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January 11-17, 2012



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- E-mail: letters@lansingcitypulse.com
- Snail mail: City Pulse, 1905 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48912
- Fax: (517) 371-5800

2.) Write a guest column:

Contact Berl Schwartz for more information:
 publisher@lansingcitypulse.com
 or (517) 999-5061

(Please include your name, address and telephone number so we can reach you. Keep letters to 250 words or fewer. City Pulse reserves the right to edit letters and columns.)

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF LANSING
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The City of Lansing
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 Is now accepting

PUBLIC COMMENTS

on the

PROPOSED ABATEMENT OF ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIALS
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 THE FORMER COMFORT STATION BUILDING
 located at 313 E. GRAND RIVER AVE., Lansing, Michigan

The City of Lansing Brownfield Redevelopment Authority is recommending that asbestos-containing materials be abated to support the rehabilitation of the Former Comfort Station building. Copies of a Community Involvement Plan, Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives, and other related documents will be available during regular business hours for review at:

Lansing Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
 401 South Washington Square, Suite 100
 Lansing, MI 48933

The administrative record, which contains the information upon which the final decision will be based, is available for review at the location listed above.

Comments on the Draft Action Memorandum may be submitted from January 11, 2012 to February 10, 2012. Comments may be submitted to:

Andrea Ragan; District Development Director
 Lansing Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
 401 S. Washington Sq, STE 100
 Lansing, MI 48933
 (517) 483-4041
 e-mail: aragan@lansingmi.gov

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News & Opinion 4
 Public Notices 4, 6
 Arts & Culture 8
 Cover Story 11
 Books 19
 Advice Goddess 20
 Classifieds 20
 Jonesin' Crossword 20
 Out on the Town 21
 Turn it Down 22
 Freewill Astrology 24
 Food 26

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Editor & Publisher
 Berl Schwartz



7 p.m. Wednesdays

This Week

Lansing City Council President Brian Jeffries

Author Jeffrey Zaslow

LEPPA President/CEO Scott Keith



COVER ART



YOUR FACE HERE by RACHEL HARPER
 PHOTOGRAPHY by MONIQUE GOCH OF MOXY IMAGERY

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

GREETINGS, EARTH-PENGUIN! MY STUDY OF YOUR NATION-STATE'S POLITICAL PROCESS CONTINUES-- AND I MUST CONFESS THAT I AM INCREASINGLY CONFUSED.

"EARTH-PENGUIN"??

CAN I POSSIBLY BE UNDERSTANDING THIS CORRECTLY--THAT THE FIRST STEP IN WINNOWING DOWN THE FIELD OF CANDIDATES CONSISTS OF A PECULIAR, UNDEMOCRATIC RITUAL IN A NOTABLY UNREPRESENTATIVE, SPARSELY-POPULATED RURAL STATE--

--AND THAT THE APPARENT WINNERS OF THIS PROCESS WERE-- IN ASCENDING ORDER--A CANDIDATE WHO DESPISES THE VERY IDEA OF THE GOVERNMENT HE SEEKS TO LEAD...A CANDIDATE WHO SEEMS PRIMARILY MOTIVATED BY HIS DESIRE TO LEGISLATE THE SPECIFICS OF ALLOWABLE MATING BEHAVIOR...

... AND THE PROBABLE EVENTUAL NOMINEE--AN INDIVIDUAL WITH NO ASCERTAINABLE CORE VALUES? THESE ARE THE MOST QUALIFIED CONTENDERS THE TRIBAL GROUPING COLLECTIVELY SELF-IDENTIFIED AS "REPUBLICANS" COULD FIND?

CERTAINLY I MUST BE MISSING SOMETHING.

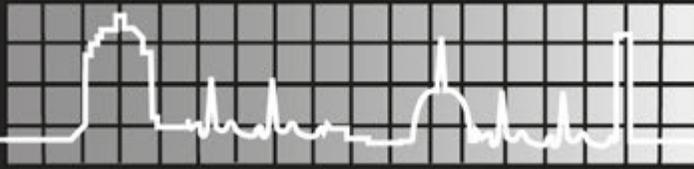
NO, THAT PRETTY MUCH SUMS IT UP.

OKAY, THEN--NEXT QUESTION, EXPLAIN TO ME, PLEASE, THE PURPOSE OF THE INSTITUTION KNOWN AS THE "ELECTORAL COLLEGE."

SORRY, BETTER MINDS THAN MINE HAVE TRIED AND FAILED TO ANSWER THAT.

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PULSE



news & opinion

What's next for Lansing Center?

On its 25th anniversary, questions about funding the Lansing Center. Mayor Bernero says the city's \$800,000 subsidy is 'unsustainable.'

Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero will help lead the invitation-only celebration Thursday night marking the 25th anniversary of the Lansing Center — while also contemplating a way of regionalizing the facility for budgetary reasons.

The city's roughly \$800,000 annual subsidy for operating the center is "unsustainable," Bernero said in an interview. "I don't want to shut it down, but we've got to come up with a solution."

Bernero wants to start looking at regionalizing funding for the Lansing Entertainment and Public Facilities Authority, which has managed the convention center since 1996. Bernero argues that the Lansing Center is a regional facility — so why should only city of Lansing taxpayers fund it? It's a similar argument the city used when it turned over control of Potter Park Zoo in 2006 to the county.

"We're subsidizing the Lansing Center to the tune of almost \$1 million a year. With the zoo, we realized we couldn't do that. We're looking for a similar solution for the convention center," Bernero said last week.

Bernero's argument comes as the administration begins preparing another fiscal year budget at an anticipated deficit of \$8 million to \$10 million.

LEPFA also manages the City Market and Cooley Law School Stadium. In this fiscal year, the city is subsidizing those at nearly \$40,000 and nearly \$305,000, respectively. The administration says those facilities may also be part of the discussion.

"We're asking: How can we get more bang for our buck? We have to because for the time being we are still talking about tax revenue being pretty inadequate," Bernero said. "It demands ingenuity."

Scott Keith, president and CEO of LEPFA, said, "The mayor and I do have discussions" that involve reconfiguring the way the Lansing Center is funded. "It's one of the things that is certainly a challenge: The Lansing Center is certainly a regional asset. We have a lot of impact on hotels throughout the region. The center as an asset to the region should be viewed that way," he said, comparing it to the Capital

Region International Airport and the Capital Area Transportation Authority.

But not everyone agrees it's a regional asset in the same vein as the airport, the bus system or Potter Park Zoo.

For one, Ingham County Commissioner Mark Grebner said Monday that the county was against the city's building the Lansing Center in 1987. Grebner has served as a Democratic commissioner since 1977, with a four-year break in the early 1980s. He's against any proposal that would involve the county paying for Lansing Center operations.



"You know what people should do with an unsustainable facility? They should close it — isn't that a shocking idea? It's almost as good as not having built it," he said.

"It was a mistake" to build the convention center in the first place, Grebner said. "It's been a sucking wound ever since they built it."

He also scoffs at the Potter Park Zoo comparison. "People like the zoo and would pay to subsidize it. They passed the zoo millage," he said, doubting the same would be true for a millage dedicated to the Lansing Center. It's uncertain whether regionalizing it requires a referendum.

Bernero also suggested getting the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitor's Bureau involved. The visitor's bureau is essentially funded from "bed tax" fees from hotels in Ingham County and marketing assessments from Delta, DeWitt and Windsor townships. These collections make up more than 94 percent of the bureau's annual revenue, which in 2010 was more than \$3.7 million, according to its 2010 annual report. The rest of the revenue is made up of membership

dues, advertising sales and special events.

Lee Hladki, president and CEO of the bureau, said the Lansing Center could be considered a regional asset — but it needs to grow first. On comparing the Lansing Center and the Potter Park Zoo as regional attractions, Hladki said: "I think it (the Lansing Center) has the potential. I don't think it's there yet. There's potential for it to become a regional asset."

He said making that happen would involve attracting larger events, bringing in more people to the greater Lansing area, not just downtown. However, Hladki added that he believes the Lansing Center is a "natural consideration" for regionalized funding. While the bureau does fund some of LEPFA's "regional marketing direction," it does not contribute to operations, Hladki said.

Meanwhile, the Lansing Center turns 25 years old this year. The convention center, which offers roughly 120,000 square feet of usable space, according to its website, evolved from the Civic Center, Keith said. The Civic Center was demolished in 1999.

Scott said when the Lansing Center opened in 1987, it employed 20 full-time workers and between 20 and 50 part-time workers, "depending on the season." LEPFA, which was established in 1996 and also manages the baseball stadium and City Market, has 48 full-time employees and close to 200 part-time workers at times, Keith said.

He added that, based on projections from the visitor's bureau, the Lansing Center had an overall \$60 million economic impact on the city last year, which includes restaurant and hotel spending.

Keith said the Lansing Center has hosted more than 10,000 events and attracted "well over nine million visitors, guests and attendees."

Bernero's assertion about regionalizing LEPFA may be the first time he's done so publicly.

Hladki said there has been "no official conversations with our board or directly with me" about reconfiguring funding for the Lansing Center. "I would assume if there is conversation about the regionalization of the Lansing Center, certainly we'd want to be part of the conversation."



Keith

Eyesore of the week



Address: 1478 W. Grand River Ave., Okemos

Owner: Crossroads Investment, Inc.

Taxpayer: Crossroads Investment, Inc.

Assessed: \$100,700

Owner Says: Could not be reached for comment

Architecture critic Amanda Harrell-Seyburn says: Blight isn't just an urban thing. The fact is, blight occurs at all levels of the built environment, but we are only used to seeing blight at the most urban and rural levels. But blight, like this collection of buildings on West Grand River Avenue, is there, even in places like Okemos. This type of blight is often symptomatic. As rural areas are enveloped in development, certain rural building types such as barns and out buildings located on the fringes become obsolete — caught in building limbo, out of place between the rural and the suburban. These buildings are a reminder that the built environment is in a constant state of flux.

It's hard to imagine a collection of derelict buildings so close to a major development like the Meridian Mall in Okemos, yet here they sit just a mile away. The trees are overgrown and wrapping dangerously around the abandoned buildings. Paint is chipping away and rust stains can clearly be seen from the road. A "for sale" sign advertising the land sits at the edge of the property, but I doubt any buyers will be interested in purchasing the site with these abandoned buildings staking the ground for their own.

— Nyssa Rabinowitz

"Eyesore of the Week" is our look at some of the seedier properties in Lansing. It rotates each week with Eye Candy of the Week. If you have a suggestion, please e-mail eye@lansingcitypulse.com or call Nyssa Rabinowitz at 999-5064.

— Andy Balaskovitz

No Hamlets here

A Lansing actor, his longtime partner and six others take arms against the Michigan law barring same-sex benefits

Sunday evening at 6, Gerardo Ascheri hustled a lingering piano student out of the living room of his Lansing home to answer a reporter's knock at the front door. Ascheri's partner of 18 years, Doak Bloss, threw some vegetables in a Ziploc bag and put dinner prep on hold.

Ascheri and Bloss lead full lives, and they've gotten busier since Friday, when they joined three other same-sex Michigan couples as plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit filed by the ACLU of Michigan against the state and Gov. Rick Snyder.

The suit seeks to overturn a law signed by Snyder on Dec. 22 barring public employers from providing health insurance and other benefits to same-sex domestic partners. (Snyder says it doesn't apply to state university employees and civil servants, but others disagree; the courts may have to resolve the dispute.)

Bloss, 57, who works for the Ingham County Health Department, estimates it will cost \$8,000 to \$10,000 to find an alternative health plan for Ascheri, a part-time piano instructor at MSU's Community Music School and private piano tutor.

"During the whole Christmas holiday, we

were down," Bloss said. "We didn't talk about it."

Bloss, a prolific actor and mainstay of the Lansing theater community, didn't feel like fretting in the wings.

"Since we got involved in the lawsuit, I feel a lot better, because I'm actually doing something, not just sitting here waiting for it to happen," he said.

They don't know for certain when Ascheri's coverage will lapse. "County attorneys are looking into it," Bloss said.

Snyder and Michigan lawmakers insist the Public Employee Domestic Partner Benefit Restriction Act is meant to cut costs and enforce the "will of the people," as House sponsor Dave Agema, R-Grandville, put it, referring to the approval of a constitutional amendment in 2004 that the courts say prohibits same-sex benefits for public employees.

The complaint in last week's lawsuit zeroes in on the law's curiously narrow calculus. Employers remain free to offer benefits to any other family members, the complaint points out, "including aunts, nieces, siblings, or cousins," but bars them from offering the same benefits to committed same-sex couples who have shared their lives, households, financial resources and power of attorney for decades, and, in many cases, raised children together.

"To say that one group cannot have this benefit, even though their employer wants to provide it for them, is really extreme," Bloss said.

The only conclusion to be drawn, alleges the complaint, is that the law is "the result ... of discriminatory animus toward gay and lesbian individuals and families."

Relying on this disparity, the suit alleges that the law denies same-sex partners equal protection of the laws provided under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

"It's very clear the legislature wanted to attack same-sex couples," Jay Kaplan, LGBT staff attorney at the Michigan ACLU, said. "Unlike heterosexual domestic partners, who have the option of getting married, same-sex partners can't get married. There's no way they can qualify for these benefits."

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Ascheri, 54, feels a touch of déjà vu these days. He grew up in the 1960s and early '70s under a series of repressive regimes in Argentina.

"You couldn't use the word 'divorce,'" he said. "It was a very Catholic country. You had to be careful if you were gay."

When he became a U.S. citizen in June 2010, he felt "safe for the first time in his life."

"I can live with the person I love, my neighbors know about it, I'm OK," he said. "My students and their parents know and they're OK. And then something like this comes on and it's disturbing. It's like shaking the floor you stand on."

Kaplan hopes a federal court will issue a preliminary injunction ordering the state to stop enforcing the law within two to six months, before the plaintiffs' current labor contracts and benefits run out, and then declare the law unconstitutional.

The complaint also lays out the law's potential consequences for all four Michigan couples named as plaintiffs.

Ascheri takes medicine for high blood pressure and cholesterol, but other plaintiffs are in more immediate trouble. JoLinda Jach of Kalamazoo works in the city's food service division. Barbara Ramber, her partner of 17 years, was hit in the eye with a baseball last year and needs daily medicine for the resulting glaucoma. Ramber lost her health coverage on Jan. 1. Kaplan said Kalamazoo is reconsidering the withdrawal because Jach submitted an application for benefits for Ramber in November, before the law took effect.

