

CSI in the News



May 2011

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Arts



Benefit concert at CSI aids Japan earthquake victims

Published: Thursday, May 05, 2011, 3:20 PM



By **Mark D. Stein**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. - WILLOWBROOK - Young vocalist Masafumi Toyoda faced the audience of about 40 people in the Williamson Theatre at the College of Staten Island (CSI).

Sitting just three feet from him at the piano was musician Taka Kigawa, who meticulously stroked the keys to assist his fellow vocalist.

Both Japanese performers concluded their masterful performance with "Ave Maria," ultimately topping off a concert to raise funds for people affected by the earthquake and tsunami disasters in Japan.



Local residents look for their neighbors' usable belongings at Shobudahama fishery port as Japan Ground Self-Defense Force members search for missing people in their third major recovery operation since the March 11 earthquake in Shichigahamamachi, Miyagi Prefecture, northeastern Japan. (Associated Press)

It was held last Friday night in building 1P on the college's Willowbrook campus.

The International Affairs Committee and College of Staten Island Student Government organized the show, which netted \$903.

As of Monday, CSI had raised \$2,224 for the Japan Earthquake Relief Fund.

Kigawa, an acclaimed pianist who has performed across the world, from New York to Cleveland, and Paris to Barcelona, meshed with Toyoda, a countertenor and former music major at CSI.

He played two separate piano solo sets, playing multiple moving songs, including "Joule" by Japanese classical composer Dai Fujikura and "L'Isle Joyeuse" by pianist Claude Debussy.

The crowd applauded the pair often, and was noticeably moved by the efforts of the musicians.

Toyoda sang in tune with Kigawa's piano, as both performed songs such as "Hark! Hark the Echoing Air" by English organist Henry Purcell, and "Che faro senza Euridice" by opera composer Christoph Willibald Gluck.

Following the two-hour performance, Comfort Asanbe, assistant professor of psychology, called the event great.

"It was very beautiful. It's real talent," the teacher said. "Especially for the reason. The devastation was too much."

Dianne Sun, of Mariners Harbor, called the event very entertaining and credited Toyoda, whom she's seen perform several times.

Qimei Luo, of Manhattan, a senior and major in corporate communications, who helped coordinate the event, said having two Japanese performers made the event authentic.

Ms. Luo was thrilled to have them play, especially for free.

Kigawa is well-known among his peers. The New York Times has often covered and reviewed his performances, making it that much special for him to play at the [College of Staten Island](#).

The Japan Benefit Concert had been in the works since the disasters struck in March. She said when the earthquake and tsunami devastation happened, she understood the feelings of her Japanese friends.

"We tried to make it perfect," said Ms. Luo. "I don't think everyone was expecting them to be this good."

For folks unable to attend but wishing to donate, checks can be written to either the [CSI](#) Association and put "donation to Japan Earthquake Relief Fund" in the memo line, or directly to "Japan Society Earthquake Relief Fund." Checks can be mailed to The [College of Staten Island](#) Student Government, 2800 Victory Blvd., Building 1C, Room 207, Staten Island, N.Y. 10314.

Staten Island Ballet has a royal wedding of its own in the wings

Published: Sunday, May 08, 2011, 6:08 AM



By **Michael J. Fressola**



Photo Courtesy of the SI Ballet

The Staten island Ballet will perform "Signatures" Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. at CSI's Center for the Arts.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — The Staten Island Ballet (SIB) comes out of hibernation this month even as the city's senior companies, American Ballet Theater and New York City Ballet, launch their spring seasons.

All deserve attention, of course, but the small and feisty Staten island Ballet is particularly worthy — not to mention convenient and affordable. The company's "Signature" spring program will take place Saturday and Sunday at the College of Island's Williamson Theater.

The company has a couple of new work things to show and a royal wedding of its own to present.

One is a short video, produced by Island-based photographer Ventura Amesse and founding company director Ellen Tharp. Called "Stepping Stones," the piece is a progress report about students (pre-school to pre-college) who train at the School of the Staten Island Ballet. Company and the school share a building on the Sea View Hospital and Home complex.

