

ACT casts 'spell'

BAR HARBOR — Acadia Community Theater presents Stephen Schwartz's "Godspell," a musical based on the Gospel of Matthew, at the Mount Desert Island High School this weekend.

Performances are Friday, April 8, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 9, at 2 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, April 10, at 2 p.m.

Music mavens



BAR HARBOR — The MacLir Ceilidh Band, which performs music from the traditions of Ireland, Scotland and French Canada, along with original compositions, is set to perform at the Jesup Memorial Library on Sunday, April 10, beginning at 4 p.m.

The band's name is derived from "ceilidh," a traditional Gaelic social gathering which involves playing music and dancing, and "Manannán Mac Lir," a sea deity in Irish mythology who is the son of the sea god Lir and is associated with the weather and the mists between the worlds.

Whimsical films



BAR HARBOR — Nancy Andrews creates films that delve inside people's minds, asking fundamental questions such as: "What is the human place in the universe?" or "What do humans really know?"

The screening begins with "On a Phantom Limb," which the filmmaker created thanks to a Guggenheim Fellowship. It will be followed by "Behind the Eyes are the Ears" featuring live music.

SECTION 2 OF 3

Arts

THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2011

The search for truth

"This is just how I feel about it. It's show and tell. That's what art does."

- Dan Burt

By Earl Brechlin ebrechlin@mdislander.com

Poetry, in essence, is about the search for truth. And for poet Dan Burt, who made his mark in life, and his considerable fortune, as a high-powered attorney and successful international businessman, writing is a way to reconnect to the fundamental truths he discovered as a young man - touchstones that so often in life come hopelessly buried under the sediments of expediency, self-deception and compromise.

It is a process of stripping away those layers, to reveal the original strata below, that drives Mr. Burt - regardless of how potentially shocking or upsetting the thoughts revealed by the naked bedrock of his soul may be.

Mr. Burt, who lives most of the year in London but spends considerable time at his oceanfront home on Schooner Head in Bar Harbor, has just released his latest volume of poetry and prose "Certain Windows," with the Linnet Press. He will be joining writers Jane Draycott and Elaine Feinstein for a reading at the London Review Bookshop on April 12. "Certain Windows" will be available locally at Sherman's book store in Bar Harbor.

In a recent interview, Mr. Burt explained that some of the pieces in the 64-page book have been published previously while others are brand new.

"It's as close as I will ever get to autobiographical," Mr. Burt said. "The book includes the poem 'Trade,' (see sidebar) which speaks of memories Mr. Burt has of his youth spending time on his father's charter fishing boat running out of Brannigan Inlet on the coast of New Jersey.

"I started going at age 5. I was a mate at 11 or 12," he recalled. "It's seen through the eyes of a very old man."

According to Mr. Burt, explor-

ing how he slowly veered away from that life on the water and into the world of law and business brings up fundamental questions about how anyone moves through life. "What interests me most is what really happened," he said. "Why didn't I see things more clearly? I'm going back and looking at a world I thought was worth having."

Not that Mr. Burt rejects the life he has now. "I am fortunate to live amidst tremendous beauty," he said. "I miss that world I came from. But had I stayed there, I would have been bored."

"Trying to trace the metaphysical echoes of how a person goes from swabbing fish guts and blood off the deck of a charter boat to being a multi-millionaire with homes on two continents naturally dredges up demons.

Titanic, yet often unfathomed spiritual conflicts arise, Mr. Burt noted, when people live one life in public but subscribe to a different set of truths in private. "In 50 years in law and business I've never had a problem of legality or ethics," Mr. Burt said. But, he continued, people in those worlds almost universally refuse to acknowledge the differences between what they do for a living and what they actually know in their hearts. "People didn't want to talk about that," he said.

One example is that being an attorney is often referred to as

being "a noble profession." What it is, he explained, is much more basic than that. "It's like whores. We're a service business," he said.

Along those lines, Mr. Burt said he would not want his own daughter to become a lawyer. He has even established several scholarship funds for college students, providing they don't go into law or theology - religion being another area Mr. Burt holds in particular disdain. When he begins writing, Mr. Burt agonizes over whether an idea will be sufficiently strong to come to fruition. "At the start of every new poem I worry, 'Will it run out, will it be bad,'" he said. As he plunges

deeper into focusing his mind on the one thought, he withdraws further and further from other people. "When I start a piece you don't want to be around me," he said. "The doors are shut and you don't even knock. Once I'm into it, then I get obsessed about it."

