

Arts & Entertainment

Jazzin' It Up on New Year's Eve With the New Jersey Festival Orchestra

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — A packed Westfield High School auditorium filled with loyal fans, as well as new comers to the longstanding New Year's Eve tradition of superior music were anxious to hear four Broadway guest performers backed by the New Jersey Festival Orchestra under the watchful baton of Maestro David Wroe. They were not disappointed.

Ringin' in the New Year with the program, "An' All that Jazz," the NJ Festival Orchestra proved the adage, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." The orchestra's name changed last year from the "Westfield Symphony Orchestra" to the present one, but the same consistent quality that they have provided for decades was displayed at the 7 p.m. musical extravaganza.

A rousing rendition of the song "Wilkommen" from Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret* at the top of the show introduced the four vocalists to the enthusiastic crowd and put them in a toe-tapping mood. Soprano Siri

Howard, mezzo soprano Gabrielle Stravelli, tenor Max Quinlan and baritone Angelo Rios delivered plenty of personality, professionalism and pizzazz in their songs and playful choreography.

The program comprised of Broadway favorites showed diversity with a definite nod to the make-up of the audience. Seemingly, not a person in the audience was surprised with more than one or two songs they did not know. At times, the familiar tunes (unfortunately) lured some audience members to sing or hum along with the soloists.

Delivering the signature song from *Camelot*, "If Ever I Would Leave You" was baritone Angelo Rios who delighted with not only that favorite, but also with the inspirational "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha* that featured the symphony's drums, bass and brass propelling the music nicely with a relentless beat.

A marvelous surprise was the not often heard "Alto's Lament" written by Marcy Heisler and Zina Goldrich, sung by Ms. Howard and artfully

accompanied by Michael Tornick on piano. Maestro Wroe challenged audience members to identify the musical allusions to Broadway songs mentioned in the piece. The accomplished soloist delivered the adorable song that tells the first person saga of a gal who never gets to sing the melody. "I've got a great high C," she sings, (and Ms. Howard does) "but we need you to sing alto" the character is told repeatedly by directors.

Ms. Howard joined her husband Mr. Quinlan in "Say it Somehow" from *The Light in the Piazza*. A delightful harp, strings and piano accompanied the stirring song unfamiliar to some in the audience. The husband and wife voices were perfectly matched in vibrato and timbre for a finely executed number.

Earlier, Mr. Quinlan sang from *My Fair Lady* with a classic portrayal of "On the Street Where You Live." The quality of his tenor voice captured the quintessential Freddy and was buoyed by the full complement of the orchestra.

Jazz enthusiasts in the audience were not neglected. Ms. Stravelli's version of "Goody, Goody" (by Matty Malneck and Johnny Mercer), effortlessly utilized her mellifluous, rich voice that intermittently handled scat, belt and legit voice. The orchestra's

brass section got a chance to shine in that number, a fun close of the first half of the show.

Another Big Band feel came in the form of "You're Just in Love" from Irving Berlin's *Call Me Madam*. The duet of Mr. Rios and Ms. Stravelli interwove their individual melodies. For this number, Ms. Stravelli aptly projected a hint of the vocal brassiness of Ethel Merman, the originator of the role on Broadway.

Earlier in the evening, the familiar, "I Dreamed a Dream" from *Les Miserables* was of show-stopping proportion. Ms. Stravelli's passionate rendition clearly indicated her acting skills are as deep and rich as her low notes. The plaintive trombone and French horns helped set the somber tone that was met with thunderous applause.

Displaying a happier version of the love theme, Ms. Howard sang, "I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy" from *South Pacific*. She, like Ms. Stravelli, brought her character to life but this time with a playful attitude. With a swish of her red gown and a toss of her golden hair, Ms. Howard's embodied unbridled love and contagious enthusiasm.

One of the last songs of the performance, Marvin Hamlisch's "What I

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DOWNTON FANS...Liberty Hall Museum will celebrate "Downton Abbey's" eagerly anticipated fourth season with an elegant Downton Abbey Luncheon on Saturday, January 18, from 12 noon to 3 p.m. Pictured are luncheon attendees from last year.

Liberty Hall Celebrates New Year, Downton Abbey

UNION — Liberty Hall Museum will celebrate "Downton Abbey's" eagerly anticipated fourth season with an elegant Downton Abbey Luncheon on Saturday, January 18, from 12 noon to 3 p.m.

This stylish buffet, billed as fit for "the Crawleys themselves," includes dessert and a selection of red or white wine. Admission is \$50 per person, and includes an intimate, guided tour of the museum, the former residence of New Jersey's first elected governor, William Livingston.

"We can't wait to celebrate the return of our favorite show, and share stories about the new season with our luncheon guests," said Bill Schroh, Director of Museum Operations. Mr. Schroh, like many of his staff, is an unabashed "Downton" fan himself, and continues to be impressed by the level of enthusiasm — and attention to detail — expressed by the museum's luncheon guests.