The other two couples named as plaintiffs will keep their domestic partner benefits only until their contracts as Ann Arbor public school teachers run out, unless the new law is overturned. Theresa Bassett, a public school teacher in Ann Arbor, has been in a committed relationship with Carol Kennedy for 25 years. Kennedy, 50, is self-employed and has a family history of breast cancer. Peter Ways is also a teacher in Ann Arbor. His partner, Joe Breakey, is self-employed.

The Michigan law gave Bloss a free set of method acting lessons for his job as Ingham County's health, equity and social justice coordinator. For six years, Bloss has worked to equalize health conditions in the commu-



Lawrence Cosentino/CityPulse

Doak Bloss (left) and his partner, Gerardo Ascheri, of Lansing are one of four couples suing the state for banning same-sex benefits to public employees.

nity, which vary distressingly by race, gender and class. Now Bloss knows, first hand, what it's like to be de-equalized.

"I'm a white male," he said with exaggerated air of entitlement. "I live in privilege all the time. I'm not accustomed to this."

Since the lawsuit was filed, Ascheri has gotten dozens of supportive e-mails from parents of his piano students.

"Everyone I've talked to, gay or straight, is upset once they know about it," he said.

Memories of a police-state childhood in Argentina make Ascheri wonder how far the right-wing anti-gay agenda will get in Michigan.

"Because of its brutal past, Argentina has become more tolerant and respectful of human rights," Ascheri said. "How far do you need to go to learn something? How far down do you have to go toward intolerance to realize it's not the right way to go?"

Ascheri and Bloss met in October 1993, during auditions for "Godspell" at Lansing Community College. Bloss was singing and Ascheri was the piano accompanist. "I knew pretty quickly this is the guy I wanted to be with for the rest of my life," Bloss said.

Despite the recent wave of anti-gay measures in Michigan, crowned by the state's constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, they hope to get married some day.

"We could get married in Argentina," Ascheri suggested with a thin smile. In July 2010, Argentina became the first Latin American nation to authorize same-sex marriage.

— Lawrence Cosentino

PUBLIC NOTICES

The Ingham County Housing Commission, on behalf of the Ingham County Land Bank is accepting proposals for the **Removal and Disposal of Hazardous Materials**, including but not limited to asbestos, mercury and various containerized material, at sites listed in the Bid Packet# NSP2 11-003-01, which can be obtained online at www.inghamlandbank.org or at the Ingham County Land Bank NSP2 office, located at 600 W. Maple Street, Lansing, Michigan 48906 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Bid Packets will be available after January 11, 2012. Proposals are due at the NSP2 office before 11:00 am on January 25, 2012. The Bid Opening will be January 25, 2012 at 11:01 am. The Ingham County Land Bank is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses are encouraged to apply. 

The Ingham County Housing Commission, on behalf of the Ingham County Land Bank is accepting proposals for the **Identification and Marking of Hazardous Materials**, including, but not limited to, asbestos, mercury and various containerized material, located at various sites listed in the **Bid Packet# NSP2 11-007**, which can be obtained at the Ingham County Land Bank NSP2 office located at 600 W. Maple Street, Lansing, Michigan 48906 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday or at the website: www.inghamlandbank.org, refer to "NSP2 11-007". Proposals will be due at the NSP2 office before 11:30 am on January 25, 2012. The Bid Opening will be January 25, 2012 at 11:31 am. The Ingham County Land Bank is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses are encouraged to apply. 

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Robinson-Wood 'deal' spurred Jeffries-Dunbar deal

At about hour three of the Lansing City Council's banging-head-against-the-wall deliberations over its 2012 president, community observer Mary Reynolds assumed the seat at the head of the table

where the eight Lansing City Councilmembers should have been and announced:

"They better hurry. I'm missing 'Hawaii Five-O.'"

Someone else grumbled about cats that needed feeding. Another

person was checking the score of the LSU/Alabama national championship football game.

Those watching the leadership sausage get made weren't alone. The City Council members, haggard from hours of gridlock and in-and-out group meetings, were getting antsy.

It's at about that time when ALynne Robinson, president for the last two years, of the "Kathie Dunbar" faction proposed a compromise to Councilwoman Carol Wood, the head of the "Carol Wood" faction, that would end a stalemate that had already resulted in a combined 13 tied votes and some bad headlines.

She proposed serving an unprecedented third-straight term as president in exchange for her support of Wood as vice president. The plan was that Robinson, Wood, Brian Jeffries, Derrick Quinney and Jody Washington would all vote in a five-person block for that leadership team.

Robinson had told me shortly before 11 p.m. that "yes" there was a deal and "yes" she was ready to vote.

The problem? The rest of the Dunbar alliance — Jessica Yorko and Tina Houghton — found the deal unacceptable. For one, they weren't involved in the crafting of the idea. Second, nobody had ever been president of the City Council for an unprecedented three years and, besides, the Dunbar Three believed it was Dunbar's time.

They also weren't enamored with the idea of conferring power on Wood, the headache of political ally Mayor Virg Bernero. They also didn't want Wood, the former mayoral candidate and full-time-but-part-time Councilwoman in charge of staffing decisions, fearing they would make the Council staff her staff.

Dunbar, seeing she had lost her fourth vote, reached out to Jeffries and Quinney to cut what she felt was the best deal she could make: agree to Jeffries for '12 in exchange for a promise that they would vote for her in '13. In the process, Dunbar needed to count on Jeffries not doing to her what former Council President Harold Leeman did to Jeffries in 2007: renege on his support of an alleged Council president agreement.

It's always a risk to promise a future vote, but after Monday night's Council meeting, Jeffries told me he would honor

the deal with Dunbar, and Quinney told me he was "sticking to his word."

Wood looked wide-eyed at Jeffries as Dunbar announced the deal at 11:30 p.m.

Robinson appeared blindsided. The walk to hand Jeffries the gavel was a slow one. Dunbar was forced to bury a lot of pride. She had served as the Council vice president — usually the steppingstone to being president — for the last two years and felt she had earned the presidency.

She just didn't have the five votes to get it this year. But Dunbar's former tight friendship with Quinney had burned down last year in a fight over a Pat Gillespie development project.

Neither Wood nor Councilwoman Jody Washington felt Dunbar's sometimes crude routines as a part-time comic, particularly her "blowjob" comment at a gay pride rally,

was unbecoming of a president. And Jeffries was tired of getting hosed by Bernero as a perceived minority member. He wanted the job.

The arrangement gives Jeffries control over the '12 Council agenda and an opportunity to work with Bernero closely in the run-up to both city officials' re-election in 2013. In exchange, Jeffries agreed to give Dunbar some say in committee assignments and control over the staffing.

Obviously, the road to compromise wasn't pretty, as is often the case. The drama dragged out over the weekend when the Dunbar faction's proposed caucus arrangement got the thumbs down from Wood & Friends.

But while the worst Council president fight in years reminded some observers of schoolyard children and all the rest, the encouraging sign was that an agreement was made.

Jeffries and Quinney have already met with Bernero, the city's mercurial mayor who allegedly is behind everything. Quinney and Washington are adamant about the Council not having "caucuses" and regular four-four split votes. They want to be independent votes on Council.

Dunbar and Jeffries exchanged a hug in the City Council chambers. After the final vote, they agreed to meet to hammer out committee assignments.

We could all wish upon a star that Bernero and Wood would meet and work together for a change, but that's probably asking a little too much.

Let's just be happy we got a City Council president.

(Kyle Melinn is the editor of the MIRS Newsletter. He can be reached at melinn@lansingcitypulse.com.)



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Arts & Culture

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Four in the spotlight

There's good rockin' tonight: 'Million Dollar Quartet' rattles the Wharton Center rafters

By ALLAN I. ROSS

True story: in early December 1956, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis were all summoned to the Sun Records recording studio in Memphis by Sun founder Sam Phillips, the man who

had “discovered” each of the artists. Someone had the good sense to hit “record,” and the music that materialized was dubbed “the Million Dollar Quartet” the next day in a local paper.

“Million Dollar Quartet” gives a realistic storyline to what was basically just an impromptu jam session of epic proportions. Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrox’s book deftly tucks each of the towering icons into traditional archetypes, giving the audience fresh notions of familiar artists.

In this version, Presley is the personality, Perkins is the crank, Cash is the soul and



Courtesy Photo

Clockwise from left, Jerry Lee Lewis (Martin Kaye), Carl Perkins (Lee Ferris), Johnny Cash (Derek Keeling) and Elvis Presley (Cody Slaughter) rock out in “Million Dollar Quartet.” For the Wharton Center run, Billy Woodward is playing the role of Presley.

Lewis is the id.

They play mix-and-match over nearly two dozen songs, and the audience does

what it can to keep its collective head from exploding from this much awesomeness.

Between songs, the four stars kibitz and

quarrel. Derek Keeling’s quiet, contemplative turn as Cash gives him a soulfulness not often depicted; Billy Woodward’s Elvis is a polite, God-fearing Southern boy who’s always a playful swivel hip away from trying to seduce you; and Martin Kaye’s Jerry

‘Million Dollar Quartet’

Wharton Center
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11 and Thursday, Jan. 12; 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 13; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14; 1:30 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15
\$30-\$67
(800) WHARTON
whartoncenter.com

Lee — the audience favorite on opening night — is the one whose zaniness always manages to stay just-this-side of annoying.

Several spiritual songs and a couple standards are included so you can see the DNA of a musical revolution.

The brilliance of “Million Dollar Quartet” is that it doesn’t have to meddle with any drawn-out backstories, crippling addictions or explosive scandals — just plenty of good music and flawless characterizations.

Then “Million Dollar Quartet” enters genius territory by daring to play the rock and roll supergroup version of “what if?” What if they four of them had taken their little jam session on the road?

Don’t leave your seat until Elvis has left the building, and you get to find out.

Six in the Starlight

Steppin’ In It members step into a side project

By RICH TUPICA

After years of playing roots rock each Monday at the Green Door, Steppin’ In It has become known for not only its Americana, but also top-notch playing skills.

The band members expertly throw down on some trombone, trumpet, Cajun accordion, dobro, slide guitar, Cajun fiddle and clawhammer banjo, along with other more traditional instruments.

A new side project, the Starlight Six, which features members of Steppin’ In It, focuses less on technical skills and more on stripped-down songwriting. Steppin’ In It members Dominic John Suchyta and Joshua Davis formed the band with fellow veteran Michigan-based musicians Seth Bernard, May Erlewine, Rachael Davis

and Mike Shimmin.

The Starlight Six releases its debut 7-inch single Friday at Ten Pound Fiddle.

“Steppin’ In It is a lot more genre-based and rooted in traditional American music,” Davis said. “The Starlight Six uses a lot of those traditional styles in some ways, but it’s a lot more about songs. It’s not necessarily about players.”

With a strong focus on melodies, Davis said the Starlight Six’s vocal harmonizing is a nod to ‘60s pop bands.

“I’ve always wanted to be in a band where there are tons of singers,” Davis said. “If you look at the band The Mamas and The Papas, all these groups where there’s awesome vocal arrangements, that’s what this band has, and it’s really powerful. Everyone’s singing. It’s just like this wall of vocal sound.”

Aside from Steppin’ In It and forming the Starlight Six, both Davis and Suchyta have been keeping busy with a handful of other musical endeavors.

When he’s not jamming with Jeff Daniels, Suchyta also records with Grammy-winning Jack White (of White Stripes fame) on a number of projects for Third Man Records, which is White’s label.

The two musicians are old friends who grew up together in Detroit. Suchyta has played alongside White on many albums,

including country legend Wanda Jackson’s latest album, a Secret Sisters single and a Hank Williams Sr. tribute album, which was spearheaded by Bob Dylan.

He also plays bass on an upcoming Third Man single by pop legend Tom Jones; it hits record stores March 5.

“I’ve known Jack for 25 years,” Suchyta said. “What’s funny to me is that things really haven’t changed that much. He had a reel-to-reel in his bedroom when we were teenagers. He used to call me over and I’d play on stuff and it’s kind of the exact same thing now.”

“He definitely has a vision,” he added. “It’s definitely nice to work with someone who knows exactly what they want. He also kind of feeds on spontaneity, I think he just loves working quickly and working spontaneously.”

Meanwhile, Davis recently completed a solo album, “Magnolia Belles.” He is also raising funds for travel expenses to get him to Palestine, where he plans to donate his time and musical skills to “Project Palestine,” a program that organizes five marathons to raise money for programs that support olive farmers and their fami-



Courtesy Photo

The Starlight Six features (top row from left) Dominic John Suchyta, Rachael Davis, Joshua Davis and (bottom row from left) May Erlewine, Seth Bernard and Mike Shimmin.

lies. Davis is raising funds via a Kickstarter donation campaign that will help pay for airfare, lodging and living expenses during the trip.

So what’s next for Starlight Six?

“We’re going to keep it as a special project,” Davis said. “We’ve all got our own stuff going on and those are our main focuses. But I think it’s going to stay this thing that’s brought out once in a while, shows with a lot of intention. I’ve always been in working bands and played all the time, so this is refreshing for me. Each show is really special.”



Photo by Luke Anthony Photography

Hamlet's ill-fated former classmates Guildenstern (Justin Brewer) and Rosencrantz (Joseph Dickson) get a chance to present their own side of the story in the Shakespearean spoof "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead." The Riverwalk Theatre comedy marks the directorial debut of Leo Poroshin.

From minor to major

Riverwalk's 'Rosencrantz' shakes up Shakespeare

By CHRISTOPHER HORB

In Shakespeare's "Hamlet," the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are just bit players, roaming the edge of the story, never really getting their moment in the spotlight.

That will no longer be the case at Riverwalk Theatre when Shakespeare's tragedy is turned upside down and inside out in Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead."

"(Stoppard) has turned a tragedy into a farcical piece," said Leo Poroshin, who is making his directorial debut.

"It's a comedy, but a very smart and clever comedy. Whether you're familiar with 'Hamlet' or not, you're still going to get something out of it."

The absurdist piece expands the roles of the once-minor characters as they offer up bizarre musings on questions including

their own existence while running into familiar figures from the original play.

Poroshin refers to Stoppard's show as an example of "metatheater," calling it "a play within a play within a play."

Riverwalk veterans Joseph Dickson and Justin Brewer star as the titular twosome.

Mark Polzin, Wayne Tagg, Donna Green, Chelsea Witgen, George Berghorn, Brian Kardell, Kris Vitols, Angela Wright, Kayla Green, Scott Crandall and Gary Mitchell round out the cast.

