

Arts & Entertainment

Coffee Intoxicated, Derailed Stayed On Right Track at WestFilm Festival

By MICHELLE HELEN Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – On May 2 and 9, Westfield's Rialto Theatre served as the backdrop for the wildly successful Third Annual WestFilm Festival, drawing amateur and seasoned filmmakers, their friends and enthusiastic residents.

Audiences were overwhelmingly impressed by *Coffee*, a short directed by Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) student Jon Lorenzini, as well as *Derailed*, a thriller directed by Alex Forstenhauser and edited by Seth Applebaum, Westfield High School (WHS) students.

Jon's film begins at a convenience store, where the main character is chatting with his girlfriend (actually, she's doing all of the talking) as they get some coffee.

Jon shares with the audience, "This girl just talks and talks" as he watches her ramble on about the college admissions process. He compares her to pop star Ashlee Simpson – nails down a chalkboard – and jokes, "Lucky she's not a mute or her hands would fall off by now!"

The audience is taken back to events that happened before the convenience store scene, when Jon's alarm goes off at 8 a.m. and he chooses to sleep until noon instead. Time literally flies by in the digital alarm clock as Led Zeppelin's hypnotic "D'yer Mak'er" plays in the background, setting the audience up for Jon's surreal experiences with coffee-drinking which bring on jittery and zombie-like states.

When asked about the premise for his short, *Coffee*, Jon told *The Westfield*

Leader and The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times, "Everyone is convinced that coffee gives them special powers. Seeing my movie up on the big screen was an awesome experience. When you show a film to your friends they're laughing at all the right times, but of course, they're your friends. But, here there were strangers laughing at all the right parts and appreciating the film. That was an amazing feeling."

Planning to major or at least minor in film at Pennsylvania State University, Jon has made shorts before. As for a career in filmmaking, he said, "I'll just go where it takes me."

Derailed, a spectacular whodunit, which revolves around three multi-faceted characters who witness a murder set at the Westfield train station, kept the audience rapt by the circumstances beyond the characters' control. The outcome was eerie and unexpected and the actors, Chloé Zeitounian, Jeff Hogan, Chris Hild, Jon Applebaum, did a marvelous job.

"I want to thank all of the actors," Alex said. "Without them, it wouldn't have come out the way it did."

A devoted fan of Alfred Hitchcock, Alex noted that "everyone seemed to like it," and he has been approached by audience members for copies of the film, which also featured scenes from the Westfield Police Department.

Derailed was written, revealed Alex, during the first marking period, cast during the second marking period and editing was done during the filming process.

This summer, Alex will attend the New York Film Academy in Princeton,



HE RUNS THE SHOW... Peter Paul Basler, one of the co-founders of WestFilm and the director of *The Tomorrow Project*, chatted with filmmakers and audience members during festival.

where he also studied last summer. He hopes to major in film at New York University and become a director.

Seth told *The Leader/Times*, "Seeing all of our hard work come together at the end and receiving so much praise for it was the most rewarding part of the entire experience."

He continued, "I couldn't have been more satisfied with the final product. The audience seemed to really be into the movie. As my dad told me, 'It was so silent in the theater that you could hear a pin drop. The audience was hanging on every word.'"

"This was my first time making a movie of this length. In the past, I had made short movies of about three or five minutes, but they didn't entail nearly as much preparation and commitment as this did. Making a movie of this length and caliber was a real test of organization and preparation," Seth noted.

"In the early stages of making the movie, Alex and I would watch clips from movies and listen to soundtracks for any form of inspiration," he added. "As the shooting of the movie progressed, many more subplots were developing than were in the original script. By the end of the shooting and editing of the movie, much of the original script had been either revised or removed completely, along with the addition of new scenes and twists in the story."

"I plan on making movies for each WestFilm until I graduate," Seth said. "I hope that each year my skills will improve and my movies will get better and bet-

ter."

There were a few stand-out WestFilm submissions presented on the second evening of the festival, namely *A Lot To Ask*, a short by Tamir Mostafa and the feature-length documentary, *Unknown Soldier - Searching For A Father*, which was recently acquired by HBO. The Rialto's foyer was packed to the gills with viewers especially eager to see *Unknown*.

Although the sound was poor, *A Lot To Ask* focused on a topic everyone can relate to – how do you move on and find love again when your ex keeps haunting you... literally? Ah, we've all been there, but the filmmaker filled the screen with interesting dialogue, intriguing characters and a delightful resolution. It was almost reminiscent of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* minus the scientific mind-crasing or haircolor changes.

