

# Arts & Entertainment



**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT...**Members of the cast of "Barefoot in the Park" rehearse for the upcoming fall play, presented at The Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison. The curtain goes up at 7:30 p.m. in the All Purpose Room of the independent school from Thursday, November 14, through Saturday, November 16. Thursday is senior citizens' night, where the local assisted living and nursing homes are invited to join the community. Tickets are free, with donations to the drama department accepted.



## Get Outta The House

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

There will be some worthwhile, free programs at Liberty State Park's Interpretive Center on Saturday, November 16. The *Winter Waterfowl Walk* is suited for birders, hikers, or nature lovers. The stroll will be a leisurely one, and possible sightings of winter species may include grebes, ruddy ducks, buffleheads and mergansers. It's from 10 a.m. to noon, and you should bring your own binoculars. Have some lunch, and come back for the *New Jersey History Lecture*, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Both events require pre-registration, so call (908) 792-3767.

After a full day at Liberty State Park, head over to the Presbyterian Church in Westfield for the Westfield Symphony Orchestra's performance, "*Destination Hollywood*" at 8 p.m. The concert will feature Gershwin's *American in Paris*, Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and Korngold's *Violin Concerto* with soloist Vadim Gluzman. *Classical Conversations* with Maestro Wroe and visiting artists begin at 7 p.m. General admission is \$15 to \$25. Call (908) 232-9400 for additional information.

Previewing on Thursday, November 14, at 8 p.m. at the Forum Theatre Company, and running through December 8, is Stephen Sondheim's classic musical comedy, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Call the Box Office at (732) 548-0582 to purchase tickets. Though dated, the musical farce about a conniving slave in Roman times is sure to bring pleasure, as all productions do at this amazing local theatre.

Finding a non-blockbuster film in New Jersey is becoming an even more challenging task. The Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival comes to the rescue on November 17, at 12:15 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. with "*Anna's Summer*," the story of a trip to a Sephardic-Jewish childhood home in Greece. This film covers a lot of bases while reliving the memory of a chaotic past including deportation, exile, escape from Nazis and a taboo love. Tickets are \$9 general admission, \$6 seniors and students. Purchasing advanced tickets is suggested. Call (732) 932-4166. Scholars will be on hand for post-film discussions.

Drive-thru's aren't just for onion rings and weddings. From November 15 through January 1, Six Flags Great Escape in Jackson will feature "*Winter Lights*," a fantastic 2.5-mile journey filled with custom-made, park-inspired light displays. There will be eight sections including religious themes, a comical look at the "12 Days of Christmas," a North Pole beach party and theme park rides. Call (732) 928-1821.

## My Take on It

the next few months. I've learned recently that virtually nothing is constant and that the only true thing that anyone can count on is personal inner peace. If I can offer any wisdom, I would like to say that this is an important time of year where we learn to give thanks. It is a time where we need to take a step back and acknowledge the people who love and support us. At a time like this, when the world seems to be hanging by a thread, I think it is imperative that we thank our loved ones, embrace our friends, and always, always follow our own hearts. Have a peaceful and safe holiday season.



## POPCORN™ I Spy: Should Have Been Kept A Secret

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER  
1 1/2 POPCORN

Attempting to create a new salt and pepper sensation whilst resurrecting the 1960s TV hit, *I Spy*, director Betty Thomas' big screen version instead presents us with a pair of secret agents that are much more like oil and water. Failing film Chemistry 101 through no specific fault of their own, Eddie Murphy and Owen Wilson rarely connect comedically. Of course one can never tell what might have developed if the script by committee (no less than four scribes are credited) had supplied at least one of the protagonists with

some funny lines. It's traditionally a requirement of comedies.

As it stands, or flops, to put it more exactly, the star-crossed pairing might remind you of that rather uneasy time when your family visited those relatives you had never met before. Everything was a little off kilter, wasn't it? First of all, their house smelled funny. Not a bad odor, but how could family members of yours have a house that smelled like that? Even something about their dog didn't seem right. Who would want a dog like that...not fluffy like ours? What made it even weirder was that all the grownups seemed to know each other, as they chimed right into conversation about things that happened long ago in another universe, B.Y.—that is, before you. You thought you knew everything about these people who called themselves your parents. How suddenly lonely.

Here's the worst part. Lo and behold, you are introduced to your cousin. Or more appropriately, your cousin is foisted upon you. Solely because you are "the children," you are expected to play with each other. Messrs. Murphy and Wilson are like stranger-cousins. Metaphorically, the performers are the children. Instead of being asked to play, they are urged to entertain: "Go-ahead, you're actors; you should be able to be funny, no matter how inappropriate the matching." That it were that easy.

Hence, the unappetizing concoction that results is the usual, mindless mixing of half-baked spy plot with freshly strained attempts at buddy-buddy farce. Not even an homage either in spirit or deed, there is virtually little resemblance to producer Sheldon Leonard's original TV version starring Bill Cosby and Robert Culp.

