



Photo courtesy of Susan Cook

The cast of Cranford Dramatic Club's *The Mousetrap*

CDC to Present Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*

CRANFORD - The Cranford Dramatic Club will present Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* opening on Friday, February 10.

There is a murderer among the guests at Monkswell Manor and no one is above suspicion. To make matters worse, a snowstorm has stranded our colorful band of suspects - the peculiar Mr. Paravicini, the aloof Ms. Casewell, the neurotic Mr. Wren, the mysterious Major Metcalf and even the young proprietors of Monkswell Manor, Mollie and Giles Ralston.

It is up to Detective Sergeant Trotter (and you) to figure out the

murderer's identity. Join fellow sleuths for an evening of mystery and murder. Can you guess whodunit? Agatha Christie's popular mystery is the world's longest running play. It opened in London's West End in 1952 where it continues its record breaking run. Cranford Dramatic Club last performed this Agatha Christie classic in 1977, and it is again mystifying the Cranford stage, complete with the repeat offender Bob Pells once again as director.

The cast includes Theresa Lyons of Nutley, playing Mrs. Ralston; Michael Miguel of Hillside, playing Mr. Ralston; David Ciampichini of New Providence, playing Mr. Wren; Leslie Riccio of Cranford, playing Mrs. Boyle; Rodney Belle of Linden, playing Major Metcalf; Alicia Cordero of Linden, playing Miss Casewell; Sam Rosalsky of New Providence, playing Mr. Paravicini and Ty Jacobs of Millburn, playing Sergeant Trotter. The play is produced by Bill Chamis and directed by Bob Pells.

Performances will take place on Friday, February 10, at 8 p.m.; Saturday, February 11, at 8 p.m.; Friday, February 17, at 8 p.m.; Saturday, February 18, at 8 p.m.; Sunday, February 19, at 2 p.m.; Friday, February 24, at 8 p.m. and Saturday, February 25 at 8 p.m.

Performances are held at 78 Winans Avenue in Cranford. For more information call (908) 276-7611 or visit www.cdctheatre.org/Show-2.html. Tickets are \$20.

duCret Accepting Artwork For Annual HS Art Show

PLAINFIELD - duCret School of Art is now accepting artwork submissions for its 33rd annual High School Art Show. The show is open to all high school juniors and seniors and is a way for students to gain not only recognition for their work, view the works of peers from all over the state, but also for them to see that opportunities in the art field are abundant despite the unstable economy. The opening reception for the High School Art Show will be held on Friday, February 24, from 7 to 9 p.m. duCret will begin accepting artwork beginning today, Thursday, January 26. Other submission dates are Friday, January 27, and Monday, January 30, and also on Wednesday, February 1, from 9 to 5 p.m.

Now more than ever, artists have the ability to be creative and be published. In support of emerging artists, each year duCret holds an annual High School Art Show. Last year there were 470 entries from High Schools all throughout the state.

Submission forms can be found at www.ducret.edu and downloaded or requested via email at pr@ducret.edu or students or teachers can stop by the school between 9 and 4 p.m.

Requirements for the art show are as follows: One submission per student. Must not exceed 36 by 48 inches; Art must be hang able, framed or matted and covered with heavy acetate. Prizes awarded at reception.

For more information call (908) 757-7171.

FSP YMCA to Host Audition For Dance Company Feb. 4

FANWOOD-SCOTCH PLAINS - The Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA Dance Company is holding an audition for their Dance Company on Saturday, February 4, at 1 p.m. at the 1340 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains location.

The Dance Company at the "Y" is for dancers ages 7-18 who are interested in advancing their education through performances, workshops and dance competitions.

The dance director of the program is Jenny Logus who is the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA Dance Program Coordinator. She is best known for directing the world-renowned Broadway Dance Center in NYC. Mrs. Logus was owner and artistic director of the Westfield School of Dance, the Westfield

Dance Company and co-founder of the Westfield Young Artist's cooperative Theatre.

Dancers interested in auditioning should come prepared to dance ballet, tap, jazz and modern. Reservations to audition are strongly encouraged by calling (908) 889-8880 x141.

Please call the Member Service Desk with questions at (908) 889-8880.

The "Y" is the nation's leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Visit fanwoodscotchplainsymca.org to learn more about Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA programs. Financial assistance is available for those who qualify.

Pushcart Players Perform at Lincoln School in Garwood

GARWOOD - Pushcart Players, the Verona based professional theatre company for young audiences, performed its musical play *Let Freedom Ring* at Lincoln School in Garwood on January 20.

The performances were done as an all-school assembly gathering of students and their teachers. *Let Freedom Ring* (formerly known as *American Sampler*), is a fast-paced musical which offers a fresh approach to telling the story of Colonial America and pleases a wide range of students and teachers with its familiar folk songs, high energy staging and colorful costumes and settings.