'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead'

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students for Friday,
Saturday and Sunday
shows; \$10 adults; \$12
seniors and students for
Thursday shows.
(517) 482-5700
www.riverwalktheatre.com

Williamston Theatre hosts a Hank Williams tribute

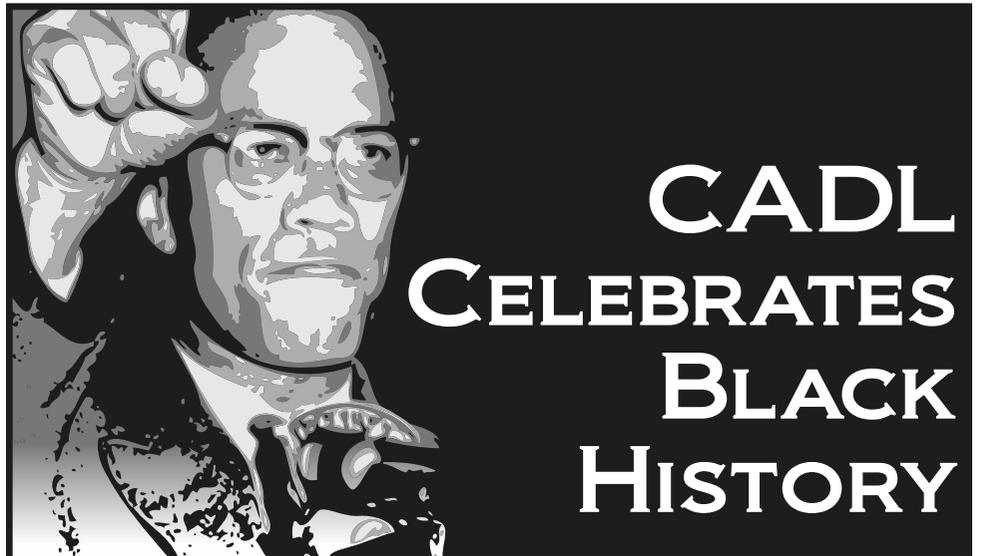
By CITY PULSE STAFF

Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins aren't the only legendary singers taking over local stages this week. At 8 p.m. Saturday, Williamston Theatre hosts "An Evening with Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys," starring Derek Smith as Williams.

In 2010, Smith won a City Pulse Pulsar Award for his portrayal of the late coun-

try star in Lansing Community College's production of "Lost Highway: The Hank Williams Story." He's joined by steel guitarist Drew Howard, bassist Joseph Bakaitis III, fiddler Nate Bliton, guitarist Christopher Hamilton and actor Michael Hays.

Tickets for this fundraiser performance are \$25. For more information, visit www.williamstontheatre.com, or call (517) 655-7469.



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Malcolm X & Hip Hop

Saturday, Jan. 14 • 11 am

Hip hop legend Professor Griff of Public Enemy will speak about the importance of lost chapters of Malcolm X to the hip hop community.

Shabazz Academy African Dancers & Drum Group

Saturday, Jan. 14 • 1:30 pm

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Black History Storytime

Saturday, Jan. 14 • 2 pm

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—Black History 101 Mobile Museum founder and curator Khalid el-Hakim

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THE SCREENING ROOM

by JAMES SANFORD

The typically superb Streep galvanizes 'The Iron Lady'

What do Karen Silkwood, Isak Dinesen, Lindy Chamberlain, Roberta Guaspari, Susan Orlean and Julia Child have in common? Each of these real-life figures has been portrayed on screen by Meryl Streep.

But why stop there? In director Phyllida Lloyd's "The Iron Lady," the two-time Oscar winner — and 16-time Oscar nominee — slips into the shoes of one of the most prominent leaders of the 20th century, playing former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

Streep's performance is, like most of her work, splendidly textured and multi-dimensional. When Streep is truly in her groove, she completely disappears into her character, and that's what happens here: She gives herself over to Thatcher's stern starchiness and conjures up that steely voice that, the movie tells us, was the result of intense vocal coaching.

'The Iron lady'

Opens Friday at Celebration! Cinema Lansing. (517) 393-7469, or www.celebrationcinema.com

The robust portrayal is more full-bodied than the film that surrounds it.

Perhaps Thatcher's curriculum vitae is too complex to be shoehorned into a 105-minute movie. While "The Iron Lady" provides a brisk and breezy overview of Thatcher's world, it suggests much more than it explains. Those who remember their 1980s British history may be able to fill in some of the blanks, but others may wish the sprawling story had been given more breathing room.

Abi Morgan's offbeat, sometimes darkly humorous screenplay opens in the recent past, with an octogenarian Thatcher now in retirement and struggling with dementia. Once one of the world's most recognizable women, she wanders in a daze through the aisles of a London convenience store, looking like just another pensioner shopping for milk and griping about rising prices.

At home, she seesaws between playing the graceful lioness in winter and having conversations with her jovial late husband, Dennis, played by a jovial Jim Broadbent.



Courtesy photo

Meryl Streep leads the way as the steely former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher in "The Iron Lady."

These frequent delusions allow Morgan to send Thatcher into flashback fantasies, in which we witness her stunning rise from grocer's daughter to member of Parliament to Conservative Party leader before taking up residence at Number 10 Downing Street in 1979 as Britain's first — and so far, only — female prime minister.

There's little time for details or analysis. Lip service is paid to the sometimes violent opposition to Thatcher's policies and the clouds of controversy that often surrounded her, but the film doesn't offer a clear picture of Thatcher's economic agenda, nor does it even touch on her close relationship with her contemporary, Ronald Reagan. The 1984 miners' strike, one of the key moments in Thatcher's career, is almost entirely glossed over; that's like doing a study of Reagan's presidency without mentioning his battles with the air traffic controllers.

Lloyd, who directed Streep in the enormously successful "Mamma Mia!," wisely keeps her star in the center ring as the circus of history parades around her. That's a shrewd move: "The Iron Lady" is not a sterling biography, but Streep is pure gold.

Soothing and bruising

LSO delivers sweet Saint-Saens, bipolar Beethoven

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

Bright-eyed in the morning, heavy-lidded in the afternoon, seeing double by midnight: the Lansing Symphony gave us an eventful day in the life at Saturday night's MasterWorks concert, and they did it in two hours.

If we had known we'd be banging our heads into the wall with Beethoven by night's end, we may not have embarked on the journey with such good cheer, but maestro Timothy Muffitt has a knack for avoiding cliché overtures and respectfully opening your ears. It was a pleasure to wake up

and smell "Rounds for String Orchestra," an intricate, caffeinated romp by American composer David Diamond. The

string section, once the symphony's chronic problem district, got a rare chance to shine, tripping nimbly through Diamond's polyphonic swirls, with a burst or two of peppery harmonies that seemed to bypass the auditory organs and go straight up the olfactory ones.

When morning calisthenics were over, an afternoon-ish reverie set in with the second cello concerto of French composer Camille Saint-Saens. The music is scaled modestly, with a modest level of tension to match, suggesting something tamer than a tempest in something larger than a teapot. (A cloudburst in a closet? A quarrel in a Mini Cooper?) Guest cellist Felix Wang, primarily a chamber musician, was the perfect man for this neither-larger-nor-smaller-than-life job. His virtuoso passages were workmanlike, but he really warmed up at the concerto's melodic center. On CD, romantic cello music can feel about as warm as a video of a roaring fireplace; Wang's rich tone took on a piercing, ember-like glow that can only be felt at a live performance. If a nurse had wheeled around the Wharton Center and taken everyone's blood pressure, the results would have enrolled us all into the world's most exclusive insurance plan.

And the coverage would have come in handy, because it was time for the evening's regularly scheduled medical emergency — Beethoven's bipolar "Eroica" Symphony.

The performance vividly evoked a watershed cultural moment when classical music began to crack into the shattered mirror of modernity. Muffitt and the crew played Beethoven's refined ditties with straight-faced delicacy, all curtsies and lace, refusing to telegraph the bearish growls, moody digressions and bellicose outbursts to come.

It wasn't a perfect performance. Several times, one section of the orchestra began to outrace another section, opening a hairline crack in the landscape, but Muffitt always managed to fuse it shut with his heat vision within a second or two.



Courtesy photo

LSO maestro Timothy Muffitt conducted a rousing version of Beethoven's "Eroica."

Time and again, the music opened up like bomb bay doors in the parquet floor of the Enlightenment, offering glimpses of 20th-century wonders and anti-wonders, from Jackson Pollock splattering paint on canvas to dictators consigning millions to flames. That's what went through my mind, anyway, every time Muffitt tore up a flowery melody by the roots and shook the dirt all over the auditorium, or pulled the orchestra's mouth open like a mad dentist, giving voice to dark new harmonies.

The first movement has a series of "stuck" chords that bang away, over and over, until the strings shrug them off with an obliviously delicate flourish. Both the hammering and the flourish got their due. How can such disturbing polarities, piled one on top of another for the better part of an hour, be reconciled? Only, perhaps, by taking joy in musical forms themselves, especially the finale's magisterial fugue, played exuberantly by Muffitt and the crew. The polyphonic wind-up had the nifty side effect of bringing the concert full circle, hooking up with Diamond's vibrant "Rounds" to roll the evening into one big affirmation of music-making.

Like the cello glow of Saint-Saens, the jerky Jekyll-and-Hyde drama of the "Eroica" hardly ever comes off on a recording, where everything is equalized by electronic distance. This music deserves to live. It isn't a sterile artifact. It still cuts to the bone. Are we gods or monsters, jewels of divine creation or bags of angry guts? To watch and hear 60-odd musicians throw themselves into this vortex, mistakes and all, was to experience a pageant and a play, a war and a symposium, a continuously breaking fever, in addition to a concert.

Despite the meticulous, passionate performance, the audience was left with a deep sense of mystery, and that's the surest sign that the musicians did their job.

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2012 City Pulse

Wedding **G**uide

Blazing their own trail

Ryan and Mandy Starski didn't listen to the naysayers — and they're glad

BY NYSSA RABINOWITZ

Everyone seems to have an opinion about the “proper” time to get married. Generally, a couple dates for a few years, gets engaged and gets married about a year later. For Mandy and Ryan Starski, that wasn't the case.

The couple met at Michigan State University and dated for three whole days before agreeing to get married, Mandy Starski said. Four months later, the couple held a small ceremony at a local church for family and close friends. The bride was 20 and the groom was 22. Both were still enrolled in college.

Almost two years later, they are still together and happily planning the rest of their lives. Ryan graduated from MSU last spring, and Mandy will complete her degree in May before the couple moves to Ryan's hometown of Goodrich, where he is campaigning to be a state representative.

“It made more sense to start off our real-world lives as a unit rather than separate,” Mandy Starski said about their decision to marry while still in school.

Ryan Starski said that starting their lives together as a couple would make it easier to decide what would come next, such as where they would live or what jobs they would have, because they had already made the decision to put the relationship first before anything else: “It's stronger for two trees to be knotted together from the bottom than it is for them to grow separately and independent and then, halfway up, decide to come together.”

Mandy Starski said the entire celebration cost less than \$1,000, dress included.

Her secret? eBay. She ordered her dress online for less than \$200.

“Money should never be an issue for getting married because if you're thinking that way then you're not really ready to get married,” Ryan Starski said.

“It should be about you and the other person, not about what's in your pockets,” Mandy Starski agreed.

Even though Mandy is a practicing Pagan, the couple held their ceremony in a local Catholic church to honor Ryan's faith. That meant taking marriage prep classes, but surprisingly, both the Starskis recommend similar classes to any couple looking to get married.

“In the classes, they stress that communication is key,” Ryan Starski said. “Most divorces happen because the parties won't talk to each other.”

Mandy Starski said the classes had a Catholic slant to them, but she never felt pressured by the church to give up her faith and convert. Instead, the classes taught them about effective conflict resolution, got them to talk about big issues (like children and money) and paired them with a married couple with similar beliefs to help coach them.

“The communication thing is vital,” Mandy Starski said. “(The class) wasn't about being married Catholics so much as it was about being married.”

Despite disapproval from some corners, the couple moved forward with their ceremony. Mandy Starski said the hardest part of getting married was the external forces — the friends who criticized them for moving too quickly, or an ex-boyfriend and a mother who jokingly asked if she was sure she wanted to go through with it.

“You brush it off as best you can and move on because it's your wedding,” Mandy Starski said. “They can have their own wedding.”

Her biggest tip for brides, especially on the big day, is simple — breathe.

“Don't stress about every tiny detail being perfect because you know its not going to be,” she said. “Something's going to go wrong no matter how well you plan it, but that's OK. It just makes your day that much more unique.”

She said “exploiting the talents of your friends” and doing things yourself are good ways to help keep costs low and involve more people in the event. She printed her own invitations and programs and made her own garter for her wedding. A friend served as the photography.

In lieu of a wedding cake, her grandmother made two pan cakes and put a wedding topper on one of them.

Following the wedding, the couple and some wedding attendees headed to Olive Garden for dinner, skipping the big reception where many brides shell out thousands of dollars on food, music and drinks.

“I would suggest, if you're worried about a budget, having a small wedding and then a bigger reception for your extended family and friends at a later date,” Ryan Starski said.

The couple stressed that spending thousands on a wedding was not worth it, saying the money could be better spent on the down payment on a house.

“Your wedding is important, yes, but it's



Courtesy Photo

Mandy and Ryan Starski's wedding cake was made by the bride's grandmother and topped with a miniature bride and groom. “Keeping it classy,” Mandy Starski joked.

one day,” Mandy Starski said. “It's the rest of what comes after that's the important part.”

The Starskis' strongest advice to couples is to be true to themselves and do what is best for them, no matter who disapproves.

“It wasn't just a feeling — for us it was about knowing,” Ryan Starski said of their decision to get married so quickly. “It's about being prepared to be with that person for the rest of your life.”

He said their ramped-up timeline just made their wedding unique.

“It's based on you and your partner,” Mandy Starski added. “Whatever they say, don't listen. It's about you two, and you have to make sure they realize that, too.”

“There are things that we've always wanted since we were little girls, and sometimes that doesn't happen and it's a better story because of it. It's not necessarily things that you do differently — it's just things that are different.”

From me to you

A little advice from one bride-to-be to another

BY NYSSA RABINOWITZ

Whether you got engaged last week, last month or last year, the next step for most couples can be a daunting task: planning your big day.

Growing up, I never realized how many decisions had to go into planning a wedding (as I am doing). From color combinations to cake cutting fees to gown fittings, there seems to be a never-ending list of things to do, people to see and ideas to consider. So where does a young, first-time bride start?

Let me share some tidbits of advice that I have picked up as I start planning my big day. I hope they will help you as you plan yours.

Utilize the Web: Ah, the beauty of the Internet! You can find everything from

bridal dresses to cake designs to the hippest new bridal hairstyles. Utilize that resource to help you envision your dream wedding. Print photos of everything so that you can talk to specific vendors about what you want to see — and hopefully find a way to work it into your budget.