In that groundbreaking series, Culp was Kelly Robinson, international tennis star; Cosby was his trainer, Alexander Scott. That was just their cover. They were actually secret agents. Their celebrity identities provided them with ready entree around the world. Along the way to saving the United States and its institutions from threatened destruction, the duo regaled us with dry-witted banter and, by their harmonious example, the noble hope of brotherhood among the races.

The only hope we have to hang on to while viewing *I Spy* circa 2002 is the certain knowledge that it will end, and that eventually we'll be able to go home. It's bad enough that Murphy and Wilson are nothing like the originals.

Even worse, save for a scant two scenes — one, a humorous confession while bidding their time in a Budapest sewer, the other when the boastful Murphy plays Cyrano to the reserved Wilson — they establish no camaraderie whatsoever.

In this permutation, Murphy is Kelly Robinson, middleweight boxing champion of the world and blowhard extraordinaire. The CIA recruits him because his stardom can provide important access. As luck would have it, or more correctly, as the contrived plot would dictate, it just so happens Robinson will shortly be defending his crown in Budapest.

That's precisely where Gundars, a world-class evildoer portrayed by Malcolm McDowell, is holding a bash to auction off his newly-acquired (read: stolen from the U.S.A.) weapon of mass destruction — an invisible airplane called the Switchblade.

Playing the champ's antithesis, as if that fact in itself might be funny, Owen Wilson is Alexander Scott, a bona fide secret agent whose retiring demeanor suggests Bob Newhart much more than it does James Bond. Robinson calls Scott "surfer boy."

In turn, Scott criticizes Robinson's braggadocio and tantalizes him with nifty secret agent gadgets to hold his interest and wheedle his cooperation. That's about as stimulating as it gets.

Thus to fill space that would otherwise amount to a continual pause as we waited in vain for the joke, any joke, director Betty Thomas paints the screen with one typical spate of cacophonous derring-do followed by the next.

Thank goodness for little blessings: Save for some switcheroos at the climax, the plot is simple. So at least we're not confused as well as bored. However, if ever offered the opportunity to see *I Spy* again, given my druthers I think I'd opt instead to spend some quality time with a long lost cousin.

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*I Spy*, rated PG-13, is a Sony Pictures release directed by Betty Thomas and stars Eddie Murphy, Owen Wilson and Famke Janssen. Running time: 96 minutes.



**COMEDIC PERFORMANCE...**Students at Governor Livingston (GL) High School, who are members of the GL Hilltop Players, are rehearsing for their production of *Don't Drink the Water*, a Woody Allen comedy. Pictured, above, are Greg Trimmer, Tamara Ciasulli, Dan Balboni and Marley Lynch.

## GL Hilltop Players to Perform Comedy, Don't Drink the Water

**BERKELEY HEIGHTS** — The auditorium of Governor Livingston (GL) High School, which is located at 175 Watchung Boulevard in Berkeley Heights, will be the backdrop for the GL Hilltop Players' performance of *Don't Drink the Water*.

The Woody Allen comedy, which was also presented by GL in 1971 as a fundraiser, will be offered this year

on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, November 21-23, at 8 p.m.

Judith Mulder will direct the play, while technical direction will be done by Ken Stiefel, a graduate of GL.

Tickets are \$6 for general admission and \$4 for senior citizens. Advanced tickets are available by calling (908) 464-9038. For more information, please call (908) 464-3100.

## 'Buon Natale: The Holidays In Italy' Slated By Summit Chorale Members

**SUMMIT** — The Summit Chorale will present its series of holiday concerts in early December, revolving around the theme, "Buon Natale: The Holidays in Italy."

The first concert will be offered on Friday, December 6, at 8 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church of Madison, 16 Green Avenue in Madison. On Saturday, December 7, at 8 p.m. the second concert will be held at Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church, 217 Prospect Street in South Orange.

Finally, on Sunday, December 8, at 4 p.m., Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Church in New Providence

will host the third concert.

The Summit Chorale's program will include popular hymns of the 14th century and Renaissance motets by Gabrieli, Palestrina and the Jewish composer Salamone Rossi. The ensemble will also perform 19th century sacred pieces by Verdi and Puccini and some 20th century works, including Respighi's pastoral *Lauda per la Nativita del Signore* with winds and piano duet, *Jesu Bambino* by Pietro Yon, and the "Shepherd's Chorus" from Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. A carol sing will close out each concert.

Tickets may be purchased in advance for \$18 for general admission or \$15 for students or senior citizens. Tickets will also be available at the door for \$20 for general admission and \$17 for students and seniors.

## Books Will Be Donated To Children's Hospital

**WESTFIELD** — The Town Book Store of Westfield will collect new books to be donated to the Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) as holiday gifts for young patients at the Mountainside facility.