"Stepping Stones" is a pastiche of still photographs, shot by Amesse, projected to a Claude Debussy score. "The idea," said Ms. Tharp, "is just that there is a progression of stages in a student's development. It's exciting to see it compressed."

Also new, is "Joplin Dances," a full-company number danced to Scott Joplin rags. Developed in the mid-1990s by Dance Theater of Harlem (DTH) choreographer Robert Garland. It was popular and became a repertory regular.

The piece came as a kind of dividend attached to company's new ballet mistress Lenore Pavlakos, who had

danced with Staten Island Ballet years ago and then moved on to other projects, like a long run with DTH. "Joplin Dances" was "set" on her, meaning she was one of its original interpreters. She, in turn, taught it to SIB dancers. The whole 15-member SIB company will dance it.

The program also has "Piano Pieces," danced to Scriabin, Mueller and Scarlatti and "Triumph," a solo choreographed by Carl Paris and danced by Kerville Jack to a Ray Charles score.

The largest piece on the program is a whole act of a staple of classical ballet, "The Sleeping Beauty," which is danced to the Tchaikovsky score. Ms. Tharp adapted the original choreography by Marius Petipa (1818-1910) the French choreographer who invented or adapted 50 ballets and is credited with much of the repertoire golden age of Russian ballet.

The version of Act III that the company will dance this coming weekend will be the most fully-realized to date. Although both the company and the school study/perform all kinds of concert dance, classical ballet remains fundamental.

"We think of it as a staple, our signature," Ms. Tharp said.

In Act III, the Princess Aurora has finally awakened from her long sleep, thanks to a kiss from a prince who has fallen in love with her comatose loveliness. Immediately thereafter, in a ceremony and reception even more colorful than that of Kate and William, they marry.

The Staten Island Ballet's will dance its "Signatures" program Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. in the Center for the Arts at the College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Blvd., Willowbrook. Tickets are \$20 (free for children under 12) and will be available at the door.

The joys of summer on Staten Island

Published: Sunday, May 29, 2011, 5:11 AM



Michael J. Fressola
By



Advance File Photo

Sundog Theatre presents the history of New York City with students from PS 53.

STATEN ISLAND, NY — Ready or not, summer arrives (unofficially) tomorrow. Will you get away or stick around?

Driving, as everyone is well aware, will be expensive. Already exceeding \$4 a gallon, gas could hit \$5 or \$6 before it falls, no?

Good thing, the wide white beaches of the Jersey Shore are only a gallon or two away... then again what makes you think you're welcome there?

Certain inhospitable resort towns south of here were thinking, earlier this month, of restricting beach access to those who rent

or own places nearby.

In other words: Don't come for the day.

Kind of nervy for a place whose situation is synonymous with trash-taste, bloodshot eyes and terrible grammuh.

Home might just be the cool place to be this summer; also the most affordable.

Fortunately there are good things to do, see and hear, on the Island and nearby. Negligible gas will be expended. Plus, many nearby options are admission-free.

MUSICAL MOMENTS

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, a string detachment of the great Orchestra of St. Luke's will play and accept non-perishable items for a food drive, June 5 at 3 p.m., Veterans Memorial Hall, Snug Harbor Cultural Center

and Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terr., Livingston. Free.

Auntie Em & Uncle Al, a family program of folk songs, clog-dancing animals and storytelling; June 19 at 3 p.m., Greenbelt Nature Center, 700 Rockland Ave. Free.

All hail the Sea Goddess: Italian folk singer/drummer Alessandra Belloni, a semi-regular on Island stages, guitarist John LaBarbera, and others will present a world-premiere new-music program in honor of marine deities at St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Avenue and 116th Street, June 18 at 8 p.m. Tickets (at the door) \$25.

For "A Royal Wedding of Classical Music and Dance," June 19th at 3 p.m., the New American Youth Ballet will dance to Richmond County Orchestra's tunes ("Paquita" and "Coppelia,") in the gymnasium at St. John's University, 300 Howard Ave., Grymes Hill. Tickets are \$20 (students and kids are free).

New York Philharmonic, free summer brass and percussion concert, July 17, 8 p.m. in the College of Staten Island's Center for the Arts, Willowbrook.

