

Arts & Entertainment

Artists Tug 'Art Strings' to Benefit Symphony

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

AREA — Four local artists — Linnea Rhodes and Shari Seltzer of Westfield, Theodosia Tamborlane of Cranford and Cynthia Smith Weiss of Mountainside — were among 10 New Jersey artists participating in "Art Strings," an exhibit to raise funds for the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO).

Each participating artist was invited to create a work of art using a violin as a canvas. All artists were to use a musical program or work presented by the NJSO during its 2008-2009 season as inspiration.

The painted violins were then displayed at NJSO Concerts and at selected venues throughout the state, where tickets for a June 1 raffle of the violins were sold.

Artist Framer in Cranford hosted the violins in mid-May.

Ms. Rhodes' violin, "The High Castle," is based on a set of six symphonic poems composed in the late 1800s by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana.

Her violin illustrates rival medieval hilltop towns located on the Dordogne River in Southwestern France.

"I was leaving for the Dordogne area of France, when I got the [invitation] to participate in Art Strings, so I chose 'The High Castle,' knowing I would be seeing hill towns with châteaux at the top," she explained, adding that she rented a canoe and paddled by the two towns to get some photos from which to work.

Ms. Seltzer's violin — a painting of a strong, yet vulnerable, tree — is motivated by Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique."

"[This work] inspired me to visually capture the lush harmonies as they



The work of Linnea Rhodes, above, and Theodosia Tamborlane of Cranford, below.



contrast with the emotional complexities of the symphony," she said.

Vienna's annual New Year's Day dance roused Ms. Tamborlane's violin, "Best of Vienna: 'The Conductor and the Dancer,'" a portrait of a symphony conductor and a dancer wearing masks.

The masks "emphasize the festivity and surprises that await the audience for each concert," she said.

Ms. Weiss' violin, "The Best of Nature," is a landscape panorama that includes "the grandest vistas to the simplest tree."

Additional artwork by all four local artists will be on display at Artist Framer, located at 17 North Avenue East, in Cranford, until Thursday, June 11.

Proceeds raised from the violin raffle will support a variety of NJSO youth and educational outreach programs, including NJSO's Concerts for Young People, Family Concert Series, Greater Newark Youth and Chamber Orchestras and Educational Ensembles.

District Art Show Displays Students' 'Amazing' Work

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WESTFIELD — The artistic talent of students enrolled in the Westfield school system was arrayed in all its glory at the District Art Show (DAS), held last month in the varsity gym of Westfield High School (WHS).

More than 500 pieces of artwork — ranging from intricate wooden furniture to construction paper cutouts and every imaginable artistic medium in between — were on display for students, teachers, parents and interested residents to view.

This year's exhibit was the district's 25th annual show. As in previous years, the display showcased the work of students in all 10 public schools and represented work created in grades K to 12.

Meg Anderson, a WHS 9th grade student in Lauren Schwarzenbek's Art class, was completing a class-assigned scavenger hunt with classmate Casey Schuster.

"This is incredible," said Lauren.

"All of the art is great," agreed Casey.

Ms. Schwarzenbek said she uses the scavenger hunt as a teaching tool because it "forces the students to see everything there is to see."

The art teacher planned to turn the scavenger hunt assignment into a critiquing session when her students returned to the classroom.

"The DAS promotes unity among the different schools in the district,"

commented Leah Jarvis, a fellow WHS Fine Arts teacher.

"Displaying the art of all grades at the same time in the same venue allows every student to become exposed to the work of every other student," she continued.

According to Ms. Jarvis, not every piece of artwork created by the students in the classroom gets to be displayed at DAS.

"Each instructor decided whether the piece should become part of the exhibit," she said.

"Some of the things we looked at were the supplies used, the craftsmanship of the piece and whether the art met the goals and objectives of the given assignment," she continued.

According to Ms. Jarvis, another criterion used by instructors to decide whether a piece of student art should be displayed at the DAS is whether the piece makes the viewer think.

"An instructor's trained eye knows a piece that deserves to be in the show," said Ms. Jarvis.

The pieces selected for display were completed by students throughout the entire school year and stored by instructors until it was time for the DAS exhibit.

Parent Christina Maurillo was happy to see the chalk print created by her daughter, Sophia, a third grader at Tamaques School, included in the DAS.

"The work done by the students and displayed here is very impressive," she said. "The art program in Westfield is just amazing."

spectrum and how anybody could end up there."