The story spans K-8 history and social studies - from the arrival of the first settlers in 1620 to the new wave of immigration at the turn of the 19th to 20th century. This spirited musical review is a celebration of our nation's birth and development, and brings history to life in an inspiring, informative and highly entertaining theatre piece.

Pushcart Players is an ensemble of professional (Actors' Equity Association) actors dedicated to enriching, enlightening and inspiring young people through the introduction and presentation of quality theatre and arts in education programming.

Pushcart is in its 38th season and has traveled over two million miles to serve more than eight million children and their families. Based in New Jersey, this dynamic and highly acclaimed company brings the power of the arts to life in schools, theatres and community centers throughout the nation and abroad. Pushcart is well known for presenting productions filled with fun, facts, magic and wonder; and for bringing a little bit of "Broadway" to schools and local theaters throughout New Jersey and beyond. Pushcart productions provide young audiences with an excellent introduction to theatre and the arts along with lessons rich in character development and human values.

All presentations are accompanied by a study guide for teachers and a question/answer session with the cast immediately following a performance. In addition to *Let Freedom Ring*, many other Pushcart productions continue to be available throughout the school year and may be viewed by downloading our current brochure from www.pushcartplayers.org. Pushcart's wide range of Arts In Education programs such as Creative Drama Workshops, Teacher Training and Professional Development Workshops, Kids Do Broadway After School Programs and many others are also available and may be tailored to suit the needs of any school or organization upon request.

Representatives from schools and other sponsors of theatre and arts in education programming interested in previewing or booking a performance or arts workshop should call Pushcart at (973) 857-1115 or write to "Pushcart," 261 Bloomfield Avenue Suite A, Verona, N.J. 07044.

Further information, such as Pushcart's current brochure and study guides to all programs, may be obtained by sending an email to information@pushcartplayers.org or by visiting the Pushcart website at www.pushcartplayers.org.

Author Robin Walensky to Visit Town Book Store

WESTFIELD - Meet Robin Walensky, author of the book, "Beautiful Life: The CSI behind the Casey Anthony Trial" on Saturday, January 28, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Town Book Store.

News reporter Robyn Walensky goes one-on-one with the CSIs and detectives from the Orange County sheriff's office who investigated the murder of Caylee Marie Anthony for three years.

She shares her keen observations from her front row seat at the trial just feet away from jurors and defendant Casey Anthony. Walensky is donating a portion of proceeds to the Orange County Sheriff's Office "Children's Safety Village," for fingerprinting and DNA collection kits for kids.

Robyn Walensky is a veteran news reporter and anchor who has been covering crime, terrorism, politics, and breaking news for more than twenty years in both radio and television. She was in two terrorist attacks, and reported extensively on the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the federal trial of the WTC 93 Plotters, and September 11th. She is co-editor/author of the book "Covering Catastrophe-Broadcast Journalists Report 9-11-01."

Most recently, Ms. Walensky was the morning drive reporter covering the Casey Anthony Trial for WDBO Radio in Orlando, Florida, and a frequent guest on CNN's Nancy Grace Show. Currently, she works for Mercury Radio Arts. She is anchor/reporter for *The Blaze* and can be heard daily on Glenn Beck's national radio show.

Meet Robin Walensky at The Town Book Store located at 270 East Broad Street in Westfield (corner of East Broad and Elmer Streets). If you are unable to attend this event, feel free to call The Town Book Store at (908) 233-3535 to reserve an autographed copy.



PROM?...David Jennings, a student at The Academy for Allied Health Sciences at the Union County Vocational Technical School in Scotch Plains, gets creative when he recently asked Avia Shadmi to the prom by utilizing the Westfield Rialto Movie Theater marquis. A very surprised and very happy Avia said yes. The prom takes place in May at the Bridgewater Manor.

Trailside to Host 'Owls of New Jersey' Program

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Department of Parks and Community Renewal are pleased to announce a new series of programs for adults at Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside. "Audubon Lecture: Owls of New Jersey" is the first of the Winter 2012 Adult Program Series. This lecture, for adults 18 and older, will run on Thursday, February 9, from 7-9 p.m. The fee is \$8 per person for Union County residents and \$10 per person for out-of-county participants. Pre-registration is required.

"Trailside's Winter Adult Program Series offers a unique opportunity for residents to learn new and interesting facts on a myriad of nature-related and historical topics," said Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella. "The Audubon Lecture: Owls of New Jersey, the first topic in the series, is sure to be an informative and engaging program."

Owls are among our most fascinating wildlife. There are eight species of these raptors living in New Jersey, four of which commonly nest in the Watchung Reservation. Dorothy Smullen, teacher/naturalist with the New Jersey Audubon Society will present an illustrated program that explains the adaptations that make these birds successful hunters. The audience will have an opportunity to view mounted specimens, listen to owl calls and learn to identify their pellets.