Metropolitan Opera in recital: Three singers (Layla Claire, Renee Tatum and Ryan Speedo Green) with accompanist Bradley Moore in a free performance, July 21 at 7 p.m. in Clove Lakes Park. Free.

Staten Island Philharmonic will be busy with mostly admission-free appearances, among them: July 3 at the Conference House Pavilion, 4 p.m. in an all-American program: July 4, "American Salute," at Alice Austen Park, Rosebank, 6 p.m., and Aug. 7, 2 p.m., Noble Maritime Collection.

Also, Viva Voce Brass, a chamber group, in "Brass Goes Naturel," Aug. 14: 2 p.m. Greenbelt Nature Center, Rockland Avenue.'

Upriver: Sibelius and His World, a survey of the Finnish symphonist at Bard (College) Music Festival, Annadale-on-Hudson, N.Y., Aug. 12-14 and Aug. 19-22.

Here Comes the Bride: Busy Stapleton-born indie singer-songwriter Ingrid Michaelson will take a little time off to marry Greg Laswell somewhere in Maine the third weekend in August. (by invitation of course)

S.I. ON SCREEN

Philip Giordano's film "The Empty Playground," June 4 at 7 p.m., at the Full Cup, 388 Van Duzer St., Stapleton; afterward, music by Enrico Arcaro. Free.

Staten Island Film Festival (SIFF) June 8 to 12. St. George Theatre, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden and other venues. Visit sifilmfestival.org for details.

Movies under the Stars, South Meadow Stage, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, June 17 and July 24; July 8 and 15, 7:30. Admission free.

LUMEN, a video-performance festival (Brendan Coyle's semi-live "Screen Test Ad Infinitum," et. al) June 25 6 p.m. to midnight on Lighthouse Plaza, adjacent to the St. George Ferry Terminal. Free.

ART & MUSEUMS

New at the Newhouse Galleries: Paul Moakley: *Vir Fidelis* (June 1-Oct 23): Photographs and short films about gender, identity and group mentality in teen-aged boys.; Noise Carousel (June 18 – Dec. 23), a sound sculpture; and Iced (June 18 – Sept. 14).

Mr. Big: Twelve towering steel sculptures by Mark di Suvero are roosting on Governor's Island through Sept. 25. Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays, Sundays and holiday Mondays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

FAMILY FESTIVALS

Staten Island Pride Parade, stepping off Saturday from the Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place, St. George, at noon.

Ferragosto, a free Italian summer fest (food, wine, games and music), Aug. 14, at the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum in Rosebank.

CAR CULTURE

Classic Cars, every Wednesday at Historic Richmond Town, from 5:30-8:30 p.m. through July 13.

"Rear View: Our Life with Cars," photographs from the Staten Island Advance archives at the Alice Austen House Museum, 2 Hylan Blvd., Rosebank.

SEEING GREEN

Back to the Beach, free family days, music, vendors, carnival; June 18 and 19, Aug. 13 and 14 at the Midland Beach Sea Turtle Circle, Capodanno Blvd. and Jefferson Ave.

"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors," a vivarium with 200 live croakers, through Jan. 2 at the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West and 79th Street, Manhattan.

"Behavior & its Evidence," a free installation by artist Sarah Sze in High Line Park, West 20th Street), opening July 11.

PLAYS & MUSICALS

Sundog Theatre, benefit show/party, Thursday (June 2), 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Temple Israel, 315 Forest Avenue, West Brighton, \$40. Contact benefit@sundogtheatre.org for details.

"Suddenly Last Summer," Tennessee Williams examines madness, shame and greed, June 17-26, Friday and Saturday at 8, Sunday at 3), The Chapel Theater, 460 Brielle Ave. (Sea View Hospital Rehabilitation Center and Home). Tickets are \$18-\$20.

"Music Man," a Harbor Lights Theater production of the classic musical, July 8-17 at the Music Hall, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden. Tickets are \$25-\$30.

"My Big Gay Italian Wedding," equality is not the issue in Grant City playwright Anthony J. Wilkinson's nuptial romp, now in its second year off-Broadway. Thursday to Saturday, 8 p.m., St. Luke's Theatre, 308 West 46th Street. Tickets are \$29.50-\$69.50 at Telecharge.com.

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