



Members make Harbor Country their stage

With the success of last year's festival and the generous hospitality of the sunset coast community, Columbia College is back to celebrate the summer with a little sand, a little sun and a large dose of artsy fun. The Michiana Festival of the Arts turned its spotlight on the performing arts/film arts on July 11. The month-long celebration has been developed as a collaborative effort of Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois; Dunes Summer Theatre and the Dunes Art Foundation, Michiana Shores, IN; The Acorn Theater, Three Oaks, MI; and The Vickers Theatre, Three Oaks, MI. The hope is that the festival will continue showcasing emerging talents, hosting conversations with celebrities, and evolving as it progresses.



Dani Lane, President of the Dunes Art Foundation, invites Harbor Country to enjoy the theatrical performances at the Dunes Summer Theater. In July, it's *Bat Boy: The Musical*.

The idea for the festival was stimulated by a recent interest in Northwest Indiana and Southwest Michigan by Columbia College in Chicago. The college brought an art exhibition to the area last summer, but this summer the program has clicked. Meeting throughout the winter in Printer's Row (Chicago) restaurants, Catherine Slade of Columbia's Theater Department, Kim Clark and David Fink of the Acorn Theater, and Dani Lane, president of the Dunes Art Foundation, hammered out the details and scheduling for the 2003 event.

"Columbia is grateful for the opportunity to bring our programs to this lakeshore community for a second year," says Dr. Warrick L. Carter, President of Columbia College. "We're inviting the entire community to come out and share in these festivities. Quite a few members of our 'Columbia community' as well as many Chicagoans are active in the arts, and spend their weekends in the different communities along the Indiana and Michigan coastal area. So there is a wonderful potential to build on our core constituency and form a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship."

"We are fortunate that we have many unique theater spaces in this area," says Dani Lane. The Dunes Summer Theater had humble beginnings as an outdoor theatre in 1939. Under a variety of leadership, the theater finally came under the non-profit umbrella of the Dunes Art Foundation in 1951. Now in its 52nd year, the theater supports a vibrant summer season including Side Show, Bat Boy, special performances as part of the Michiana Festival of the Arts, The Hobbit, Curse of the Werewolf, and La Cage Aux Folles.

The Acorn Theater, Generations Drive, Three Oaks, has revitalized a worn and weathered section of the historic Featherbone Factory. The circa 1850 factory forms the backdrop for the downtown area and plans call for some additional residential development, commercial space, and studio spaces for artists. Kim Clark has brought his Chicago theatrical experience and David Fink his business acumen to the small southwest Michigan village to develop a theater anchored with strong ties to the Chicago performing arts scene. A focal point of the theater is the massive pipe organ lovingly restored by Clark. The Acorn Theater will host 18 different performances this summer alone.

The Vickers Theatre has already set a higher standard for regional fine art film theaters. A product of the dreams and elbow grease of Jon and Jennifer Vickers, the former opera house then commercial movie house, has been given a new lease on life providing cultural diversity through foreign language and fine art film.

The Michiana Festival of the Arts will include a Performance Arts Festival at the Dunes Summer Theatre, Experimental Works at The Acorn Theater, and a Film Showcase at the Vickers Theatre. The program concludes on August 9 with the Art of the Home Tour featuring ten outstanding homes in the area.

Dunes Summer Theatre kicked-off the festival on July 11, with *Once on this Island*, an adaptation of an adaptation, based on the book

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BLUES FEST AND FIREWORKS- The annual Harbor Country Blues Fest drew hundreds to Watkins Park in Three Oaks for an evening of live entertainment including Blues Incorporated and Nora Jean Bruso (above). Hundreds of additional spectators pulled up a blanket for a 5th of July Fireworks spectacular. The Blues Fest is supported in part by the Chamber, Lodging Association, Three Oaks Business Association and the Village of Three Oaks.

Ship & Shore, PET golf outing still ahead

The **20th Annual Ship & Shore Festival** unleashes its brand of fun in the sun August 1-3 at New Buffalo's Lakefront Park. Sponsored by the New Buffalo Lions Club, Ship & Shore offers a weekend of activities near the beach including live entertainment, arts & crafts, food vendors, beer tent, lighted boat parade, and fireworks.

