

Enlivening Westchester Communities With Art and Artists



(Clockwise from above) Mary Johnson's On Time Dancers aboard float at Governor George Pataki's inaugural celebration in Peekskill; Mark Shepard makes music for young mothers and their babies; (Back row, L - R) Mariah Fee, Valerie Swan, Kleinmann, (Front) Eileen Braun, Ellen Haven, Westchester County Cultural Affairs Director Judy Matson and Francesca Samsel; Grant recipient Bram Levin of Port Chester-based educational organization for immigrants and WAC Marketing and Media Relations Manager Deborah Scates.



sequent medical bills overwhelm their father, Eddie, played by Michael J. Muldoon of Yorktown, who brings his sons to live with their stern grandmother (Eileen McMahon). This Neil Simon play is art imitating life, with humor and pathos analogous to the human condition. The tidbits of comedy and laughter are wrung from the otherwise dreadfully morose and penurious nature of a bitter old woman.

Muldoon has worked with several area groups in Yorktown, Garrison and Peekskill, and his favorite roles include Horst in *Bent*, Michael in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Manolo in *The Odd Couple* and Billy Bibbit in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Siriant made his debut in the CDG production of *Lost in Yonkers*. He has played numerous roles with Yorktown Regional Theater, including Slightly in *Peter Pan*, Mike Teever in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and Young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. He also performed in YRT's *A Funny Thing ...* and *South Pacific*, and will appear in *Once Upon a Mattress* in March at Somers High School.

Eldridge also debuted with CDG in *Lost in Yonkers*. He has been seen on stage as Hans Brinker in *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates*, Nick in *A Thousand Clowns*, Little Jake in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Augustus Gloop in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and Joe Crowl in *Our Town*.

"It was a miracle," according to Peekskill folk-singer songwriter Mark Shepard, who, in a recent interview, described how he happened to receive an Arts Alive grant of \$500, fostered by Fordham University School of So-

cial Services in partnership with the White Plains YWCA and White Plains High School.

He attended a Westchester Arts Council grants workshop and met two professors from Fordham who wanted to engage a professional songwriter to coordinate a music education series for adolescent mothers and their children. Shepard's program of "Lullabies, Rap, Rock & Roll" provides music for the babies and their young mothers who attend high school classes across from the YWCA.

"Today I made up a song on the spot about peek-a-boo, and played peek-a-boo with my guitar," having been asked to compose something that would bring mothers and babies face to face. "Then I brought out percussion instruments — pot covers, a bunch of cans tied together like a drum set, film canisters filled with beans, and big locust seed pods to shake." He said the mothers started banging on them and the babies loved it. Going into his third meeting next week, he notes the young mothers are now unabashedly singing to their children.

Valerie Swan directs The City of Peekskill Youth Bureau and presented two wonderful ideas that received two Arts Alive grants — \$1200 and \$1000. One is called "First Friday Jazz," and brings a cultural and social evening to parents on the first Friday of six months throughout 1995. The Youth Bureau will hire students to provide free baby-sitting services for three of the six shows.

The second grant is for "The Carousel Project" and will enable Joseph Kleinmann to research and

specify a modern-day carousel for Peekskill, and coordinate an exhibit performance by Peekskill youth documenting carousels.

A Mohegan Lake resident, Kleinmann teaches at a South Bronx high school. A firm conservationist and environmentalist, he recycles everything, and his students are convinced he's saving the world.

The Carousel Project is for Peekskill children interested in exploring the history of the carousel, and may include a visit to an existing merry-go-round.

Flamboyant and elegant, carousel or fairground art has long been neglected. The study of carousels is filled with exciting possibilities for art, dominated by the spectacular galloping horses, ornamented with rows of glass jewels cut like diamonds, or carved with patriotic emblems.

Fairground Art, by Geof Weedon and Richard Ward, published by Abbeville Press, is a photographic history of the decorative and commercial art form of the past. Kleinmann is using this photographic essay as a resource for his Carousel Project.

Peekskill dance teacher Mary Johnson received an Arts Alive grant in the amount of \$750, in partnership with the Zeta Interested in People Foundation (an offshoot of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Foundation), to present a performance of 16 dancers, ages 8 to adult, all students

of Johnson's On Time Dance Studio.

The ZIP Foundation will present "A Black History Performance," featuring Johnson's On Time Dance Studio, Friday, February 24, at 8 p.m. in the auditorium of Peekskill High School (1072 Elm Street).

This past week Johnson introduced dance to Peekskill elementary students with a program of tap and African-American dance. She also volunteers time to teach tap dancing to inmates at the Taconic Correctional Facility who call themselves "The Taconic Seven." The dance therapy program has had such a positive effect on the lives of the prisoners that other facilities are now interested in duplicating the program.

Last summer the choreographer was selected as a resident artist for the Westchester Arts Council Residency Program from a cadre of 60 candidates. These artists provide workshops and demonstrations for schools, community centers and cultural organizations throughout the county.

Arts Alive grants are made possible with public funds from the Decentralization Program of the New York State Council on the Arts. If the arts are the bread of the soul, as Heston maintains, government funding has been the butter. The question appears to be with the government going on a low-cal diet, will it continue to supply this spread?