"When we [first] decided to host a "Downton Abbey"-themed brunch at [Liberty Hall], we never thought the guests would be as excited about the event as we were," Mr. Schroh reflected after the museum's first successful "Downton" event, a New Year's brunch, in January 2013. "But quite a few came dressed to the nines in Edwardian outfits; some were even in original Edwardian clothing."

Initially offered in conjunction with the exhibit "Ring for Service: The

Role of Servants in a Country House," (since closed), Liberty Hall's popular "Downton"-themed brunches and luncheons are now a tradition in their own right. The museum hosted no less than thirteen "Downton" events last year, and offered gift certificates to the wildly popular luncheons throughout the busy holiday season. Due to continued demand — undoubtedly heightened by the long-awaited season premiere, which aired statewide on January 5 — the museum has committed to three Downton Abbey Luncheons in early 2014: Saturdays, January 18, February 22, and March 22.

Liberty Hall Museum at Kean University chronicles more than 240 years of American history. The museum also houses extensive collections of furniture, ceramics, textiles, toys and tools owned by seven generations of the Livingston and Kean families. The Firehouse Museum, built in 2004, houses three antique fire engines, including a rare 1911 American LaFrance Metropolitan Steam Engine. The museum is currently open for group tours (10 or more guests), private events, and scheduled seasonal activities such as those outlined above. Public tours resume Tuesday, April 1.

For reservations and further information, call (908) 527-0400, e-mail libertyhall@kean.edu or visit www.kean.edu/libertyhall.

Kean Stage Presents The Haifa Symphony Orchestra

UNION — The most significant musical institute in the north of Israel, the Haifa Symphony Orchestra of Israel will perform at Kean University's Wilkins Theatre on Sunday, February 2, at 3 p.m. Conductor Boguslaw Dawidow will lead a program that includes Weber's "Overture to the Opera Euryanthe" and the powerful Beethoven's "Symphony No. 7." It will also feature Israeli pianist Roman Rabinovich performing Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1."

Internationally renowned for his musical knowledge, immense enthusiasm, and extraordinarily charismatic stage presence, Maestro Dawidow is also currently the Principal Guest Conductor of the Bogota Symphony Orchestra, and the General Music Director of Chopin Chamber Orchestra. The Israeli pianist Roman Rabinovich was the top prize winner at the 2008 Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition and the 2007 Animateo Competition.

Wilkins Theatre is located on Kean

University's main campus at 1000 Morris Avenue in Union. Tickets are \$30 standard; \$20 senior, student, child and are available at the Wilkins Theatre Box Office on campus, by calling (908) 737-SHOW (7469), and online at www.keanstage.com.

Winter Fever Toy Set For January 26

MOUNT LAUREL — On Sunday, January 26, the Winter Fever Toy Show will take place at the Enterprise Center at Burlington County College, 3331 Route 38, Mount Laurel, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$7; children under the age of 12 free; 9 a.m. early admission is \$12. Parking is free. This is an indoor, all weather event.

The toy show will feature up to 200 tables of new, antique, and collectible toys for sale from unique toy dealers from the east coast.

For more information on attending or participating in the show, visit www.toysshows.org or call (856) 302-3606.



TICKET WINNER...Joella Sperber was the winner of four free tickets to the recent production of *Dear Edwina* at the Cranford Dramatic Club Theatre. The annual Children's Theatre show was the second offering of the 95th anniversary season at CDC Theatre. Pictured left to right, are: Joella, Shayna Jiorle, Hannah Cadoff and Stacey Cadoff. Already in rehearsal is the musical *Spring Awakening*, which will open on Friday, February 14, and continue through March 1. It will be followed by the Pulitzer Prize winning drama *Doubt, A Parable* in May. Visit www.cdctheatre.org, for details and ticket information.

Coffee With Conscience to Feature The Kennedys

WESTFIELD — The Coffee With Conscience Concert Series continues its fourteenth season by presenting the Kennedys in concert. The concert will take place on Saturday, January 18, at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield, located at 1 East Broad Street (corner of North Avenue) in Westfield. Doors will open at 7:15 p.m. and the concert begins at 8 p.m. Admission is \$19 on line and \$24 at the door.

This concert will benefit Habitat for Humanity — Plainfield Chapter. Tickets can be purchased online in advance — at the discounted price — by going to the kennedys.eventbrite.com

The Kennedys are Pete and Maura Kennedy, who met at the Continental Club in Austin, Tex. Within 24 hours, they had written their first song, "Day In and Day Out."

At the time of their meeting, Pete was playing lead guitar with Nanci Griffith, and shortly thereafter, Maura also joined Ms. Griffith's band and they set out on an extended tour of the British Isles, opening shows all over England, Ireland, and Scotland.