While Matthew enjoys writing and has even had a couple of his pieces appear in *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, he said composing the e-mail to ask for donations proved challenging.

"I wanted to include everything I saw there, but I also knew people didn't want to spend 20 minutes reading it," Matthew said. "It took me a couple of weeks to write."

Through his persistence and follow-up, he ultimately collected 30 bags of clothing and household items, including sets of dishes donated by a local merchant, Adlers Jewelers.

Matthew then added to the monetary donations with gifts he received at his Bar Mitzvah on May 9.

"The miracle is that this kid takes the biggest moment in his life so far and chooses to give it to homeless kids," Fr. David said. "He made over \$100,000, and then his family was so proud of him, they matched the gift to \$20,000... Talk about a way to step into manhood."

On May 12, Matthew and his family personally presented the check to Fr. David at Covenant House.

"It was very exciting because we had [originally] told them it would be around \$7,000," Matthew said. "I got to meet more kids, and they all hugged me."

Fr. David said the gift meant even more considering Covenant House re-

cently had to cut about 20 percent of its staff due to the loss of government grants and the current state of the economy.

Matthew's gift, along with a matching donation, catapulted a fundraising drive that ultimately saw more than \$1 million contributed to the organization, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in New Jersey.

"Previously, in our best year, we maybe raised \$560,000 total, but this year, thanks to an outpouring from people like the Enslins, we raised \$1.2 million," Fr. David said.

Matthew said he originally hoped his project could make a small contribution and was amazed it blossomed into something so big.

"I thank all the people for their generosity and support for donating clothes, money and household items," Matthew said. "The teens at Covenant House will benefit from this and are very grateful."

Fr. David said the proceeds would go far beyond providing food and shelter for Covenant House's homeless youth. Its varied programs include substance-abuse counseling, mental-health services and many educational and vocational opportunities.

"I just want to say how grateful and inspired we are by the Ensin family," Fr. David said. "We hope Matthew will be able to come and tell his story to other groups or schools... We think he is a great example."



MAKING A COVENANT... Westfield resident Matthew Ensin, center, used his Mitzvah Project as a springboard to raise \$20,000 for Newark's Covenant House, which cares for homeless youth. Pictured is the Ensin family along with Fr. David Fox, director of major gifts, who remarked, "I'm unaware of anyone that young who has given such a substantial gift." In the back row, from left to right, are: Jennifer Ensin, Jeff Ensin, Matthew, Fr. David, Lenny Armuth and Sara Jane Armuth, while three young adults from Covenant House kneel in front.

St. John Choir, SP Soloist Receive Honors at Festival

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Saint John the Apostle School Choir in Clark recently received a "superior" rating and came in first place in its division at

Kutztown University in a Music In The Parks Festival.

Sixteen elementary, middle and high school choirs from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York participated in this festival. A superior rating is the highest honor given at the adjudication.

Conor Flood, a fourth grader from Scotch Plains and one of the choir members at the school, received the "Outstanding overall soloist award" at the festival for his solo in "Amazing Grace."

Conor recently sang with the New Jersey Elementary All State Honor Choir and sings with the Celebration Singers children's choir in Cranford.

The 44-voice choir is under the direction of Tom Pedas, a former music teacher in the Cranford and Linden Public School Districts. Of the honor, Mr. Pedas said, "This is only my second year at Saint John and this is the first time, that our school has ever participated in any kind of a festival, so I was elated with how well our children did."

Sister Donna Marie, principal of St. John the Apostle, said, "I am so proud of our Schola Choir. We were the only Catholic elementary school competing. To receive the superior rating for our first time speaks wonderfully of our music program here at St. John the Apostle School, Clark."

Carly Nygard, famous composer, conductor and educator, said the following about the choir: "You should be very proud. You are making music on a very high level. I enjoyed hearing you."

Dr. Paula Zerkle, head of the choral department at Moravian College, said, "There are great things happening in this choir, and it is a pleasure to hear such young children singing so fine."



EXPLORING THE ART WORLD... Third grade boys from Jefferson School take notes while admiring art work at the 25th District Art Show in the Westfield Public Schools. They are Steven Barden, left, and Zachary Kronheimer.

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Events 6/12
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Join the Party! Images: The Bare Walls Event, an interactive art party, 7pm-11pm. Tickets start at \$100 and are available online.

Gallery Event: Opening Reception for the Annual Members' Show and art sale, 6-8pm. Free and open to the public.