



## Montclair Arts Alliance Festival of Visual and Performing Arts kicks off!



*The wedding brings the finale and a standing ovation for the Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), in the United Way Theatre, at the Saturday afternoon performance, Sept. 16.*

ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL

**By GRACE WILLIAMS**

*For Montclair Local*

While it may already be known for its film and jazz festivals, Montclair is now poised to add fine arts to its lineup for those in the know.

From Wednesday, Nov. 29 to Saturday, Dec. 2, the newly official Montclair Arts Alliance will treat attendees to hidden gems in the local arts community through the Montclair Arts Festival 2017. This four-day arts extravaganza calls upon local talent within the fine arts, with 24 organizations (as of this writing) showing work in theater, visual arts, music, opera, and dance.

The latest schedule and more information can be found at [montclairartsalliance.org](http://montclairartsalliance.org), and tickets are available at [montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com](http://montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com). Information is also up on Montclair Arts Alliance's Facebook page.

The different genres are organized on different days: Wednesday is devoted primarily to visual arts and jazz; Thursday to theater; Friday to rock and R&B; Saturday, during the day, to performances and art for young audiences; and Saturday night to dance.



*Freespace Dance. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

The festival has two-pronged purpose: 1) to showcase local artists and arts organizations and 2) to establish the United Way Theater, 60 South Fullerton Ave., as a performance venue and a future arts center, The center will be able to provide non-profit arts organizations affordable, rentable, shared performance and arts spaces.



*Art from the Creativity Caravan. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

Although the alliance itself has been in the works for several years, the festival had to be planned quickly and on a shoestring. Along with a few grants, the organization's non-profit, or 501(c)(3), status have just recently come through, organizers said, and as such, the festival, which needs to take place in 2017 had to be planned swiftly. But, despite the time constraints, the response has been promising, with dozens of artists, bands and companies signing up to participate in the event.

The kickoff starts on Nov. 29, with the opening of the art exhibit "Improvisations," curated by local artist Joyce Korotkin.

"The Montclair Arts Alliance was created to help all regional and local performance groups to perform," Korotkin said. Events like this typically take six months to a year to plan, but the alliance is making it work in a shorter window: "This is talent that needed a space to be displayed."

Korotkin's portion of the show will feature curated works from 12 to 15 visual artists showing painting, sculpture and art installations. Featured artists include internationally known artists, as well as newcomers and emerging artists.

A way to streamline organization and event space is especially needed by emerging artists, and the United Way has been



*Vanguard Theatre Company. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

helpful in that regard, said Alliance President Elaine Molinaro.

The social justice element of the event comes through United Way's ALICE program, which specifically aims to foster the arts for people who are employed but face income restraints.

"Montclair is a wonderful town for the arts," Molinaro said. "But space is expensive." And for most artists struggling to cover their daily expenses, finding extra money for their own place is out of reach. In partnering

with each other and working with the United Way, artists in the alliance will utilize a space that once served as a formal theater and now caters to revolving arts genres, from paints to plays. In addition, the space believes the theater must have at one time served in a formal capacity given the layout. Its features such as a projection booth and dressing rooms lend credence to the theory.

In addition to producing the festival overall, Molinaro is directing readings of two short plays with her company, Culture Connection Theatre, by the Montclair Local's Culture Editor Gwen Orel.

Having put on productions locally, members of the alliance like Mia Riker-Norrie know that it's hard for productions to land



*MIA RIKER-NORRIE*

in an actual home-base. Riker-Norrie, who serves as vice president of the alliance, also runs Opera Theatre Montclair. Although local churches and schools have generously donated their space for past productions, in Norrie's line of work acoustics are paramount and shows take up a lot of space. Moreover, a school or church's first priority is clearly to its students and parishioners. And having to tear sets down over the weekends, only to rebuild them for the upcoming shows is an exercise in frustration, she said.

## **DRAWING PEOPLE IN**

From a production standpoint, the space, which played home to a recent production of "Cinderella," serves as a highly necessary breath of fresh air. "The festival will serve as a good intro to opera," Riker-Norrie said. "It will draw people in to appreciate the arts scene [here]." Her company will perform the children's version of "The Magic Flute," which it performed at Van Vleck House & Gardens this past summer.

