

Musical Textures: NJ Symphony Brings 'Fire and Serenity'

By VICTORIA McCABE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra's "Fire and Serenity" November concert program was all about texture. From Edvard Grieg's "Suite No. 1 from 'Peer Gynt'" to Max Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy" to Beethoven's bright Fourth Symphony, the NJSO, under the baton of Neeme Järvi, culled a wide palate of musical colorings and sounds.

At a Sunday matinee performance, the orchestra squeezed onto the Morristown Community Theater's temporary stage (the theater is in the midst of fundraising efforts to finance the construction of a new stage), and though the fit was tight, the sound the musicians created had no difficulty filling the charming venue's space.

The Grieg opened with lovely wind solos, joined with a wash of delicate string tones before the strings picked up the expansive, lyrical melody. The second movement brought hushed drama with intense chords and a muted string texture, and a dynamic arc faded away into nothing. Glossy opening chords in the third movement quickly made way for a buoyant waltz, and the orchestra fluxuated between a *pizzicato* aesthetic and shimmering violin melodies. The famous melody of the fourth movement slowly grew from a bassoon-driven rumbling into a full-orchestral frenzy; the NJSO gave all the meaty tremolos, offbeat cymbal crashes and dramatic climaxes the wild energy they require.

The second part of the concert's first half featured the 2006 Young Artists Auditions winner Betty Zhou, a teenage violinist from Edison. Her piece, Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy," Op. 46, evoked completely different

textures from the orchestra and treated the audience to a new musical aesthetic.

Regrettably, some in the audience took the break between pieces as an opportunity to start chatting, and though conversations stopped once orchestra and soloist began, the noise coming from certain individuals did not. Indeed, there was so much unmuffled coughing that one longed for the cough-drop bins Carnegie Hall not-so-discreetly places at each entrance to the theater.

But though the audience was fidgety, 16-year-old Zhou was poised and elegant, both in stature and technique. She immediately asserted both her dexterity and the mature, melancholic tone she could draw out of her violin. She filled the theater, her low notes resonating wonderfully.

This was the "fire" that the concert program's title promised. The musicians dug into bouncy Scottish melodies as Zhou alternately performed furious runs up and down the violin and delivered dancing melodies.

An explosive solo exposition began the final movement; the orchestra in its exposition echoed Zhou's impassioned performance. A bouncy violin melody flourished on top of pizzicato strings. An orchestra and soloist playing in overdrive dug into wild runs and big chords, then slowly calmed down as fluid solo passages ran under sustained winds. In a particularly poignant moment, all else faded away from the solo violin, leaving only its soothing whisper hanging in the air.

Sandwiched between the overarching heroics of his Third and Fifth symphonies, Beethoven's light-hearted Fourth Symphony sometimes gets lost. The tremendous longevity of the turbulent Third and Fifth has

rendered the milder Fourth one of the least performed and least explored of Beethoven's symphonies.

But though the Fourth does not ascribe to the heroic proportions of its predecessor and successor, it's not in Beethoven's nature to play to conventions. So he starts toying with them right away, opening the symphony with a slow introduction in minor, though the symphony is in B flat major. He sets up an ominous explosion with big anticipatory chords, but suddenly the cadence gives way to a playful melody in major.

The NJSO's excellent timpani player played a key role, deepening the dramatics of the first movement and then punctuating the second movement *Adagio* in one of Beethoven's interesting scoring choices. The timpani's underscoring gives the movement a surprisingly weighty quality; after a lovely interplay between the first and second violin sections, some delicate woodwind melodies and soft exchanges, a solo timpani pulse led into the movement's final cadence. The second movement is the Fourth's emotional and dramatic center, and the NJSO accordingly emphasized the movement's alternating tension and supple release.

In the third movement, Beethoven passes the melodic line around the orchestra from one section to another; it's an interesting surround-sound effect, and one that requires a real cohesion between the sections of an orchestra. The NJSO gelled as an ensemble in Morristown, fluidly sending the bouncy melody from winds to strings and back.

Järvi swayed back and forth amidst a torrent of activity from his orchestra, conductor and musicians all playing on the same page, moving in time with each other.

Beethoven challenges the musicians by bouncing rapid-fire runs around the string sections during the symphony's final movement. The NJSO string players again joined cohesively, nimbly accentuating all notes and keeping runs crisp.

The intimate Morristown venue was the perfect atmosphere for the lesser-known symphony; the NJSO allowed the audience to explore the majesty of the work up close and personal.

