

Calling All Singers...

Local Groups Seek Musicians

Celebration Singers Hold Audition for Holiday Opera

CRANFORD – Auditions for the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* will be held on Wednesday, September 13, at 7:30 p.m. at the Cranford United Methodist Church. The opera is being presented by the Celebration Singers and directed by Tom Pedas.

Leading roles are Amahl, his mother, the three Kings and the page. Callbacks are Sunday, September 17. Rehearsals begin in October and end with performances on December 8 and 9 and are held on Sunday evenings except for tech week and a few Tuesday evenings closer to the production. Rehearsals are held at

the Cranford United Methodist Church.

Amahl and the Night Visitors is a one-act opera written in English by Gian Carlo Menotti. *Amahl* was commissioned for television in 1951 and for many years was annually shown at Christmastime on NBC television and is performed live in most major cities.

The story focuses around Amahl, a poor crippled shepherd boy living with his widowed mother. The night visitors are the three Kings following a star to Bethlehem where they heard of the birth of a King. It is a touching story that tells about hardship, unselfish love, the triumph of good over evil and will leave an audience with both tears of sorrow and laughter.

This production is being presented by the Celebration Singers as a part of their annual Holiday concert. The Celebration Singers is a non-profit adult choral organization which also sponsors the Celebration Children's Choir, a tuition free chorus for talented singers between the ages of nine and 14. The adult chorus will play the Shepherds chorus in the opera.

For additional information, call Tom Pedas, director, at (908) 245-2339.

Westfield Glee Club Holds Rehearsals

WESTFIELD – Adult and student, male and female singers are invited to join the Westfield Glee Club as its 82nd-season rehearsals resume Monday, September 11, from 8-10 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield's choir room.

Director Thomas Booth and accompanist George Lachenauer will introduce the seasonal Christmas program with a variety of classical, spiritual, novelty and popular arrangements.

Sample selections are: "Ave Maria" by Bach-Gounod and arranged by Anne Albritton, "Rise Up Shepherd and Follow!" arranged by Roger Emerson, "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" arranged by Don Besig and "Feliz Navidad" by Jose Feliciano and arranged by John Leavitt.

Following the September rehearsal the group will join for a coffee and donuts fellowship. Singers are invited to attend.

Metro Rhythm Chorus Seeks New Members

CRANFORD – The Metro Rhythm Chorus, a four-part a cappella chorus, meets on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church of Cranford, located at Springfield and Union Avenues.

A non-profit organization, the chorus is affiliated with Sweet Adelines International. Its membership is comprised of women from north, south and central New Jersey, with a few traveling from Staten Island.

The group is looking for new members to join. Anyone who enjoys singing is invited to stop by the First Presbyterian Church of Cranford on a Wednesday evening when the chorus meets or to call Janice at (732) 381-2535 in the evening.

Peace Council Offers Film *It Was a Wonderful Life*

WESTFIELD - The Union County Peace Council continues its "Films for Change" with a free screening of *It Was a Wonderful Life* at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, September 15.

The film will be shown at First United Methodist Church of Westfield, located at 1 East Broad Street. The parking lot is accessible from Ferris Place, off Prospect Street. Filmgoers should enter through side door.

In the film, Academy Award-nominee Michèle Ohayon presents the accounts of six Los Angeles women who are part of America's growing "hidden homeless." The film reveals the hardships and triumphs experienced by these "tenacious" women in their daily struggle for survival. Jodie Foster narrates, with an original musical score by Melissa Etheridge.

The six women who share their lives in *It Was a Wonderful Life* went from a pleasant middle-class existence to poverty and homelessness when medical bills undermined their financial stability or support was cut off through divorce or abandonment. With ingenuity and perseverance, they provided for themselves and their children without decently paid jobs, health insurance or childcare. None of these women applied for Welfare. The documentary illustrates the need for stronger legal protections for divorced women, especially in the area of child support, according to a press release submitted from the Peace Council.

Refreshments and post-film discussion will be held after the film. Filmgoers are invited to pickup literature, sign a petition and learn

about actions they can take "to make the world a better place." *It Was a Wonderful Life* is part of Films for Change, which offers movies on a variety of important peace and social justice issues.

The Union County Peace Council, First United Methodist Church of Westfield and WordOut! are sponsoring the event.

For more information, call (908) 233-7344 or e-mail the Peace Council at unioncountypeacecouncil@gmail.com or visit unioncountypeace.org.