In a dusty little dressing room on the top floor of Dublin's Olympia Theatre, they penned the songs that would become their first CD, "River of Fallen Stars." The CD was awarded the "Indie" award in 1995 for "Best Adult Contemporary CD" by the National Association of Independent Record Distributors (NAIRD).

In 1995, the duo hit the road to record their second CD, the ambitious "Life is Large," which wove their talents with those of guests Steve Earle, Kelly Willis, Nils Lofgren, Roger McGuinn, and the Dixie Hummingbirds. They were nominated once again for the NAIRD Indie award, and the title track became their signature song. Their third CD, "Angel Fire," was a largely acoustic, lyric driven collection. The following CD, "Evolver," was a big, rocking set that included the power pop "Pick You Up". In 2001, they released their fifth CD, "Positively Live!" a live album that captured the blistering guitar jams and rocking vibe that set them apart from other acoustic acts.

The Kennedys are comfortable in a variety of styles ranging from roots rock to soulful acoustic pop, but ultimately it is their chemistry,

their love for each other, and their unashamedly idealistic pop vision that has carved them their own niche onstage and in the world of maverick radio.

For more info about this concert, please visit the kennedys.eventbrite.com.

The Coffee With Conscience Concert Series is a seven-show series running from October through May at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield. Upcoming artists include Tom Prasada-Rao and Cary Cooper on Saturday, February 15; Kim and Reggie Harris on Saturday, March 15; Carsie Blanton on Saturday, April 26, and David Wilcox on Saturday, May 31.

The Coffee With Conscience Concert Series supports the following charities: Homefirst (Plainfield), Habitat for Humanity (Plainfield), the Community Food Bank of NJ (Hillside) and the Keith Knost Special Needs Fund (Mountainside). Each beneficiary has at least one concert dedicated to it during the season.

The Coffee With Conscience Concert Series is sponsored by Ahrr's Coffee Roastery at 104 Elm Street in Westfield and is further supported by a generous grant from the Westfield Service League, and a few other private donations — which are enthusiastically encouraged! For more information about the Coffee With Conscience Concert Series, the upcoming performance, or ways in which to get involved with the series, visit www.coffeewithconscience.org. You can also call the Concert Hotline at (908) 412-9105 or send an e-mail to ahrr@ahrr.com. Volunteers are always appreciated.

Essex Water Color Club to Host Show

LIVINGSTON — The Essex Water Color Club, now in the 82nd year of continuous activity in the watercolor painting community, announced its 2014 Winter Members Show at the Library of the Chatham's.

A reception will be held on Sunday, February 2, between the hours of 2:30 and 4:30 p.m. The show will run from Tuesday, January 28, to Sunday, February 23.

The library of the Chatham's is located on 214 Main Street, Chatham.

For further information, contact John Wolff at (973) 994-1597 or visit www.ewclub.com.

Ambush to Demonstrate Fine Art Airbrush Painting at WAA

WESTFIELD — On Sunday, January 19, the Westfield Art Association (WAA) will host a demonstration of fine art airbrush painting by Peter Ambush of the duCret School of Art.

Peter Ambush was born and raised in Frederick, Md., and from an early age wanted to be an artist, perhaps from watching his father, an air traffic controller, draw nativity scenes for their church. Mr. Ambush's earliest drawings were copies of *Mighty Mouse* and some were good enough that he was able to sell them for a nickel to fellow grade-schoolers.

Mr. Ambush attended the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Md. where he received a bachelor's degree in fine art. He also studied at the duCret School of Art in Plainfield. Using an airbrush and watercolor, acrylic, or ink, Mr. Ambush creates large portraits and a wide variety of other artworks with such realistic detail that they may easily be mistaken for photographic prints.

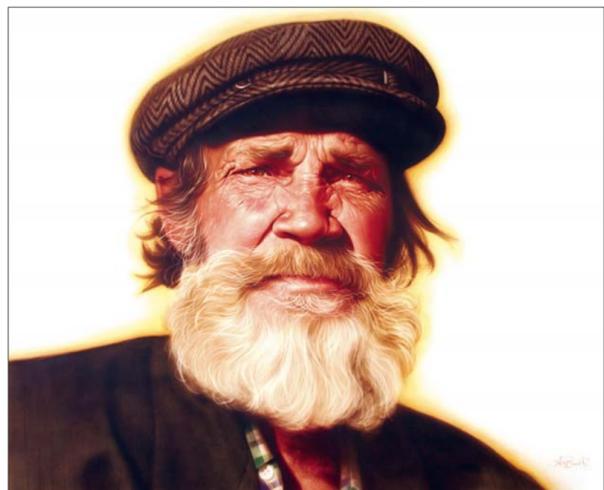
After graduation, he moved to Atlanta, Ga. where he eventually worked doing caricatures at Six Flags and at the Atlanta Underground.

