

Hedgehog & Feather Offer One-Day Workshops

WESTFIELD - Hedgehog & Feather Theatre Company will host several one-day winter workshops offering a great way to explore the fun world of theatre.

Theatre Games Galore - January 18 and February 1 - Theatre games exercise the body and brain and encourage creative thinking, cooperation and focus. This is a great introduction to the wonderful "warm-ups" actors use to prepare for rehearsals. A fun, fast-paced, hilarious class. Offered twice for each age group - children are encouraged to come to both. Grades 1-3 and grades 4-6

Wacky World of Props - January 25 and February 8 - Let your imagination go with a crazy collection of props. Turn everyday objects into anything you want. Offered twice for each age group - children are encouraged to come to both. Grades 1-3 and grades 4-6

Super Sticky Situation - January

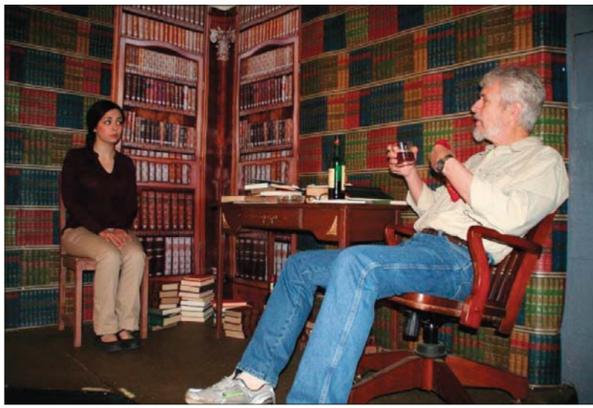
30 - Duct tape keeps every Theatre Company "together." Join us for an afternoon of adhesive creativity as we create props and costume accessories from duct tape. Grades 5 and up. Prerequisite: must be able to tear duct tape.

Mask Making for Mardi Gras - February 13 - Make marvelous masks just in time for Mardi Gras, learn about the history of masks in theatre and see how masks are used to train actors. Grades 1-3 and grades 4-6.

Puppets, Muppets and More! - February 27 - Be a puppeteer! Explore the vast collection of puppets of all kinds. A guest puppeteer will share professional puppeteering techniques. Grades 1-3 and grades 4-6.

All workshop are held at the Parish Hall of St. Paul's Church, 414 East Broad Street, Westfield.

(Enter from St. Paul Street side of St. Paul's Church) For more information call (908) 578-0756.



THE INTERVIEW... A young Native American girl (Ali Archetti) is interviewed for a housekeeper position by Beverly Weston (Christopher Gibbs), patriarch of the family and soon to bring tremendous upheaval to those around him.

Fanwood Resident Appears in August: Osage County at Studio Playhouse

UPPER MONTCLAIR - Christopher Gibbs of Fanwood portrays Beverly Weston in August: Osage County, a drama by Tracy Letts at Studio Playhouse in Upper Montclair.

Meet the Westons. Dad has disappeared. Mom's popping pills. One daughter's bound for divorce. A romance is brewing. A lie has been uncovered. And a hell of a family reunion is about to begin. And that's just the start. Equally harrowing and hysterical, Tracy Letts' Pulitzer Prize, Tony and Drama Desk Award winning August: Osage County has already been hailed as an American classic. So spend an evening in Oklahoma's Osage County where it is often laugh-out-loud funny with plot twists that are dark and nasty.

Directed by Mark Liebert and Stage

Managed by Alexandra Garbeck, August: Osage County is a true theatrical masterpiece.

Performances are Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. on January 13, 14, 15, 10, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28. Be advised that this show contains strong language and mature themes. Tickets are \$18 for adults, \$15 for students and seniors age 65 and up with discounts available for groups of 20 or more that prepay. Tickets are two for one on opening night, Friday, January 13.

To reserve tickets in advance, call the box office at (973) 744-9752. Studio Playhouse is located at 14 Alvin Place, off Valley Road near the A&P, in Upper Montclair. www.studioplayhouse.org.

Bay-Atlantic Presents Music By Dvořák, Mendelssohn

BRIDGETON—Elegant, melodic music for strings by Antonin Dvořák, Felix Mendelssohn, George Walker, and Sir Edward Elgar will make up the program for the Bay-Atlantic Symphony's next concert series on January 28 and 29.

The concerts, continuing the orchestra's popular, innovative mid-winter format and featuring the largest chamber ensemble forces to date, will take place on Saturday, January 28, at 8 p.m., at the Frank Guaracini, Jr. Fine and Performing Arts Center, Cumberland County College, Sherman Avenue and College Drive, Vineland, NJ; and Sunday, January 29, at 2 p.m., at the Richard Stockton College Performing Arts Center, Jimmie Leeds Road, Galloway Township, NJ.

Again for this season's subscription concert series, a discounted ticket price of \$25 will be for all seats in all venues, subsidized by a generous grant from the PNC Arts Alive grant program. PNC Arts Alive is a five-year, \$5 million investment from The PNC Foundation that supports visual and performing arts groups with the goal of increasing arts access and engagement.

