

# Arts & Entertainment



TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE... Fairy Godmother Yuka Omori reveals the "Tick Tocks," who will warn Cinderella when it's time to leave the Prince's Ball during the New Jersey Ballet's recent family-friendly performance of *Cinderella* at UCPAC in Rahway. Courtesy of Christina Wilson

## NJ Ballet's Cinderella Delights Families at Rahway's UCPAC

By CHRISTIE STORMS  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

RAHWAY — Audiences of all ages were recently treated to an enchanting performance of the New Jersey Ballet's *Cinderella* at the Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) in Rahway.

The "Kids and Families" matinee featured the NJ Ballet's original "storyteller" voiceover narration to guide even the youngest audience members through this artistic interpretation of a childhood favorite.

Yet the narration never detracted from each character's essence unfolding through expressive dance during the two-act production.

Kotoe Kojima-Noa poignantly illustrated Cinderella's plight, from the sad resignation toiling at household chores to her wistful dreaming of a better life, and her elation when the dream is finally realized.

Meanwhile, male dancers Andres F. Neira and Vladimir Roje brought infectious charisma to their portrayals of the wickedly (funny) stepsisters, continually engaging the audience with their perceived lack of grace.

The Fairy Godmother (Yuka Omori) cast her spells with the assistance of four fairies representing the seasons of the year.

Beautiful scenery and props, including a sparkling golden pumpkin coach, added to the magic.

When the curtain rose after intermission to reveal the first glimpse inside the Prince's ballroom full of dancers in their finery, the audience could be heard collectively sighing in awe.

Alas, the ball could not last forever, so 12 child performers (the "Tick Tocks") swirled around Cinderella. Each wore a clock number and danced to a corresponding stroke of mid-

night as the clock chimed, compelling Cinderella to return home.

Not, of course, before she left behind a glittering ballet slipper, which seemed to enchant young audience members, many of whom wore their own princess dresses and tiaras to the performance.

The stepsisters made quite a spectacle of themselves attempting to make the slipper fit, and even the stepmother begged to try it on herself.

At last, Cinderella was revealed to be the owner, and the Prince (Albert Davydov) and she performed a wonderful pas de deux before he eloquently lifted her across the stage to begin their life together.

Affordable and entertaining, *Cinderella* proved to be a charming introduction to classical ballet.

The NJ Ballet will return to UCPAC in May 2011 for another family-friendly production, *Sleeping Beauty*.

## Urbalist 'Turns Tables' on Cancer

By ERIC NIERSTEDT  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

GARWOOD — The Garwood Crossroads, usually home to guitars and rock music, switched things up on Thursday. Exchanging its standard instruments for turntables and hip-hop, the venue played host to the release party for Westfield alum Jesse Hershkowitz, aka rapper Urbalist's new album, *Cancerous Flow: Lyrical Journey*.

The night was a trifecta of sorts for Urbalist, who celebrated not only his new album, but also his 30th birthday. But most importantly, the day marked his fourth year of cancer remission, a subject that forms the focus of his album.

After traveling through Rhode Island and Atlanta to hone his rapping skills, Urbalist was diagnosed and told that he would not live to reach his 30th birthday. Therefore, the night's theme could be summed in Urbalist's own words, "F— Cancer!"

The evening was hosted by rapper Unknown, who rapped a short song to warm up the crowd, before bringing on the night's first act, Dirty Mac. The young MC had a lukewarm reaction from the crowd, despite having a big YouTube hit, "iLL Scaplel," which he did not perform. Instead, he hit the crowd with a short set of songs, backed by house DJ, DJ Late Night.

While his songs were impressive in their speed, and the dexterity of his raps were noteworthy, Mac had problems from the get-go with "I've Arrived," a fast-paced song that had too much flow and no real hook. He fared

better with his second song, "This Way," but the lack of a crowd response for the remainder of his set, as well as including a "but" song, should be a message for Mac to heed.

The night's second rapper, Moe Mentum, was a much better performer, who was more melodic than

Finally, Urbalist took the stage solo. After a warm reception from the crowd, he began his set with the Eminem-like "Keep up Or Get Left Behind," a very introductory, "this-is-who-I-am" type of song. After that explanation, Urbalist began to perform the highly personal songs of



Mac and understood that even the fastest raps still need a hook. The rapper's music included plenty of cultural influences as well as hip-hop references, such as "Last of the Moe-ricans."

Moe's set only improved as Urbalist came up to rap as well (the two had previously formed an outfit called Hybrid H). The two were a marvel onstage, using excellent call-and-response on "They Don't Know" and dedicating a song called "You Can't Take Me Down" to cancer.

*Cancerous Flow*, starting with "First Five Days," which detailed the five days leading up to his diagnosis. The song was highly detailed, as Urbalist described the pains he felt in his arms and the fear he felt at the diagnosis.

From there, the subject became treatment on "I'd Rather Be," a ballad-esque song in which Urbalist rapped about all the things he could have done instead of being on chemo. This included the most somber moment of the night, as Urbalist delivered this interlude — "I had two roommates in the hospital. One was 20; one was 15. They're both dead."

