

Arts & Entertainment

Talented WF Actress Becomes Teen Idol, Stars in *Les Misérables*

By AMANDA SIMMONS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Catalina Gaglioti of Westfield has sung for nearly her entire life. She was first featured in *The Westfield Leader* when she was 3 years old, began taking voice lessons in first grade and, at 8 years old, won the Union County Vocal Competition and Audience Choice Award.

Since then, Catalina, 15, who will be a sophomore at Westfield High School this fall, has been in shows through school and community theater groups. Most recently, Catalina was featured

referred to the other young singers that participated in the NHSTI as "amazingly talented high school students."

The talented young girl said it was strange, but fun, to see herself on television after she was interviewed. Catalina, who chose to sing a classical piece ("Think of Me" from *The Phantom of the Opera*), said that she "honestly had no expectation of winning."

Catalina is unquestionably passionate about singing. This summer alone, on top of winning the NHSTI competition, she also was involved with the Pineda Conservatory Center Stage's

Trade Center, to be particularly moving. She said, "This event was one of my favorites, because I felt that I was using my talents to give something back to the community."

Jen Dilzell, who played Fantine opposite Catalina's Eponine in *Les Misérables*, said of her grounded co-star: "Catalina is an amazing performer who brings such an incredible energy to the stage. I've had a chance to work with her in a lot of productions, and it is always so much fun. On stage and off, she has such a fabulous personality, and her level of talent is remarkable."

Though she has clearly already accomplished much, Catalina aspires to achieve more. Currently, she is working on her demo CD (she heads to the studio on August 15), auditioning and looking for an agent. After she graduates high school, Catalina hopes to attend college in New York, where she can continue to seek auditioning opportunities. Catalina is proud of the work she has done so far but determined to achieve even more.

"Honestly, there's so much I want to do," she said.

Having been a part of innumerable shows and other singing-related experiences, plus having just won the prestigious NHSTI competition, Catalina is gaining exposure and is indubitably well on her way to attaining the exciting goals she sets for herself.



Photo Courtesy of Catalina Gaglioti

IDOL WORSHIP... Catalina Gaglioti of Westfield poses with her winner's trophy alongside two judges and the male winner, Dominic Panfile, at the National High School Teen Idol. Catalina was interviewed on "FOX and Friends" and received the opportunity to work with music producers on recording an original CD. Last month, she played Eponine in Pineda Summer Conservatory's *Les Misérables*.

on FOX News' "FOX and Friends" after winning the National High School Teen Idol (NHSTI), which was sponsored by the National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA).

The three-day contest and learning workshop, which took place at Long Branch High School and ended on June 29, was open to all American high school students and "designed to help young people interested in the different aspects of a music career," according to the NHSCA's Web site, nhsc.com.

Competing against teenagers from across the country, Catalina went through three rounds of singing before being named the female winner. Along with the television interview, Catalina also was granted an opportunity to work with a professional music producer to create a CD.

Even after receiving the top accolades from the nation-wide competition, Catalina has managed to remain contently modest. She appreciates the learning experience that the workshop-side of the contest gave her and even

production of *Les Misérables*, starring as Eponine.

When talking about the performance, which ran this past weekend at the Cranford Dramatic Club, Catalina, maintaining her humility, took the time to credit the rest of the "extremely talented" cast. She was also accepted into, and picked to be a soloist at, the Westminster Choir College Summer Program this year.

Catalina said that Eponine has been her favorite role to play so far, but she has also loved being a part of the plays *Oklahoma!*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Hello Dolly!* and *The Apple Tree*, among several other productions. She has sung in operas, including *Tosca*, *Magic Flute*, *Turandot* and *A Masked Ball* and has also performed at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

Catalina enjoys using her voice for community service as well. In 2002 she performed at a memorial service for the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, which was held at Liberty State Park. She found the location, which overlooks the former site of the World



YOUNG AT ART... Cassia Harting-Smith, 8, of Westfield, smiles next to her watercolor and oil pastel. Her painting, entitled "Pig-a-Cycle Circus" is being showcased as part of The Visual Arts Center of New Jersey's Young at Art Exhibition.

Millburn Purchases Paper Mill Playhouse

MILLBURN — Paper Mill Playhouse announced its new partnership with the Township of Millburn.

In March of 2007, Paper Mill Playhouse Management approached members of the Millburn Township Committee to engage in a financial partnership with the not-for-profit theater. After months of negotiations, the Millburn Township Committee voted unanimously on June 17, 2008 to pass an ordinance allowing the township to purchase the land and buildings situated on Brookside Drive from Paper Mill Playhouse for \$9 million.

"With this unprecedented support from the township, Paper Mill Playhouse will get the fresh financial start it needs," said Mark Jones, Paper Mill's executive director.

