

Arts and Entertainment

Pen and Ink

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN

An Emmy Offer for "The Sopranos" That They Can't Refuse: Sixteen Nominations

Being a groupie of "The Godfather" trilogy and a die-hard Sicilian, I found it unfathomable that HBO's "The Sopranos" could offer any semblance of real Italian life. I thought it would be just another demeaning depiction of Italian-Americans as brutally violent, unfeeling people who pride themselves in making a good tomato sauce one minute and killing their enemies in the next. Well, "The Sopranos" does that too. But, it adds real emotion to its characters and demeaning or not, paints a portrait of a very colorful Italian family.

Tony Soprano, the lead character, his family, psychiatrist and fellow hoodlums have impacted the TV-viewing public to such an extent that "The Sopranos" has received 16 nominations for the 1999 51st Annual Primetime Emmy Awards, including a nod for Outstanding Drama Series. More awards than the quirky "Ally McBeal," the legal eagle series, "The Practice" and the Freudian "Frasier."

However, "Ally" did get nominated for Outstanding Comedy Series and seems to be quite a shoe in at this point. People are taken with her over-the-top neurosis. They laugh when she falls in a toilet before a date and requires the jaws of life to get her out of it. The Jack Tripper high jinks are a little much for me. I'd like to see "Frasier" take the Emmy. It has maintained its healthy dosage of the hysterical without surrendering to the mundane. "Friends," which is also in the running, has had its 15 minutes of fame. The actors are overpaid and underamusing.

Jenna Elfman who portrays Dharma Montgomery on "Dharma & Greg" deserves the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series. Although she has great admiration for Lucille Ball and seems to mirror her one-of-a-kind brand of humor, Jenna holds her own and doesn't need to emulate anyone else. Calista Flockheart (a la "Ally") is also nominated, as is Helen Hunt who played Jamie Buchman on "Mad About You." I'm trying to think of something good to say about these performances, but for once, words escape me.

It's a toughie - the category of Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series. Wendie Malick (Nina Van Horn) of "Just Shoot Me" and Lucy Liu (Ling Woo) of "Ally" are both neck and neck in this grouping. Lucy's biting sarcasm and political incorrectness churn out a unique type of humor that is noteworthy. But, Wendie should go home with the Emmy because that same sarcasm oozes from her character, but with an extra punch and belly laugh each time she delivers a line.

"This is Dr. Frasier Crane. I'm listening." Some have said that "Frasier" is heading for the hills in the comedy arena. But, truth be told, it's more afloat than it has been in years. Nominated for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series, Kelsey Grammer keeps the show part of NBC's "Must See TV" lineup with a lot of help from his sidekick and brother, David Hyde Pierce (Dr. Niles Crane), who is nominated and should most definitely win for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series. Paul Reiser and John Lithgow, who also received nods for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series, have their own special brands of humor, but they cannot really measure up to the flavor of Frasier Crane.

Agent Dana Scully, who portrays portrayed Gillian Anderson in "The X Files," is rumored to be holding the winning nomination in her hands for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series. However, the top choice for the Emmy should be Lorraine Bracco (Dr. Jennifer Melfi) of "The Sopranos." Bracco, who bounces back psycho babble with her patient Tony Soprano with strength and intelligence, was also nominated for her Academy Award and Golden Globe Award in 1990 for *GoodFellas*. She deserves the Emmy for "The Sopranos." If you watched, you'd know why.

Kim Delaney should walk off stage with the Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series for her role as Diane Russell in "NYPD Blue." She tugged at everyone's heartstrings when she watched Jimmy Smits die over the length of five episodes. She shows superb strength in this role. Also nominated is Camryn Manheim as Ellenor Frutt in "The Practice." Reports prove that she is confident that the Emmy will be hers.

The choice for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series is the same talented actor who wowed us in *Crimson Tide*, *Get Shorty* and *Mr. Wonderful* - James Gandolfini as Tony Soprano, of you guessed it, "The Sopranos." His role is not that of a man who runs around town plotting mob hits, but grapples with infidelity, guilt trips from his dear old Italian mom, spilling his guts to his psychiatrist and watching his back so he doesn't get killed. It takes strong acting skills to juggle those emotions. Gandolfini handles those dimensions with finesse. Other contenders for that award include Jimmy Smits as Bobby Simone of "NYPD Blue" and Dylan McDermott as Bobby Donnell of "The Practice."

Noah Wyle is a shoe in for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series for his role as Dr. John Carter in "ER." He has everyone's attention at 10 p.m. on Thursday nights. At least, while George Clooney has stepped off the screen.

