

Coventry Village News

The Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.
July 2001

FROM THE PRESENT'S PEN

Many years ago, when the Metropolitan Opera still toured, I was returning from a weekend in New York City. As I walked down the concourse of Hopkins Airport, I spotted Luciano Pavarotti, sitting on a bench, skimming through a magazine; waiting. A number of travelers passed this operatic giant without notice, but I, an opera fan could not, without some acknowledgement. I told my buddy (an unimpressed, baseball fan) that I needed to say something. He held my bag as I approached the tenor and quietly said, "Signor Pavarotti, I noticed you here and wanted to stop and say, thank you for your music and your talent. It has brought me a lot of pleasure." He was most gracious. We shook hands, he thanked me for the kind words and said it was his pleasure. As we were about to engage in our second sentence, a few ladies approached the maestro. He stood up, smoothed his slacks and immediately directed his attention to the women. The ladies giggled and the tenor beamed. I was a distant memory as he engaged and charmed the middle-aged female fans. The next day, after work, I entered Public Auditorium, bought my typical three-dollar ticket and along with less than 6000 other patrons, fully enjoyed a remarkable, performance of Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera", my handshake and talk forever captured and tucked away.

The memory reappeared last summer when the "Three Tenors" came to town. Everyone assumed I would be going and was quite shocked when I said I'd be skipping the show. "A football stadium is no place to hear opera." (Some would argue that Public Auditorium was no place to hear opera either, but that detracts from my point.) 35,000 patrons disagreed with me, sat in the burning afternoon sun and listened to a program of acoustically fractured songs. The differences struck me as a very telling indicator of the power of celebrity, the city and its times.

For all of the years I was old enough to attend the Met's week in Cleveland, I never bought a ticket in advance. That changed for the last three years when

they moved to the State Theatre in Playhouse Square. I never paid more than four dollars for a seat, again, until the move to the State (cheap seats were increased to \$4 near the end of the Public Auditorium run, higher at the State). Attendance ran from about 2500 (Weill's "Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny") to 6000 (for Luciano). Even in the smaller State, seats were always available. This, despite the visiting talents of Beverly Silles, Grace Bumbry, Cornell MacNeil, Sherrill Milnes, Judith Blegen, Renata Scotta, Paul Plishka, Jon Vickers and a young Dawn Upshaw in a minor role of the 1985 production of Verdi's "Simon Boccanegra". There was no excuse NOT to attend. Now, twenty years later, seeing Pavarotti, singing the same songs that have been repeated endlessly on PBS in an outdoor stadium with "Jumbo-tron" was somehow a more satisfying experience. Like the nouveau Indian's fans that now pack Jacob's field and irk my luggage holding, "baseball buddy", nouveau Opera fans snapped-up tickets and feel fully comfortable stating that Luciano is the finest tenor to ever grace a stage. Don't ask them to name three others (Carreras and Domingo don't count.) Guess how many operas they've seen. The celebrity, not the music/game drives them. They want to be counted as a fan. They want to advertise the fact that they were in attendance, that they saw the "no-hitter", they heard the "high C." The notoriety they achieved by holding the torn ticket stub is more important and more valuable than witnessing the artistic or athletic feat.

In addition to the star-struck, E.T., celebrity mentality, the perception of the city and the attitude of the people has changed. There is a dignity and self-respect that was missing when the Met made their last yearly visit. People are proud of their community and are unashamed of announcing to the world, "Signor Pavarotti will be touring this year in New York, Paris, Tokyo and Cleveland." Cleveland is no longer thought of as the city with the burning river and mayoral caricatures, but the city with the best orchestra in America, good ball teams, a great art museum and the home of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Coventry, at this time reminds me of Cleveland in 1979. We have had better days. The Centrum is

closed for what seems to be an eternity. Dobama has decided to move and will abandon its basement home in a year or two. The Hyde Park Restaurant has altered the format of its signature location. Saturday crowds are a bit thinner than they used to be.

A change, a renaissance is on the way. I feel it, as I feel the power of Pavorotti's version of "E Lucevan le Stelle". The Centrum is too valuable a location to remain dormant. The basement locale is perfect for a kamikaze theatre troupe willing to bear the frailties of a space that annoy the matured, seasoned group. Retailers, searching for an alternate location with an eclectic clientele will find our neighborhood. New restaurants, with new ideas about food preparation will inhabit the few abandoned storefronts. We are a neighborhood too valuable to overlook.

