

Creative Living

Marie McGee editor 591-2300



Thursday January 15, 1987 O&E

(P.C.W.G)E

briefly speaking

ART EXHIBIT

Adult art students of Art Store and More in Plymouth will be featured in an exhibit from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18 in the store at 265 N. Main Street. The exhibit coincides with the final day of the Plymouth ice festival. The public is invited. Refreshments will be served.

MUSICALE SERIES

The Plymouth Symphony Society Musicale will feature chamber music for winds and piano at a concert at 4 p.m. Sunday in the First United Methodist Church of Plymouth.

Musicians performing will include Pauline Martin and Detroit Symphony musicians: flutist Shaul Ben-Meir, oboist Treva Womble, clarinetist Douglas Cornelison, bassoonist Robert Williams and horn player Corbin Wagner.

Womble and Williams are married and live in Canton. In addition to their work with the DSO, Williams teaches at the University of Michigan and they give private lessons. Wagner is a Livonia resident.

A reception and refreshments will follow the concert. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3.50 for seniors and students. Tickets will be available at the door.

SEARCH FOR DESIGNERS

As part of a "Discover Michigan" project to coincide with its Michigan sesquicentennial celebration, the Hillside Inn in Plymouth is conducting a search for unknown designers. The designers will have the opportunity to show off their work in special shows at the inn at 41661 Plymouth Road during the year.

Initiating the series was Ypsilanti designer Sallie Weimer who showed her "Glamour Rags" Monday and Wednesday at the inn.

For an appointment to submit their line for consideration, unknown designers may call the Hillside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at 453-2002.

PEOPLE DANCING

People Dancing-Whitley Setrakian and Dancers will be in concert Jan. 15-18 at the Performance Network, 408 W. Washington Ann Arbor.

People Dancing is a professional modern dance company known locally and around Michigan for its often humorous, often off-beat dances which are accessible to all dance-goers. Guest artist will be Loi Kail who will perform a solo choreographed by Setrakian. This solo will receive its New York City premiere later this year.

Showtimes are Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. Tickets at \$6.50 general admission and \$5.50 for students and seniors will be available at the door. For reservations or more information, call 663-0681.

CABARET CONCERT

The Dearborn Orchestral Society will present the Dearborn Symphony Orchestra in a special cabaret concert at 8:30 p.m. Friday in the Dome Room of the Dearborn Civic Center, Michigan at Greenfield roads.

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Concert is postponed

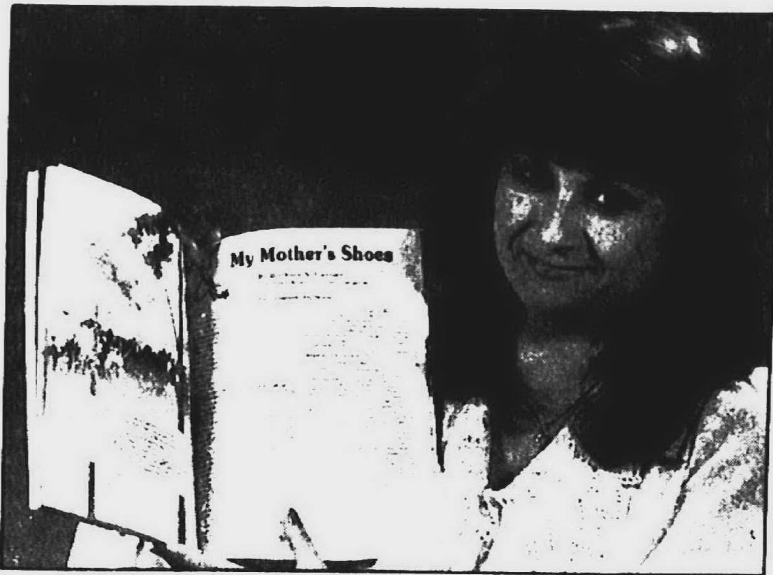
The Arts Alliance Group has announced the postponement of the second concert in its series Music at Eight, scheduled Sunday, Jan. 18.

However, the March 15 concert will be held as scheduled.

Joseph Goldman, the scheduled soloist for the Jan. 18 concert, will perform the Brahms Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 77 at the March concert.

The postponement was "due to circumstances beyond our control," a TAAG spokesman said. Patrons who have purchased tickets for the January concert may obtain either a refund or tickets for March 15 instead. Information is available by calling 525-3010.

She wins short story contest — twice



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Barbara Cassani's prize-winning story is featured in the Detroit Auto Show magazine. The Livonia resident took top honors last year in open competition as well.

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

FOR THE second year in a row, Barbara Cassani of Livonia won the \$1,000 first prize in the Detroit Auto Dealers Association short story contest.

Cassani, 34, a graduate of Stevenson High School with a master's in film studies from Wayne State University, works for Henry Ford and other area hospitals as a medical editor.