The concerts, conducted by Music Director Jed Gaylin, will include Dvořák's *Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20*—a work that is, in turn, folksy and elegant. Also featured will be Mendelssohn's *Sinfonia No. 7 in D minor for String Orchestra*—an early masterpiece filled with counterpoint, soaring melodic lines, and youthful spirit. The program will also feature Walker's *Lyric for Strings*—the most celebrated work by this New Jersey composer—and Elgar's beautiful *Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22*.

All Bay-Atlantic Symphony performances will be preceded one hour prior to starting time with a "Pre-Concert Conversation with the Maestro."

Tickets may be ordered by calling the Guaracini Fine and Performing Arts Center box office at (856) 692-8499, or the Stockton College Performing Arts Center box office at (609) 652-9000.

For more information, please call the Bay-Atlantic Symphony at (856) 451-1169, visit the Symphony's website at www.bayatlanticsymphony.org, or visit them on Facebook.

Moderne Academie of Fine Arts Hosts Free Mommy and Me Class

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Moderne Academie of Fine Arts will be hosting a free Mommy and Me class on Tuesday, January 10, from 11:15 to 11:45 a.m.

Children ages 18 months and up will learn dance games, basic dance steps, stretches and classroom etiquette in a fun, safe environment with a caregiver. This class is focused on developing balance, coordination, and the ability to follow a steady beat. The curriculum uses books, instruments, and dance props to introduce children to the art of dance. No special attire is required.

The next session of Mommy and Me classes begins January 17 and runs for ten weeks. The Moderne Academie of Fine Arts is located at 1820 East Second Street in Scotch Plains. More information can be found on their website www.moderneacademie.com or by calling (908) 322-4249.

DWC Announces Winners of Miracle on Elm St. Drawings

WESTFIELD - The annual "Miracle on Elm Street" holiday promotion took place for the fourth straight year. Sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation as part of the "Welcome Home to Westfield" holiday events, the promotion encouraged people to enter a weekly drawing in downtown stores and restaurants or online and place their entry forms in two special decorated mailboxes located downtown. The weekly drawings of \$150, \$100, \$50 offered weekly gift card prizes to downtown stores and restaurants of the winner's choice. In addition, there was a bonus drawing for a \$20 parking card each week. Winners were drawn at random on December 3, 10, 17, and 24.

There were 1,065 entry forms submitted during the four weeks. While 47 percent of the entries were from residents of Westfield, applicants originated from as far away as Canada, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Maine, Maryland and Washington. This demonstrates that Westfield truly lives up to its name of "Welcome Home to Westfield" during the holiday season.

The first week's drawing held on December 3 featured \$150 winner Glenn Karaban of Westfield. The \$100 winner was Daniel Brotman of Westfield, while the \$50 winner was Cathy D'Altillo of Roselle Park. Kristen Lee of Scotch Plains won the \$20 parking card bonus drawing.

The second week's winners on December 10 were James Ng of Westfield (\$150 drawing), Leslie Bauer of Princeton (\$100 drawing), and Paula Long of Westfield (\$50 drawing). Joann Lund of Westfield won the \$20 parking card bonus drawing.

The third week's winners on December 17 were Elvira Rettino of Westfield (\$150 drawing), Pamela

Reihenberg of Cranford (\$100 drawing), and Mary Cirillo of Scotch Plains (\$50 drawing). Sandra Hernandez of Union won the \$20 parking card bonus drawing.

The last drawing held on December 24 was won by Dale Hagstrom of Westfield (\$150 drawing), Kate Warren of Westfield (\$100 drawing), and Kimberly Rusinko of Linden (\$50 drawing). The bonus drawing for the \$20 parking card was won by Maureen Bryce of Ocean, N.J.

The "Miracle on Elm Street" winners selected gift cards or certificates which were purchased by the DWC at the following downtown businesses: Banana Republic, Running Company, Hershey's Deli, Aerosole, Game Stop, Learning Express, Adler's, Rialto Digiplex Destinations, Lord & Taylor, Westfield Service League, AT&T, Chocolate Bar, Chez Catherine, Chico's, Brick Oven, Eileen Fisher, Cosimo's, Xocolatz, Trader Joe's, Rock'n Joes Coffeehouse and Bistro, and Limani Seafood Grill.

According to Sherry Cronin, Executive Director of Downtown Westfield Corporation, "We are pleased with the level of participation, not only with the community but also the merchants and restaurants which have embraced this promotion and encouraged their customers to enter the contest. From the time we started this promotion in 2008, we have seen a 281 percent increase in the number of entries. This year, we also added the name of the business where the applicant entered in order to determine where shoppers and diners went in downtown. The top businesses who encouraged their customers to enter the contest included Eileen Fisher, Sole, Robert Treat Delicatessen, and Ann Taylor."

Pianist Alice Firgau Returns to NJ Workshop for the Arts Music Studio

WESTFIELD - In an effort to accommodate students who may be unable to take music lessons in their local districts, and to give adults a chance to pursue their musical endeavors, Ted Schlosberg, New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA) Founder and Executive Director, has recently added several music teachers to the staff of the Music Studio. Among them is pianist Alice Firgau, who returns to the teaching staff.

