



FLOWING COLOR...Anthony Ventura, a widely acclaimed artist from Neptune, demonstrated traditional transparent watercolor techniques in executing a winter landscape for approximately 100 members and guests of the Westfield Art Association at their meeting in the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building on February 13.

CONCEPTS & THOUGHT

Five WHS Seniors Named Merit Scholarship Finalists

WESTFIELD — Westfield High School (WHS) Principal Dr. Robert Petix recently announced that five members of the class of 2005 — Jake Brandman, Christina Cordeiro, Gilad Edelman, David Reinhardt, and Oiazi Yang — have been designated National Merit Scholarship Finalists and are among 15,000 other academically talented high schools students nationwide to achieve this top-raking distinction.

"Our students' selection as National Merit Finalists," commented Dr. Petix, "reflects their capacity for rigorous scholarly work and accomplishment, not only here in Westfield High School, but also in the highly competitive National Merit Scholarship Program."

Dr. Petix also marked the occasion by presenting a Certificate of Merit and a letter of congratulations from the National Merit Scholarship Program to each of the five finalists.

He said, "We are proud of our seniors for achieving this honor and wish them the best of luck in their continuing quest for a National Merit Scholarship."

Westfield's five seniors began their journey to the prestigious finalist status during their junior year when they qualified as semifinalists after achieving high scores on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which is administered every year in the fall.

As high scorers in New Jersey on that test, they represent less than one percent of the state's entire 2005 graduating class.

As finalists, Brandman, Cordeiro, Edelman, Reinhardt and Yang now have the opportunity to enter the level of competition, which may garner them one of 8,200 National Merit scholarships that will be awarded later in the spring.



RISE AND SHINE...Pat and John Cataldo of Mountainside enjoyed the annual Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the borough's Parent Teacher Association. Their children, Stephanie, a fifth grader, Matt, a seventh grader, and Alex Choma, a fourth grader and neighbor of the Cataldos, also savored their pancakes. The breakfast was held at Deerfield School. Parents and teachers helped cook and set up, while students seated "customers" and served up a hearty meal.

Amateur Astronomers Will Meet at Union County College

CRANFORD — On Friday, February 18, Amateur Astronomers, Inc. will host its monthly membership meeting at 8 p.m. in the Main Lecture Hall on the Cranford campus of Union County College (UCC) at 1033 Springfield Avenue at 9 p.m.

The club will present "Galactic Collisions" by Dr. Dale Gary, who is Professor of Physics and Director of the Owens Valley Solar Array radio telescope near Big Pine, Calif. He will discuss the differences between collisions of variously shaped galaxies in terms of new star formations.

Following the lecture, attendees will be invited to the William Miller Sperry Observatory and will have the opportunity to speak with club members and tour the facility. Refreshments will be served.

If weather permits, a celestial viewing focusing on Saturn and the first quarter Moon will be conducted using the club's two large telescopes.

In addition to the monthly meetings held on the third Friday of each month from September to May, more informal meetings are held on the remaining Fridays at the observatory.

At 7:30 p.m., a program for younger audiences is held with topics that include the solar system and the constellations. Arrangements can be made for groups to attend at 7:30 p.m. by contacting bigjody1@netzero.com. At 8:30 p.m., programs for the general public are presented.

On Friday, February 25, Hank Adams will present "CCD Imaging." On Friday, March 4, Ed Carlos will present "Web Cam Imaging in Astronomy." If weather permits, there will be a celestial viewing throughout the evening.

All meetings and lectures have no admission fee and are open to the public. For more information about the group and directions, please call (908) 276-STAR or visit www.asterism.org.

Scrapbooking Workshop Slated at Community School

SCOTCH PLAINS — A scrapbooking workshop is being offered in March at the Community School of Scotch Plains-Fanwood. The six-week program starts on Tuesday, March 15, from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Syracuse Univ. Reports Area Dean's List Pupils

AREA — Students from Westfield, Fanwood and Mountainside have been named to dean's lists for the fall 2004 semester at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Martta McGlynn of Westfield, a junior majoring in television, radio and film, joined Matthew Powers of Fanwood, a freshman majoring in newspaper journalism, in being named to the list.