Through this land purchase, Paper Mill Playhouse plans to pay off the loan from Investors Savings Bank last year that covered a 2007 operating deficit, provide working capital

Teen Art Exhibit Displayed at Edge Art

RAHWAY — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders announced that the 2008 Teen Arts Traveling Exhibit will be on display at Edge Art Gallery at 1577 Irving Street in Rahway, through Friday, August 29.

The exhibit consists of 75 pieces of art selected from more than 600 visual art works shown at the 2008 Union County Teen Arts Festival held in March at the Cranford campus of Union County College.

The Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs is administering the annual event.

"Each year, I am amazed by the exceptional artwork submitted by the students," said Freeholder Chair Angel Estrada. "I encourage everyone to get out and see this fun, lively exhibit as it goes on tour throughout Union County."

The following area students will have art on display:

Samantha Abbate, Nancina Bucci, Claire Smith, Heather Weston and Grace Boyle of Berkeley Heights; Michael Carbonell, Robert Hopkins, Nicole Severini, Katherine Vanbenschoten, Leah Quinn, Kate McDermott and Yolanda Edme of Cranford; Scotland Preston and Francesca Najdzin of Mountainside; Katrina Millan, Deshawn Bellford, Sefton Bass and Arthur Shaffry of Scotch Plains; and Kathleen Tang, Geena Gao and Richard Michelena of Westfield.

For more information about the Teen Arts program, contact the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs at (908) 558-2550.

NJ Relay service users should call 711, or e-mail culturalinfo@ucnj.org.

Millburn Purchases Paper Mill Playhouse

for the theater and add to a newly created endowment seeded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation earlier this year.

"Millburn will purchase a valuable piece of real estate while supporting the arts organization that economically drives our downtown," said Committeeman Tom McDermott. "Last night was a historic evening for us and a chance for us to invest in our community."

This is the first time in New Jersey's history that a municipality has supported a town arts organization at such a high level.

"I hope the actions of Millburn's Township Committee will be a role model for local governments throughout the nation," said Howard Hirsch, co-chair of Paper Mill's Board of Trustees. "Members of the Millburn Township Committee understand the economic benefits of the arts and how a strong arts organization directly impacts neighborhoods."

The Nerds will Rock At Free Concert Series

MOUNTAINSIDE — The Union County Summer Arts Festival concert series continues on Wednesday, August 13, with a performance by The Nerds. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, led by Chair Angel Estrada, invites the public to attend this free concert, which is sponsored by the Union County Democratic Committee, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in Echo Lake Park.

The Nerds have carved a niche since 1985 with its high-powered performance of hit tunes that span generations. The band members look funny in their plaid shorts, polyester shirts and horn-rimmed glasses, but their non-stop selection of rock and pop music from the 1940s to the present is even more memorable. While The Nerds are regulars at many

Jersey Shore watering holes, the members' musical talents also have taken them to the stage at Carnegie Hall, the PNC Bank Arts Center, Madison Square Garden and the White House.

The Union County information van will be at the concert site, along with representatives from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, to answer questions and offer information about interesting programs available to Union County residents.

Other free Wednesday night concerts in the Union County Summer Arts Festival series include:

August 20 — The Ed Palermo Big Band with Rob Pappozzi (blues and jazz);

August 27 — Verdict (reggae and soca), sponsored by the Union County Education Association.

All Summer Arts Festival concerts are held on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Avenue end of Echo Lake Park in Mountainside. Lawn chairs, blankets and picnic baskets are encouraged. Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que will have a food concession, along with an ice cream and snack vendor, which will be available at approximately 6:30 p.m.

In case of rain, concerts will be held at the air-conditioned auditorium at Cranford High School, on West End Place off Springfield Avenue in Cranford at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, call the Union County Department of Parks and Community Renewal at (908) 527-4900 or visit ucnj.org/parks/summerarts.html.



THE GOSPEL TRUTH... Jubilation, a Scotch Plains-based choir, released its first album this year, which is on sale nationally. The choir has recorded with Ray Charles and opened the U.S. Open with Queen Latifah.

Jubilation, Rev. Minatee 'Spread the Good Word'

By LAURA MORTKOWITZ
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The mission of Jubilation is to spread the good news, but don't pigeonhole them as a gospel choir. The Scotch Plains-based choir focuses on African-American sacred music with an emphasis on gospel choir.

Under the leadership of Rev. Stefanie Minatee, Jubilation has had the good fortune to sing with big names. The group recorded Christmas DVD and CD with Ray Charles and opened the U.S. Open with Queen Latifah and Tony Bennett.

"I am overwhelmed with what has happened with the choir," Ms. Minatee said. "It skyrocketed. People have been blessed with our ministry."

In May, the choir released its first CD, "The Launch Out Project," which is now on sale nationally. A lot of the songs are spiritual, anthem, hymn and gospel songs.

The group has its own spiritual advisor, Rev. William Hall. A resident of Scotch Plains, Rev. Hall preaches at New Life Baptist Church in Bloomfield.

"The entire choir is very spiritual," he said. "We try to help each other out in that capacity."