The hospital is requesting donations of new books, particularly board books and storybooks, to be wrapped by hospital volunteers and distributed during the holiday season.

The store is offering a 25 percent discount on any books purchased at their store for the purpose of donating to CSH. The donated books will be delivered to the hospital in early December.

For more information, please call (908) 233-3535.

## 'Jazz for Teens' Program Includes Local Residents

**AREA** — Musicians from Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood are among 74 youngsters selected for the sixth annual New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJ PAC) "Jazz for Teens" program.

These students include Westfield saxophonist Gilad Edelman, Scotch Plains saxophonist Steven Cooney, and Fanwood saxophonist Andre Baruch. They have begun classes at NJ PAC's Lucent Technologies Center for Arts Education, under the tutelage of eight professional artists.

## Devlins Will Be Remembered At Mountainside Library Event

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — The Mountainside Public Library will host an Open House on Sunday, November 17, in honor of Harry and Wende Devlin, Mountainside authors and artists. The afternoon will celebrate the lives and work of the Devlins, who recently passed away.

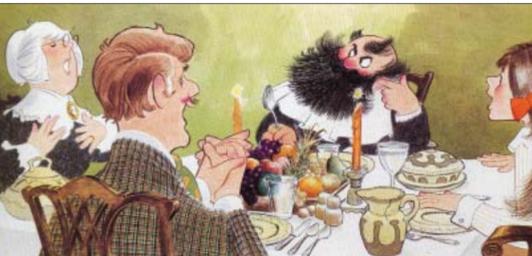
The event, which will last from 2 to 4 p.m., will feature children's activities, as well as film biographies and the dedication of the Devlin Collection, a compilation of many of the books and works of art by the pair.

The Devlin Collection will include

depicting Harry's rendition of the Hetfield House will be vended for \$25. Refreshments with a cranberry theme will be served.

Support for the Devlin Collection came from several local groups: the Friends of the Mountainside Public Library, Mountainside Rotary Club, and the Mountainside Education Fund.

The Friends are also sponsoring the afternoon's entertainment, which is free and open to the public. For more information, please call (908) 233-0115 or visit the library during library hours.



**THANKSGIVING FEAST...**Harry Devlin's artistry was clearly at work in this illustration, "Thanksgiving Dinner," from the Devlins' book, "Cranberry Thanksgiving." Wende and Harry Devlin will be honored by the Mountainside Public Library from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, November 17.

all of the "Cranberry" series written for children, plus other popular titles. Textbooks illustrated by Harry and cartoonist magazines featuring him have also been assembled.

Many of the materials were bought from used bookstores, online and through Ebay in order to gather a broad collection of historical materials. In addition, the library staff has created two special scrapbooks chronicling their careers and artistic successes, as well as Harry's tenure as a trustee and contributor to the library.

Glass shelving has been installed at the library as a permanent showcase for the materials.

Activities include Caricatures by Gina, who will draw a special likeness of each child as a favorite character from the Devlin's children's books. Short remembrances after the dedication ceremony by members of the family and close associates will be held.

Prize drawings will be held for copies of "A Kiss for Warthog" and the Devlin's special cranberry bread recipe. Films will be shown and prints

## The Chansonettes Report Holiday Concert Plans

**WESTFIELD** — The Chansonettes of Westfield, a women's choral group, have been rehearsing for their upcoming holiday concert.

"Goin' on a Sleigh Ride," the theme for the ensemble's season, will include holiday favorites such as, "Let It Snow," "Canon of the Bells," and "Winter Wonderland."

The tour will begin on Thursday, December 5, at Runnells Hospital, Tuesday, December 10, at Atria in Cranford, Wednesday, December 11, to Ashbrook Nursing Home, Thursday, December 12, at the Fellowship Hall in Florham Park, and Tuesday, December 17, to The Chelsea in Fanwood.

To join the group or to obtain directions to the venues, please call Amy Herrington at (908) 317-5910 or Ginny Buccini at (908) 232-1750. Rehearsals are held every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.

The group convenes under the direction of Jean Schork and is accompanied by Mary Ellen Freda.



**EASTER OR CHRISTMAS?...Cynthia Meryl rehearses "Easter Parade" with, pictured clockwise, Chelsea Meyers, Ted Elias at piano, James Kilduff, Lindsay Sinclair, and Brian Maslow of "Puttin' On The Ritz, The Music of Irving Berlin, America's Songwriter" to be presented by the Westfield Young Artists' Cooperative Theatre (WYACT) and the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) on New Year's Eve at 7:30 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield at 140 Mountain Avenue. Tickets are available in Westfield at the WSO office, The Westfield Leader, Lancaster's, Ltd. and The Town Book Store. Proceeds will benefit WYACT's free summer program and WSO's educational programs.**

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