Figure out the basics first and then plan around them: The biggest constraint on planning your perfect day is most likely money. Talk to your future spouse and family to see what you can realistically set for a wedding budget and then base everything else around that. Avoid the heartbreak of going into a bridal salon and trying on \$2,000 gowns, only to realize you only have \$1,000 to spend. Take a breath, step back and plan ahead. It will prevent a lot of headaches later.

Set your guest list: I've been doing a lot of research online and gathering tips to help me plan my wedding, and one thing comes up again and again — set your guest list early. The most expensive part of your wedding will most likely be the reception; the most expensive part

of that reception is feeding your guests. Have a tight budget? Whittle down that 500-person guest list and watch the prices become more doable. Your guest list determines many of the main aspects of your wedding, from food costs to the size of your ceremony and reception venue to the number of invitations, envelopes and stamps you have to buy. Honing in on the number of attendants will give you a good basis for budgeting and venue-picking, so set a number early and try to stick to it if you can.

Ask family and friends for help: Have an aunt who just got married? Sit down with her and talk about her planning process. What hidden costs should you watch out for? How affordable were those beautiful centerpieces adorning every table? Have a cousin in the photography business? Maybe they will shoot your ceremony at a reduced rate. Grandma loves to cook? Maybe she had her heart set on baking your wedding cake. Utilize the skills of your family and friends. It keeps your costs down and gets them in-

timately involved in the celebration.

You're not in this alone: While family and friends can be helpful, expert advice is always welcome — especially if a wedding planner isn't in your budget. There are a number of websites and online communities that offer advice and encouragement as you plan your big day. I joined TheKnot.com and instantly had access to thousands of photos from real, everyday-people weddings from all over the country to provide me with inspiration. The Knot also has tons of message boards to help with all your wedding concerns, from wedding etiquette to planning a budget wedding. A great resource for me has been the Lansing area message board, where I can get the low-down on local photographers, florists, caterers and more by talking to other brides-to-be and hearing about their experiences. Whatever you need, websites like this have the expert knowledge and community support to answer any questions you might have and make your planning that much easier.

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from page 13

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from page 14

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from page 15

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Becker's Bridal owner Shelley Becker Mueller is one of the women profiled in Jeffrey Zaslow's "The Magic Room: A Story About the Love We Wish for Our Daughters." The two are promoting "The Magic Room" together: They'll be signing books at the Okemos location of Schuler Books & Music at 2 p.m. Saturday.

'Every dress has a story'

Becker's Bridal in Fowler has been making wedding dreams come true for more than 75 years

By BILL CASTANIER

Open the door to Becker's Bridal, and you are overwhelmed by a sea of fluffy white wedding dresses. Hanging cloud-like from racks on three levels, the 2,500 dresses suggest a dream world full of divinity fudge.

All those dresses can be a bit unsettling — "a white blindness nightmare" is what Alyssa Becker, the daughter's owner, sometimes calls it — but "dream" is an apt description, since the dreams of tens of thousands of brides have started right here in this unimposing store in downtown Fowler.

Since 1934, more than 100,000 brides-to-be have found their way to this country town 25 miles northwest of Lansing in search of the perfect dress. Like her mother, Sharon, before her and her grandmother, Eva, before that, current dream maker Shelley Becker Mueller doesn't just see dresses. She sees a life unfolding.

"Every dress has a story," she said.

Becker's Bridal and eight of its customers, including Becker Mueller, have their stories told in "The Magic Room: A Story About the Love We Wish for Our Daughters," by Jeffrey Zaslow, Wall Street Journal columnist and best-selling author.

Zaslow, who was once the replacement for advice columnist Ann Landers, has perfected the art of telling other people's stories, most recently with "Gabby," the story of Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. Before that, he catapulted onto the best-sellers lists with "The Last Lecture," about the final days of Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch, and "The Girls from Ames: A Story of Women and a Forty-Year Friendship."

Zaslow and his wife, Detroit TV news anchor Sherry Margolis, have three daughters of their own. When the author was looking for a topic that spoke to love, he was considering a maternity ward for a backdrop, until his spouse suggested a bridal shop. While researching online, he came across an unusual mid-Michigan bridal shop, once a general store, nestled on the proverbial Main Street in a village of 1,100. He knew immediately he wanted to write about it.

It almost didn't happen. Initially, Becker Mueller said she thought he was trying to sell her something, and only after seven phone calls did she call him back.

Zaslow was sold on the story after making his first trip to Becker's, exactly 100 miles from his southeast Detroit home. He would make more than a dozen more trips to immerse himself in the stories of eight brides-to-be. At five of the weddings, he became a guest and an observer.

He watched firsthand the complex and emotional process of selecting a dress. Becker Mueller says brides-to-be typically look at 50 to 60 dresses and try on 20 before making a selection. Some get lucky and hit a home run with the first dress they try on. Then, when wearing it in the "Magic Room," a converted bank vault — during the Depression, Becker's bought a building that once housed a failed bank — with multiple mirrors to provide

a dramatic final look, the bride-to-be often takes her place on the marble platform, checks her dress out in the "infinity mirrors" and cries out, "Perfect!"

Becker Mueller says a lot has changed in the industry since she began working in the store 32 years ago, when she was 14.

As a small child she remembers seeing the stocked shelves in the original store that looked like something you'd see on "Little House on the Prairie." In the book, Becker Mueller talks about some of the tender moments she shared with her grandmother and the business acumen she learned from her mother and her father, Clark.

She said when she began working, Clark still sold some menswear and work boots, but after Becker Mueller took over the operation, "anything that wasn't white was gone."

Since 1934, the store had slowly transitioned from a general store — with the requisite pickle barrels and crackers — to apparel. In 1991, all street wear was moved across the street to an annex, the site of the original Becker's General Store. That site now sells prom, bridesmaid and mother of the bride dresses.

Becker Mueller said she always harbored thoughts of owning Becker's Bridal. "There was something in me that said, 'Someday.' I thought it was always a known for me."

She said years ago young women would come into the store with a photo torn out of a bride's magazine, while today's brides have the image of their "perfect dress" on a cell phone or a page they may have printed off the Internet. "It's a sign of the times," Becker Mueller said. "Hardly ever see a bride's magazine."

One thing that hasn't changed is that every wedding dress is a shade of white ivory, in tones of white or ecru.

During the selection process, brides-to-be often send photos and texts to their friends, asking what they think. "It's a much more complex process than it used to be with the bride's family and bridesmaids involved in the selection," Becker Mueller said.

Becker Mueller also said it has gotten harder to close the sale.

"Brides used to come to buy," she said. Now, brides-to-be shop at several stores, or may leave to buy what they like on the Internet.

Becker Mueller says most of her customers show up at Becker's because of its reputation.

"We're still getting a lot of 'my mom bought her dress here.' Their mom bought a dress, or grandmother and a lot of 'my sisters,' 'my friend' or cousin — that type of direct generational referral. Not a large percentage comes from the Internet, compared to word-of-mouth."

Although the majority of dresses are sold to brides from the Fowler, Westphalia and west Michigan areas, Becker Mueller said brides also make the trek from southeast Michigan and Chicago. A typical traveling distance is an hour and a half.

"We get a lot from the west side of the state, and Chicago is big," she said. "As they drive through the flat country they think they are lost. We'll get calls and we tell them, 'Keep driving.'"

Zaslow's book may just be the ultimate in word-of-mouth for Becker's Bridal. In it, he closely follows eight brides-to-be, each with her own distinct demographic, lifestyle and personal challenges. Erika, Danielle, Meredith, Megan, Julie, Ashley, Shelley and Jennifer each found their way to Becker's during the search for the perfect dress. Each woman has her own story: growing up in a tight-knit family; a bride-to-be raised by her grandmother; second marriages; older brides; brides overcoming amazing obstacles, etc. But they are all connected by "the dress" and the

On the cover: Frank Jr. and Eva Becker, the founders of what became Becker's Bridal and the grandparents of business owner Shelley Becker Mueller.

Becker's

from page 17

transformative power of the Magic Room.

The author also cleverly weaves in the changing cultural mores, the shifting relationships between mothers and daughters, and how the wedding and the institution of marriage have changed over the last seven decades.

"Every day, Shelley observes this changing dance between mothers and daughters," Zaslow writes. "She sees moms who can't let go of their own youth. 'People think we're sisters,' a daughter will say, but Shelley can tell if the young bride is happy about it. It can feel creepy."

Zaslow had a lot of choices of future brides to write about: Each Saturday about 55 wedding parties visit the store. He looked at 100 brides-to-be in winnowing down his selections of whom to profile.

"I didn't work too hard to find these brides," he said in a phone interview, "and Shelley was very open to telling her story. I've done five books in four years, and this was the easiest."

The author was able to get all the featured brides to talk openly about who they are and whom they expect to become, as well as talking about their fears as well as their excitement.

One bride has yet to have her first kiss (by choice), another has a young child, another is a widower and yet another has found love late in life. One bride's wedding plans are almost derailed by an auto accident. Becker Mueller's own marriage ends in divorce.

Where the author has really excelled is in the telling of the story of Becker's and, in particular, Shelley's reign. As in most family-owned businesses there were moments of duress, especially as Becker Mueller began to exert her influence, asking that she be allowed to take over the operation. Becker Mueller may face this difficult transition herself as her 25 year-old daughter Alyssa has begun working full-time in the store.

In the book, Alyssa Becker describes herself as a hopeless romantic — but she has also come to grips with the statistical fact that 50 percent of brides to whom Becker

Jeffrey Zaslow and Shelley Becker Mueller

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Mueller sells dresses will probably end up divorced.

Becker Mueller knows that someday she will turn over her operation to the next generation, but she seems to be comfortable with that change.

"Each of us have taken it to a new level and have responded to changing times," she said.

Dresses may be made in China today, but one thing that hasn't changed is they are still hand-ironed in Becker's back room before being turned over to the bride.

Zaslow said the stories in the book were especially moving to him since he has three daughters. When they are ready to buy a dress, the odds are pretty good he'll drive them to Becker's.

Shopping for the dress is almost as important as the wedding ceremony, Becker Mueller said, stressing the word "almost."

One vanquished custom of the past: a bride wearing her mother's wedding dress. "It just doesn't happen," Becker Mueller said.

She says every bride wants her own dress. More practically, Becker Mueller points out, today's brides are generally bigger, with waists that are maybe eight inches wider than their mothers. Becker Mueller also said that, contrary to popular belief, celebrity weddings only influence the selection to a minor degree.

"Brides like to look at similar dresses, but ultimately they want it to be their own," she said. "Who wants to exactly copy Kate Middleton's dress?" (Much less the



Courtesy Photo

Years before he took over the family business that would eventually become Becker's Bridal, a very young Clark Becker, seated on the left, participated in a family wedding ceremony.

gorgeous gown worn by disturbed bride Kirsten Dunst in "Melancholia.")

Becker Mueller said in the last 10 to 12 years the most enduring trend for dresses has been strapless. "It's had the longest run of any style," she said.

Zaslow has said in media interviews that he doesn't care for the strapless look: That's why dads don't get to make decisions.

Generational differences are important in the wedding industry. Zaslow cites the statistic that 16 percent of all weddings are now what are called "destination weddings," held outdoors in lieu of traditional church ceremonies. So Becker's carries a line of wedding dresses that were specifically made to wear on the beach. They are sleeker, lighter and more accommodating to the sandals look.

It seems fewer dresses will end up sealed in plastic or stored in attics. Statistics show that as many as 30 percent of brides might partake in a "trash the dress" ceremony, which could involve a photo session of the bride swimming in the surf or running through the woods in her dress. A growing number of brides sell their wedding dresses on the used market.

Becker Mueller said much of what is driving the new culture of bridal dress hysteria is reality-television programs like "Bridezilla" and "Say Yes to the Dress."

"Now, when brides find 'the dress,' we hear (their bridal party) saying, 'Are you saying yes to the dress?'" she said.

Not every story that begins at Becker's has a happy ending, however. Some of those who buy dresses never make it to the altar and never come back for the gowns.

They are "buried in a cemetery," Becker Mueller says, in the basement of the annex store across the street, until they are donated to theater groups. Becker Mueller knows she could sell the dresses on the secondary market, but says she would never do that.

"It would be a bad vibe," she said.

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BECKER'S DEPT. STORE
Fowler, Michigan

Courtesy Photo

When the Beckers' family business opened its doors in 1934, it was a general store. Over time, Becker's shifted its focus to wedding gowns and accessories.

Honoring X

The late activist's life is remembered in a series of events at Capital Area District Library

By **BILL CASTANIER**

When Lansing resident Doug Warren was making the case in front of Lansing City Council last year for renaming Main Street in honor of Malcolm X, he said that if there was a Mount Rushmore for African-Americans, Malcolm X would be on it, along with Martin Luther King.

"You can argue about the other two (figures), but there is no question Malcolm X would be up there," he said.

Warren, along with several other Lansing activists, had been trying for some time to find a way to honor Lansing as the childhood home of Malcolm X. Street signs designating Malcolm X Street went up last year without any fanfare.

A native of Omaha, Malcolm Little (later Malcolm X) moved to the Lansing area with his family in the late 1920s, and moved around Lansing and Mason throughout the 1930s.

Malcolm's father, Fred Little, was a follower of Marcus Garvey, the Black Nationalist, and when Little died in 1931 under the wheels of a street car there were claims his death was not accidental; fingers were pointed in the direction of the Black Legion, a white supremacist group. Before that, the Little's home (on what is now Martin Luther King Boulevard) had been burned down in what was believed to be a fire set by the same group. The location is identified by a State of Michigan Historical Marker.

Warren, Dennis Burnside, Ammahad Shekarakki and Apaxumaiz have created the Malcolm X Lansing Foundation (www.malcolmxlansing.org) to promote the ideals of Malcolm X.

The group hosts a monthly book club. David J. Garrow's "Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Leadership Conference" will be discussed at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at the downtown



Courtesy Photo

Then known as Malcolm Little, Malcolm X spent his childhood in the Lansing/Mason area in the 1920s and 1930s.

Capital Area District Library.

Burnside said one of the primary goals of the foundation is to increase literacy and respect for the value of self-education. He said it is important to recognize Malcolm X since he manifested the constitutional ideals this country was founded on.

"He advocated for those ideals for all people, especially freedom," Burnside said. He believes the resistance in recognizing and honoring Malcolm X can be attributed to one thing: racism.

Prior to the street renaming, the only other physical recognition of Malcolm X's time in Lansing was the El-Hajj Malik-Shabazz Academy, a private charter school academy that had been named in his honor.