The NJSO will present Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, on a concert program including Tchaikovsky's violin concerto and Adams' "Shaker Loops," this Saturday, January 6, at 8 p.m. at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark, and Sunday, January 7, at 3 p.m. at the Community Theater in Morristown. Visit njsymphony.org for details.



FINAL FANTASY...The 2006 Young Artists Auditions winner Betty Zhou, a 16-year old violinist from Edison, presented Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy," Op. 46

WHS Band The Bus Reunites at Hamilton St.

By CASSIE LO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Westfield High School (WHS) funk band The Bus played a reunion show at Hamilton Street Cafe and Stage in Bound Brook on Saturday, December 30, 2006.

Opening acts included WHS bands Top Dogs, The Sirkus and Southern Fried Funk.

The bands played to an intimate audience at Hamilton St. The crowd was comprised mainly of high school and college students, with a few parents present to support their children. Audience members sang and danced along with the bands, cheering after each song and shouting out requests to play their favorites.

"This is my second time playing here, and it's a pretty nice spot. A lot of funk bands play here, which is unusual for the area," said The Sirkus' lead singer and guitarist Ben Colvin. The Sirkus played a cover of "Cut the Cake" by Average White Band and four original songs.

The Bus members Will Harbaugh, Jon Fichter, Mike Risberg and Gabe Yukon played together for the first time since last summer, when Gabe moved to Texas with his family. They played both cover songs and originals for over an hour, with favorites including "Sex Machine" by Aretha Franklin and originals "Track

A" and "Westbound," a song written for the reunion show.

The middle of the set was dedicated to James Brown, the late "Godfather of Soul." The boys entertained their fans with a rendition of rap favorite "Get Low," which elicited laughter from the audience.

"It was a good set," said Jon, the lead singer, whose guitar broke towards the end of the show. He grabbed a friend's and continued to play, saying, "the show must go on."

"I think we were lucky to find each other at such a young age," said bassist Will, referring to the fact that The Bus has been playing together for four years. The band plans to continue playing together in the summers after they graduate in June.



TICKET TO RIDE...The Bus records their debut CD at Brick Window Recording Studios.

Westfield Figure-Drawing Group Displays its Work

WESTFIELD - The Figure-Drawing Group of the Westfield Art Association is mounting "Drawn Together," an exhibit of its pictures, to be viewed from Saturday, January 6, through Tuesday, January 30, at the Westfield Art Gallery.

The storefront venue is part of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, 150-152 East Broad Street in the midst of downtown Westfield.

The dozen artists in the group meet at 9:30 a.m. on Thursdays in the Westfield Community Room to draw from clothed models. After several quick warm-up poses, the main pose of the day continues to 12:30 p.m., long enough to complete a finished drawing, pastel or watercolor. Reflecting the different media, some pictures in the exhibit are black-and-white, and some have high color.

The non-taught sketch class has a drop-in format, and it welcomes newcomers. Next to Mindwaskin Park, its location in the Community Room is behind the door closest to the street at the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street. This entrance is handicapped-accessible. For information about the class, call Barbara Uhr at (908) 317-2983 before 9 p.m. or Eileen Willoughby at (908) 232-5046.

Meet the participating artists at the reception for "Drawn Together" Sunday, January 14, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Westfield Art Gallery, between Pros-



FANTASTIC FLUTISTS...Scotch Plains residents Jessica Clarke and David Monte, seventh graders at The Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison, delighted audiences during the Middle School Holiday Concert on the evening of Tuesday, December 19.

pect and Elm Streets on East Broad Street. Regular viewing hours are: Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Thursday evenings, 6 to 8 p.m.; and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to noon. Admission to the exhibit or reception is free.

For information about "Drawn Together," call Linda Kolar at (908) 753-1154. For the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, call (908) 789-9696.

Vagina Monologues Cast Hosts 'beauTEA'

AREA - The cast of *The Vagina Monologues* will host a "beauTEA" at the Grand Summit Hotel in Summit on January 21 from 1 to 4 p.m.

There will be tea, coffee, sandwiches and desserts and a silent art auction with the theme of "women." Proceeds are going to the YWCA Eastern Union County, and their mission to fight violence against women.

A speaker from the YWCA will be attending and there will also be a short reading from the cast. Those attending are encouraged to bring an item to add to the community collage that celebrates women. Items include anything from a word to a picture.