On both evenings, WestFilm audiences were also treated to the world premiere of Westfield resident Sam Freeman's *Unholy*, starring Adrienne Barbeau and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer's" Nicholas Brendon. Scenes for the film were shot on Hillcrest Avenue in early February.

A Walk Home, a short by Colonia filmmaker Patrick Buonincontri, kept audiences in suspense and evoked strong sentiment as viewers watched a youngster taunted by two other boys who confronted him on a playground. The background is filled with the sounds of chirping birds and swarming bees as the lad clenches and loosens his fists and he tries not to cry during the torment. What fate will befall the youngster? Mr. Buonincontri, an aspiring film writer, takes the audience on an emotional rollercoaster that is worth the trip.

WHS student Rachel Gordon gave viewers some things to smile about and ponder during her short, *Red-Haired Boy*, which starred students Michael Tannenbaum and Lindsay Degiralamo.

Using familiar backdrops like Mindowaskin Park, Rachel dynamically illustrated the life of lonely boy, virtually ignored by his peers and parents, who eventually meet a happy-go-lucky gal, Suzie, who lifts his spirits and fills his emptiness. She even makes him green pancakes, which are so different from the bland ones he cooked up for his teddy bear, who took off for medical school. Genuinely cute film.

SPFHS film teacher and WestFilm co-founder William McMeekan, Jr.'s tribute to firefighters competing in athletic events, *Eighth World Firefighter Games*, was tremendously inspirational and showed younger filmmakers what years of seasoned and professional film study

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LOCAL STARS

WHS Senior Jeff Hogan Will Stage Original Musical Next Week

WESTFIELD— *The Fall of Rain*, an original musical incorporating Tony award-winning Broadway songs, which has been written, produced and directed by Westfield High School (WHS) senior Jeff Hogan, will be presented at Roosevelt Intermediate School on Thursday, May 19, at 4 p.m. and Friday, May 20, at 7 p.m.

This astonishing and affecting love story, with its dramatic heartbreaking conclusion, will transport audiences to an exotic time and place.

At WHS, Jeff participates in high school drama classes, Concert Choir, Choraleers and Chorale.

Fall of Rain, which started as a senior project, has taken new meaning and has transcended into a benefit for The National Stroke Association. Admission is free, but donations are gladly accepted.

Major cast members include Chloé Zeitounian as Sheila Forrester, Steve

Markowskias Adam Baker, Zal Spialter as Dracula, and Gina Castorao as Anita. Supporting cast are Maurice Blackmon, Kristin Agüero, Jennifer Kujawski, Andrea Gordon, Christina Collucci, Nick Williams, Danielle Frogley, Greg Nelson, Patriona Caruana and Ellen Scariati.

The remaining ensemble members are Alexandria Ann Brummell, Mike Burns, Jonathan Chananic, Max Lazar, Tim Mathews, Lauren Miceli, Mia Pafumi, Luke Ricci, Lindsay Ryan, Laura Schwab, Katlin Swadosh, Michael Tannenbaum, Danielle Tepper and Annie Valentine.

Technical support includes set design, scenic artistry, and costumes by Jess Ropars. Greg Ryan manages lights, and Julia Korn handles props. Musical directors are Maurice Blackmon and Steve Markowski, and Kristin Agüero is the choreographer.



Jeff Hogan

Westfield High Students Win Top Awards at Art Contest

WESTFIELD – Philip Kim and Maggie Lee, members of the Westfield High School (WHS) senior class, have been honored for their art by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers Corporation, a non-profit organization dedicated to honoring the work of young artists and writers.

The Gold Portfolio Medal, representing the highest level of achievements in the competition, has been awarded to Philip, who entered a portfolio consisting of eight pieces of his artwork. Only five other students in the nation achieved this high-ranking distinction.

In addition to having his work exhib-

Writing Awards program since it was founded in 1923 to acknowledge and support talented students who have demonstrated exceptional achievement and promise as young writers and artists. Scholarships and awards totaling \$20 million have been bestowed upon the two million who have participated in the program.

"Philip and Maggie have the potential and motivation to excel in any field of art they choose," commented their WHS art teacher Timothy Stumbers.

"They have worked hard to get where they are and exemplify the kind of suc-



CREATIVE GENIUS... Westfield High School (WHS) Principal Dr. Robert Petix, left, poses with WHS art teacher Timothy Stumbers, far right, as they congratulate Maggie Lee and Philip Kim on their Scholastic Art Awards.

ated at the Diane von Furstenberg Studio in New York City, Philip will also receive a Silver Award for a separate entry and a scholarship in the amount of \$10,000 at an awards ceremony to be held at Carnegie Hall on Thursday, June 2.