The roster also included Mountainside junior Steven Brown, who is majoring in magazine journalism.

Classes meet at the Terrill Middle School on Terrill Road in Scotch Plains. During the workshops participants will be assisted in starting or completing their scrapbook photo albums. Each week a scrap-booking technique will be demonstrated and a full-line of scrapbooking tools will be available for use.

To register, please call the Community School at (908) 889-7718 for additional information about this class, or for any questions about scrapbooking or supplies, please contact the instructor Mickey Howard at (908) 889-5954.

Robert Daurio Named To Fall Dean's List

WESTFIELD — Robert Daurio, a junior majoring in architecture at the School of Architecture at Syracuse University, was named to the dean's list for the fall 2004 semester.

Arts & Entertainment

Cozy Up to Bread Baking Recipes, Techniques in Winter Months

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Nothing takes the sting out of a cold winter afternoon like the smell of bread baking in the oven. The fragrance wafting from the kitchen defies blustery winds and falling snow, and speaks of coziness, comfort and warmth.

Granted, with their many kneadings and proofings, some types of bread may be time-consuming to make. I find this makes bread-baking all the more perfect for a day when the weather keeps me inside.

One of my favorite breads to bake is Indian Pueblo Bread. Also called Taos Bread, it is fun and interesting to make because it is formed and baked in the shape of the sun. It bakes lightly golden on the outside and soft and chewy on the inside.

This recipe has been adapted from one found almost 30 years ago in *Family Circle* magazine.

Indian Pueblo Bread
Yield: 3 Loaves

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 2 envelopes active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup warm (not hot) water
- 6 1/2 cups sifted flour

Heat water, butter, sugar and salt in a small saucepan until butter melts; remove from heat and cool to lukewarm.

Sprinkle yeast onto 1/2 cup warm

water. Stir to dissolve, then stir in lukewarm butter mixture.

Using an electric mixer, beat in four cups of flour, then enough additional flour to make a soft dough.

Knead on lightly floured board for about five minutes. Dough should be smooth and elastic.

Spray a large bowl with cooking spray. Place dough into bowl, then lightly spray dough with cooking spray. Place bowl in a warm spot and let dough rise until double in bulk — about two hours.

Punch down dough. Knead for less than one minute. Divide dough into three pieces and shape each piece into a ball. Cover with a towel for 10 minutes.

Roll each ball into a circle the size of a dinner plate. Spray two cookie sheets with nonstick spray. Transfer a circle to the cookie sheet. Fold each circle so that the top edge is about one inch from the bottom edge.

With kitchen shears, slice into the dough about two inches, cutting from the circular edge into the folded edge. Make six cuts. Spread apart the cut pieces apart so that they resemble the rays of a sun. Let rise again one hour or until double in bulk.

Bake in a 350-degree oven for approximately 50 minutes or until outside is golden. Remove from cookie sheet and cool.

These "sun breads" go great with soups or stews, which are also wonderful dishes to serve on a cold day.



SPECIAL APPEARANCE...John Correll, as the deceased math genius Robert, appears to his math whiz daughter Catherine (Danielle Shepard) the night before his funeral. Directed by Peter Clark, the Pulitzer Prize winning play *Proof* by David Auburn is being presented at the Cranford Dramatic Club, founded in 1919 and boasts the title of the longest running community theater in New Jersey.

Scotch Plains Music Boosters Will Host SP-F Jazz Festival

SCOTCH PLAINS — On Tuesday, February 22, at 5 p.m., the Scotch Plains Fanwood High School (SPFHS) auditorium will be filled with high school bands set to compete in the SP-F Jazz Festival, sponsored by the Scotch Plains Music Boosters.

Bands from Cranford, Warren Hills, Edison, JP Stevens, Bridgewater-Raritan, South Brunswick, South Plainfield, Belleville, and Carteret will vie for prizes.

Two Scotch Plains entries, The Moonglowers and SP-F Jazz Band, will

also perform but not compete.

Adjudicators will be Dr. John Vilella from Westchester University and Gary Fineberg from The College of New Jersey.

Awards for outstanding section and soloist will be distributed. A unique aspect of the festival will be the absence of trophies and plaques. All awards will be jazz-t-shirts, CDs and jazz training books.

