

FCBUZZ IN *LIVE* STAMFORD

WHERE THE PALACE THEATRE GIVES VOICE TO THE CITY

by RYAN ODINAK
Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County



What do a Vaudeville house and a 21st-century theatre have in common? Lots of variety! If we could turn back the clock to the roaring 1920s and step into the 1927 Thomas Lamb-designed Vaudeville house that is today the Palace Theatre, we might find dog acts, plate-spinners, actors, and comics. Restored and reopened in 1983 for live theatre, opera, dance, concerts, and art exhibitions in the Sackler Gallery, the Palace is still delivering plenty of variety as downtown Stamford's performance hub.

The word Vaudeville was derived from the expression *voix de ville*, or "voice of the city." Today, Stamford's performing groups provide a voice for many regional residents who perform or attend shows at the Palace, which is part of Stamford Center for the Arts (SCA). A multi-year improvement project has provided the Palace with physical improvements, and plans for the future include another lower-level venue and a learning center. The Rich Forum, the second SCA venue, is leased by NBC Universal as a television production studio. In addition to a full season of entertainment events, the Palace Theatre is also home to local voices including the Ballet School of Stamford,

Connecticut Ballet, Connecticut Grand Opera & Orchestra, Stamford Symphony, Stamford Young Artists Philharmonic, and the Namaskaar Foundation's World on Stage programs.

The Ballet School of Stamford focuses on ballet training for students aged from three to 13 in the school's studios housed in Stamford's renovated Old Town Hall. A free school spring performance at the Palace Theater gives more than 11,000 children the opportunity to see ballets by world-renowned choreographers. Connecticut Ballet also provides dance education and is the state's professional ballet company, performing a diverse repertoire of new works, masterworks, and great story ballets. The company presents high-quality professional classical and contemporary ballet. Works like *Giselle*, *Coppélia*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Nutcracker* all can be seen at the Palace.

The Namaskaar Foundation's World on Stage mission is to create interest in Indian performing arts among non-Indian audiences by including music and dance presentations from other countries in its programming. Since its inception, Namaskaar has presented more than 100 plays, concerts, and workshops by eminent artists of India. It also presents the annual Festival of World Music and Dance at the Palace, with multicultural artists representing Africa, China, Ecuador, Spain, India, Ireland, and Poland.

Every great city has an orchestra and Stamford is no exception. The Stamford Symphony, led by music director Eckart Preu, is an ensemble of professional musicians from New York City and its surrounding areas. The symphony's regular and recital season is performed at the Palace Theatre and is complimented by performances at

Clockwise from left: Eckart Preu Conducting the Stamford Symphony Orchestra; Young Dancers from Ballet School of Stamford; Dancers from Ballet School of Stamford



several other venues including a mini-concert series for young people at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center and a free summer pops concert in Stamford's Columbus Park. The Connecticut Grand Opera & Orchestra presents world-class operatic and orchestral performances featuring innovative productions and international talent at the Palace as well. Stamford Young Artists Philharmonic cultivates the players and audiences of the future by providing opportunities to learn and perform while entertaining the community.

To compliment all the great live programming being generated in the community, the Palace opens its doors for benefits and corporate and private events. No matter what your taste, you are likely to find it offered at the Palace Theatre at some time during the year.

To find out what's happening in Stamford and the other cities and towns of Fairfield County visit www.FCBuzz.org presented by the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County. This arts and culture resource offers ticket and event information for music, theatre, visual arts, history, lectures, literature, kids and families, classes, workshops, social events and much more.

For more information contact the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County by emailing info@CulturalAllianceFC.org, or calling 203-256-2329 or visiting our Web site at www.CulturalAllianceFC.org.