

DOWNTOWN MONITOR

Winter Magic Weekends Wrap Up at Campus Martius



Winter Magic Weekends conclude on Friday and Saturday, December 16 & 17 at **Campus Martius Park in Downtown Detroit** (pictured). Starting at 7 p.m. each night, this weekend's theme is *Home for the Holidays*.

Winter Magic's final weekend event offers holiday drink tastings, featuring fresh and festive twists on classic cocktails and an opportunity to experience Michigan wines, craft beers and spirits, plus beverages from all around the globe served up by some of Detroit's best mixologists. The event will take place within a 10,000 square foot heated structure that provides clear views of the fabulous Campus Martius Park Christmas tree.

Attendees are also asked to don their ugliest Christmas sweaters, continuing an annual Winter Magic holiday tradition. Live entertainment, a popular 'selfie' station and a keepsake commemorative glass will also add to the festivities. Food will also be available for purchase from some of the city's most popular establishments. This event is for adults 21 and older. Tickets are \$20. For tickets and more information see wintermagicweekends.com.

Other Campus Martius Park seasonal favorites include *Carriage Rides*

throughout Downtown on Fridays, December 16 & 23 and Saturdays, December 17 & 24 beginning at 6 p.m., and Sunday, December 18 beginning at noon.

Special Holiday Carriage Rides will happen on Monday, December 26 through Thursday, December 29 from 6 p.m. - midnight. *Carriage Rides* cost \$5 for children and \$10 for adults, with private rides available at \$40.

Continuing through Sunday, December 18 at **Cadillac Square**, is the *Kidz Zone* with *Hands-On-Creation Stations*, *Make-A-Gift* workstations, a *Winter Magic Maze*, *short animated films*, and special *Kidz drink specials* available for purchase.

Kids can also *Visit with Santa* at **One Campus Martius** through December 23, with Santa hosting children at 4 p.m. on December 15, 16, 22 and 23, and on December 17 & 18 at 12 noon.

Street Performers will also appear throughout Campus Martius at various times during the weekend days leading up to New Year's Day.

For more information, see campusmartiuspark.org. Campus Martius Park is located at 800 Woodward Avenue, at the intersection of W. Fort St. and Michigan Avenue, in Downtown Detroit.

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WWE's Smackdown at JLA



World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) will return for *WWE Smackdown Live* at Joe Louis Arena on Tuesday, December 20 at 7:15 p.m. as part of the *Farewell Season at The Joe*. This Smackdown event will be the first visit to Detroit since its move to a live format.

The roster will include appearances by many of the WWE Superstar favorites live in action including WWE World Champion AJ Styles, Dean Ambrose, Randy Orton, Bray Wyatt, Women's Champion Becky Lynch, Nikki Bella and Intercontinental Champion The Miz (pictured). The card is subject to change.

Tickets range from \$23-\$123 and are available at OlympiaEntertainment.com, The Fox Theatre and Joe Louis Arena box offices, Hockeytown Authentics in Troy (without service charge), at all Ticketmaster locations and ticketmaster.com. To charge tickets by phone call (800) 745-3000.

For additional information call (313) 471-6611. Joe Louis Arena is located on Detroit's Riverfront, just west of Cobo Hall, in Downtown Detroit.

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Fri, Sat, Dec 16, 17, 7:30PM

Opera Modo presents: *Three Decembers*



Three Decembers is a 90-minute opera in one act by composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer, based on Terrence McNally's original script *Some Christmas Letters*. The opera tells the story of a famous stage actress – Madeline Mitchell (mezzo-soprano) – and her two adult children: Beatrice (soprano) and Charlie (baritone).

The drama takes place over three decades of the AIDS crisis (1986, 1996 and 2006), each section recalling the events of a December as the characters struggle to connect when family secrets are revealed. Adults \$27, Students \$15

Tickets on sale now online:

www.thecarrcenter.org

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SYMPHONIC NEWS



Ruth's Music Notes...

Ruth Crystal-Zaromp

It's been a big week, but it is quieting down now, providing time for fresh breathing. There were two major events during this past week that are worth reporting. Renowned pianist Ivan Moshchuk gave a solo recital at the **Cranbrook Music Guild** this past Tuesday. The music is meant to commemorate pieces that were performed by Emil Gilels, who still serves as a vivid towering figure of performance for many of us. Gilels came to the U.S. for a visit from the Soviet Union. At the time, there was significant KGB controlling oversight over him wherever he went. But for those who have maintained some of his recordings, he is certainly near the top of the list. This year, 2016, is the hundredth year to Gilels' birth.