My hope is that as I prepare to stroll through Little Italy at the San Genarro Feast on September 12, eating my sausage and pepper sandwich, I will get to hear that evening, "For Outstanding Drama Series, the Emmy goes to...." "The Sopranos." But, I think all of you "ER" fans know better.



James Gandolfini of "The Sopranos"



Wendie Malick of "Just Shoot Me"

HOT! Tango in the Park With the Symphony

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Spicy red, magenta and yellow spotlights pulsed over the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) on Saturday evening at Echo Lake Park as the ensemble delivered a full-bodied, theatrical and scintillating performance in "Tango in the Park" to an audience of 1,500 people resting upon multi-colored lawn chairs and blankets.

Maestro David Wroe, Music Director and Conductor, who sambaed and mambaed along with the music, stated that planning the selections was "a pretty tall order for Englishman like myself." He added playfully, "But soon after giving into the pulsating beat, the sultry, tragic mood, passion and the sheer romance

their own with flawless transitions and a booming ending with horns that recalled the story's tragic ending.

As the evening began to cool down, Uruguay native and Elizabeth resident, Raul Jaurena used the somber and weeping tones of his bandoneon in "Concerto for Bandoneon & Orchestra" to lull the audience before intermission.

Maestro Wroe noted the multi-faceted quality of "Carmen Fantasy" which was performed with 14-year old violinist Christine Kwak, the daughter of W S O musician and the evening's Concert Master, Byung-Kook Kwak. *Carmen*, he revealed, was written by a Frenchman, with music composed by a Spaniard, now conducted



WITH SPICE AND SIZZLE...Music Director and Conductor Maestro David Wroe leads The Westfield Symphony Orchestra during "Tango in the Park" on July 31 at Echo Lake Park. The concert drew a crowd of approximately 1,500. Everyone enjoyed tunes from *West Side Story* and *Carmen* as well as arrangements from *New Jersey* composers.

of it all, the Queen soon disappeared from my mind!"

Orchestra members were clearly enjoying themselves, as Maestro Wroe chanted along with the musicians, "Tequila!" during the arrangement which was written by New Jersey composer and arranger, Mark McGurty.

As concert goers turned Union County brochures into accordion fans to beat the heat, the WSO soothed the audience with adventurous, seductive versions of "Jealousie," arranged by Healy and "La Cumparista," arranged by Dragon.

The romantic and tragic tale of *West Side Story* was revived as Maestro and the WSO stirred the emotions and memories of avid listeners with stand-out performances of "Something's Coming," "Maria" and "Tonight, Tonight." The ensemble took a classic love story and made it

by himself, an Englishman, and accompanied by a talented Korean violinist.

Christine is a marvel and an incredible musician. She was a perfect accompaniment to the music. Through the fastest, most intricate tempos, she held on with professionalism and detail all the way.

But, perhaps the most spirited renditions came with Mr. McGurty's arrangements of the aforementioned "Tequila!" "Brazil," and my personal favorite, "Copacabana." These songs compelled concertgoers to rise from their seats and try out a little tango themselves.

"Tango in the Park" was the ideal way to spend a Saturday evening - feeling the piquant vibrations and culture of Spanish music from an ensemble of stellar professionals. The Westfield Symphony Orchestra has done it yet again!

**"There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you."
-Maya Angelou, Author and Poet**

THE MAIN INGREDIENT

GASPACHO

- 1 MEDIUM CUCUMBER
- 1 MEDIUM RED SWEET BELL PEPPER
- 2 MEDIUM RIPE TOMATOES
- 1 CUP TOMATO JUICE
- 6 CLOVES GARLIC
- 2 OUNCES OLIVE OIL
- SALT, PEPPER, CHILI SAUCE

Peel garlic and cut into coarse pieces. Peel and dice cucumber. Cut open the red pepper and remove seeds. Dice pepper to the same size as diced cucumbers. Cube the tomatoes. Place these ingredients into a large bowl. Place seasonings in the same bowl, adding olive oil and tomato juice. Use a hand-blender to turn the mixture into a soup-like consistency. Cover the bowl and place in a refrigerator for approximately 24 hours. Check flavor and spicing prior to serving. Serve cold with croutons. Serves 4.



TO SUBMIT A RECIPE FOR THE MAIN INGREDIENT, PLEASE MAIL E-MAIL (MICHELLE@GOLEADER.COM) OR FAX TO MICHELLE'S ATTENTION BY FRIDAYS AT 4 P.M. FOR CONSIDERATION.



Cheri Rogowsky for The Westfield Leader and The Times

READY FOR A LIFT OFF...The Quick Check New Jersey Festival of Ballooning featured approximately 125 colorful hot air balloons which lifted off the ground and ribboned through the sky at Solberg Airport in Readington on July 23, 24 and 25. Budweiser and Bud Light balloons were set to take to the sky as festival-goers watched from the ground.