Paper Mill to Perform Schwartz's *Godspell*

AREA – Stephen Schwartz's *Godspell* will be performed at the Paper Mill Playhouse September 20 through October 22. Opening night is September 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Directed by Daniel Goldstein with choreography by Dan Knechtges, the show features Jonathan Groff as Jesus, along with Uzo Aduba, Sarah Bolt, Holly Davis, Joshua Henry, Patrick Heusinger, Anika Larsen, Telly Leung, Megan Lewis, Julie Reiber and Jimmy Smagula.

Godspell includes songs "Day by Day," "Save the People," "All Good Gifts" and "By My Side," among others.

The show will be performed Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m., Thursdays at 2 and 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 and 8 p.m. Single tickets are now on sale and range in price from \$19 to \$68. Student rush tickets are \$16 and are available the day of performance in person with current student ID. Tickets may be purchased by calling (973) 376-4343.



PAYING TRIBUTE...On August 23, The Ed Palermo Big Band with Rob Paparozzi played The Union County Summer Arts Festival. Sixteen studio & Broadway musicians performed a tribute to blues legends, Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield.

County to Host Annual Arts & Healing Conference

ELIZABETH – Union County's third annual Arts and Healing Conference "Language and the Mind: An Arts & Well Being Initiative," sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Union County, the Board of Chosen Freeholders and Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs, will take place Friday, November 3, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hilton Hotel, 1170 Spring Street (Route One), Elizabeth.

Pre-registration is required. The fee for early registration by Friday, September 15, (and students with current I.D.) is \$65 per person, which includes a continental breakfast, lunch, snacks and all materials. Registration after September 15 cost \$80. Registration on the day of the conference is \$95.

Those who register by September 15 and will receive free admission to the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival on Friday, September 29 at Waterloo Village, Stanhope.

There will be two morning keynote presenters: Dr. Sayantani DasGupta of Columbia University's Program in Narrative Medicine, and Cheryl Hulteen, associate director and master artist at Artsgenesis, Inc., and speaker on the role of the arts in healing, multiple intelligences, differentiated learning and the role of creativity in literacy. Ms. Hulteen is also an actress, playing the role of Winifred on ABC's "All My Children."

The conference features six concurrent workshop sessions that are offered in the morning and afternoon. The workshops will explore how language is a successful strategy in working with well-aging, healing trauma, serving people with special needs, aiding children in schools, restoring mental health/treating substance abuse, and conquering compassion fatigue.

There also will be a panel discussion, "Vision of the Future," with experts about programs in language and healing, moderated by Martin Farawell, associate poetry director for the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Program.

Poet William Higginson will moderate the Poetry Café open reading. Attendees are urged to bring their favorite healing poems to read.

Police, Fire Pipes, Drums Celebrate Fifth Anniversary

AREA – The Union County Police and Fire Pipes and Drums band will celebrate its fifth anniversary with its annual "Pub Night" event on Saturday, September 9, at 7:30 p.m. at Roselle Catholic High School in Roselle.

The bagpipe band, one of the largest in New Jersey, will honor Township of Union Fire Chief Frederic Fretz for his support of the band.

"We are excited about celebrating our fifth year as we continue to grow stronger as a band," said Pipe Major Ed Donnelly. "It also is a great opportunity to thank and honor Chief Fretz for all he has done in support of the band. We invite everyone to join us for what is always a great night."

The band's "Pub Night" will be a celebration of Celtic music with a

performance by the Union County Police and Fire Pipes and Drums performing sounds of Gael Force playing Irish classics with their own rock arrangements.

During the evening, there also will be a memorial ceremony to remember and honor fallen police officers and firefighters as the fifth anniversary of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 approaches.

"Pub Night" tickets cost \$20 and include food, beer, wine, soda and door prizes.

For tickets and more information, contact Joe Dooley at (908) 925-3936 or Ed Donnelly at (908) 296-6797. To learn more about Union County Police and Fire Pipes and Drums, visit hosesnholsters.com.



PUB CRAWL...The Union County Police and Fire Pipes and Drums band will celebrate its fifth anniversary with its annual "Pub Night" event on Saturday, September 9, at 7:30 p.m. at Roselle Catholic High School in Roselle.

POPCORN™ How to Eat Fried Worms: Kiddie Flick Proves a Delicacy



By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
3 popcorns

One of the truly surprising things about *How to Eat Fried Worms*, aside from how charmingly the kiddie flick cleanses the jaded cinema palate, is that it actually does instruct how one might dine on said wriggling nematodes. Indeed, the story is full of metaphors, but the eating worms thing is taken literally, and seriously.

Yecch! Wait until you see some of the preparations.

Don't worry. It's doubtful you'll be prompted to seek out the questionable delicacy. But as a dramatic mechanism, it works.

It's a rather harsh and unappetizing test Billy, the new kid in the neighborhood, must take to pass muster with his cruelly unwelcoming hosts. Yet, the sticky, icky, gooey and double-dog-dare yuckiness of it all is a perfect counterbalance to the otherwise wholesome goodness of youth the story so notably celebrates.

