to a life filled with riches and distinction. Having grown up on the outside of all this intriguing wealth and power—now the mature and cultivated Sabrina wants to be recognized as a bona fide lady.

The Westfield Community Players (WCP) is currently staging this charming piece as the last offering of their successful season. Directed by Ken Rosenblum, the WCP production is light, harmless and enjoyable throughout. The able cast performs the blithe material earnestly, and, with a few exceptions, it is a nice evening of theater.

The actors, all in all, are quite good, particularly Patti Vidakovic as Sabrina, Stan Kaplan as Linus Larrabee, SR, Rick Brown as Linus Larrabee, Jr., and Alan Niebuhr as David. Jim Caffrey and Becky Randazzo also turn in good work in smaller roles.

The main problem with this production, and, unfortunately, with several WCP productions that I have attended recently is the pacing. With the exception of their brilliant season opener, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, most of this years' offerings have suffered from this theatrical enigma, which, frustratingly, can be so easy to fix.

Particularly noticeable in the opening scene, the stilted, slow delivery of the material starts the enchanting play off in the entirely wrong direction. Tragically, when a play begins in this sluggish manner, it is hard to get it back on track.

Slow and uninspired pacing can kill weeks of hard work. It is disappointing and difficult to watch, as the actors are all quite talented and truly have what it takes to excel.

When a production has several days off in between performances, as this show, and most other local productions do, it is imperative to have some sort of re-connection exercise or brief rehearsal prior to the first performance of the weekend. After several days away from their roles, the actors need to reacquire themselves with the play.

It is a shame when weeks of hard work are destroyed because of flubbed lines and eternal pauses that could so easily have been avoided.

The cast is talented, the play itself is well-written and enjoyable, so solving this problem could make this production of *Sabrina Fair* a terrific piece of theater. It is no one particular person's fault, but the company, unanimously, must join forces to keep the energy flowing or the play will continue to come across as a nebulous offering with no heart. That first scene should start with a bang and never stop moving.

I only mention this issue because WCP is a terrific company with enormous potential. When I see a talented cast such as this, it is painful to see their hard work fall short because of something that is so easily avoidable. With more energy and focus,  
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## David Palladino's Music Corner

A Review of Local Concerts

### New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Features Solid Repertoire

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

NEWARK — The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO), under the direction of Zdenek Macal, recently offered a solid rendition of the Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A Major, the Mendelssohn violin Concerto in E Minor and the Overture to



GUEST PERFORMER...Shlomo Mintz, who was guest violinist with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, also performed with The Jerusalem Academy of Music and the Paris National Conservatory.

Orpheus in the Underworld by Offenbach with guest violinist Shlomo Mintz.

The sound of the NJSO has been improving with every concert and has reached their season peak with these final concerts.

Only next week's final concerts of Wagner's Tannhauser Overture, and Orff's Carmina Burana promise to top off the season completely. These concerts are not to be missed.

The orchestra began the concert with a stellar rendition of Offenbach's Orpheus

# A&E Pen & Ink

## Ingredients for Season Finales: Death, Flashbacks, Babies and Engagements

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

Feel like your nails are gripping the edge of a cliff? You're suspended over a canyon, filled with uncertainty, wondering what will happen next? Suddenly the credits roll and there are three long summer months ahead of you with nothing to watch but re-runs. Ah, there's nothing like an old-fashioned cliffhanger to keep you pondering the fate of your favorite television characters.

Let's put "The West Wing" (NBC), "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" (WB), "7th Heaven" (WB again), "Friends" (NBC) and "Providence" (NBC) under the microscope to see how they handled every TV writer's quagmire — THE FINALE.

Keep in mind that, under these circumstances, writers will usually go to any length to shock-blast your imagination in order to guarantee big ratings in the fall. Okay, now that that's been explained...

Vamp killer Buffy Summers discovers that the only way she can save the world from hocus pocus, hellish events, and other ghoulish hoopla, is to kill one of the most powerful gods, Glory. Otherwise, her sister Dawn will be toast. When Glory captures

in the Underworld. The composer wrote this piece as a riotous musical satire based on the exploits of the gods, as told in the legend of Orpheus and Euridice. The piece included his famous Can-Can melody.

Orchestral sound highlighted appropriate and exciting tempos, aggressive and accurate horn and cello section performance, and several solo sections of pure excellence by concertmaster Eric Wyrick. Well-placed dynamics executed by the trombone section was notable.

One musically savvy audience member was correct in surmising, "It takes a great orchestra to pull off a lightweight piece like that."

Next, guest violinist Shlomo Mintz took his place in front of the orchestra to offer a solid and respectable Mendelssohn concerto, but nothing more. While all of the notes were there, Mr. Mintz failed to infuse passion. While he had good projection over the orchestra, his opening melody was somewhat stiff, solid and straight-laced.

Transitions between the second movement were seamless and ultimately well-handled by Mr. Macal — no musical pauses to allow inappropriate, distracting audience applause. Melody in second movement was again solid, but with no frills or passion.

The third movement was highly  
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Will he run for a second term?



Will Mary go to New York with Wilson?



Can Buffy call UPN home?