Mr. Ambush moved back to Maryland and worked as a graphic artist for the Army Times Publishing Company. After moving from Maryland to New Jersey, he worked for more than a decade for the *Newark Star Ledger* as a graphic artist and illus-

trator, creating over 400 covers for the paper's weekly "Scanner" TV guide. Ambush has illustrated eight book covers, and two books, "One Million Men and Me" written by Kelly Starling Lyons and "It's Church Going Time," for Just Us Books of East Orange.

In 2006, Ambush moved to Stroudsburg, Pa. where he lives with his wife and daughter. Mr. Ambush is a member of the Pocono Arts Council and the International Guild of Realism. For the past three years, he has been airbrushing at Air Graphics in Wyomissing, Pa. along with creating graphics for screen printing. He has recently returned to doing fine art full time and has reestablished his company, Burnin' Bush Studios, which consists of fine art, graphics design and fine art printing. Mr. Ambush continues to teach at the duCret School of Art and has exhibited in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, New York and California. His artwork can be seen at www.peterambushart.com.

The WAA demonstration will be held from 1-4 p.m. at the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street, Westfield. Light refreshments will be served. The Community Room is handicapped-accessible and the demonstration is open free of charge to the public.



REALISTIC ART... "Josh," a 37 by 30 inch watercolor airbrush painting by Peter Ambush of the duCret School of Art in Plainfield.

Book Hosts 'Meet and Greet' With Author Bill Griffith

WESTFIELD — The Town Book Store is hosting a Meet and Greet for Westfield resident Bill Griffith, author of "Loose Nukes," on Saturday, January 11, from 2 - 4 p.m.

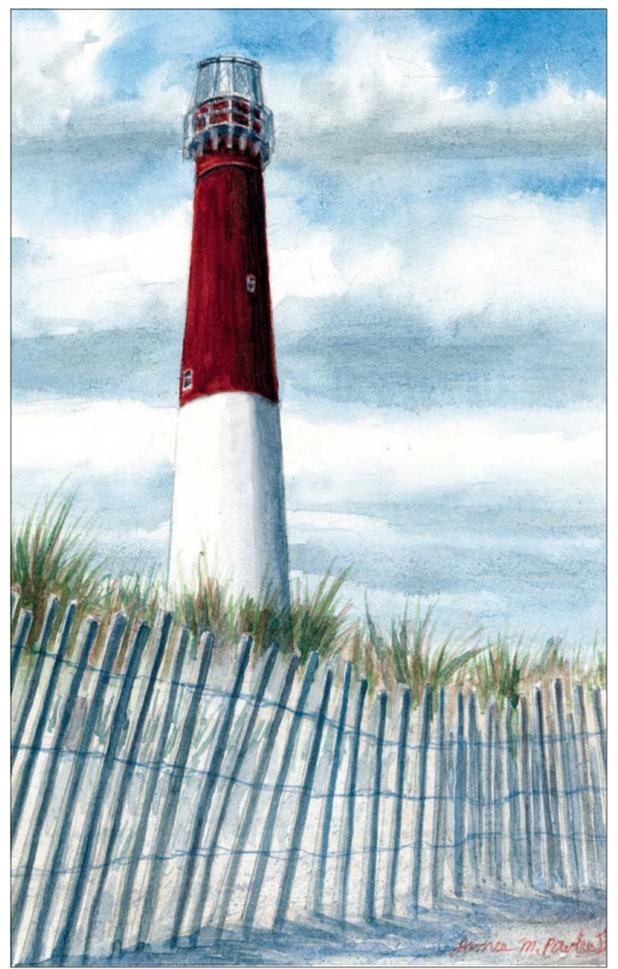
In "Loose Nukes," nonproliferation expert Coot Jenkins confronts the Mushrooms: anarchists who threaten to detonate nuclear weapons unless people join their insurrection. Coot must discover who financed the Mushrooms' black market purchase of Soviet-era nukes and gain the cooperation of the Mushrooms to thwart a devastating nuclear attack on the United States.

Still grieving over the death of his wife, Frannie, Coot meets computer security specialist Diana Munson, a younger woman determined to avoid romantic involve-

ment. Coot pursues Diana even while working to prevent more nuclear catastrophes.

Bill Griffith has long been interested in such nuclear policy issues as non-proliferation, strategic arms reduction, and nuclear test bans. A mathematician by training and a software engineer by choice, Dr. Griffith retired from software engineering in 2010 to devote himself to writing. Bill and his wife, Nancy, have lived in Westfield since 1987.

Meet Bill Griffith 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 of "Loose Nukes."



MEMBERS SHOW...The Essex Water Color Club announced it will hold a 2014 Winter Members Show at the Library of the Chatham's. Above, a watercolor by James M. Powles, IV titled "Barnegat Lighthouse."