The festival is supported by the generosity of the community in purchasing \$20 raffle tickets. The \$2,500 grand prize with limited ticket sales adds up to great odds. New this year is a separate raffle to win a trip to the Grand Cayman

Islands. There will also be ongoing drawings to win Budweiser gear.

The annual **PET Golf Outing** is set for Wednesday, September 17. The event is organized by the Chamber PET (Partners in Education for Tomorrow) committee to raise money for scholarships.

The outing is your chance to play at the beautiful and challenging Lost Dunes Golf Club in Bridgman. It has been ranked as one of the top 50 private courses in the country. The fee is \$175 per person. Call Sue Harsch at the Chamber office by September 1 for details and registration: 269-469-5409.

Harbor Country® Connection

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"Beach towns" a hit!

In our April 2003 Internet Forum, we advised members to partner with Travel Michigan (www.michigan.org - Michigan's official site) or miss out. The following month we were pleased to find many Harbor Country businesses heeded the call and were listed on the site. Here's some early results for those that benefited. (The numbers expected to be higher for June-July)

1) Travel Michigan reports that the first few weeks of their Michigan.org - Beachtowns advertising campaign (via internet, radio, TV, and print) brought in over 50,000 direct inquiries to Michigan.org/beachtowns. Of that over 10,000 were direct click-thru's to partnered sites. The New Buffalo icon on the Beachtowns page represents Harbor

Country, and is a direct link to our site. The Harbor Country Lodging Association paid \$10,000 for it's share of the Beachtowns sponsorship.

2) Our top referring search engine, Google, brought in about 1,000 referrals in May. In contrast, Travel Michigan brought in more than triple that amount at 3,500.

3) Nearly 32% of the traffic coming from Travel Michigan goes directly to our Chamber members listed on our Hot Deals Page www.harborcountry.org/hotdeals

4) Chamber members with paid hyperlinks on our site have noted a marked increase in referrals from the Chamber. How much more traffic would you have if you got it directly

from Travel Michigan!

So if you're wondering why business seems down, participating in these programs could make a difference, and there's still time. Sign up for a listing/hyperlink with Travel Michigan for FREE at: <http://travel.michigan.org/about/mareq.asp>

Giving movie tickets at your B&B or offering half off on kid's menu at your restaurant? It qualifies as a Hot Deal. Submit your Hot Deals for FREE at www.harborcountry.org/hotdeal-posting (in-area members only). The Chamber and Lodging Association have made substantial investments for you, our members. All you have to do is take a little time to sign up and start reaping the benefits.

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My Love My Love or The Peasant Girl by Rosa Guy. Directed and choreographed by Danny Bernardo. The show included the Dunes Bay Bash post-show party featuring Clyde George's Steel Drum Band and food with an "island" theme. The Performing Arts aspect of the schedule takes place at Dunes Summer Theater, Shady Oak and Springdale, Michiana Shores, IN 219-879-7509

Saturday, July 12, featured *A Lake Shore Conversation* with nationally acclaimed film critic Roger Ebert, director and chairman of Columbia's Theater Department Sheldon

Patinkin and Chicago radio personality John Landecker.

On Sunday, July 13, the *Cupid Players Sketch Comedy Review* was the featured performance. It drew upon improvisation, music, script writing and other art forms to create a connection between the performers and audience. The players were directed by Brian Posen, a core faculty member of the Second City Training Center and the Columbia College Theater Department.

Find the time to enjoy the magic of live theater at one of the following performances.

Thursday, July 17, 9 p.m. EST-Bat

Boy: The Musical opens. A tongue-in-cheek musical based on a story in the Weekly World News ("Bat Child Found in Cave"). Directed by Kyle Hillman of Lookingglass Theater in Chicago. Hillman comes home to New Buffalo with this production. "Bat Boy continues on July 18, 19 and 20.

Saturday, July 19, 3 p.m. EST-A Lake Shore Conversation with Fr. Andrew Greeley and Chicago Sun Times feature writer Paul Galloway.