After expressing gratitude at being alive on the next song, Urbalist brought up Dirty Mac once more, to announce their new partnership, called Grey Matter, and a new song, which borrowed its beat and theme from the film *The Warriors*. After leaving, Urbalist performed another sample-heavy song — using Cutting Crew's "I Just Died in Your Arms" — in which he answered the classic chorus line by line ("I just died in your arms tonight"/"Is that right?").

Urbalist then attempted to leave, but the crowd pulled him back for an encore, which he gave in the original, "Positivity," letting the victorious night end on the perfect anthem for a man who was told he would not be around to celebrate it.

## WSO to Present Holiday Concert on December 4

WESTFIELD — On Saturday, December 4, at 8 p.m., Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) will present a brand-new concert. Maestro David Wroe, WSO musicians and guests will present *Home for the Holidays*, a family festival of traditional and contemporary songs and music, sing-alongs and more. This special holiday concert will offer seasonal delights and symphonic classics.

From Hollywood favorites such as *Polar Express*, *Sleigh Ride* and *March of the Toy Soldiers* to *Nutcracker* selections and Humperdinck's *Prelude to Hansel and Gretel* to choral favorites and timeless holiday classics (complete with song sheet), this concert

will offer selections designed to please listeners both young and old.

The concert will take place at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield, located at 140 Mountain Avenue, and will finish at approximately 9:30 p.m. Tickets prices range from \$25 to \$70 for adults, and there is a special discount price of \$10 for students K-12, making this event a perfect start to the holiday season for the whole family. Tickets may be purchased directly from the WSO by calling (908) 232-9400 or visiting the office at 224 East Broad Street.

Tickets are also available from The Town Bookstore in Westfield and Martin Jewelers in Cranford.

## Enlow Hall Welcomes Grammy Award Winner

UNION — The Gene & Shelley Enlow Recital Hall at Kean University will present Grammy Award winner Sharon Isbin in concert on Saturday, December 4, at 7:30 p.m.

The Classical guitarist received a 2010 Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance for her CD *Journey to the New World*. She is the first guitarist in 43 years to receive a second classical Grammy and the only classical artist to perform in the 52nd Annual Awards.

Ms. Isbin recently performed at the White House for President Barack

Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama; she is featured on the soundtrack of the Academy Award-winning movie *The Departed* and has given sold-out performances internationally in the world's greatest halls, including Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, Boston Symphony Hall, Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center and more.

Enlow Hall is located on the East Campus of Kean University at 215 North Avenue in Hillside. Tickets are \$40 and are available by calling (908) 737-SHOW (7469) and online at enlowhall.kean.edu.

## Celebration Singers, Choirs Present Concert

CRANFORD — The Celebration Singers and the Children's Choir will present their winter performance, "Holiday Treasures," on Friday, December 3, at 8:15 p.m. and Saturday, December 4, at 7 p.m. at the Harvest Training Center, located at 69 Myrtle Street in Cranford.

Under the direction of Sean Berg and Jennifer Sellman, more than 70 adults and 65 children are preparing to entertain with an eclectic repertoire. The adult directors' selections include variations on traditional songs like "Away in a Manger" and "He's Got The Whole World in His Hands," as well as "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen.

The choir will perform Rachmaninoff's "Rejoice O Virgin" in Russian, and "Ubi Caritas" in Latin. The children will perform renditions of "Dashing Through the Snow," a Christmas Medley, and "Share the Joy," a new song that the children premiered earlier this month.

Tickets are available online at celebration-singers.org. Discounted prices are in effect online until December 1; adult tickets are \$12; seniors and children pay \$8.

Tickets will be available for purchase at the door for \$15 and \$10, respectively. To learn more, call (908) 241-8200.

## WCP Readies for A View from the Bridge

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Community Players will hold open auditions for *A View From The Bridge* by Arthur Miller on Sunday, December 5, from 1 to 5 p.m.; Monday, December 6, from 7 to 10 p.m.; and Thursday, December 9, from 7 to 10 p.m.

Actors are needed for the following roles: three women, ages 20's to 50's, and 12 men, ages 20s to 60s.

Auditions will take place at the theater at 1000 North Avenue in Westfield. The performance dates are weekends from March 5 to 26. To learn more, visit westfieldcommunityplayers.org or call (908) 232-9568.

## Summit Playhouse Announces Auditions

SUMMIT — The Summit Playhouse has announced that auditions are scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, December 6 and 7, for an upcoming production of *Speed The Plow* by David Mamet. The playhouse is located at 10 New England Avenue.

Director Trey Compton is casting one woman (20s to 30s) and two men (30s to 40s). Productions dates are February 18 to March 5. Familiarity with the play will be helpful. Those auditioning should prepare a one- to two-minute contemporary monologue; otherwise sides or a monologue will be provided. To learn more, call (908) 358-5405 or visit summitplayhouse.org.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

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## Triple Threat Productions

Winter Acting Classes

Directed By Tori Clemens and Laurie Wood

All Classes begin in January and are held at Terrill Road Methodist Church Scotch Plains, NJ

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