Dawn and she realizes how much her mother's recent death has affected her. Buffy goes into a catatonic state with flashbacks from her childhood and teen years. Once  
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## Get Outta the House

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

Throughout the month of June, visit the Member's Gallery at the New Jersey Center for the Visual Arts, 68 Elm Street in Summit for an exhibition of fine art photographs by Nancy J. Ori of Berkeley Heights. "A New Photographic Journal" consists of a series of fine art photos highlighting our great state's parks and other areas of natural beauty. The focus is on historic and natural preservation. Ms. Ori studied with the acclaimed Ansel Adams, gaining from this master a deep respect for our land. She is now an international freelance photographer and video producer. The best time to visit this and the other galleries is during the week from 12 to 4 p.m. and on weekends from 2 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The Jewish Community Center of Central New Jersey, Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains, will present *Mark Levy* on Tuesday, June 5, at 10:30 a.m. Mr. Levy, a singer and a lecturer who specializes in Judaic folk music, sings in various languages including Yiddish and Hebrew. He has performed as a cantorial soloist, and he has taught and performed in the San Francisco area for 25 years. Recently, he released his fourth album of Yiddish work songs, in commemoration with the 100th birthday of Workmen's Circle. It's just \$5 for the performance and \$7.50 if you would like some lunch. What a deal. Call them at (908) 889-8800 by Friday, June 1, to register.

Tomorrow night, the Fanwood Memorial Library will closeout the *Friday Night at the Movies* series with the romantic comedy, *Dr. T. & the Women*, directed by Robert Altman. Richard Gere plays a wealthy Dallas gynecologist (try getting an appointment with him). His life starts to unravel as his wife, Farrah Fawcett, starts falling apart just when their daughter, a lesbian who is involved with her maid of honor, plans to get married — to a man. But wait, there's more. Just go see it. Don't tell your date it was free.

A variety of voices from age 9 to 70 will entertain all as the *Celebration Singers* present their annual Spring Concert on two nights, June 1 and 2 at 8 p.m. at Hillside Avenue School in Cranford. "Pops of the Decades" will include medleys from the 50s, 60s and 70s, like "I Got Rhythm" and "Danny Boy." The Children's Chorus will take you back to the 20s with tunes including "Singing In The Rain" and "Everything's Coming Up Roses." Khy Garner leads this group of locals. Tickets range from \$5 to \$10, and you can get them at the door.

There are only a few days left to see the *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Art Association's Members Exhibit* at the Union County Freeholders Gallery. The show features ten local visual artists displaying their paintings, woodcuts and photographs. The gallery is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, and is located on the sixth floor of the County Administration Building on Rahway Avenue in Elizabeth. The show will run through the end of May and there is no admission fee. Support your local artists.

### Coming This Summer In Arts & Entertainment

- Michelle H. LePoidevin talks to Scotch Plains quilter Jan Clare Viehman about her workshops.
- Birthday parties for toddlers go under the microscope in "Pen & Ink."
- Kerrienne Spellman Cort will offer the best of summer theater.
- John Luerssen will bend his ear to the best concerts area venues have to offer.
- "As I Was Saying," A&E's newest column, will be a flavorful forum for entertainment-related topics.

## Artist of the Week



### Mary Pickford (1892-1979)

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

During the early 1900s, silent film actress Mary Pickford was the Julia Roberts of her day. Earning the label, "America's Sweetheart," she had once charmed her way into a lead role in a Broadway play, *The Warrens of Virginia* featuring the author's brother, Cecil De Mille.

In Manhattan, Pickford was a long way from her native home in Toronto, Canada. Born on April 8, 1892 Gladys Louise Smith, Pickford's father died after a job-related accident, leaving Mary, mother Charlotte, and siblings to



BUSINESSWOMAN PICKFORD...Mary Pickford sits beside business partners and actors Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and D. W. Griffith. The quartet established United Artists Corporation, which later became MGM.

eke out a living. At the age of eight, Pickford won the role of a young girl in a play, *The Silver King*. Soon, Pickford was scurrying around the United States with various theater troupes, accompanied by the family she was struggling to support. It was at this time that they settled in Manhattan at Eighth Avenue and 39th Street.

Pickford always fought hard for a salary equal to her male counterparts, starting at a \$10,000 weekly wage and finally reaching \$350,000 per film. Eking out a living gave the actress, who commonly depicted sweet and soft characters, a tough skin. Proving that she was just as business-minded as the guys, the doe-eyed Pickford teamed up with film's big leaguers Charlie Chaplin, D.W. Griffith and future husband Douglas Fairbanks to establish the United Artists Corporation. United Artists, which struggled financially for years, was eventually bought out and became known as MGM.

The death of her mother Charlotte in 1928 caused Pickford to shed her innocent image (portrayed in movies such as *Daddy Long Legs* and *New York Hat*) by shedding her lovely locks. She transformed herself into an actress ready to adapt to "talkie" films, sporting a new bobbed hairstyle.

Ever the businesswoman and trendsetter, just like Roberts, Pickford started her own cosmetics company.

Although she divorced Fairbanks, they were one of Hollywood's most legendary couples — The Tom Hanks/Rita Wilson or Tom Cruise/Nicole Kidman of their day. They threw the most lavish parties at their estate.

Before marrying Fairbanks, she wed actor Owen Moore. That marriage didn't have much of a chance when Pickford's eyes met Fairbanks' on a war bond tour during the first World War. After she divorced Fairbanks, she married actor/musician Charles Rogers the following year.

In the latter part of her life, Pickford spent her time aiding charities. Three years after receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Arts and Sciences, Pickford died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 87.

If you are an artist, musician or entertainer from the area, please call Michelle at (908) 232-4407

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