Eugene Cain, principal of the academy, said that each year the school (which enrolls 375 students, pre-school through sixth grade) holds a special week to honor Malcolm X around the time of his birthday (May 19). However, that had been

about the extent of any recognition for the international civil rights leader.

That changes this coming weekend when the Capital Area District Library downtown branch hosts an exhibit and several events honoring Malcolm X.

From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, the Black History 101 Mobile Museum brings to the downtown library an exhibit called "Necessary!" that includes more than 150 historical artifacts from the life and work of Malcolm X.

Khalid el-Hakim, the museum's founder and curator, said the exhibit traces the life of Malcolm X through original flyers, photos, magazine covers and memorabilia. The exhibit also features some items from the Jim Crow era, as well as some of the more disturbing manifestations of racism, such as the Marion, Ind., lynching of three black men in 1930.

"I have put together a timeline exhibit that shows what created the Nation of Islam and what inspired Malcolm X," El-Hakim said.

Originally from Detroit, El-Hakim said at one time he considered opening a traditional museum, but opted for a traveling show instead: "Museums are closing and attendance is down, so I decided to take my museum to the people."

The curator said that his introduction to black consciousness came through hip-hop music and sampling, which used the actual speeches of individuals like Malcolm X. He said "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" was the first book he read cover to cover by choice and not as a requirement for a class.

After leaving the Lansing area for Boston in 1941, Malcolm X would be caught up in a life of crime: drug dealing, gambling, pimping, robbery, etc. In prison, he converted to the Nation of Islam, a religious movement founded in Detroit.

"He is the ultimate story of American redemption, and despite all obstacles he overcame them," Warren said.

"As a young man he finds something about himself that changes his relationship with the rest of his life. He was regarded throughout the world as a man of substance, and Malcolm X tried to unshackle the minds and spirits of African-

Americans."

Malcolm X returned to East Lansing in 1963 for a speech at Michigan State University.

Several years ago Cain said he made a presentation to a "city monument committee" about erecting a statue in honor of Malcolm X, but it never got off the ground.

He believes that this year, around Malcolm X's birthday, the city should have a formal ceremony to recognize the street renaming.

In addition to the traveling museum, at 11 a.m. Saturday, a program called "Malcolm X and Hip Hop" will be presented by Professor Griff of Public Enemy. Other Saturday events include a performance by Shabazz Academy African Dancers at 1 p.m. and a Black History Storytime for children at 2 p.m.

The downtown library is at 401 S. Capitol Ave. For more information, visit www.cadl.org, or call (517) 367-6300.

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Q: I just got dumped by a guy who swore he was ready to settle down (after years of serial monogamy). His relationship history reminded me of the man you wrote about recently who had been married and divorced five times and was on relationship number six. Woman number six wrote you, "He's in his 50s; his marriage-hopping has to stop." Obviously, she's fooling herself, but what's his deal? What's anyone's who gets married over and over?

—Morbidly Curious

A: Some model their marriage on their parents' and some on their parents' car lease. (Sadly, hanging a new-car smell pine tree around the wife's neck doesn't seem to stem the flow of trade-ins.)

Everybody wants to believe their love will last, but when a guy's marrying Wife Number Five, some honesty in vow-making seems called for — for example, "Till mild boredom do us part." And in keeping with the trend of using movie lines in the ceremony, the groom can turn to the minister at the end and state the Schwarzenegger-accented obvious: "I'll be back."

The notion that the only valid relationship is one that ends with the partners in twin chairs on the veranda of Senior Acres, rocking off into the sunset together, keeps some of the wrong people chasing it. The truth is, some people just aren't wired for forever. That's okay — providing they're honest with themselves and their partners that for them, lasting relationships last only so long ("when two become as one" and then one starts getting all fidgety for the next one).

Even for those who are determined to make forever work, there's a problem, and it's called "hedonic adaptation" — getting acclimated to positive additions to our lives and no longer getting the lift out of them that we did at first. This happens with boob jobs, lottery wins — and marriage, explained

happiness researcher Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky on my weekly radio show. Lyubomirsky writes in her terrific book, "The How of Happiness," of a 15-year study in Germany showing that couples got a big boost in happiness when they got married — a boost that, on average, lasted two years.

According to Lyubomirsky, research shows that the most powerful ways to combat hedonic adaptation are adding variety and expressing gratitude. You add variety by shaking up your date night routine, going on vacation (even a quick one), and varying your daily life in small, fun ways. You can express gratitude by buying or making some little thing to say how much you appreciate your partner or by verbally admiring his or her hotitude and wonderful qualities. Lyubomirsky explained, "Gratitude is almost *by definition* an inhibitor of adaptation," because adaptation means we're taking something for granted. "Being grateful for something is appreciating it, savoring it — i.e., NOT taking it for granted."

Predicting whether a particular guy is a romance junkie can be tough. (It's not like a meth habit. There are no scabs.) A girlfriend-hopper might swear he's ready to settle down and believe it — until the moment he realizes he's not. You'll want to believe him; we all tend to lead with our ego: "I'll be the one he's different for." This is risky if your ovaries are on the clock. If, however, you can just live in the moment and hope for lots more moments...well, there's always that chance you'll end up being his eighth and only.

Q: The man I've been in a long-term on-and-off relationship with has started seeing someone else. He's cagey about the details, but what's really bothering me is that she has no clue that I exist. I'm tempted to write her an anonymous note, telling her that I was here first, have been here a long time, and am continuing to have sex with her Lothario.

—Pen Poised

A: Like many people around the holidays, your thoughts turn to the have-nots: "Hi, I believe you have not heard that I'm

having sex with your new boyfriend." The reality is, you're looking to escape feeling vulnerable by lashing out. (When life gives you lemons...break some other woman's windows with them.) The "anonymous" note is really about telling this woman, "Hey! I'm here! I'm lovable! I'm important!" Well, there's a better way to say those things, and it won't even take a stamp. Just call this man and say goodbye. This means finally admitting that the parameters of this relationship aren't working for you. Come on...you're well-aware you aren't his one and only, yet there you are complaining, "Waiter, waiter! There's a harem in my soup!" What is there to say to you but "Yes, madam, of course there is. It's the Lothario special. It comes with other women on the side."

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To read more of Amy's advice and guidance, please visit our Web site at www.lansingcitypulse.com

Serving Greater Lansing's LGBT Community

Lansing Association for Human Rights

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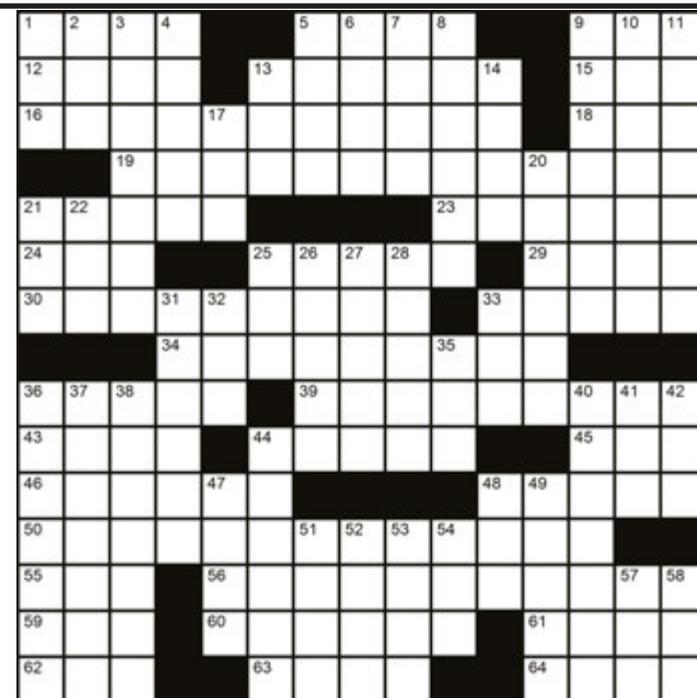
Jonesin' Crossword

By Matt Jones

"Cheatin' with the Codes"—old school Nintendo knowledge.
Matt Jones

Across

- 1 Designer Oldham
5 Victoria's Secret sells them
9 ___-cone (carnival purchase)
12 Strained from work
13 Dusting items
15 Good or bad figure, in TV dramas
16 Direction for "my beautiful balloon," in song
18 Come up short
19 What "we're" doing, in a Fall Out Boy song lyric
21 Part of a fireman's outfit
23 Babies do it
24 Movie where Will Ferrell played Buddy
25 Fall guy
29 In the ballpark
30 With 39-across, marching chant
33 Labor mate, on an invoice
34 Like objective data
36 Prefix before gender or mission
39 See 30-across
43 "Role Models" actor Paul
44 Complaints
45 Not just my
46 Like some playgrounds
48 "Yabba ___ doo!"
50 Degree that focuses on human behavior
55 "And so on"
56 Panicky yell to a getaway driver
59 Felix or Fritz



- 60 Forehead-smacking phrase
61 Bupkis
62 Sit-up focus
63 1970s song with a letter-forming dance
64 Abbr. in a recipe

Down

- 1 Coll. in Houston
2 Alley-___
3 Towed away, colloquially
4 Train station
5 Skyscraper, for example: abbr.
6 Word before hog or rage
7 "...and ___" (Lawrence Welk count-off)
8 BET Hip Hop Awards "Rookie of the Year" winner ___ Lo

- 9 Two-wheeler
10 "OK, I'm waiting..."
11 Can ___
13 Anderson Cooper's channel
14 Word sung on 1/1
17 "___ for Alibi" (first in the Kinsey Millhone book series)
20 North America's highest peak
21 ___ Paese (cheese)
22 Soccer match shout
25 Spot on a domino
26 Like contortionists
27 "A magic number," according to "Schoolhouse Rock"
28 Rigid
31 Muscle-to-bone connector
32 Apt. ad stat
33 Golf average

- 35 Dollar divs.
36 Robert De Niro's film studio
37 Keep the drink payment until the end
38 Detox denizens
40 Take a taxi
41 Central airport series)
42 "La la" lead-in
44 Like weak soup
47 ___ buco
48 "Simpsons" word added to the OED
49 Bond, e.g.
51 Chilled out
52 ___-Z (old Chevy)
53 ___ vez (again, in Spanish)
54 Public Image ___ (post-Sex Pistols band)
57 30-second spots
58 Grammy category

City Pulse Classifieds

Interested in placing a classified ad in City Pulse?
Call (517) 999-5066 or email adcopy@lansingcitypulse.com

Warehouse Part Time Clean driving record. 8.50hr, entry level position. Send resume to P.O. Box 21218, Lansing, MI 48909.

TAXI DRIVERS WANTED Cash paid daily. Apply at 4773 W. Grand River Ave., Lansing. Bring current driving record. Must be 23 years or older. Two years taxi driving experience required. Spartan Yellow Cab.

Creative General Manager Lansing's Top Gay Nightclub is seeking a full-time creative general manager. Must possess a high-school diploma and have bar management experience. Must be highly organized and have great people skills. Send cover letter and resumes to clubspir@aol.com. Please no calls.

follow us on TWITTER!

@CityPulse

OUT on the TOWN

Wednesday, January 11

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Photography Open House. Series of basic photography. 6:30-9 p.m. FREE. First Presbyterian Church, 510 W. Ottawa St., Lansing. (517) 482-0668.
Meditation. For beginners and experienced. 7-9 p.m. FREE. Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, 3015 S. Washington Square, Lansing. (517) 351-5866.
Community Yoga. Power yoga. 6:30-8 p.m. FREE. Just B Yoga, 106 Island Ave., Lansing. (517) 488-5260.
Diversity or Heresy. Discuss the heresy & diversity. 6-7 p.m. FREE. Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, 125 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Lansing. (517) 484-7434.
Small Business. Help to start a successful business. 6-7 p.m. FREE. MSUFCU, 3777 West Road, East Lansing. (517) 664-7725.

EVENTS

Game On. Play a variety of games. 3-5 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 x3. www.dtdl.org.
Practice Your English. Practice speaking and listening to English. 7-8 p.m. FREE. East Lansing Public Library, 950 Abbot Road, East Lansing. (517) 351-2420.
Overeaters Anonymous. 7 p.m. FREE. Grand Ledge Baptist Church, 1120 W. Willow Hwy., Grand Ledge. (517) 256-6954.
CAMW Lansing Center Orientation. Learn how to benefit your career development and search. 2-3:30 p.m. FREE. Capital Area Michigan Works, 2110 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 492-5500.

MUSIC

Faculty Recital. Walter Verdehr, violin, & Deborah Moriarty, piano. 7:30 p.m. \$10, \$8 seniors, FREE students. MSU Music Building Auditorium, MSU Campus,

See Out on the Town, Page 23

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Listings deadline is 5 p.m. the THURSDAY BEFORE publication. Paid classes will be listed in print at the cost of one enrollment (maximum \$20). Please submit them to the events calendar at www.lansingcitypulse.com. If you need help, please call Jessica at (517) 999-5069. E-mail information to calendar@lansingcitypulse.com.

Jan. 11



Courtesy Photo

Faculty gets down to music

No wonder MSU violin master Walter Verdehr has long been fascinated by nearly forgotten predecessor, Ferdinand David. With his best friend, composer Felix Mendelssohn, David revived neglected the music of baroque composers like Bach and Handel, and was a champion of his own day's "new music" (Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms and the like). David composed, taught, published, advocated broader musical taste and did more than most mortals could do in several lifetimes — much like Verdehr does in our own time. Wednesday, Verdehr will be joined by piano Professor Deborah Moriarty for a program of music written or reworked by David, will even play one of David's own violins. Neither of these guys messes around. 7:30 p.m. Regular ticket prices \$10 for adults, \$8 for senior citizens, FREE students. Music Building Auditorium, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 353-5340. www.music.msu.edu.

Empowering the artist

On Thursday, Greater Lansing artists interested in becoming a potential applicant of the Arts Council of Greater Lansing's Individual Artist Grant Program are welcome to attend an informational workshop at the Arts Council. Participants will learn more about the guidelines and application grants of \$1,000 that are available. Although all projects must have a strong local public component, applicants can be both emerging and established — working on projects in the literary, performing or visual arts. The application can be downloaded from the grants page at www.lansingarts.org. Must RSVP by contacting the program manager Katie Robiadek, at Katie@lansingarts.org. 4-5 p.m. FREE. Arts Council of Greater Lansing, 1208 Turner St., Lansing. (517) 372-4636.