The Threepenny Opera Pulls No Punches With Satirical, Broadway-Caliber Performance

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - The *Threepenny Opera* by the Westfield Young Artists' Cooperative Theatre is one of those joys in life that you can relish from beginning to end. This mature ensemble delivers the tale of Mack the Knife with sass and savvy while giving the audience a moral to take home with them - the perfect souvenir.

While most productions commence with the rising of a curtain, *Threepenny* cleverly begins as you are retrieving your tickets in the main lobby. Beggars donning tattered clothes and faces smudged with soot plead for spare change or the purchase of a *Threepenny* T-shirt. Street walkers find a seat next to you and chat about life in London with authentic English accents which never falter.

David Villalobos as "A Street Singer" sets the stage with a sharp rendition of the familiar song, "The Ballad of Mack the Knife." Serving as narrator throughout the production, he rolls out on his knees on a scooter, delivering the lessons of the story.

Richard McNanna of Springfield plays the villainous Mack the Knife, juggling criminal acts as well as a bevy of adoring women. Armed with a Cheshire cat grin and a clever raising of the eyebrows, Rich portrays the debonaire cad with brilliancy.

The casting of Margaret Brautigam as Polly Peachum is ideal. She plays the ever-faithful and ever-wide-eyed bride of Mack with a combination of strength and grace. Her operatic voice is angelic. This Westfield resident makes the ending of *Threepenny* work wonders. She drives the moral home.

Collin Howard who plays Crookfinger Jake, is first seen trying to sell T-shirts pre-performance with the same bursting joviality he later carries into the theater in his main role. Collin is one of those actors who is not afraid to put himself on a stage and give the role everything he has, heart and soul. He's got grit, but above all, he has perfectly timed comedic talent.

Marc Bertha masters his roles as Filch and Victoria's Messenger in *Threepenny*. He seems to have the uncanny ability to take a smaller role and turn it into something even greater than that of a lead character. His portrayal of Victoria's Messenger has audience members bent over with laughter and loving his one-of-a-kind brand of comedy-drama. Give him any character and he breathes his own life into it.

Westfield's Julianne Mandrillo (Mrs. Peachum) keeps the audience rolling with her depiction of the alcoholic, over-bearing mum of Polly who trots about the stage proclaiming that both men and love are hopeless. She is another WYACT treasure.

Gary Patent (Mr. Peachum) has the authentic face of a Londoner and a masterful delivery of the woes of an overbearing father, tormented by the fact that his daughter is marrying a noted criminal. The pairing of Gary and Julianne in "Instead of Song" deserves accolades.

The supporting cast of *Threepenny* provides audience members with a strong reminder of the professionalism which embodies the WYACT family. And that is just what it is - a family. Cast members of *Oliver!* grabbed seats to cheer on their friends in *Threepenny* and offer hugs and smiles of support. Artistic Director of WYACT, Cynthia Meryl, is the mother bird of this nest of actors who shapes the skills of her actors and watches them soar.

The final drape at the closing of *Threepenny* packs the punch and the ensemble delivers it well. Spend an evening with WYACT's acting gems and you are sure to feel the same.

Threepenny will be performed on Friday, August 6, Saturday, August 7, and Sunday, August 8, all at 7:30 p.m. in the Murphy-Dunn Theatre in the Vaughn Eames Building at Kean University in Union.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. They may be purchased at The Music Staff on Quimby Street in Westfield, at the door or by calling (908) 233-3200.

ARTIST OF THE WEEK

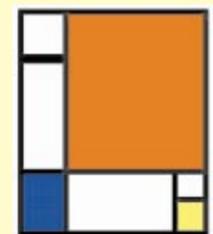
Pieter Cornelis Mondrian (1872-1944)

Boxes upon boxes of primary colors comprise the abstract geometrical masterpieces of Pieter Cornelis Mondrian. So many boxes, one might wonder if the artist dreamt in mosaic.

Through this shapely approach, Mondrian, a native of The Netherlands, attempted to create a new way to look at life through his world of boxes. He was heavily influenced by the cubist works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, later inventing his own type of cubism.

Mondrian's technique called for various simple components: straight lines, right angles and red, yellow, blue, black, white and gray paints. Why did he choose these elements? He hoped to express a spiritual view of the world that all of humanity could relate to.

The inventor of his own technique which he labeled



"Composition in Red, Yellow and Blue" by Piet Mondrian

"neoplasticism." Mondrian immigrated to the United States in 1940 and died in New York City four years later.

The real question is, did Mondrian think outside of the box?

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