Tickets are \$10 and can be reserved with Noelle Tate at (908) 273-9121, extension 13. For more information, visit noellelate.com/vday.

Carriage House Series Celebrates Eight Years of Poetry Readings

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

FANWOOD - Fanwood's Carriage House Poetry Series (CHPS) recently celebrated its eighth anniversary with a night of poetry readings featuring the distinguished poets, Renée Ashley and Peter Murphy.

Collectively, Ms. Ashley and Mr. Murphy are the recipients of many awards and honors.

Ms. Ashley is the author of "Salt," a Brittingham Prize in Poetry winner, and three other poetry collections: "The Various Reasons of Light," "The Revisionist's Dream," and a chapbook, "The Museum of Lost Wings."

In addition, she has written a novel entitled, "Someplace Like This." She is the recipient of fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Ms. Ashley is a contributing editor to *The Literary Review*, and she is on the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University's low-residency MFA Program in Creative Writing.

"The Carriage House Poetry Series is a tremendously prestigious series, professionally and magnificently run and hosted by [founder] Adele Kenny, who is a really marvelous poet herself," said Ms. Ashley.

"It's always a pleasure to be included [at a CHPS readings], but the anniversary reading was a particular honor," she continued, adding that she believes that Ms. Kenny and Fanwood deserve to be recognized for their contribution to poetry in the state.

Mr. Murphy was born in Wales and grew up in New York City, where he operated heavy equipment, managed a nightclub, and drove a cab. "Stubborn Child," his first book, was a finalist for the 2006 Paterson Poetry Prize. He has also received awards and fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Corporation of Yaddo, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities,

Tree Disposal Benefits Music Scholarships

WESTFIELD - The Westfield High School Concert Choir is offering to help area residents dispose of their Christmas trees in exchange for a \$10 donation to be used for vocal music scholarships.

This service has been provided in the past by the cast of the spring musical, but is being sponsored by the Choir this year. Anyone interested in having a tree picked up after the holidays is asked to e-mail William Mathews, Choral Director, at wmathews@westfieldnj12.org and it will be relayed to the choir officers. Individuals are asked to include their name, address and telephone number. Trees will be picked up on Saturday and Sunday, January 6 and 7. The deadline to make arrangements is Friday, January 5.

'Women of Song' Series Continues in Watchung

WESTFIELD - The Watchung Arts Center continues its brand-new concert series called "Powerful Women of Song" by presenting New York City based singer/songwriter Anne Heaton on Saturday, January 6, at the Watchung Arts Center at 18 Sterling Road in Watchung. Doors will open at 7:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 8 p.m. Admission is \$15.

The Powerful Women of Song Series is presented by Ahre Maros, owner of Ahre's Coffee Roastery in Westfield and host of the award-winning Coffee With Conscience Concert Series in Westfield.

The Powerful Women of Song Series is an eight-concert series, taking place on the first Saturday night of each month from October through June - skipping April because of Easter Weekend.

This series honors and features strong and powerful female singer songwriters from around the country who express their thoughts, feelings and passions through musical composition. This series is dedicated to the power that music has to invoke change.

Tickets can be purchased on line for this concert by going to watchungarts.org, clicking on Anne Heaton and finding the link to the tickets at the bottom of the page.

For more info about Ms. Heaton, visit anneheaton.com.

the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars.

Mr. Murphy is also the founder of the Winter Poetry & Prose Getaway, held annually in Cape May.

"I have been reading about the Carriage House Poetry Series for years, even in Atlantic City. I am pleased to finally read my poems here. I think Adele should be canonized as a Poetry Saint for her hard work bringing poets and audiences together for so many years," commented Mr. Murphy.

Ms. Kenny established CHPS in December 1998 while she was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. "My prognosis was excellent and I wanted to give thanks by volunteering something of substance to the community," she explained.

Then Fanwood Mayor Mary Ann Connelly and current Assemblywoman Linda Stender, who was a freeholder at the time, assisted her in her efforts.

Ms. Kenny thought the Fanwood Carriage House, (now the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center), a historic Gothic Revival structure that was once a 19th century carriage house, would be an interesting site for the CHPS.

"Both [women] were extremely supportive and helped immeasurably

in making the Carriage House available, and the series possible," continued Ms. Kenny.

With Ms. Connelly and Ms. Stender's encouragement, Ms. Kenny wrote a grant proposal, and the Series began as a project funded in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs.

Since 1998, the CHPS has featured over 55 distinguished poets, including Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, and Pushcart Prize recipients.