Ms. Firgau possesses credentials in teaching, performing, writing, editing, translating and recording. A graduate of Douglass College with a B.A. in Music Education and an M. MUS. in Music Literature and Piano from the University of Michigan. Ms. Firgau also took post graduate courses in Spanish civilization and literature from the University of Guadalajara, Mexico.

A former educator in several Union County schools, Ms. Firgau has been a pianist, organist, and singer in various churches in the area. She has also worked in the publications industry as a writer of music education materials, has written song lyrics, composed piano arrangements and translated music.

Her background includes production work in recording studios in New York, Texas, California and New Jersey.

The NJWA Music Studio, located at 150-152 East Broad Street, Westfield,

offers music lessons to both children and adults. It also provides opportunities for area musicians to play in its many bands, orchestras and ensembles.

For more information, visit the NJWA studios, phone (908) 789-9696 or log on to www.njworkshopforthearts.com.

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By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
Film Critic

Oh, woe to the very occasional moviegoer who, to please his or her significant other, chooses Michel Hazanavicius's "The Artist" as the sacrificial offering. While it could turn out great and engender a life-changing renaissance, odds are the experience will be met with, "Huh? What was that? Couldn't they afford sound?" The thing is, it's silent.

As such, cineastes, dilettantes, aspiring film students and fellow directors will find much to mull here après theater, preferably at a cozy café that has witty, framed needlepoint sayings hung like, "Intellectual Spoken Here." I'll take the side of those who deem this a fine change of pace, a novel experiment gone right, and have a coffee regular, please.

My esteemed challenger will of course respectfully caution that perhaps it's my jaded tastes at play, inviting me to be taken in by a gimmicky redolent of the emperor's new clothes. "But no, dear Yorick," I will kindly respond, "I, too, have pondered that chance, and because sure 'tis not so, will risk the slings and arrows concomitant to my decision."

Supporting my stance, I will present the good evidence, beginning with Hazanavicius's exquisitely evoked reproduction of the silent era, both reasonably accurate and a sweet paean to that time afore. While it was technology being a tad sluggish that was originally responsible for silent film, "The Artist" tacitly suggests a far more romantic reason.

Maybe it was a needed balance, the Roaring Twenties being so cacophonous that a few hours at the Bijou, muted of all but music and the oohs and ahs of its rapt audience, forged a proper poetry for the age. Apologists for the medium might also say that, as with books, but with yet one more evincing sense, it prompts one to cultivate the imagination.

Act I. Scene I: Witness the splendor and exuding joy of George Valentin's life and career. It is Hollywood, 1927, and he is the cat's pajamas, the penultimate matinee idol. Handsome, devil may care, a presence the lens can't get enough of, he makes one box office hit after another. Well, that is, he and his companion on and off screen, The Dog.

If you decide nothing else about this bound to be controversial, almost masterpiece, it's that Uggie, the nine-year-old Jack Russell Terrier who plays George's canine sidekick, deserves an Oscar for his endearing supporting role. He's already won The Palm Dog Prize, awarded

each year at the Cannes Film Festival by British journalist Toby Rose.

The Dog, an empathic little soul with the sensitivity of a tuning fork, perceives all...including the one sadness George, fabulously interpreted by Jean Dujardin, quietly harbors. His cold-as-steel wife, Doris (Penelope Ann Miller), is a joyless haridan who can't be relied on to support our title character. Too bad, because tough times are coming.

The irony here is that, for all its retro inventiveness, "The Artist" tells an old story, though probably never before related in speechless mode. It's about the advent of talkies. But the only thing George can hear is the death knell for silent film. Surely old sport it's just a fad, don't you think? Never mind for now why George can't make the transition.

The studio drops him. So, in a desperate last stab to salvage his stardom, he self-produces a silent film. But what's now the artistic equivalent of the dodo bird writhes and plummets in anguish. Then, to add insult to injury and turning the scenario into a total tragedy, the market crashes. You can fill in the resultant fallout. Ah hubris, you are paid.

About a year passes. Cast from glory to circumstances almost threadbare, he has been abandoned, save for The Dog and Clifton, his loyal chauffeur, smartly acted by James Cromwell. In his shabby, one room apartment, George asks "How long since I've paid you, Clifton?" The servant answers, "One year, sir." But wait, there may be a bright spot.

Sweetly exacted by Bérénice Bejo, she is the fittingly named Peppy Miller, the ingénue turned-It Girl who George kindly gave a little boost toward fame back in the day. But to complicate matters, it's not just gratitude that spirits her desire to help. Enter stage right, Cupid. As pride is a double-edged sword, lending a hand will present a sticky wicket.

Why? Read between the subtitles. That's where Mr. Hazanavicius astutely pours all the drama and philosophy. Challenging his obvious talent for narrative, he has doubtlessly culled the finer points of silent movie storytelling to beautifully exercise nuances of this art long dormant. Thus, at least in this case, "The Artist" proves that silence is golden.

"The Artist," rated PG-13, is a Weinstein Company release directed by Michel Hazanavicius, and stars Jean Dujardin, Bérénice Bejo, John Goodman, James Cromwell and Uggie. Running time: 100 minutes



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