Jan. 16

MLK Luncheon with Judge Joe Brown

Michigan State University President Lou Anna K. Simon emcees the 27th annual MLK Luncheon at the Lansing Center. Hosted by the Greater Lansing Area Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, the luncheon focuses on the theme "I Am a Dream Keeper." Judge Joe Brown, from the eponymously titled daily, half-hour TV courtroom show, is the program's keynote speaker. Brown was the first African-American prosecutor for the city of Memphis and then served as the director of the Memphis Public Defender's Office. In 1990 he was elected judge of Division 9 of the State Criminal Courts for Shelby County. 11 a.m. \$30 for individuals, \$225 for a table of eight. Tickets can be purchased at the East Lansing Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbot Road, and at Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave., or over the phone. For more information, call (517) 483-7637.



Courtesy Photo

Jan. 17

Cooley speaks on conviction

Michelle Alexander, a civil rights attorney, Ohio State University law professor and author of "The New Jim Crow," speaks at Cooley Law School's 2012 Martin Luther King Day event. Professor Alexander's book concentrates on the conviction rate and the overwhelming number of incarcerated African-Americans. While speaking at Cooley, she will share how criminal conviction can lead to difficulty when individuals seek employment and how this hurts communities, families and taxpayers. 5:30-8 p.m. FREE. Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Cooley Temple Conference Center 6th Floor, 217 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing. www.cooley.edu/events/mlk.html.



Courtesy Photo

TURN IT DOWN

A SURVEY OF LANSING'S MUSICAL LANDSCAPE

BY RICH TUPICA

CHRIS BATHGATE RETURNS TO LANSING



Courtesy Photo

Chris Bathgate

Chris Bathgate's melancholy indie-folk has earned him a loyal following in the Midwest and beyond. On Thursday, he plays Mac's Bar; openers include Small Houses, Pioneer and Kevin Killen. His acclaimed new album, "Salt Year," has been compared to songwriters Damien Jurado and Will Oldham. Bathgate is originally from rural Iowa, but now calls Pinckney home.

He's been garnering attention since 2005 following the release of his first album, "Silence is for Suckers," and a slew of self-produced EPs and singles. For more information on Bathgate's signature country-tinged gothic folk style, visit www.chrisbathgate.org.

Thursday, Jan. 12 @ Mac's Bar, 2700 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, 18 and over. \$7, 9 p.m.

FRIDAY THE 13TH HEADBANGER'S BALL



Image by David Peterman

Caricature of Satyrasis' David Peterman

Friday night at Mac's is all about homegrown head-bangin' bands. The night, which is headlined by Satyrasis, features the heavy sounds of Halstatt, Genocya and Dagon. Satyrasis was formed in 2001 by Dave Peterman and Matt Trzcinski and has gradually become a staple in the mid-Michigan metal scene. Drawing influence from early Metallica, Carnivore and Death, the band developed a unique style of old-school death metal and thrash. Satyrasis released its debut, "Creation of Failure," in 2008 and then embarked on a month-long national tour in May 2009. Since then the band has played a limited amount of shows, so local headbangers may not want to miss this rare performance.

Friday, Jan. 13 @ Mac's Bar, 2700 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, 18 and over. \$5, 9 p.m.

EXPLICIT BOMBERS BRING 'END OF THE WORLD'

For those in search of a free punk-rock show, Saturday at Basement 414 may be the spot. The Explicit Bombers (a.k.a. "the Bombers") play an all-ages CD release show; openers include Against the Grain, CBJ and St. Thomas Boys Academy. The Explicit Bombers are a Howell-based punk band that features Dan Harness (lead vocals, bass), Tyler Brooks (guitar), Cody

Biroth (guitar) and David Harness (drums). The Bombers have been gigging around the state for over two years and have opened for the likes of Mustard Plug, the Toasters and DRI. The band's new album, "The End of the World," features 11 songs and will be available at B414 for \$2. This new disc is a follow-up to the band's "Out of Business" EP.

Saturday, Jan. 14 @ Basement 414, 414 E. Michigan Ave. (Jay Street alley), FREE, all ages, 7 p.m. to midnight.

P. DIDDY-TESTED, WAKA FLOCKA-APPROVED



Courtesy Photo

Machine Gun Kelly

Machine Gun Kelly is a Cleveland-based rapper and a new addition to Sean "P. Diddy" Combs' Bad Boy label. He performs an all-ages show Saturday at The Loft. Opening the show are local hip-hop artists the Specktators, Green Skeem and Stryve. MGK was born Richard Baker in 1990 and was raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio. His rap name was inspired by his rapid-fire lyrical flow. After creating a buzz with his three mix tapes — "100 Words and Running," "Lace Up" and "Rage Pack" — the tattooed rapper and Diddy inked a record deal follow-

ing MGK's high-energy performance at SXSW in Austin. Last month, MTV named MGK the "Hottest Breakthrough MC of 2011." His Bad Boy debut is expected to drop sometime in 2012; in the meantime, fans can listen to the single "Wild Boy," which features Atlanta-based rapper Waka Flocka Flame.

Saturday, Jan. 14 @ The Loft, 414 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, \$18 advance, \$20 at door, all ages, doors 8 p.m.

FREE SHOW AT GONE WIRED

Local duo Teag and PK plays a free show Saturday at Gone Wired Cafe, with special guests Delicious Bass and Stargrazer. Teag and PK is the project of Mike Teager (saxophone/flute) and Matt "PK" Borghi on guitar and vocals — both are members of local band the Elevator Conspiracy. The songwriters focus on improvisation and ambient music, drawing inspiration from Nick Drake, Bon Iver and the Grateful Dead. The pair also blends in hints of jazz, folk, and blues, creating a repertoire of jazz standards, traditional America folk music and songs reminiscent of the 1970s singer/songwriter period. Stargrazer, a.k.a. Peter Richards, is a solo bassist/vocalist who plays quiet, minimal rock. Richards has been playing shows around Lansing for years, and has an EP on Good Time Gang Recordings. Delicious bass, a newly formed folk-blues-rock outfit, plays a mix of covers and originals. The Lansing-based band includes Ryan Shadbolt (resonator guitar, bass, vocals), Ed Lutz (acoustic guitar, bass, vocals) and Will Jurkiewicz (percussion).

Saturday, Jan. 14 @ Gone Wired Café, 2021 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, all ages, FREE, 7:20 p.m. to 10 p.m.

UPCOMING SHOW?

POST IT AT
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TURNITDOWN

LIVE AND LOCAL

To be listed in Live and Local, e-mail your information to liveandlocal@lansingcitypulse.com by Thursday of the week before publication.

| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Colonial Bar, 3425 S. MLK Jr. Blvd. | | | Avon Bomb, 9 p.m. | Avon Bomb, 9 p.m. |
| Brannigan Brothers, 210 S. Washington Square | | Jammin' DJs, 9 p.m. | Jammin' DJs, 9 p.m. | Jammin' DJs, 9 p.m. |
| Crunchy's, 254 W. Grand River Ave. | Cloud Magic, 10 p.m. | Karaoke, 9 p.m. | Karaoke, 9 p.m. | Karaoke, 9 p.m. |
| The Exchange, 314, E. Michigan Ave. | Burton's Garden, 9 p.m. | Tryst Thursdays, 8:30 p.m. | The Smoking Jackets, 9 p.m. | The Smoking Jackets, 9 p.m. |
| The Firm, 227 S. Washington Square | | DnW Sound DJs, 9 p.m. | Various DJs, 9 p.m. | DJ Donnie D, 9 p.m. |
| Grand Café/Sir Pizza, 201 E. Grand River Ave. | Driver & Rider Show, 7 p.m. | Kathy Ford Band, 7 p.m. | Karaoke, 7 p.m. | |
| Green Door, 2005 E. Michigan Ave. | | | Smooth Daddy, 9:30 p.m. | Squids, 9:30 p.m. |
| The Loft, 414 E. Michigan Ave. | Once Upon a Nightmare, 9 p.m. | Nick Van Huis, 8 p.m. | | Machine Gun Kelly, 8 p.m. |
| Mac's Bar, 2700 E. Michigan Ave. | | Chris Bathgate, 9 p.m. | Satyrasis, 9 p.m. | Wilson, 9 p.m. |
| Moriarty's Pub, 802 E. Michigan Ave. | | | Big Willy, 10 p.m. | Big Willy, 10 p.m. |
| Rick's American Cafe, 224 Abbott Road | | ICE DJs, 10:30 p.m. | | Collision 6, 10:30 p.m. |
| Rookies, 16460 S. US 27 | Sea Cruisers, 7-10 p.m. | Water Pong DJ with Ryan, 9 p.m. | Karaoke with Bob, 9 p.m. | Karaoke with Bob, 9 p.m. |
| Unicorn Tavern, 327 E. Grand River Ave. | | Frog & The Beeftones, 9 p.m. | Riff Raff, 9 p.m. | Time to Play, 9 p.m. |

Sunday Open Jam with Bad Gravy, 9:30 p.m., Green Door; Karaoke, 9 p.m. Drag Queens Gone Wild, 11 p.m., Spiral Dance Bar; DJ Mike, 9:30 p.m., LeRoy's Bar & Grill; Open Mic, 5 p.m., Ull's Haus of Rock.
Monday Steppin' In It, 9:30 p.m., Green Door; Easy Babies funk trio, 10 p.m., The Exchange. Open-Mic Mondays, 6:30 p.m., Michigan Brewing Company-Lansing.
Tuesday Tommy Foster & Guitar Bob, 9 p.m., The Exchange; Neon Tuesday, 9 p.m., Mac's Bar. Jazz Tuesday Open Jam, 9 p.m., Stober's Bar, 812 E. Michigan Ave.

Out on the town

from page 21

East Lansing. (800) WHARTON.

Jazz Wednesdays. Live entertainment. 7-10 p.m. FREE. ENSO, 16800 Chandler Road. East Lansing. (517) 333-1656. www.enjoyenso.com.

Jazz Wednesdays. Featuring the Jeff Shoup Trio. 7-10 p.m. FREE. Gracie's Place, 151 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. (517) 655-1100.

Auditions. The MSU Choral Union will hold auditions for its spring 2012 season. 6 p.m. FREE. MSU Communication Arts and Sciences Building, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 353-9122.

THEATER

"Million Dollar Quartet." Musical inspired by the true story of four rock 'n' roll icons. 7:30 p.m. Range from \$30-\$70. Wharton Center, MSU Campus, East Lansing. 1-800-WHARTON or (517) 432-2000.

LITERATURE AND POETRY

Lansing Area Science Fiction Association Weekly Meeting. Needed: knowledge of great literary SF. 7 p.m. FREE. Sammy's Lounge, 301 E. Jolly Road, Lansing. (517) 402-4481.

Thursday, January 12

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Wills & Trusts. Get prepared for the unexpected and keep your family's future secure. 6:30-7:30 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext 4. www.dtdl.org.

Peaceful Art. Ages 12-adult. Create peace-themed art using recycled materials. 6-7:30 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext. 4. www.dtdl.org.

Yoga for Beginners. Seven-week introduction to yoga for beginners. 9:30-11 a.m. 7 weeks for \$84. Turner-Dodge House & Heritage Center, 100 E. North St., Lansing. (517) 351-6640. www.center4yoga.com.

Human Resource Management Association of Mid-Michigan. A presentation, lunch and networking. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. \$25 for members, \$40 for non-members. Lansing Community College West Campus, located at the corner of W. Mount Hope Ave. and Snow Road, Lansing. (517) 336-7536.

Adoption. On domestic infant and international adoption in the U.S., China, Ethiopia and Russia. 6:30 p.m. FREE. Adoption Associates, Inc. 800 E. Thomas L. Parkway, Lansing. www.adoptionassociates.net.

Slow Flow Yoga. Focuses on breath and stretching. 5:30-6:30 p.m. FREE. Fenner Nature Center, 2020 E. Mount Hope Ave., Lansing. (517) 483-4224. fofnc.org.

Yoga XL. Move with confidence. 7:15-8:15 p.m. \$8 suggested donation. Just B Yoga, 106 Island Ave., Lansing. (517) 488-5260.

EcoTrek Fitness Outdoor Workout. At parking lot near the playground and start of the trail. 5:45-7 p.m.

\$12. Sharp Park, 1401 Elmwood Road, Lansing. (517) 243-6538. www.ecotrekfitness.com.

Eating Disorders Anonymous Meeting. A group of people recovering from eating disorders who talk about recovery. 7-7:45 p.m. FREE. CADL Mason Library, 145 W. Ash St., Mason. (517) 899-3515.

Prostate Cancer Education Forum. With literature and other health materials. Registration is required. 6-8:30 p.m. FREE. Sparrow Hospital St. Lawrence Campus, 1210 W. Saginaw, Lansing. (517) 203-5022. www.everydaydigital.org.

EVENTS

Morning Storytime. All ages, for stories, songs, rhymes & fun. 10:30 a.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014.

Euchre. Come play euchre and meet new people. No partner needed. 6-9 p.m. \$1.50. Delta Township Enrichment Center, 4538 Elizabeth Road, Lansing. (517) 484-5600.

Karaoke. Every Thursday Night with Atomic D. 9 p.m. LeRoy's Classic Bar & Grill, 1526 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 482-0184.

CARE Program Volunteers. The Capital Area Response Effort is a post-arrest response team for survivors of domestic violence. 5 p.m.-1 a.m. FREE. South Precinct, 3400 S. Cedar St. Lansing. (517) 272-7436.

Mid-day Movies. Watch recent releases on the big screen. 2 p.m. FREE. CADL Downtown Lansing Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing. (517) 367-6363.

(SCENE) Benefit Party. A wine-and-dessert party with live music and a sneak peak at the first art exhibit of 2012. 6-8 p.m. \$50, \$75 couple. (SCENE) MetroSpace, 110 Charles St., East Lansing. (517) 319-6832.

MUSIC

Faculty Recital. Richard Sherman, flute, and Ralph Votapek, piano. 7:30 p.m. \$10, \$8 seniors, FREE students. MSU Music Building Auditorium, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 353-5340.

Jazz Thursdays. Various artists. 6:30-9:30 p.m. FREE. Mumbai Cuisine, 340 Albert St., East Lansing. (517) 336-3150.

THEATER

"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead." A comedy on the tale of Hamlet from the view of two bewildered minor characters. 7 p.m. \$14, \$12 seniors & students. Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Drive, Lansing. (517) 482-5700. www.riverwalktheatre.com.

"Million Dollar Quartet." 7:30 p.m. Range from \$30-\$70. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

Friday, January 13

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Relics of the Big Bang. Emphasizes research currently underway at CERN. 8 p.m. \$3, \$2.50 students & seniors, \$2 kids. Abrams Planetarium, 400 E.

Grand River Ave., East Lansing. (517) 355-4676.

Winter Night Hikes. Explore astronomy, survival skills, nocturnal animal senses, owls and more. 6-8 p.m. \$5; FREE members. Fenner Nature Center, 2020 E. Mount Hope Ave., Lansing. (517) 483-4224.

