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John Swartz, Orillia Packet Times, March 4, 2004

### Peter Stoll smooth as silk

Saturday night's Orillia Wind Ensemble concert at St. Paul's United Church was a step back up to the plate for the band. I knew it would be after talking to music director Roy Menagh earlier in the week.

He was pretty excited about the show they put together, the way the band was playing and clarinet soloist Peter Stoll's talent.

The band was pretty tight most of the night. I was impressed with the fullness of sound, particularly with the longer notes. The endings of tunes were solid, with no overplaying, and if nothing else you want to leave a reminder that smells good.

They played the complete *Water Music Suite* by Handel. It was originally written for wind ensemble, not orchestra. I found that most of the audience was particularly enjoying that piece.

Stoll played Weber's *Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra* and Rossini's *Introduction, Theme and Variations*. Stoll is in a class of musicians few attain. He knows his instrument so well; it's an extension of himself. His entries, at piano or forte, were confident and paced correctly, taking his queues from the band so that his dynamic levels were right where they ought to be.

His lines were very smooth. Unlike a jazz soloist's attack into a run of notes, Stoll slipped into them. His playing was lyrical in nature, making it look so easy and natural, when you know years of practice went into it.



Packet photo/Colin McKim  
Leading cat lady Janet Martin sang at the press conference unveiling some of the cast who will be coming to the Orillia Opera House this summer for the musical *Cats*.

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get out until later in the evening Friday and Saturday and may have missed the supertime crowds, and that may have given me a different impression. However, with the smaller audience at the OWE concert as well, maybe everyone was in Florida.

I only saw Jay (Pegg) and Jo (Gravelle) doing one tune at the Ossawippi, and Al Lerman and Terry Blankley doing three at Webers because I hit them both as they were taking breaks. Nevertheless, both acts were in good form.

Jo and Jay were into a long rendition of Crossroads that I enjoyed. What can you say about Lerman's harp playing at any time that is negative? Nothing, and this time Blankley was adding in some terrific keyboard playing and singing.

Some of you may have read Geoff Chapman's report in the Toronto Star concerning the demise of Fathead. It's not true.

"Back in November we announced we were hanging it up for a while," Lerman said, but it was only from gigging. "We're still rehearsing and still writing songs."

He said he was pretty clear with Chapman that it was only an extended vacation, not a permanent thing. End

that moving it helped. The audiences were pretty small or virtually non-existent in the places I checked out.

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to catch Ronnie Douglas.

There were more people on hand. The main room was full with a few standing to catch some great playing. Ronnie had Murray Sylvestre playing with the band, and Murray isn't a little teenager anymore. Since I last saw him, he's added a lot of height and put on some beef, so much so that I didn't even recognize him.

Ronnie's band is as good as any, anywhere. All the players work well together, and they exude a confidence that one usually finds with long established and well travelled bands. Look forward to seeing them again in April.

February Blues festival organizer, Robin Munro said that the Saturday afternoon jam went well, with some good music being played. I heard from another that the audience was on par with other festival jams held in the Green Room at the Opera House in the past.

Folks, get your tickets for the Sunshine Festival production Cats now. If the demonstration I saw last Friday by Janet Martin, who is playing the part of Grizabella, is any indication of where the cast is at with talent—it's going to be more than memorable.

At the press conference, Martin sang Memory. I've heard many do this tune, but not as well as she did it. It's going to be great.

I believe that because of the 17 who are cast for this production, 10 of them have already appeared in Cats, either in Toronto, Broadway, the German company, or one of the touring companies.

The significance of that is that no regional theatre has produced Cats until the Sunfest snagged it after the Broadway production closed,



Packet photo/Collie McKim

Leading cat lady Janet Martin sang at the press conference unveiling some of the cast who will be coming to the Orillia Opera House this summer for the musical Cats.

tions are March 14 at the Let's Dance studios beginning at 11:30 a.m. He'd like you to bring a resume and a head shot. You can call the Sunfest at 325-4972 for more info.

On Saturday, March 13, David Fanstone is holding auditions for the August production of Oklahoma at Swanmore Hall beginning at 10 a.m.

Drop off your resume and pictures to the Sunfest Office, 29 West St. N. and get an audition time.

• March 8, the Green Haven Women's Shelter is celebrating International Women's

same time.

Anne Murray, Pamela Wallin, June Callwood, Margaret Atwood, Natalie McMaster, Michele Landsberg, Maude Barlow, Alexa McDonough, Jan Wong, Air Force Quartet and a number of local artists and businesses have donated something for that.

Tickets are 30 bucks at the door. You can get them in advance at Green Again, the clothing store Green Haven Shelter for Women operates at 33 Mississauga Street E., for only 25 bucks.

• Dan Austin has a new band. Methodology plays

Dan's note said Tower is arguably one of the best funk bands ever.

There is no argument, they just are.

• Coming up...50s/60s dancing Fridays at the Broadway Hall in the Lacie Street Plaza...Under the Influence (John Blanchard) does the blues jam Thursday night at the 2nd Last Call; the Carl Dixon Band does Friday and Pop Cherry does Saturday; Hardly Soft hosts the rock jam Sunday night...Gentleman's Lunch plays the Leap-ing Leprechaun Friday and Saturday.

Rants, raves, info? Write