"My (creative) writing is totally unrelated to what I do for a living," she said.

Her background in film helps explain the subtle references to "The Wizard of Oz," "Casablanca" and "Dracula" in her award-winning short story, "My Mother's Shoes."

She received her \$1,000 check at a luncheon at the Westin Hotel given by DADA to honor the three adult

and three high school contest winners and preview the Detroit Auto show which begins its nine-day Cobo Hall run Saturday, Jan. 10.

CASSANI, WHO said, "I'm an old movie fan," looked like she could have been in one of those films she likes so well. Her long red hair and bright red, spike heel pumps made a dramatic contrast to her winter white outfit and soft hazel eyes. The equally subtle literary references in her story confirm her statement that she reads constantly.

"I had one creative writing class at Wayne. Hal Youngblood was my teacher. He and his assistant, Chuck Dapaz, gave me a lot of help and confidence."

Incidentally, Cassani has been invited to be a guest on Youngblood's evening radio talk show Friday.

When she's not editing medical material or reading (for her own pleasure) she's writing or going

through the intake process that leads to writing "I write whenever I have the chance," she said.

"I work more on an observation level. I have to take in a lot of things and formulate them in my mind. 'My Mother's Shoes' was a culmination of a year's experience. I wrote the story on a Saturday night. I go on instinct on a lot of things. The story has to be in your mind first — if you push at it, it weakens. This story is dedicated to my mother who died in August."

Cassani who won in 1985 for her story, "Under the Waxie, Dixie Moon," said she wasn't certain if this one, describing her feelings about her mother's death, would appeal to the judges because it was so subjective, but it was one she felt compelled to write and enter in the contest. She's now at work on a more extensive project.

"My Mother's Shoes" will be published in the Detroit Auto Show program.

Reeling in credits

Filmmaking trio focuses on documentaries

By Faye Kuzma
special writer

WITH THE very first click of the camera, reaching for the stars has been the ambition of three school teachers who have founded Meridian Films specializing in documentaries.

That they are on the way to accomplishing what they set out to do is evident when you take into account the fact that in less than 10 years, the fledgling company has received an Academy Award nomination and several film festival awards.

Their latest achievement came this fall when one of their documentaries, "Waiting Tables," won two awards in the Great Lakes Film Festival. It also won a coveted CINE Golden Eagle in international competition.

CINE is the acronym of the Congress of International Non-Theatrical Events. Golden Eagle films become part of a world-tour package with Meridian Films representing the U.S. in this tour.

MERIDIAN'S FOUNDERS are Pamela LaBlanc of Livonia, Linda Chapman of Westland and Freddi Stevens-Jacobi of Indianapolis.

The name of the group reflects the trio's aspirations.

"Meridian" comes from an Alice

Walker ("The Color Purple") novel by the same name. It means apex or the highest point. Thus, it is meant to suggest the excellence that is the filmmakers' aim.

But, by coincidence, also is the name of the street in Indianapolis where the company is based.

Striving for success has meant the group has had to overcome certain obstacles. One big one is the time each woman can give to the project. All three hold full-time teaching jobs. The filmmaking is done on off-hours.

"Working full time, we're limited to the time we can spend," said LaBlanc. "We used to hop on the train and go to Chicago a lot of weekends. Now we're limited to the holidays and some vacations. So, any major shoot or grant-writing (which has enabled them to continue their work) usually happens in the summer."

LABLANC, 43, HAS taught for 12 years in Woodhaven High School in that downriver community. She received her first grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts in 1978. She used the funds to bring film professionals to her students. In a course on film editing, for instance, she brought in Christa Kindt of Unique Films in Livonia and Andrea Gomez from the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit.

LaBlanc also arranged film camp experiences where her students

could meet professionals in the filmmaking field.

Upshot of all the extra-curricular projects was that LaBlanc found herself becoming increasingly involved not only in teaching film and assisting student filmmakers, but in producing films herself.

Meridian's first film was entitled, "See What I Say." Its focus was to demonstrate the value of sign language between the hearing and deaf cultures. The film received as many as 11 awards, including a blue ribbon, in the American Film Festival in 1981 and a prize in the Margaret Mead Film Festival in 1982.

THE FILMING WAS done at a Holly Near concert. A feminist singer and songwriter, Near worked with Jane Fonda when the movie star went to Vietnam in the '60s. Near has all her concerts interpreted for the hearing impaired.

Initially, the Meridian filmmakers were drawn to the uniquely artistic movements of Susan Freundlich, recognized American sign language interpreter, who interpreted Near's songs by combining mime and dance with sign language.

"We thought that was something very filmic," said LaBlanc, adding, "Then we got pulled into the issue."

The issue, said LaBlanc, was the accessibility — or the lack of it — of the arts, culture and political events to the hearing impaired.