In addition, countless local poets have read in open readings over the years.

"The support of current Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council has enabled the series, now a satellite project of the Fanwood Arts Council, to remain vital and active," said Ms. Kenny.

The Kuran Cultural Arts Center is located on Watson Road, off North Martine Avenue, and is adjacent to Fanwood Borough Hall.

There will be no CHPS reading in January, but the series will resume at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, February 13, with a celebration of Black History Month. Award-winning poets Gwen Samuels and Gretna Wilkinson will be the featured poets at that reading.

Westfield Symphony Orchestra

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

tem the Westfield High School now boasts that was able to overshadow the chatter of that little voice.

Gershwin's "How Long Has This Been Going On?" with Ms. Willbanks was done up royally. With lush strings and sexy brushed drum accompaniment, we could have been in an intimate Cabaret. The orchestra was able to shine in a solo capacity for the ending refrain.

Assistant Conductor James W. Fuerst ably conducted two numbers: "I Have Dreamed" from *King and I* and "Who Can I Turn To?" from *Roar of the Greasepaint*.

Some of the most beautiful notes of the night came from the "All the Things You Are" duet by Ms. Millbanks and

Mr. Gagnon. At the key change, with the orchestra's swell, they brought the house down with the addition of Mr. DeLoach and Ms. Ilieva's voices.

Visually, the stage was elegantly gorgeous with lighted greenery, silver and gold accents dotted with pink and red poinsettias thanks to Christopher's Flowers of Mountainside.

"We'll send you home with one more little ditty," said Mr. Wroe, as he invited the packed house to sing the encore number with the four vocalists.

And right on cue, the strains of "Auld Lang Syne" began.

What a pleasant way to usher in 2007.

WF's Dodgers' Fans Share Memories with Author

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

WESTFIELD - Westfield's Brooklyn Dodgers fans recently flocked to the Westfield Memorial Library to hear author, Bob McGee, speak about his book, "The Greatest Ballpark Ever: Ebbets Field and the Story of the Brooklyn Dodgers."

Mr. McGee's interest in the Brooklyn Dodgers stems from his childhood. Not only was he raised in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, he lived down the block from Pee Wee Reese, the shortstop and third baseman who later became captain of the team.

Like the rest of his Bay Ridge community, Mr. McGee was devastated when the team left for Los Angeles.

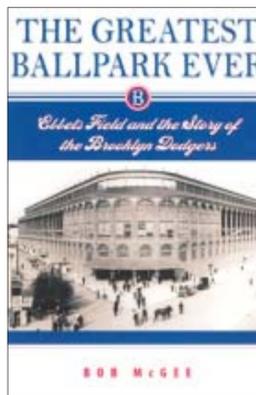
"I was five-years-old when the Dodgers left Brooklyn," Mr. McGee recalled. "Nothing in life was the same after that."

In "The Greatest Ballpark Ever," Mr. McGee traces the history of the famed sports stadium from its conception in the mind of Dodgers' owner, Charley Ebbets, to its opening game in April, 1913, to its demolition and subsequent redevelopment in the sixties.

Mr. McGee refers to historical facts, New York politics and the sentiment of Brooklyn Dodgers' fans to tell the story of Ebbets Field.

As Mr. McGee related in his Westfield presentation, the idea to write a book about Ebbets Field came after writing a short article on the ballpark, and having it published on the first page of a weekend section of the *New York Times*.

"My article drew a lot of attention," he stated.



For Mr. McGee, one of the highlights of his visit to Westfield was the interaction he had with his audience.

"They are a very responsive and wonderful group," he remarked after his presentation.

"The members of the audience were very open and willing to talk about their own personal memories of the team and the ballpark."

The response the author received in Westfield mirrors those he has received elsewhere, and is, in part, the reason he wrote "The Greatest Ballpark Ever."

"I want the book to honor the memory of the Brooklyn Dodgers fans," he explained.

"The team was as much about the people [who loved them] as it was about the players," he continued.

The author, whose background includes a long career in public relations, currently teaches Speech at Dominican College in Orangeburg, N.Y.

He is also the coauthor of "Bridges of Central Park," a definitive study of the architecture of the Manhattan landmark.

"The Greatest Ballpark Ever: Ebbets Field and the Story of the Brooklyn Dodgers" is the winner of the national juried Dave Moore Award for the best baseball book of 2005.

The book is available at all local bookstores.

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