"Necessary!" Curated by the Black History 101 Mobile Museum. Focuses on Malcolm X and relics of racism from America's past. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. FREE. CADL Downtown Lansing Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing. (517) 367-6348. www.cadl.org.

Cabin Fever Party. Entertainment with Fred Walker, hot soup luncheon, dancing and more. Call for price and details. Noon-2:30 p.m. Grandhaven Manor Retirement Community, 3215 W. Mt. Hope Ave., Lansing. (517) 372-4499.

EVENTS

Chipmunk Story Time. Featuring a puppet who, with staff, reads nature stories to preschool/elementary children. 10 a.m. \$3 child. Harris Nature Center, 3998 Van Atta Road, Meridian Township. (517) 349-3866.

Howl at the Moon. Bring your dog for a guided walk in moonlit woods. 7 p.m. \$3. Harris Nature Center, 3998 Van Atta Road, Meridian Township. (517) 349-3866.

CARE Program Volunteers. In need of volunteers. 5-1 a.m. FREE. South Precinct, 3400 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 272-7436.

THEATER

"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead." 8 p.m. \$14, \$12 seniors & students. (Please See Details Jan. 12)

"Million Dollar Quartet." 7:30 p.m. Range from \$30-\$70. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

LITERATURE AND POETRY

Music & Movement Storytime. Dance and sing to music, learn to play with instruments and more. 1 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext. 3.

Saturday, January 14

CLASSES-AND-SEMINARS

Relics of the Big Bang. 8 p.m. \$3, \$2.50 students & seniors, \$2 kids. (Please See Details Jan. 13)

Beginner Tai Chi. Can build strength and reduce stress. 8-9 a.m. \$8. Just B Yoga, 106 Island Ave., Lansing. (517) 488-5260.

Tai Chi in the Park. Meditation at 8:45 a.m. followed by Tai Chi. 9:30 a.m. FREE. Hunter Park Community GardenHouse, 1400 block of E. Kalamazoo St., Lansing. Contact Bob Teachout (517) 272-9379.

Overeaters Anonymous. 9:30 a.m. FREE. Sparrow Professional Building, 1200 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. (517) 485-6003.

EVENTS

Pokemon Battle. Ages 8-12. Bring your DS and Pokemon game to compete against others. 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Ages 13-18 at 1-3:30 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext. 3.

Salsa Dancing. DJ Adrian "Ace" Lopez hosts. Singles welcome. 9 p.m.-2 a.m. \$5. Gregory's Bar & Grille, 2510 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Lansing. (517) 323-7122.

CARE Program Volunteers. 8-1 a.m. (Please See Details Jan. 13)

"Necessary!" 9 a.m.-4 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 13)

Mitten Mavens Roller Derby Snowpocalypse. Mitten Mavens Roller Derby vs. the Chemical City Derby Girls from Midland. 6-9 p.m. \$8 pre-sale & students, \$10 door, FREE kids. Demonstration Hall, MSU Campus, East Lansing. www.mittenmavens.net.

Second Saturday Supper. Baked chicken with mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans and more. 5-6:15 p.m. \$8. Mayflower Congregational Church, 2901 W Mount Hope Ave., Lansing. (517) 484-3139.

MUSIC

Jammin' Round. With Jamie-Sue Songwriters Series. 8 p.m. \$10 in advance, \$13 at the door, \$5 students. Christ United Church, 1000 W. Webb Road, DeWitt. (517) 651-5487.

Breathe Owl Breathe. With Gifts or Creatures. At C20 Snyder-Phillips Hall. 7:30 p.m. \$10. MSU Snyder Hall, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 410-6325.

Machine Gun Kelly. Rapper from Shaker Heights, Ohio with Green Skeem, Stryve and more. 8 p.m. \$18 advance, \$20 at door. The Loft, 414 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. www.theloftlansing.com.

Dan Unkefer. Playing guitar & performing since the seventies. 7-9 p.m. FREE. Coffee and Friends Cafe, 5100 Marsh Road, Okemos. (517) 347-0962.

THEATER

Auditions. For "The American Spirit," Lansing Community College's annual spring dance concert. Bring dance attire. 2-4 p.m. FREE. LCC Gannon Building, 422 N Washington Square, Lansing. www.lcc.edu/cma/events.

"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead." 8 p.m. \$14, \$12 seniors & students. (Please See Details Jan. 12)

"An Evening with Hank Williams and the Drifting Cowboys." Derek Smith performs in a tribute to the music and legacy of Hank Williams. 8 p.m. \$25. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam, Williamston. (517) 655-7469.

"Million Dollar Quartet." 2 p.m. & 8 p.m. Range from \$30-\$70. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

Sunday, January 15

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Overeaters Anonymous. 2 p.m. FREE. Everybody Reads Books and Stuff, 2019 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. (517) 485-8789.

Gardeners Roundtable. Swap ideas, tips and occasionally seeds and plants. 12:30-1:30 p.m. FREE. Hunter Park Community GardenHouse, 1400 block of E. Kalamazoo St. Lansing. (517) 999-3910.

The Super Sky Show. Children will hear star myths while learning about the night sky and planets. 2:30 & 3:30 p.m. \$3, \$2.50 students & seniors, \$2 kids. Abrams Planetarium, 400 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing. (517) 355-4676.

Relics of the Big Bang. 4 p.m. \$3, \$2.50 students & seniors, \$2 kids. (Please See Details Jan. 13)

EVENTS

Salsa Dancing. DJ Mojito spins salsa, merengue & Bachata. 7 p.m.-Midnight. \$5 21, \$7 under 21. Fahrenheit Ultra Lounge, 6810 S. Cedar St., Lansing.

CARE Program Volunteers. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 13)

MUSIC

Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer and Protest. A commemorative concert celebrating the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. featuring the MSU Children's Choir, Jazz Orchestra I, II, and III. 3 p.m. & 7 p.m. FREE. Wharton Center, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (800) WHARTON.

Mid-Michigan Bluegrass Association Concert. The MMBA meets every third Sunday of the month to play a concert. 2-7 p.m. \$4, \$2 seniors. Woldumar Nature Center, 5739 Old Lansing Road, Lansing. (517) 482-2382.

Calling All Singers. Ingham Festival Chorale is seeking SATB singers to perform "Hear My Prayer" by F. Mendelssohn and more. 4-6 p.m. FREE. First United Methodist Church of Mason mi, 201 East Ash St., Mason. (517) 487-5528.

THEATER

"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead." 2 p.m. \$14, \$12 seniors & students. (Please See Details Jan. 12)

"Million Dollar Quartet." 1:30 and 6:30 p.m..

| ERASER-FREE SUDOKU | | | | | | | | |
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Medium

TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, column, and outlined 3-by-3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once. No guessing is required. The solution is unique.

To avoid erasing, pencil in your possible answers in the scratchpad space beneath the short line in each vacant square. For solving tips, visit www.SundayCrosswords.com

Answers on page 24

Free Will Astrology By Rob Breznsky

January 11-17

ARIES (March 21-April 19): The Sanskrit word *tapasya* is translated as "heat," but in the yogic tradition it means "essential energy." It refers to the practice of managing your life force so that it can be directed to the highest possible purposes, thereby furthering your evolution as a spiritual being. Do you have any techniques for accomplishing that — either through yoga or any other techniques? This would be a good year to redouble your commitment to that work. In the coming months, the world will just keep increasing its output of trivial, energy-wasting temptations. You'll need to be pretty fierce if you want to continue the work of transforming yourself into the Aries you were born to be: focused, direct, energetic, and full of initiative.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): "Live out of your imagination, not your history," says Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. While that's always true, it will be especially crucial for you to remember in 2012. This is the year you can transcend stale traditions, Taurus — a time when you can escape your outworn habits, reprogram your conditioned responses, and dissolve old karma. You will be getting unparalleled opportunities to render the past irrelevant. And the key to unlocking all the magic will be your freewheeling yet highly disciplined imagination. Call on it often to show you the way toward the future.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Comedian Steven Wright says his nephew has HDADD, or High Definition Attention Deficit Disorder. "He can barely pay attention, but when he does it's unbelievably clear." I'm predicting something like that for you in the coming week, Gemini. You will encounter more things that are dull than are interesting, but those few that fascinate you will awaken an intense focus that allows you to see into the heart of reality.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): As I contemplate the most desirable fate you could create for yourself, I'm reminded of a lyric from one of my songs: "We are searching for the answers / so we can destroy them and dream up better questions." Here's what I'm implying by that, Cancerian: This is not the right time for you to push for comprehensive formulas and definitive solutions. Rather, it's a favorable moment to draw up the incisive inquiries that will frame your quest for comprehensive formulas and definitive solutions. That quest is due to begin in two weeks. For now, raise your curiosity levels, intensify your receptivity, and make yourself highly magnetic to core truths.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): "A writer — and, I believe, generally all persons — must think that whatever happens to him or her is a resource," said author Jorge Luis Borges. "All that happens to us, including our humiliations, our misfortunes, our embarrassments, all is given to us as raw material, as clay, so that we may shape our art." I agree that this advice isn't just for writers, but for everyone. And it so happens that you are now in an astrological phase when adopting such an approach would bring you abundant wisdom and provide maximum healing. So get started, Leo: Wander through your memories, reinterpreting the difficult experiences as rich raw material that you can use to beautify your soul and intensify your lust for life.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): "Poetry is the kind of thing you have to see from the corner of your eye," said the poet William Stafford. "If you look straight at it you can't see it, but if you look a little to one side it is there." As I contemplate your life in the immediate future, Virgo, I'm convinced that his definition of poetry will be useful for you to apply to just about everything. In fact, I think it's an apt description of all the important phenomena you'll need to know about. Better start practicing your sideways vision.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): A Swedish man named Richard Handl decided to conduct a scientific experi-

ment in his kitchen. Would it be possible to split atoms using a homemade apparatus? He wanted to see if he could generate atomic reactions with the radioactive elements radium, americium, and uranium. But before he got too far into the process, the police intervened and ended his risky fairy-tale. I bring this to your attention, Libra, as an example of how not to proceed in the coming weeks. It *will* be a good time for you to experiment around the house — refining your relationship with your roommates, moving the furniture around, and in general rearranging the domestic chemistry — but please avoid trying stuff as crazy as Handl's.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): In 1878, Thomas Edison perfected the phonograph, a machine that could record sounds and play them back. There had been some primitive prototypes before, but his version was a major improvement. And what were the first sounds to be immortalized on Edison's phonograph? The rush of the wind in the trees? A dramatic reading of the Song of Songs? The cries of a newborn infant? Nope. Edison recited the nursery rhyme, "Mary Had a Little Lamb." When you make your own breakthrough in communication sometime soon, Scorpio, I hope you deliver a more profound and succulent message.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): I suspect you may soon find yourself in a situation similar to the one that 19th-century American President Abraham Lincoln was in when he said the following: "If this is coffee, please bring me some tea. But if this is tea, please bring me some coffee." In other words, Sagittarius, you may not be picky about what you want, but whatever it is, you'll prefer it to be authentic, pure, and distinctly itself. Adulterations and hodgepodes won't satisfy you, and they won't be useful. Hold out for the Real Thing.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Last summer, before the football season started, sportswriter Eric Branch wrote about a rookie running back that San Francisco 49er fans were becoming increasingly excited about. The newbie had made some big plays in exhibition games. Would he continue performing at a high level when the regular season began? Were the growing expectations justified? After a careful analysis, Branch concluded that the signs were promising, but not yet definitive: "It's OK to go mildly berserk," he informed the fans. That's the same message I'm delivering to you right now, Capricorn. The early stages of your new possibility are encouraging. It's OK to go mildly berserk, but it's not yet time to go totally bonkers.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): In summer, the pickleweed plant thrives in the saltwater marshes around San Francisco Bay. In many places, bright orange patches of the dodder plant intermingle with the pickleweed's sprightly jade green, creating festive displays that suggest nature is having a party. But there's a secret buried in this scene. The dodder's webby filaments are actually parasites that suck nutrients from the pickleweed. In accordance with the astrological omens, Aquarius, I'll ask you if a situation like that exists in your own life. Is there a pretty picture that hides an imbalance in the give-and-take of energy? It's not necessarily a bad thing — after all, the pickleweed grows abundantly even with its freeloader hanging all over it — but it's important to be conscious of what's going on.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): "That in a person which cannot be domesticated is not his evil but his goodness," said the writer Antonio Porchia. I invite you to keep that challenging thought close to your heart in the coming days, Pisces. In my astrological opinion, it is an excellent moment to tune in to your wildest goodness — to describe it to yourself, to cherish it as the great treasure it is, to foster it and celebrate it and express it like a spring river overflowing its banks.

Out on the town

from page 23

Range from \$30-\$70. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

LITERATURE AND POETRY

Lansing Poetry Club. Meecha Griffin: "A Glance at Modern Women Poets from around the World." Room 165. All are welcome. 2 p.m. FREE. LCC Arts & Sciences Building, 419 N. Washington Square, Lansing. (517) 614-7820.

Monday, January 16

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Divorced, Separated, Widowed Conversation Group. For those who have gone through loss of a spouse. 7:30 p.m. FREE. St. David's Episcopal Church, 1519 Elmwood Road, Lansing. (517) 323-2272.

GriefShare Seminar. A DVD series, with small group discussion. 6:30-8 p.m. FREE. Grace United Methodist, 1900 Boston Blvd., Lansing. (517) 490-3218.

Overeaters Anonymous. 7 p.m. FREE. St. David's Episcopal Church, 1519 Elmwood Road, Lansing. (989) 587-4609. www.stdavidslansing.org.

Garden Volunteers. Help with an invasive species removal project. 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. FREE. Fenner Nature Center, 2020 E. Mount Hope Ave., Lansing. (517) 292-3078. nikkia.midmeac@gmail.com.

EVENTS

Euchre. Come play euchre and meet new people. 6-9 p.m. \$1.50. Delta Township Enrichment Center, 4538 Elizabeth Road, Lansing. (517) 484-5600.

Social Bridge. Come play bridge and meet new people. 1-4 p.m. \$1.50. Delta Township Enrichment Center, 4538 Elizabeth Road, Lansing. (517) 484-5600.

MLK, Jr. Day of Service. In the Thomas M. Cooley Center Lobby. 11 a.m. FREE. Cooley Law School Building, 217 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing. (616) 776-3511.

MLK, Jr. Day Documentary. "The Long Walk to Freedom" addresses how ordinary people with different racial/economic backgrounds changed the nation. 10 a.m. & 1 p.m. FREE. MSU Library, 100 Main Library, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 353-8700.