According to Mr. Burt, truth in writing requires a component of timelessness. "You hope people will still read you 50 years from now," he said. "You hope the work is sufficiently plainspoken so it doesn't date."

In the end, Mr. Burt does not see his writing as an indictment of any one profession or path in life, rather he views his works as a cautionary tale for those who still have time to make changes or who just want to live a more examined life. "Some of the poems in here are really going to bother people," he said. "This is just how I feel about it. It's show and tell. That's what art does."



ISLANDER PHOTOS BY MARK GOOD

Thistle Swann, above, sings the role of Marian the Librarian in the Connors-Emerson show choir's performance of "The Music Man." Below, the Pemetic Show Choir traveled to the Far East with their production of "Mulan." The show choirs were among the 43 groups to perform Saturday at the State Vocal Jazz Festival in Ellsworth. See more photos in an online gallery at fenceviewer.com.



Choirs hit high note at state fest

By Mark Good mgood@mdislander.com

Show choirs from Mount Desert Island High School and the Connors-Emerson School won second-place trophies Saturday at the State Vocal Jazz Festival at Ellsworth High School.

The high school's jazz choir and show choirs from Pemetic Elementary School and Trenton Elementary School also received accolades from judges.

The MDI High School Show Choir, directed by Bronwyn Kortge, took second-place honors in the High School Show Choir Division 2 competition for its performance of selections from the musical "Chess."

Finn Jordan was named outstanding male vocalist in the division. The pit orchestra, made up of student musicians, earned the division award for outstanding rhythm section.

"I was so pleased with the kids; they worked so hard," Ms. Kortge said.

Comments from the judges included the "show was incredibly original" and the "articulation was especially clear."

The show choir was one of two in the division to move on to the finals. Stearns High School also progressed and took top honors for its performance of a grouping of five spirituals.

Vocal groups are awarded ratings of "1" through "4," based on a point system. Groups scoring 88 and above get a "1" rating, which is the highest. Scores of 74 to 87 get a "2" rating and scores of 60 to 73 received a "3" rating. Soloists are scored in the same manner.

Ms. Kortge also directs the MDI High School Jazz Choir. The jazz choir performed "Hit Me With A Hot Note and Watch Me Bounce," "Embraceable You" and "Too Hot to Samba."

This is the first year for the jazz choir and Ms. Kortge set the bar high.

"My goal for the kids was trying to get a '1' rating," she said. The group fell a little short and received a high "2" rating, Ms. Kortge said.

Katie Forthofer and Caroline Homer received "1" ratings for their solos.

The Connors-Emerson School show choir, performing as the Bar Harbor Show Stoppers, took second place in the division 2 middle school competition for its performance of "The Music Man." First place went to Millinocket Middle School, with the Wagner Middle School placing third.

standing rhythm section award. All soloists received a "1" rating. Along with Ms. Swann, the soloists were Gala Coffman, Sara Todd, Olivia McCarthy, Sarah Soucek, Annie Painter, Grace Higgins, Emily McCarthy, Valerie Del Gid, Emerson Jeffery, Mary Paola, Theresa Krieg, Ben Hagle, Caroline Graber, Molly Brown, Jacob Sanner, Hunter Dougherty, Ava Drennan, Emma Jones, Nellie Horvath and Julia Link.

Show choir director Rebecca Edmondson attributes the group's success to the young musicians and their parents.

"It was truly teamwork between the students and the wonderfully supportive parents," she said. "We really became a family."

The judges' comments included, "This show has many moments of brilliance," and "Thank you for such a delightful beginning to the day."

Also competing in the middle school division 2 were the show choirs from Pemetic Elementary School in Southwest Harbor and the Trenton Elementary School.

The Pemetic Show Choir, directed by Ed Michaud, performed selections from Disney's "Mulan." The group received a "1" rating.

"I am very proud of their performance," Mr. Michaud said. "It was strong, powerful and well-executed."