Maggie's work, a mixed media piece entitled, "Health or Greed?" earned her a Gold Key Award. Her artwork was one of 767 selected for an award from over 2,000 regional entries.

As a recipient of this award, Maggie now qualifies to advance to the national level of competition where she will have the opportunity to win a scholarship and have her works exhibited.

Approximately 12 million students have participated in the Scholastic Art &

cess that will give students working in an artistically dynamic environment can experience," he added.

WHS Principal Dr. Robert Petix said, "We are very proud of Philip Kim and Maggie Lee for their exceptional accomplishments and congratulate them for the awards they have received."

He added, "Their success serves also as a reminder about the importance of studying the fine arts and the value which the Westfield school district places on providing students with these kinds of experiences as part of their education."



WESTFIELD ARTWORK... Westfield artist Joan Dreyer will have work, such as the piece pictured, above, juried in the New Jersey/New York Surface Design Exhibit. The show, which will open on Wednesday, May 25, at the Phoenix Gallery, 210 11th Avenue at 25th Street, Suite 902 in New York City, will run through Saturday, June 18. A reception will be held on Thursday, May 26, from 6 to 8 p.m., and the exhibit will also be featured at www.sdaexhibit.homestead.com. Participating award-winning artists will demonstrate many fields of fiber art, such as basket-making, sculpture, art quilts, mixed media, and more.

Musicians Needed For Community Band

WESTFIELD— The Westfield Community Concert Band, under the direction of Dr. Thomas Connors, is putting the final touches on their 93rd Season of Summer Concerts in Mindowaskin Park.

The Westfield Community Concert Band has openings for experienced musicians on the tuba and double reed instruments.

Musicians must be available for rehearsals on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Community Room in the Westfield Municipal Building.

Interested musicians should contact Dr. Connors at (908) 737-4327. The Westfield Community Concert Band is sponsored by the Westfield Recreation Department, Bruce Kaufmann, Director.



CHORAL LEADER... In late April, Matt Forman of Scotch Plains, conductor of the Wardlaw-Hartridge Choral Arts Society, leads his peers as they sing for residents at the Genesis Eldercare nursing facility in Westfield. Last year, Matt developed the teen group. Vocal and instrumental soloists helped round out the program of music from various time periods. The students have also slated a performance for residents of Sunrise Assisted Living in Westfield.

Choral Art Society Concert Plans Concert This Saturday

WESTFIELD – The Choral Art Society of New Jersey, Inc. will perform Luigi Cherubini's *Requiem in C Minor* and George Frederic Handel's *Coronation Anthem No. 1, Zadok the Priest* on Saturday, May 14, at 8 p.m. at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.

The evening's program will also feature the Advanced Chorus of The New Jersey Youth Chorus, directed by Patricia Joyce.

James Little, Musical Director of the Society, will conduct the evening's performance. The Choral Art Society Orchestra will accompany the chorus. Phillip Steffani will accompany the New Jersey Youth Chorus.

Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$15, general admission, or \$10 for senior citizens and students.

sary of Louis XVI's execution and it was first performed on January 21, 1817. The *Requiem in C Minor* is scored for a conventional orchestra and chorus – no soloists.

The New Jersey Youth Chorus will perform *Dome Epais* by Leo Delibes, *Alleluia, Amen* by Randal Thompson, *Niska Banja*, a Serbian gypsy dance arranged by Nick Page, *My Lagan Love*, a traditional Irish song arranged by Michael Neaum, *Ain't That News*, arranged by Stephen Hatfield, *Prayer of the Children* by Kurt Bestor, *Give Us Hope* by Jim Papoulis, and *Praise His Holy Name* by Keith Hampton.

Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$15, general admission, or \$10 for senior citizens and students.



CONCERT THIS WEEKEND... The Advanced Chorus of the New Jersey Youth Chorus, directed by Patricia Joyce, will perform seven special arrangements at the Choral Art Society of New Jersey's concert this Saturday, May 14, at 8 p.m. at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.

THE CHORAL ART SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY
James S. Little - Director

Requiem Mass
in C Minor
by Luigi Cherubini

Coronation Anthem
Zadok the Priest
by G.F. Handel

Chorus and Orchestra
- also featuring -
New Jersey Youth Choir
Patricia C. Joyce, Director

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