For additional information about the Audubon Lecture: Owls of New Jersey, or other programs for adults



FASCINATING WILDLIFE...A Barred Owl is one of the owls that will be discussed during the program for adults, "Audubon Lecture: Owls of New Jersey" at Trailside Nature and Science Center on Thursday, February 9, from 7-9 p.m.

or special events at Trailside, call (908) 789-3670 or visit www.ucnj.org/trailside. Trailside Nature and Science Center is located at 452 New Providence Road in Mountainside and is a service of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.



See it all on the Web!
www.goleader.com

Stony Hill Players Present A Man For All Seasons

SUMMIT - The Stony Hill Players will present *A Man For All Seasons* on February 10, 11, 17 and 18, at 7:30 p.m. and February 12, and 19, at 3 p.m.

This historical drama by Robert Bolt tells of Sir Thomas More, a man of strong conscience and his dealings with Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey and Cromwell among others. The production will take place at the Oakes Center, 120 Morris Ave. Summit. Dennis Ryan directs.

For more information call (908) 665-1376.

POPCORN™ "The Iron Lady" Streep Steals the Show

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By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
Film Critic

In Phyllida Lloyd's "The Iron Lady," the great Streep and great makeup doth a prime minister make. It's gotten to be an old saw, touting Meryl Streep's thespic brilliance in spite of whatever flaws detract from the film containing her performance. Here, she is probably more Margaret Thatcher than Mrs. Thatcher herself. Aye, it's a magic trick.

So, even if you're a film critic who finds the former prime minister's politics abhorrently opposed to almost everything you believe in, you still can't help but be drawn into the superbly artistic web of personality Miss Streep weaves. Just be aware that this is more character study than biopic. The stuff of governing is decidedly ancillary to the charisma.

Forcefully denoted in what often feels like an apologia, this daughter of a self-reliant grocer, brought up during WWII, is indeed a tough cookie who feels people should fend for themselves. And, thanks to a camera that moves back and forth through the years with seamless poise, the sympathetic portrait doubles as a touching look at the aging process.

Making it a full course lesson in what can be achieved in but one portrayal, Streep also etches a Machiavellian pastiche on the workings of power. She gets good help. Playing sounding board and conscience to the process of prominence, Jim Broadbent is superb as Denis Thatcher, proving that behind every great woman there is a magnanimous man.

This is where the director takes a daring but ultimately successful chance. She keeps Mr. Thatcher ever-present along the perimeters of his wife's career. Serving as afflatus, he chides comically, sweetly and acerbically. And then Miss Lloyd ups the ante. That is, she chooses to have him flit in and out of Margaret's consciousness, even after his death.

The resultant mini-monograph on non-traditional marriage sings a paean to the unselfish give and take required of all relationships, and thus provides a primer on what it takes to make the seemingly impossible impossibly sublime. Unfortunately, the historical events depicted are more in the service of the main characterization than they are of history.

Granted, adding an hour to the film to accommodate the turbulence before and after the tumbling of the Berlin wall, plus bunches of parliamentary stuff only the history buff might welcome, would be unworkable. But while a feeling for the times is more or less achieved, a

grander effort would be required to make this a film of true historical import.

Almost always ready to the challenge, however, are the costume and set design folk, who here attain with notable aplomb the visual temper, tone and aura of whatever era in Mrs. Thatcher's political career is being detailed. Actual footage of accompanying cataclysms, usually of terrorist activity, supplies a jarring, startling contrast to the heady ruminations.

All well and good. But the problem nags. There should be more. Here I am at about the 60 percent mark of the review, where it behooves to tell you how the filmmaker plays Devil's advocate by taking the prime minister to task for this or that. But, there is very little, if any, of that. Thus somewhere where inspiration resides, Clio, the muse of history, scowls.

Too bad. Biography can be a great tool for historical study, provided its intention, after detailing the life of its subject, is to place said personage in the circumstances that both shaped him and that he or she in turn shaped. Although Miss Lloyd pays lip service to the process, this is more about fame and achievement than the life and times of Thatcher.

Pity, too. Because we sure could use an astute rummaging around in the enmity between the left and right, a force currently deterring much of the world from progressing toward a fruitful destiny. Perchance a look at the version of the enigma as it existed in Thatcher's day might have shed light on the current permutation. After all, that is how history works.

Case in point, "M*A*S*H" (1970), though set during the Korean War, was really about the Vietnam War. Art and history combined in a grand, comparative muckraking worthy of Mark Twain himself. The film did its part to help end the war. In this case, too much homage and not enough counterpoint prove a disservice, especially to Mrs. Thatcher.

Still, lest we think her a party to lying by omission, Meryl Streep's smart, multi-layered representation tacitly coaxes one to read between the lines. Therefore, for those so inclined and possessing of the time, the suggestion is to see this for Streep and then, just for good form, get hold of a biography with more mettle to it than "The Iron Lady."

"The Iron Lady," rated PG-13, is a Weinstein Company release directed by Phyllida Lloyd and stars Meryl Streep, Jim Broadbent and Alexandra Roach. Running time: 105 minutes.

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