True lovers of baseball and opera will always find the venue where quality reigns. A real connoisseur perseveres after the later-day fan slides onto the next fad. Some of my diehard, baseball-loving friends are visiting the minor league Akron team. They say that the passion of play is similar to the struggling, former Indian's teams. Local opera fans are watching as the Cleveland Opera company improves with age. Smaller Lyric Opera groups also help to fill the tremendous gap left by the Met. Good merchants and high-quality owners will return to Coventry. Patrons are sure to follow. After the novelty of Shaker Square and Tremont wears off, patrons will return to Coventry. We may even get our share of "star-gazers". They will all be welcomed back to our neighborhood, where they belong.

Jeffrey R. Dross – President, Coventry Neighbors

2001 COVENTRY MAGIC BUS /CAIN PARK CALENDAR

The Coventry magic Bus will be used as a free shuttle service for 26 performance events at Cain Park this summer. Principal shuttle lot will be the Severance parking lot in front of Borders Books. The shuttle will operate from Coventry as well for a limited number of events. Key Bank and Severance Town Center merchants are underwriting the operational costs for the shuttle program.

The shuttle will bring and return visitors from the Severance lot and Coventry locations starting one-hour prior to the curtain time. Returns will be made for one-hour after the events. Underlined, bold dates denote shuttle to both Severance and Coventry locations.

June 21:	8:30 p.m. The Sound of Music
June 22:	8:30 p.m. The Sound of Music
June 23:	8:30 p.m. The Sound of Music
<u>June 26:</u>	8:30 p.m. Janis Ian (<u>Tuesday</u>)
June 27:	7:30 p.m. The Pointer Sisters w Femi Kuti
<u>July 3:</u>	8:30 p.m. Ramsey Lewis, Billy Taylor (<u>Tuesday</u>)
<u>July 17:</u>	8:00 p.m. Jethro Tull w/ Willy Porter (<u>Tuesday</u>)
July 18:	7:30 p.m. The Neville Brothers with Steel Pulse
<u>July 19:</u>	8:30 p.m. The Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra (<u>Thursday</u>)
July 20:	7:30 p.m. John McCutcheon
July 22:	7:30 p.m. Guy Lombardo & The Royal Canadians w Ali Pierson
July 26:	8:30 p.m. The YARD (Youth At Risk Dancing) & Friends
July 28:	8:30 p.m. Doug Elkins Dance Company
July 29:	7:30 p.m. Cleveland Jazz Orchestra

- August 2: 8:30 p.m. Moving Histories & Other Stories. David Dorfman & Friends
- August 3: 7:30 p.m. The Russian/American Kids Circus
- August 4: 8:30 p.m. Glory Bound. Odetta & Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Josh White Jr.
- August 5: 7:00 p.m. Workmen's Circle Yiddish Concert
- August 7:** 8:30 p.m. Bela Fleck & the Flecktones! (Tuesday)
- August 9: 8:30 p.m. Pointe of Departure. Gabay & Rodriguez Dance Concert
- August 10: 7:30 p.m. The Chenille Sisters
- August 11: 8:30 p.m. Piano Jazz. Marian McPartland & Willy Pickens
- August 15: 8:30 p.m. Evening of Dance with Cleveland & Akron Choreographers
- August 16:** 8:30 p.m. Brave Combo (Peace Through Polka). (Thursday)
- August 17: 8:30 p.m. Cleveland Pops Orchestra
- August 19:** 8:30 p.m. The Temptations! (Sunday)

YOUR TABLE IS WAITING!

Coventry SID and the City of Cleveland Heights will reintroduce outdoor seating to the Coventry commons area. A small number of tables and chairs will return this season.

COVENTRY ARCH INSTALLED

Gambier, Ohio artist, Barry Gunderson, installed "Coventry Arch" on Tuesday June 5, 2001. As an entryway to the Coventry PEACE Park, The abstract figurative piece arches over the walk from two bases immediately behind the concrete landscaping walls installed by the city at the southeast corner of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Coventry Road.

The Coventry PEACE Public Art Committee raised funds to commission this exciting piece of public art. The Committee, which has been working on the project since January 1999, has membership from Coventry PEACE, Inc.; Coventry PTA; Coventry Neighbors, Inc.; the Coventry Village Special Improvement District, Inc. (CVSID); Coventry Village Branch Library; as well as at-large members.