Peter Jacobson received the division's outstanding male vocalist award. He, and all other soloists, received "1" ratings: they are Emily Homer, Jackie Higgins, Adriana Novella, Sara Norberg, Clara Johnson, Cordell Soper, Teddy Gentry, Miles Schuman, Nick Soper, Paige Bennett, Emma Forthofer, Rye Murray and Alden Schuman.

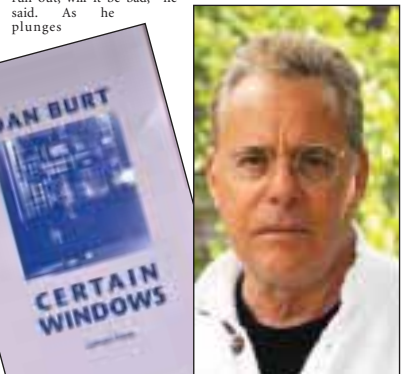
Judges complimented the group for the set and costumes and their "wonderful sound." One judge singled out "Reflection," which featured Ms. Bennett and Ms. Forthofer, saying the performance was really moving.

Trenton's show choir, directed by Seth Briggs, performed selections from the show "Wicked."

Mr. Briggs said the group turned in its best performance to date on Saturday.

"We improved our score quite a bit from the districts," he said. The soloists - Samantha Farley, Brittany Corson, Samantha Sawyer, Cassidy Parady, Ed Vanzura, and Cailyn Ray - all received "1" ratings.

The judges were impressed with the soloists, liked the musical selections and commented that the choir had "good volume for such a small group," Mr. Briggs said. arts.fenceviewer.com



ISLANDER PHOTO BY EARL BRECHLIN

Dan Burt

Trade

Barnegat inlet is a gauntlet In the sea where waves break on sand Bars that pen a bay, an unquiet Place, lethal when easterlies stand The long swells up to lumber White capped across the shoals And crumble in a khaki welter Of seaweed, mud and spray that rolls West through the cleft Atlantic coast.

Chartermen say little on the docks At dawn standing by for parties, For mates to ready boats - pull chocks,

Dog ports and stow necessities, Bait, ice and beer - for copper gleam To port ahead, gulls working grom From sand eel shoals the strippers gleam,

After noon the wind comes up, skipper's Go topside, shout Reel in! and head For home; crews gut the catch, scuppers Clog with viscera, decks turn red Till seawater sluices them teak Again and sunburned weekend Warriors, beers wedged, peaked,

Doze and in day-dreams pretend They're heroes home from the sea.

Lines secured, the anglers leave For row homes, showers, bowling club: But by slips boatmen remain, reeve Rod guides, observe the weather, rub Penetrant on rusted pliers And pause - to watch sedge sway on flats, Geese rise honking from wetland choirs, The sun decline, a whirl of gnats And the Light flick on at Barnegat.

Dan Burt

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Modern verse shared at library

SOUTHWEST HARBOR — The Southwest Harbor Library intends to transport people by the power of poetry with the help of Arnold Greenberg and Christian Barter.

Each poet will read from their book-length poems on Wednesday, April 13 at the Southwest Harbor Public Library, in a literary event that begins at 7 p.m.

Mr. Barter will read from his poem "Bye-Bye Land," which uses dramatic monologue and other post-modern devices to create a portrait of contemporary American life. His first collection, "The Singers I Prefer," was a finalist for the Lenore Marshall Prize from the Academy of American Poets. His work has appeared in Ploughshares, The Georgia Review,

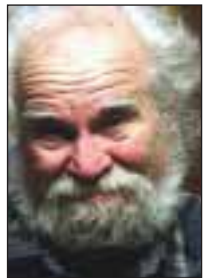
The American Scholar and has been featured on Poetry Daily and the Writer's Almanac. He was a Hodder Fellow in poetry at Princeton University and recently a fellow at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. He lives in Bar Harbor and is a crew leader for the trail crew at Acadia National Park.

Mr. Greenberg's poem "Sisyphus" is a dramatic monologue that expresses his thoughts about the human condition, the burden of moral consciousness and what it means to love and accept one's life while defying what he considers today's gods, the power elite of corporate America, the government and the military.

He has published three collections of poetry and a book of essays on education. He has been



Christian Barter



Arnold Greenberg

ISLANDER FILE PHOTOS