"It's not a pretty picture," LaBlanc said. "Did you know that the third largest concentration of deaf people is in Michigan with the auto industry?"

"I DON'T THINK it was until we were editing that we realized that we'd made a foreign-English film," she laughed. Editing "provided quite a challenge in terms of not being able to make the aesthetic decision about editing the priority: it had to be sign. You can't cut off the sign in the middle of a word."

Editing is not dependent on completed sentences in a film utilizing a spoken language because it is possible to "slide sound." However, when it came time to edit "See What I Say," the film team realized the built-in demands of their subject.

For instance, the team had the film captioned so that it would be totally accessible. Moreover, 90 percent of the film shows sign language on the screen. Finally, during interviews, translators were needed.

"We had no idea what we were getting into," said LaBlanc, "when we first saw the pretty signing up on stage there."

"That was probably the biggest challenge in the shooting, too. In documentary, you have a lot of talking head shots," she said. "If someone, because of what they're saying, shows emotion, you zoom in on the person for the emotional drama on the face."

But that couldn't be done in "See What I Say" because, as the film team soon realized, if the hands were not a part of the shot, the result would be a loss of meaning.

ANOTHER SURPRISE for LaBlanc was learning that there are dialects of sign language.

"Someone from Boston doesn't necessarily understand Ann Arbor's sign," she said.

As a matter of fact, when the film was shown in San Francisco, the hearing impaired audience immediately recognized the sign language, because of added gestures and flourishes, as that used in Boston.

The credits show the team as joint producers and directors. However, in order to learn more about the film and in order to avoid getting locked in one role, the team frequently switches roles.

For "See What I Say," LaBlanc conducted interviews and directed; Chapman produced; and Stevens-Jacobi was camera operator. The film was shot in three days over a Thanksgiving vacation, yet it took three years to raise the money, shoot it, edit it and distribute it.

THE IDEA FOR Meridian's latest film, "Waiting Tables," came while the trio was working up a five-year projection for their company. They

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Staff photo

Linda Chapman (left) of Westland and Pamela LaBlanc of Livonia are full-time teachers and part-time co-producers in the film company they organized along with Freddi Stevens-Jacobi of Indianapolis.

LOOMing ahead

Sondheim presentation is delightful

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

SOMETHING inviting, something exciting are not just lyrics, they describe the Light Opera of Michigan's production of "Side by Side by Sondheim" now playing at the Marquis Theatre in Northville.

Opening with the song "Comedy Tonight," an ensemble of six singers and two pianists presented 34 of Sondheim's compositions from Broadway musicals for which he either wrote the words or composed the music.

A light, refreshing diversion, entertaining in every way, is the only way to describe the 2½-hour show.

A sparkling silver backdrop accents the pink attire of the three women, Rosemary DiDomizio, Maria Cimarelli, and Rochelle Rosenthal who dance, act and sing their way through vaudeville routines and Andrew Sisters imitations.

EXCERPTS ARE from "West Side Story," "Company," "Sunday in the Park with George," "Follies," "Sweeney Todd" and "A Little Night Music."

Their male counterparts, Mark Vondrak, Michael Pavelich, and

review

David Pulice, complement the women's attire with black tuxedos, pink bow ties and cummerbunds.

This show, regarded as a low-budget production, was created by Sondheim to showcase himself as a composer/lyricist.

Director David Pulice turned to this show and to this group of local professionals to recover from the company's outstanding but poorly attended "Barber of Seville" last September. The experts don't necessarily have to come from out of town. This group underscores this point dramatically.

Rochelle Rosenthal gave a memorable performance as the Beggar Woman in Michigan Opera Theatre's production of "Sweeney Todd" a few years ago. In this show, she shows she can spit out Sondheim's "Another Hundred People" lyrics just as clearly and do many types of characters. Her "Losing My Mind" was penetrating. "The Boy From . . ." was funny.

The usually classical Maria Cimarelli was just as versatile —

emotional in "A Boy Like That," honky in "Broadway Girl," and sad in her rendition of "Green Finch." Cimarelli took her top notes easily and gently, not harshly.

THE THREE MEN, are all experienced revue singers. Pavelich's high notes were beautiful in "Finishing the Hat." Vondrak's lyric high baritone was never out of his range. Pulice is well aware of his powerfully dramatic lower voice especially in "Never Could I Leave You" and his ability to deliver out the fast and furious Sondheim lyrics.

Rosemary DiDomizio, a good actress, was humorously appealing in "I Never Do Anything Twice."

Pulice's directing put the singers in the limelight, using few props. His direction was simple and effective. Accompanists David Wilson and Beverly Labuta share the responsibility for the show's success.

The French idea of musical revues is seldom carried out with this much continuity. This is good entertainment, folks.

It continues this weekend with performances at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:20 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call 349-8110 or 349-0868.