The artist selection process began in March 1999. In brief, the Committee hosted:

1. A public slide review of ten regional artists who responded to a call for entries.
2. Three evenings of talks by selected artists; Rob Bliss, Barry Gunderson, Joan Damankos, Irina Koukhanova, and Angelica Pozo. The informal talks were held at the Coventry Branch Library, and were open to the public.

3. Five were narrowed to three and Joan Damankos, Angelica Pozo, and Barry Gunderson presented proposals for the site.
4. A Birdhouse Art Show at the library raised funds for the project with imaginative birdhouses created by adults and schoolchildren in the community.

The chosen artist, Barry Gunderson, is an art professor at Kenyon College. His work has been installed as a part of the "Ohio Percent for Art" projects throughout the state. He came to know the Coventry neighborhood when his son and daughter-in-law lived here and writes, "I have visited often and certainly found the charm that you now wish to expand." His proposal is best described in his own words:

"This commons area is certainly the hub for the area and significant attention has already been exerted on the site with the pavers, walkways, and plantings already in place. Thus it was a challenge to find both a location and proper sculptural addition to be added. But . . . it became very clear to me what the exact site should be. The newly established gardens. The pleasant walkways, the intended forest of trees needed a 'gateway'-some marking that said 'welcome to our community'. And the perfect setting for this gateway was the poured-in-place planter walls that ushered pedestrians in and out of this portal. Thus my thinking quickly turned to the enterprise, what kind of gateway should there be? Figurative sculpture has been ruling in my studio work for the last five years. I have been fascinated with the complex invention of turning industrial materials – pipes and structures – into anatomical forms. Inventive cutting and shaping of round tubes yield arms and legs; intriguing joining of lengths and angles gives feet and fingers. Together these geometric materials form a figure of gesture and

character."

"My intent here is to use 12" diameter aluminum pipe rolled into a 180-degree arch to form a passageway of greeting-two abstract figurative forms on either side. Because my work cannot get away from whimsy, the gesture of the extended arms of the figures will form the arch itself, culminating as their hands touch in the center. The four figures, two on each side, will thus form two arches, one slightly higher than the other. The surface patterns of design are there for two purposes. The first is visual. The markings of lights and darks blended with the sparkle and shine of the metal surface are primarily there to excite the eye, to catch your attention. The second purpose is to indicate the internal character of the figures and thus community members. Each is different, each unique; each is made up of internal spice. How else to show this than with pattern, design, and rhythm? My hope is that this figurative cluster will serve as a symbol of the community's interactions with each other and with visitors-a symbol of greeting, accommodation, and the celebration of differences that I see in PEACE. What more fitting symbol could you have for a community?"

Contributions to this \$33,300 budget have been made by the Ohio Arts Council; The Cleveland Foundation; The Raymond John Wean Foundation; The Wolpert Fund; Coventry PEACE; Coventry PTA; Coventry Neighbors; Friends of the Cleveland Heights University Heights Public Library; individual donations; and a New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast at Tommy's restaurant on Coventry Road that raised \$2000.

The Coventry Arch was dedicated Wednesday, June 20, 2001, in the Coventry PEACE Park. Speakers at the ribbon cutting included the Mayor of Cleveland Heights and Artist Barry Gunderson. A celebration of music followed the dedication.

HEIGHTS YOUTH CENTER

The Heights Youth Center has always run an exciting and rewarding summer Camp for young people. If you have not arranged for your youngster's summer, please contact HYC immediately. Also, please keep in mind that the HYC has been running a day-care center at Hope Lutheran Church. There are a few

remaining spaces available for pre-school youngsters. For information or enrollment of either program, call 216-932-9785.

BEYOND THE WALL

A new store has opened in the location of the former City Books. Beyond the Wall offers posters and framing. They claim to have over 1000 posters on the premises. Next time you're strolling down the avenue, stop in and look around at our new neighbor's place.

ELECTION TIME IS COMING

Four seats for Cleveland Heights City Council are up for grabs in this fall's municipal election. As of this publication date, all four incumbents are seeking re-election. Bonnie Caplin, Ed Kelley, Jimmy Hicks and Nancy Dietrich hope to be re-elected. Judith Botwin has also filed papers with the Board of Election. Time remains and more candidates may decide to enter this contest. Keep your eyes and ears open. This should be an interesting race.