Experimental Works aspect of the schedule takes place at The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, MI 269-756-3879

Friday, July 18, 8 p.m. EST-Jails, Hospitals and Hip-Hop and (*non*)*narrative*, two experimental pieces of work produced by Columbia College Chicago's Glass Curtain Gallery, Hokin Center and the Theater Department. Directed by Jeff Award winner and Columbia College theater faculty member, David Cromer, this is a groundbreaking performance that springs from the mind of internationally acclaimed performance artist and hip-hop activist Danny Hoch.

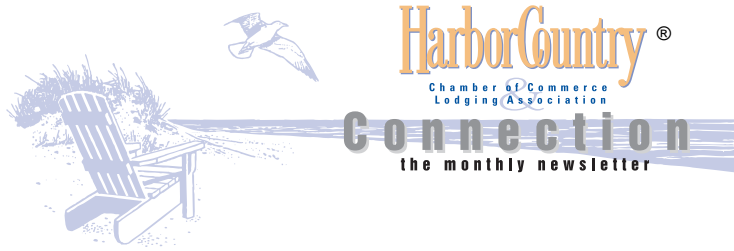
Saturday, July 19, 8 p.m. EST-notes on desire features songs, meditations, rants and dialogues directed by Valeria Vasilevski. Vocal performance is by Lynn Book and she is joined by composer/percussionist Kevin Norton.

Sunday, July 20, 1 p.m. EST-An Afternoon of Spoken Word. Directed by Columbia College faculty member Jeff Ginsberg, this performance features Amy Mitchell, Poet Laureate of Three Oaks along with Colleen O'Shea and Lisa Locasio, winners of Columbia College's Young Authors Award and Gigi Buffington reading M.F.K. Fisher's *I Was Really Very Hungry*.



Kim Clark demonstrates the workings of the reconditioned pipe organ at the Acorn Theater to former Three Oaks mayor, Bryan Volstorf, during an open house in June.

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**ON
STAGE**

**SUMMER
SCENE**

**ON THE
WATERFRONT**

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The Film Arts aspect of the schedule takes place at Vickers Theatre, 6 N. Elm, Three Oaks, MI 269-756-3522

Friday, August 8, 8 p.m. EST-Film Roadshow and post-show reception. (\$25 per person) This program features award-winning, experimental and documentary work by women filmmakers, including recent Columbia College graduates Samantha Sanders and Sue-Yeon Jung and faculty members Paula Froehle and Wen Hwa Ts'ao. Reception follows at 9:30 p.m. in the theatre lobby.

Saturday, August 9, 2 p.m. EST-Film and Video Roadshow and Conversation (\$20 per person) Films by men featuring the animated short *Hue* by Andrew Hodges, an invitee to the Emerging Filmmakers section of the Cannes Film Festival. Also featured will be film by alum Keith Ransfer and faculty member Dan Dinello. A special screening of *Paula*, the student film by George Tillman, Jr. and Bob Teitel, the creative team responsible for the hit films *Soul Food*, *Men of Honor* and *Barbershop*. The screening concludes with a question and answer session hosted by Bruce Sheridan, chair of the Columbia College Film and Video Department.



Vickers Theatre in Three Oaks.

Saturday, August 9, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST-The Art of Home Tour features the interior and landscape design, architecture and art of the Michiana area. It also concludes the Michiana Festival of the Arts for 2003.

This region known as Harbor Country (seven southwest Michigan communities) and more broadly as Michiana is shaping an artistic identity of its very own. It doesn't have to linger at the edges of a shadow cast by Saugatuck's Art Coast of Michigan, nor does it

have to buckle under the glamour and glitz of the Chicago art scene. It is the best of both worlds. The area is now home to many artists, writers, producers, and media personalities. It is the newfound show-place for emerging artists from the bohemian neighborhoods of Chicago and across the hinterland of the Midwest prairie. Formerly an ag-based culture, it is now plucking the pluckiest and harboring a creative commodity behind walls that once produced corsets or served as stables. It is a warm and welcoming community that is fast becoming the locus of an art renaissance. If you don't want to miss the next chapter in this continuing story, then you must plan to attend some facet of the Michiana Festival of the Arts.

This article by Michael Hojnacki originally appeared in the South County Gazette and has been modified for use in the Connection.

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