Jubilation began with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in 1998 and has continued its relationship with the organization even after separating. The choir participated on the July 3 opening day of NJPAC's Chase's Sounds of the City, a free outdoor music series.

"We sang some gospel, some mes-

sage music, and we toured with Kenny Loggins, so we did one of his songs," Rev. Minatee said.

The choir's diverse set has an emphasis on gospel and spreading the message. The word "gospel" means "good news," and that's what Rev. Minatee and Jubilation always keeps in mind.

"If you're having problems or there are things getting you down, we use the gospel to lift people," she explained.

The entire choir has more than 100 members, who are about as diverse as the music selections.

"The choir is made up of singers from all over, of different denominations and includes people of different races," Rev. Hall said.

The ages of members range from 23 to 100, and while they are mostly volunteers, there are professional members, too.

"They are a wonderful group of people," Rev. Minatee said. "I am so blessed to work with them."

As a spiritual group, the choir's main purpose is not to simply entertain.

"Gospel music should never be used to entertain but to enlighten; it is good news for bad times."

Even though Jubilation has already performed at NJPAC for the Sounds of the City series, Rev. Minatee said they should be back in September before they go back out on the road.

Venues interested in booking Jubilation should contact Nicole Davis at (201) 342-0909 or visit jubilationinc.com and myspace.com/jubilationinc.

Rainbow Experience Holds Auditions for *Godspell*

WESTFIELD — The Rainbow Experience theater group announced auditions for *Godspell*, the musical adaptation of the book of St. Matthew.

Auditions will be held on two different days in two different locations: Tuesday, September 9, from 7 to 10 p.m. at the First Congregational Church on 125 Elmer Street in Westfield and on Thursday, September 11, from 7 to 10 p.m. at the United Church of Christ-Congregational on 220 West 7th Street in Plainfield.

Callbacks will be scheduled on Saturday, September 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Westfield.

Auditions are open to adults and young people in fifth grade and above. Those auditioning should

prepare a song in their key and bring sheet music. An accompanist will be provided.

Those without a song prepared can sing something from the musical.

Godspell will be performed November 8-9 and 15-16. Rehearsals will be Monday and Thursday nights, as well as Saturdays, beginning the week of September 14. Be prepared to list possible conflicts at auditions.

Scott Goldman, the executive assistant of the George Street Playhouse and producer of his own theater company, Stage Presence, Inc., will direct *Godspell*.

Musical director DeLyn Celec, graduate of Drew Theological School and staff musician in various community and faith-based organizations, will assist him.

Freeholders Exhibit Features First Place Senior Art Winners

ELIZABETH — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders announced a new exhibit of artwork at the Freeholders Gallery in Elizabeth. The exhibit features the first place winners from the Union County Senior Art Contest and Exhibition, which was held at the Elizabethtown Gas Company in Union.

The winners of the 11 contest categories were both professionals and non-professionals. The Freeholders Gallery is located on the sixth floor of the Union County Administration Building, located on Elizabethtown Plaza at Rahway Avenue in Elizabeth. The exhibit will be open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

"We are proud to present the work of these talented artists who have found satisfaction in their artistic expression in their senior years," said Freeholder Chair Angel Estrada. "We wish them the best of luck at the statewide level of the contest."

The following are artist-exhibitors representing Union County in the

State Senior Art Show in Flemington from August 21 to September 26. There they will have the opportunity to compete for statewide honors with other first place winners.

Non-Professional — Acrylic, Carol Norman, Union, 1st Place and Best in Show Non-Pro; Drawing, Eileen Willoughby, Westfield; Mixed Media, Jean Ricks, Plainfield; Oil, John Quinn, Roselle Park; Pastel, Marjorie Picard, Scotch Plains; Photography, Greg Cummings, Fanwood; and Watercolor, Cecilia Fonseca, Cranford.

Professional — Acrylic, Joseph Hulsen, Union; Drawing, Mel Holston, Plainfield; Oil, Avi Kiriakatis, Kenilworth; and Watercolor, Pearl Piegari, Hillside, 1st Place and Best in Show Pro.

The following artists will represent Union County with three-dimensional art pieces:

Non-Professional — Craft, Lynn MacWhirter, Cranford; and Sculpture, James Temple, Westfield.

Professional — Sculpture, Dolores Stewart, Plainfield.

For more information about exhibits, programs and services related to the arts and Union County history, contact the office at 633 Pearl Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202, telephone (908) 558-2550, NJ Relay 711 or e-mail culturalinfo@ucnj.org.

Shining STARS Take The Stage in *Grease*

SCOTCH PLAINS — Students Thespians are Recreating the Stage (S.T.A.R.S.) will perform the musical *Grease* on Friday and Saturday, August 8 and 9, at 7:30 p.m. on the Scotch Plains Village Green stage.

S.T.A.R.S. is a summer theater group made up of local students and supported by the Scotch Plains Department of Recreation. Admission is free.

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