Planning Meeting & Reflections. On Martin Luther King, Jr. & justice work. 5:30-7 p.m. FREE. South Kedzie Hall, corner of Farm Lane and Auditorium, . (517) 332-0422.

Monday Morning Movie. Get your film fix at the library. 10:30 a.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext.4.

MUSIC

Open-Mic Mondays. Sign up to play solo, duo, with your band. Spoken-Word acts welcome. 6:30-10:30 p.m. FREE. Michigan Brewing Company, 402 Washington Square, Lansing. (517) 977-1349.

Tuesday, January 17

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Schizophrenics Anonymous. Support group for those effected by the disorder. 10 a.m. Room 215-F. (517) 485-3775. 10 a.m. Community Mental Health Building, 812 E. Jolly Road, Lansing. (517) 614-7820.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly. Anyone wanting to lose weight is welcome. 7 p.m. FREE to visit. Eaton Rapids Medical Center, 1500 S. Main St., Eaton Rapids. Judy @ (517) 543-0786.

Schizophrenics Anonymous Self-help Support Group. For persons with schizophrenia and related disorders. 5:30 p.m. FREE. Sparrow Professional Building, 1200 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. (517) 485-3775.

Yoga 40. For those in their 40s, 50s, 60s and beyond. 7:15 p.m. Suggested \$7. Just B Yoga, 106 Island Ave., Lansing. (517) 488-5260.

Mid-Michigan Knitters Guild. Learn to wash your knitting and become more confident in your blocking skills. 7 p.m. Annual Dues: \$20. Haslett Public Schools Administration Building, 5593 Franklin St., Haslett. (517) 339-8242.

Overeaters Anonymous. 7 p.m. FREE. Presbyterian Church of Okemos, 2258 Bennett Road, Okemos. (517) 505-0068.

Caregivers Program. Gain skills to manage stress and increase effective caregiving skills. Part of 6-week series. 2-4 p.m. FREE. Valley Court Community Center, 201 Hillside Ct., East Lansing. (517) 887-1440.

Intro to Computers. Professionals from Career Quest instruct attendees in the basics everyone needs to know. 2:30-4 p.m. FREE. Capital Area Michigan Works, 2110 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 492-5500.

EcoTrek Fitness Outdoor Workout. Back of parking lot. 5:45-7 p.m. \$12. Lansing River Trail, Grand River Access Point, Corner of Grand River Ave. and Turner St., Lansing. (517) 243-6538. www.ecotrekfitness.com.

Way To Wellness. Barb Geske provides nutrition and wellness coaching in a positive, motivational format. 9:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m. \$10. Presbyterian Church of Okemos, 2258 Bennett Road, Okemos. (517) 349-9536.

Investment Planning 101. This seminar is presented by Jose Yanez of Full Circle Financial Planning. 6-7 p.m. FREE. MSUFCU, 3777 West Road, East Lansing. (517) 664-7725.

EVENTS

DTDL Crafters. Knitting and other projects. Bring own supplies. 2:30-4 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext.4. www.dtdl.org.

Game On. Play a variety of board and video games. 3-5 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 x3.

Morning Storytime. All ages welcome for stories, songs, rhymes and fun. 10:30 a.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014.

See Out on the Town, Page 25

SUDOKU SOLUTION

From Pg. 23

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CROSSWORD SOLUTION

From Pg. 20

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Out on the town

from page 24

Mid-day Movies. Watch recent releases on the big screen. 2 p.m. FREE. CADL Downtown Lansing Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing. (517) 367-6363.

Compassionate Friends of Lansing. Support group, for grieving parents who have lost a child of any age. 7:30-9:30 p.m. FREE. Salvation Army (South) Community Center, 701 W. Jolly Road, Lansing. (517) 351-6480.

Intro to Computers. Professionals from Career Quest help with basics everyone needs to know. 2:30-4 p.m. FREE. Capital Area Michigan Works, 2110 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 492-5500.

Get Organized. "Have Coffee with a Professional Organizer" informal coffee hour. 10-11:30 a.m. FREE. Coffee and Friends Cafe, 5100 Marsh Road, Okemos. (517) 347-0962. www.napo.net.

MUSIC

Jazz Tuesdays. Hosted by the Jeff Shoup Quartet and features artists from the MSU Jazz Studies Department and Mid-Michigan jazz community. 10 p.m.-1 a.m. FREE. Stober's Bar, 812 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing.

Wednesday, January 18

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

Grande Paraders Square Dance Club. Round dancing and alternating plus & more. 7 p.m. \$4 members; \$5. Holt 9th Grade Campus, 5780 Holt Road, Holt. (517) 694-0087.

MSU Distinguished Lecture Series. Paul Stern will give a lecture on "Climate Change: The Role of Behavior." 3-4:30 p.m. FREE. MSU Union, MSU Campus, East Lansing. www.espp.msu.edu/news/dls.php.

Meditation. For beginners and experienced. 7-9 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

Community Yoga. 6:30-8 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

EVENTS

Practice Your English. 7-8 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

Overeaters Anonymous. 7 p.m. FREE. Grand Ledge Baptist Church, 1120 W. Willow Hwy. Grand Ledge. (517) 256-6954.

CAMW Lansing Center Orientation. Learn about the programs and services that may benefit you in your career development and search. 2-3:30 p.m. FREE. Capital Area Michigan Works, 2110 S. Cedar St., Lansing. (517) 492-5500.

MUSIC

Jazz Wednesdays. Live entertainment. 7-10 p.m. FREE. ENSO, 16800 Chandler Road, East Lansing. (517) 333-1656. www.enjoyenso.com.

Jazz Wednesdays. Featuring the Jeff Shoup Trio. 7-10 p.m. FREE. Gracie's Place, 151 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. (517) 655-1100.

Auditions. The MSU Choral Union will hold auditions for its spring 2012 season. 6 p.m. FREE. MSU Communication Arts and Sciences Building, MSU Campus, East Lansing. (517) 353-9122.

LITERATURE AND POETRY

DTDL book club. Discussion of "The Book of Salt," by Monique Truong. 6-7:30 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext. 4. www.dtdl.org.

Baby Time. Books and songs for ages 2 years and younger, with a parent/caregiver. 10:30 a.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 x3.

Lansing Area Science Fiction Association Weekly Meeting. 7 p.m. FREE. (Please See Details Jan. 11)

Book Club: Ages 9-12. Read and discuss "Number the Stars," by Lois Lowry. Call to register. 4-5 p.m. FREE. Delta Township District Library, 5130 Davenport Drive, Lansing. (517) 321-4014 ext. 4. www.dtdl.org.

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6:00 pm

hour-long discussions on current issues

7:00 pm

our short, mid-week worship service

Winter Discussion Series:

Christian Diversity or Heresy?

Wed Jan 11 - Exploring the different belief systems that exist within Christianity

Wed Jan 18 - How does Mormonism compare with other Christian faiths?

Wed Feb 1 - Religious Fundamentalism



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(mak•er•el ski) n.

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fig. no. 9
a fine way to beat the winter blues

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THE ST. OLAF CHOIR

IN CONCERT
ANTON ARMSTRONG, CONDUCTOR

Sunday, January 29, 3 p.m.
Wharton Center for Performing Arts
Great Hall
Michigan State University
Tickets at whartoncenter.com
or by calling 1-800-WHARTON

Video Presentation:
St. Olaf Choir
Centennial Retrospective,
2:15 p.m. Jackson Lounge
(No additional ticket required)



James Sanford/City Pulse

A Lansing landmark, Emil's Italian Restaurant opened its doors in 1921.

Pasta its prime

Emil's Italian Restaurant is Lansing's oldest eatery, but these days the atmosphere outclasses the food

By JOE TOROK

Emil's Italian Restaurant emphasizes its family heritage and calls itself a family-friendly eatery. With the soft lighting and intimate booths, many also consider it a romantic destination for first dates or anniversaries. Others liken the atmosphere to something out of a Martin Scorsese mob film, especially when entering from the back door.

Emil's has charm, with extensive woodwork, stained glass and Tiffany lamps hanging from a drop ceiling that has seen better days. The aisles between booths and tables are narrow, especially near the back door where one imagines a Goodfella might be squeezing by to belly up to the bar.

Cozy atmosphere aside, Emil's menu, ostensibly filled with Italian-themed fare, promises an effort to provide the "finest quality food and services available."

I learned at least one thing dining at Emil's: Don't trust menus.

When my companion and I dine out, we like to try what the restaurant is known for. At Emil's, it's apparently racks of ribs, which was our first clue that we might not be in for an authentic experience of the beautiful country.

Passing on the ribs, we started with potato wedges, largely because the menu excitedly told us they would be covered in Emil's famous Alfredo sauce.

That sauce will live forever in my mind

— in infamy. It was overcooked and had broken down visibly before the wedges were served to us. Pools of oil floated alongside the white sauce. Spooning oil away, the remaining Alfredo had an unpleasant grainy texture and left a cottony impression.

It came with bacon bits. We had hoped, after reading about serving the finest foods on the menu, we might see some prosciutto. Nope. We got those dehydrated pebbles that come in jars and likely contain no actual bacon whatsoever.

Things didn't get any better.

Our entrées came with a cup of minestrone soup and a salad with house-made bleu cheese dressing. Despite its abundance of vegetables, the soup had little depth beyond a vague impression of beef and tomato. But the worst part was the bloated penne rigate that floated in the little bowl like lumber in a clogged river. The far-overcooked penne was closer in texture to pudding than pasta.

The salad was a plate of iceberg lettuce, surely poured from a bag, with requisite slivers of carrot and cabbage to add some color without flavor. I had hoped the bleu cheese dressing would partially redeem the salad, and it was creamy, with some nice big chunks of actual cheese. But someone must have mismeasured the amount of vinegar to add — the abbreviation for teaspoon may look like the abbreviation for tablespoon, but when it's vinegar, if you don't get it right, it's tough to eat without squinting.



Review

foodfinder

Food Finder listings are rotated each week based on space. If you have an update for the listings, please e-mail food@lansingcitypulse.com.

CAFES & DINERS

TED DEE'S SANDWICH SHOP

This downtown Lansing spot serves a variety of deli sandwiches and specialties, like the chicken cheese panini. It also offers soups, fresh salads and desserts. Every Friday there is a pulled pork sandwich special. 119 S. Washington Square, Lansing. 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 11-2 Saturday closed Sunday. (517) 374-2784. www.ted-dees.com. TO, D (orders of \$20 or more), OM, WiFi, \$

THEIO'S — Serving breakfast around the clock, Theio's is also great place to grab a burger for lunch or satisfy a late-night craving. 2650 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. Open 24 hours. (517) 487-3955. TO, P, WiFi, \$

TONY'S — A lively restaurant near the Michigan State University campus that has something for everyone, with breakfast all day, lunch specialties, burgers and dinners, such as the hot turkey sandwich. 350 Albert Ave., East Lansing. 8 a.m.-8 p.m. daily. (517) 332-5553. TO, WiFi, \$.

ZEUS' CONEY ISLAND

This eatery offers Greek classics, like chicken kabobs marinated for 24 hours in lemon juice, olive oil and a blend of secret herbs. Plus American favorites like walleye. 6525 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Lansing. 7a.m. - 9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday & Saturday. (517) 272-7900. OM, TO, WiFi, \$

CASUAL DINING

ALTU'S — Traditional Ethiopian food served

with specials, including the Friday special of spicy shredded beef with jalapenos and ginger served with Ethiopian bread, yellow cabbage and a house salad. Vegetarian dishes include spicy lentils, mild lima beans and a dish of whole white peas and potatoes. 1312 Michigan Ave., East Lansing. 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; closed Sunday & Monday. (517) 333-6295. www.EatAtAltus.com, OM, TO, P \$

BENSON'S VINAIGRETTES

In the mood for some home-style cooking? Benson's makes all of its "Michigan Farmhouse" cuisine from scratch and rotates the menu daily and seasonally. For lighter appetites, try one of the restaurant's many sides and salads. 940 Elmwood St., Lansing. 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday; closed Sunday. (517)

703-9616. OM, TO, D (for orders more than \$20), P, \$\$.

BEST STEAK HOUSE

— Low-cost dining for meat lovers, serving steaks and sandwiches, including a modified Philly cheesesteak. 3020 E. Kalamazoo St., Lansing. 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. (517) 337-2210. TO, RES, OM \$\$.

BLUE GILL GRILL

This eclectic restaurant features a variety of fresh fish, including grouper, salmon, wall-eye, cod and bluegill made with a unique blend of spices in a secret family recipe. 1591 Lake Lansing Road, Haslett. 11 a.m.-2 a.m. Monday-Saturday; 12 p.m.-2 a.m. Sunday. (517) 339-4900. www.bluegillgrill.com. FB, TO, RES (eight or more), OM, WiFi, \$\$

Average price per person, not including drinks:
\$ Less than \$8 | **\$\$** \$8 to \$14 | **\$\$\$** \$14 to \$20 | **\$\$\$\$** Over \$20

FB Full Bar **WB** Wine & Beer **TO** Take Out **OM** Online Menu **RES** Reservations **P** Patio **WiFi** Wireless Internet **D** Delivery

Emil's

from page 26

For the main course, we tried a veal cutlet sandwich and the nightly special: chicken with garlic, lemon and herbs.

The cutlet, served on a fast-food style sesame seed bun, was crispy and cooked well, but nothing special. It was really not a great idea to give it its own bread on top of the massive bun. It was overpowered by the tinny, aggressively acidic pasta sauce that was also all too generously ladled onto

out sides of pasta cooked a minute or two beyond al dente.

The chicken, though, did us in. I want to say something nice, but even the skin, with visual evidence of herbs, had no flavor. My companion remarked that it did at least have chicken flavor. Too bad it didn't have much else.

Again, we found ourselves with an over-

cooked dish, difficult to even cut into and, instead of juicy white meat, we worked out our jaw muscles chewing through leathery meat that, in the end, literally took effort to swallow.

Emil's has a reputation for generous portions, which would have been nice if we had felt compelled to take one of our half-eaten meals home.

Likewise, the bread that was served with our meal — massive, cold slices of the whitest bread I have ever seen with, as my companion noted, a thin membrane of brown skin in place of any real crust — was not worth taking more than a few nibbles from.

I will say something nice: The mascarpone in the tiramisu, with a delicate, silky texture that balanced air and cream, was a pleasant surprise. I don't want to remember much else about the dessert, but that mascarpone was nice.

The bill came to just under \$50. For that money, I could have invested in a Mario Batali cookbook and a few groceries and had a fine, authentic Italian meal at home.

A fine authentic Italian meal — sounds good. Haven't had one in ages.

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