

PROMISING PERFORMANCES

By William Nicoson

A rich array of offerings in the performing arts has been scheduled at Reston Community Center for this winter and spring. Break out your brand new 2004 calendar and start filling it in.

Concerts

Our opportunities to appreciate musical offerings are particularly rich. On January 24 at 3 PM, The Polygraph Lounge performs on RCC's Center Stage. Mark Stewart and Rob Schwimmer keep their audience in stitches with raffish patter and instrumental ingenuity. *The New York Times* has celebrated their "mischievous, hyperactive creativity."

On March 10 at 8 PM, the acclaimed Irish band, Lúnasa, returns to RCC's Center Stage. *The Wall Street Journal* has noted that "Lúnasa balances tradition [and] innovation for a compelling Celtic sound." Then on March 27 at 3 PM, the Audubon Quartet is also scheduled to return to Center Stage for an afternoon of compelling chamber music. Their concert last fall was a knock-out.

The highly regarded pianist, Christopher O'Riley, whose repertory ranges from established classics to contemporary innovations, will perform on RCC's Center Stage on April 3 at 3 PM.

Dance

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performs at Center Stage on February 21 at 8 PM. This American-Asian group brings to their muscular choreography "endlessly proliferating forces of cosmic energy" in the words of *The New York Times*.

On April 14 at 8 PM, Jane Comfort and Company will perform at Center Stage excerpts from "Persephone," their latest operatic ballet. Reviewing an earlier work, *Backstage* found that "the dancers sing and move with a buoyance that is almost magical."

Theater

Michael Cooper brings his Masked Marvels and Wondertales to Center Stage on March 20 at 3 PM. A formidable change artist with a magnificent collection of masks and stilts, Cooper conjures effortlessly true marvels and wonders.

On May 23 at 3 PM, The Reduced Shakespeare Company will perform "All the Great Books (Abridged)" on Center Stage. The great authors may be twirling in their graves, but the audience will be laughing and clapping endlessly. Center Stage ticket prices for other performances noted above will be \$10, but \$15 for this attraction.

Three works will be performed at Center Stage by The Reston Community Players during the winter and spring of 2004: Ken Ludwig's family farce, "Moon Over Buffalo," from Jan. 23 to Feb. 7; "Working," a musical based on Studs Terkel's novel, from Mar. 5 to 27; and, from April 30 to May 15, a drama involving murder and forgiveness, "The Laramie Project," by Moises Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project. Recent productions by RCP have been highly professional in quality. Ticket prices vary from \$11 (youth and seniors on Friday) to \$17 (all seats on Saturday). Performances are on Friday and Saturday at 8 PM and on Sunday at 2:30 PM.

On February 7 at noon a bus will leave RCC at Hunters Woods bound for the National Theater downtown and a performance of the popular hit, "Mama Mia." Return is expected by 6 PM. The price for Restonians of ticket, bus and guide is \$60. On March 3, a bus of Reston seniors to George Gershwin's "Crazy for You" at the West End Dinner Theater will depart from RCC Lake Anne at 11:30 AM and Hunters Woods at 11:45, return expected by 6 PM. The all-inclusive price: \$23.

On April 3 at 6 AM a bus will leave RCC at Hunters Woods bound for the New York production of another hit musical, "Urinetown." Return is expected by 10 PM. The all-inclusive price: \$80. RCC at Lake Anne will sponsor two sessions for seniors (April 15 and 22, 1:30 to 3 PM) to discuss the works of William Shakespeare and a visit (April 29, 12:45 PM pick up, 5 PM return) to the Folger Library production of "The Comedy of Errors." The all-inclusive price: \$25.

That's a lot of good theater at bargain basement prices.

William Nicoson is a student of the performing arts.