Admission is \$5. Refreshments will be available.

For more information, please call (908) 889-8600.



POPCORN™

The Wedding Date: Vow Not to See It

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

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
1 POPCORN

First of all, you have to ask yourself: "Do I even want to deal with the sort of self-absorbed, whiny and rather uninteresting leading lady that Debra Messing plays in *The Wedding Date*?" It's a lackluster reverse spin on the *Pretty Woman* thing. So in this permutation, Kat Ellis — that's her name, not Kate or Katherine, but Kat — is the John. Or is it Jane?

In any case, it's a bit of an emotional bind that's brought her to this humiliation. And it's expected that we should care.

This is but the introductory pretension in a long list of affectations, which, happily enough, become indistinguishable as the film drones its negligible way from one irrelevance to the next. At long last, it lands at its predictably banal conclusion. We've only the promise, the potential of an idea, to keep us from getting a good 90-minute snooze.

There's the rub, dear reader... that potential. Hence, perennial optimists, hopelessly hopeless romantics and cowardly film critics will be forced into a synthetic insomnia, made to stay awake and count film flaws. Sheep would be more interesting.

Come to think of it, that's an idea. Down the line, the use of director Clare Kilner's film as an inexpensive soporific may be just the ticket. Once you've seen it and are certain nothing of any great import is going to happen, what's to keep you awake? And since DVDs at \$1.99 a copy are destined to be piled up in those bins at the supermarket soon enough, you might want to pick one up for yourself, and maybe some for your sleepless friends.

Although there's no way of knowing right now if repeated viewing of *The Wedding Date* might have potential side effects, it just may be a safe alternative to harmful drugs. And in all fairness, the FDA should take into consideration that ordinarily patients would only be viewing the first few minutes of the film anyway. That is, before the desired result takes effect.

Here's what they'd see before somnolent bliss rescued them from what follows: Rather perky Kat was given the gate a little while back by Jeffrey (Jeremy Sheffield). And she's embarrassed that she doesn't have a date for her half-sister Amy's (Amy Adams) wedding in England. So much so, in fact, that the New Yorker deigns to plunk down \$6 thousand for a, ahem, male escort to accompany her across the ocean for said nuptials.

Enters stage right, Dermot Mulroney as Nick Mercer, the gigolo's gigolo. Of course it's not enough that he is handsome, sensitive and witty. As Kat's resourceful research unearthed, his anonymously published article in the *New York Times Magazine* just so happens to make him the current authority on his profession.

In short, for motion picture entertainment purposes, he's supposed to be some demographic group's idea of a fantasy. And in varying degrees he just may be, though it might also be nice to get Margaret Mead's take on the whole thing.

But while we're waiting for that, what you see is what you get. And although this is the suggested fall asleep point, note that those who will be continuing on with us for the boring duration will be served up the usual drivel. You know... that stuff about

how it takes a presumably less moral, less mainstream character to cut through the bourgeois morass and see things for what they are.

The Socratic deducing and discovering gets into full swing after Kat and Nick land in Merry Olde England. There, once ensconced in the slightly wacky but ever so opulent and completely dysfunctional group that Kat knows as her family, oh so wise Nick imparts his philosophy.

But not before learning a few things. For one, half-sister Amy, the product of her Mom's second marriage to a kindly Britisher (Peter Egan), is the baby that got all the attention. Now, adding insult to injury, she's getting married first. Mom (Holland Taylor), a rather silly matron named Bunny, makes sure everyone is apprised of that chronological fact.

Further creating a bit of a sticky wicket, heartbreaking Jeffrey will be in attendance as the best man. Plus, there's a dirty dark secret, not divulged until near the climax, which explains why Kat's ex did her wrong.

Naturally, concurrent with Nick's divining and opining, there is delivered the hardly subtle, dump truck portion of sexual tension. Flat out, Nick informs that while it's \$6,000 to fly over and masquerade as her beau, it'll be another \$1,700 if she wants him to play the role in earnest.

"\$1,700?" she incredulously asks. "Why, that's a down payment on a Ford Focus." Not that she cares. Or does she?