Truth be told, Billy, superbly played by Luke Benward, chooses his own poison whilst attempting to establish his machismo among these strangers in a strange land. It starts when his lunchbox is stuffed with worms on the first day of school.

It's obvious Joe Guire (Adam Hicks), the freckled bully you'll chillingly recognize, is responsible for the cool reception. Feigning to take it in stride, Billy braggishly informs, "I eat worms all the time." He then casually tosses one back, the slimy little devil inadvertently landing on Joe's face. What's a long-established bully to do?

They almost come to fistcuffs. But calmer heads prevail. And instead, a wager is made, which essentially threatens to overturn Joe's fiefdom.

If Billy can eat ten worms by 7 p.m. Saturday, Joe will come to school Monday with his pants full of worms. If he fails, Billy will have the honor, and probably never shed his newly acquired sobriquet, Worm Boy.

Meanwhile, back at the expanded ranch now called home, Dad (Thomas Cavanagh) tries to do the father knows best thing. He was a kid once, too, and while he doesn't quite know the details of his son's current trials and tribulations, his intuition is pretty good. Mom (Kimberly Williams) is appropriately loving.

Less helpful is little brother Woody (Ty Panitz), annoyingly cute and blending into the new surroundings. To complicate matters, Billy is saddled with babysitting the tyke on the big day.

On the plus side, Billy has attracted the allegiance of a wise old confederate. Actually, Erika (Hallie Kate Eisenberg) is only a few months senior to our put-upon protagonist, but she's about six inches taller, for which she politely apologizes. Boys are weird, she repeatedly observes, but this one's apparently worth saving.

Without giving too much away, note that Billy's bravery doesn't go unnoticed in other quarters, including mean Joe's camp. There are defectors.

But whether remaining loyal to their diminutive version of King John or swayed by this Robin Hood, they are

a great bunch of actors. The ensemble performances will doubtlessly remind both junior and dad of that old gang.

There's Austin Rogers as Adam, the nerd who's sure a delayed reaction-deathblow from Joe's poison ring is just waiting to cause his demise...in 8th grade. Ryan Malgarini is fun as Benji, the dedicated worm preparer who delivers his creations with a French accent. And Andrew Gillingham as the orthodontically challenged Techno Mouth adds his research scientist skills to the adventure.

The sights and sounds will all come back to you. For there were always cloak-and-dagger missions. Which meant lots of running on warm summer nights, when kids' voices filtered up through the alleys and between the trees, peppered with sudden outbursts, a laugh, a whisper, and the hum of a secret world at play. All things were possible. You were special. And let's not forget immortal.

Yet, for the crowd for which it is primarily intended, the tale, based on Thomas Rockwell's story, serves more as a confidence-bolstering handbook one can identify with, as well as a primer on how to win friends and influence little people.

Granted, production standards in director Bob Dolman's childhood retrospective rarely rise above made-for-Nickelodeon quality. Yet the genuinely captured magic of innocence almost makes up for it.

None of this is to suggest that "How to Eat Fried Worms" is another *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962). Far from it. Still, that it might make you recall that classic is high praise.

More correctly, it's a lighter, fluffier version of *Stand By Me* (1986), only about three years beforehand. But no matter how you categorize it, anyone with a taste for good, nourishing entertainment will want to put *How to Eat Fried Worms* on his movie-going menu.

How to Eat Fried Worms, rated PG, is a New Line Cinema release directed by Bob Dolman and stars Luke Benward, Hallie Kate Eisenberg and Adam Hicks. Running time: 98 minutes

Larkin to Play Coffee With A Conscience

WESTFIELD – The Coffee with a Conscience concert series at the Westfield First United Methodist Church, will feature musician Patty Larkin on Saturday, September 16, at 8 p.m.

Ms. Larkin has been redefining folk-pop music for more than 20 years with her singing, songwriting and guitar playing.

Her latest project, La Guitarra: Gender Bending Strings, is geared towards demonstrating women's contributions to modern guitar. She has also undertaken the task of producing.

Coffee with a Conscience is located at the Westfield First United Methodist Church on East Broad Street. Tickets for the performance will be \$25. For more information on Ms. Larkin go to www.pattylarkin.com, and for more information on Coffee with a Conscience go to www.coffeewithconscience.com.



JUST BEAD YOURSELF...Pictured, from left to right, are: Sara Rogers, Christopher Kirkwood, Naomi McElynn of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation Sherry Cronin, Mayor Andrew Skibitsky and owners Thea and Bruce Jackson at the Just Bead Yourself ribbon cutting.

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