Molinaro said the buzz about the festival is in the air: when she was handing out flyers at the farmer's market, one person told her they had already picked one up at a restaurant. "Word of mouth is important," she said.

In a nod to the family aspect thriving in the community, the festival will also provide plenty of opportunities for young learners. On Saturday, there will be day-long workshops and performances specifically for children. Young participants will be exposed to family friendly performances including theater, music, dance, drumming, drama, opera, visual arts and interactive art.

Saturday evening will usher in dance performances by seven local companies including Freespace Dance.

Before that, though, on Friday, music will turn up the heat and draw in the adults. Although there will be music peppered



throughout the festival, Friday will serve as the time for a large portion Montclair's musical talents to make themselves known.

Four R&B and rock bands, including Tierney's Tavern regulars The Fabulous Flemtones, are expected to turn up the heat a little. Bruce Tyler has been a longstanding member of the local arts and festivals scene. Tyler, whose band Black Lace Blues is slated for a Friday show, said there has been a need for strength in numbers where arts are concerned in this community.

"It's a good thing for Montclair to have a festival like this that is multidisciplinary," Tyler said. "Montclair is an arts community and we need to show it."

*INFO:*

*Montclair Arts Festival 2017*

*WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29*

*VISUAL ARTS/JAZZ*

*6 p.m.: Art gallery opening, Violetta Norrie, harp*

*19 artists: Ananda Bell; Mona Brody; Willie Cole; Lori Field; Samuel Iztueta; Elizabeth Jacobs; Peter Jacobs; Jennifer T. Ley; Fernando Mariscal; Deborrah Markette; Indigo Nelson; Karen Neilsen-Fried; Sharon Pitts; Yana Rodin; Ela Shah; Madeleine St. Jacques; Marilyn Stevenson; Jon Taner; Philemona Williamson*

*8 p.m.: three jazz companies including:*

*Scott Robinson/Seed Artists*

*Jazz House Kids Organ Ambassadors Ensemble*

*Trio Mia Jazz*

*THURSDAY, NOV. 30*

*THEATER*

*6:15 p.m.: Culture Connection Theater*

*6:50 p.m. Sugar Mama Productions*

*7 p.m.: UCC Players*

*7:30 p.m.: Vanguard Theater Company*

*8 p.m.: Theatre 167*

*FRIDAY, DEC. 1*

*ROCK/R&B*

*6 p.m.: QWERT*

*7 p.m.: Meg Beattie Music*

*8 p.m.: Fabulous Flemtones*

*9 p.m.: Black Lace Blues*

*SATURDAY, DEC. 1 DAYTIME*

*FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES*

*11 a.m.- 6 p.m.*

*Pushcart Players*

*Montclair Early Music*

*Montclair Dance Collective*

*Premiere Dance Theatre Workshop Kids*

*MADLOM*

*Opera Theatre of Montclair*

*A Mid-Summer's Dreaming Theatre Company*

*Interactive Arts by Indie Arts Montclair (IAM and Creativity Caravan*

*6-8 p.m. Jennifer Levine's Soul Paintings*

*SATURDAY, DEC. 2 EVENING*

*DANCE*

*8-9:30 p.m.: six dance companies, including:*

*Padierna Dance Project*

*Premiere Dance Ensemble*

*DanceWorks & Company*

*Kyle Marshall Choreography*

*Freespace Dance*

*Umoja Dance Company*

*The United Way Theater, 60 South Fullerton Ave.*

*Montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com*

*montclairartsalliance.org*

*\$20.00 for one-day festival admission*

*\$30.00 for a two-day festival pass (save \$10)*

*\$40.00 for a three-day festival pass (save \$20)*

*\$50.00 for an all festival 4-day pass (save \$30)*

*\$10.00 for children 12 and under*

*Schedule is evolving and subject to change*



*Black Lace Blues. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*



*Umoja. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*