Of course that's the big question. Will the failed coquette fall for the Casanova? Will he fall for her? Will love once again cross all class barriers and conquer all? Or, will they just have a sordid affair?

The other thing we wonder about is Nick himself. There is very little character development. And while we usually don't expect the dramatic personae in our farces to reveal a full three dimensions, Nick's character is curiously incomplete. Why bother telling us that he has a degree in comparative literature from Brown if you're not going to apprise us of why and how he became a prostitute?

Otherwise, and also leading up to nowhere, *The Wedding Date* is filled with a lot of preliminary nonsense. Using the occasion of bachelor parties, bridal showers and rehearsals to show young folk romping, it drags out the exposition process way beyond what it would take to give us the skinny on Kat, Amy, Jeffrey, et al.

It's sort of like a British episode of TV's "Friends," but of even less consequence. The only happy byproduct is the introduction of Sarah Parish as TJ, Kat and Amy's handsome, self-effacing girlfriend. Her good-natured sarcasm offers hints of Eve Arden. It'd be nice to see what she does with a larger role. And while that's something, it's hardly enough.

All in all, like our heroine, we were led to believe there would be much more forthcoming. Which, in this litigious age, has us wondering: After we've had our naps, could we sue *The Wedding Date* for breach of promise?

The Wedding Date, rated PG-13, is a Universal Pictures release directed by Clare Kilner and stars Debra Messing, Dermot Mulroney and Amy Adams. Running time: 90 minutes.

Two Scotch Plains entries, The Moonglowers and SP-F Jazz Band, will

WCP Adds Extra Performance To Witness for the Prosecution

WESTFIELD — Westfield Community Players (WCP) has added an extra performance to Agatha Christie's crime drama, *Witness for the Prosecution*, which will open at 8 p.m. on Friday, March 4, at the WCP Theater at 1000 North Avenue, West in Westfield.

Other show dates are Friday and Saturday evenings, March 11, 12, 18 and 19 with single tickets at \$15 available from the box office at (908) 232-

1221.

Maurice Moran will direct this tale of a wealthy British woman who is brutally murdered by someone she knew. Ms. Christie carefully lays a trail of confusion, doubt and uncertainty as the suspect's wife offers conflicting information and hazy details about the night of the murder.

Patrick Field of Bloomfield stands accused of the crime while his wife, Renee Litwin of Scotch Plains, offers conflicting information to Queen's Council Jon Heron of North Brunswick.

While the maid Joyce Lee Goldstein of Westfield eyes the "other woman" Irene Hernandez of Cranford with suspicion, the Police Surgeon Frank Lettera of Scotch Plains sifts for clues with the inspector Allan Gershenson of Linden.

Other cast members include Kirstin Lutz of Westfield, Evan Blank of New York City, Michael Piperato of Edison, George Straley of Carteret, Julie Zatkow of Cranford and Iris Fraser Foss of East Brunswick as the mysterious stranger.

As a reminder, WCP now has reserved seating. When reserving tickets, patrons should make their preference known when calling the box office for seats at (908) 232-1221. Opening night patrons are invited to stay for light refreshments with the cast and crew after the curtain rings down.

Working with Mr. Moran are Assistant Director Barbara Goldstein, Stage Manager Kate Douglas, and Assistant Stage Manager Anthony Marotta.



IN REHEARSAL...Pictured, left to right, while rehearsing for *Witness for the Prosecution*, Renee Litwin is interrogated by the Prosecution Team of Michael Piperato and Jon Heron.

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WESTFIELD AUTHOR...The first Vassar College edition of the *College Prowler* series has just been published, authored by Rachel Falcone, a graduate of Westfield High School. Rachel, who is a philosophy major, is studying in London this year. She loves to write, and was a tri-editor of *Hi's Eye* and a *Folio* contributor. The *College Prowler* series is available through www.collegeprowler.com and major booksellers.



TRAILBLAZERS...Fourth graders from Franklin Elementary School in Westfield recently visited the Monmouth Museum in Lincroft to see the highly interactive *Westward Migration 1840 to 1850* exhibition about the Oregon Trail. Pictured, above, are students in Mary McCabe's fourth grade class.

Please send all A&E news to: ae@goleader.com!