Moshchuk's program at **Christ Church Cranbrook** included Mozart's *Sonata in C Major, K.330*, Beethoven's *Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op 13 (Pathetique)*, Chopin's *Prelude in D-sharp Minor, Op. 45*, going directly into his *Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58*. For an encore, Moshchuk performed a sonata by Prokofiev. Moshchuk, who has appeared here many times in the past, is a rising star of wide repertoire and incredible technique. We will probably have future opportunities to hear him, and I would highly recommend such events when they arise.

Future programs of the **Cranbrook Music Guild** include the Morgenstern Trio on Wed., Feb. 15, and the Jasper String Quartet on Tues., April 11. For further information, phone (248) 853-5170 or check cranbrookmusicguild.org.

Jason Odell Williams is a playwright as well as an actor. He's married to Charlotte Cohn. Jason Odell Williams is an Emmy® Award nominated writer and producer. His play *Handle With Care* opened Off-Broadway at The Westside Theatre on Dec. 15, 2013 star-



Pianist William Bolcom

ring Broadway legend Carol Lawrence, directed by Karen Carpenter, and was a NYT Critics' Pick.

Handle with Care, as it is being currently shown (through Dec. 24) at the **Jewish Ensemble Theatre**, features four people, who it seems, speak four different languages, or should I say dialects. Ayelet (performed by Annie Keris) is an Israeli, who speaks very little English but is well accomplished in the art of charades. She is visiting the USA with her grandmother (Henrietta Hermelin Weinberg), who is a character of her own. The two additional characters relate to the motel where the women are staying. Terrence, driver of a delivery

van, (performed by Dan Johnson) speaks and behaves in a manner that is reminiscent of Lionel from *All in the Family*. Josh (performed by Michael Lopetrone) is the cavalier who is also reminiscent of the one whom the grandmother had dated many years ago. The story is one that follows through from generation to generation.

Ayelet introduces quite a bit of *Hebrew* into the show. Some of her fast tirades sounded like gibberish, which I couldn't quite follow, but some slower sentences were genuine Hebrew, rather well pronounced for someone who doesn't speak the language. However, there is absolutely no need to know Hebrew to enjoy this show. The Hebrew in this play was written by Charlotte Cohn. This show is truly amusing in its manners and philosophy. At the same time, it is reminiscent of scenes of everybody's personal life. For further information, check www.JetTheatre.org or call (248) 788-2900.

Recommended for this week are composer and pianist William Bolcom and Mezzo-Soprano Joan Morris at Kerrytown Concert House on Friday, December 16, at 8 p.m.



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Downtown Monitor is now in its 53rd year of continuous publication, and is circulated free throughout Downtown, and to all points of Greater Detroit.

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CITY SCENE



Hartford's 65th Annual Performance of Handel's Messiah

Laydell Harper

Handel's Messiah is one of the brightest of our holiday traditions. The season would be incomplete without it and listeners are still in awe more than 250 years after the composer's death.

On December 18 at 4 p.m., **Hartford Memorial Baptist Church (HMBC)**, will celebrate 65 successful and glorious years

of presenting *Handel's Messiah*. This is a rare opportunity to hear some of the most acclaimed soloists in a local performance at no charge and open to the public – an exciting chance for the entire family to make this a family holiday tradition.

The performance will include: the Inter-generational Mass Choir with the Hartford Cathedral Choir, Male Chorus and the

Jubilee Chorus along with the Detroit School of Arts Achievers Ladies Ensemble and Vision Male Ensemble, and Orchestra. Guests Soloists include: Marliisa Hudson, Soprano; Louise Rogan, Mezzo Soprano; James Moore, Tenor; Dr. Theodore Jones, Bass; Conducted by Dr. Robert Harris.

Celebrating his 80th birthday this month, Dr. Charles G. Adams, HMBC Pastor, will again have an

active role in the performance as he lends his rich tenor voice to the choir. Adams has sung tenor in the *Handel's Messiah* performance since he was 16 years old. He's even sung the tenor solo a few times.

Again this year, Pastor Adams and the Hartford congregation would like to offer a special invitation to Detroit Public School students and their parents to at-

tend this wonderful annual holiday event.

"It's our gift to Detroit and it offers an opportunity to reach out to a diverse public throughout the area," said Dr. Charles G. Adams. "We're proud to present this ageless production year after year."

The guest conductor for Hartford's *Handel's Messiah* will be Dr. Robert Harris – a choral conductor, clinician and adjudicator. The soprano will be Marliisa Hudson. She has been described as a 'superb lyric coloratura' and as an international concert performer, she's been a featured vocalist in Bulgaria, Paraguay, and in Brazil in 2015. British mezzo-soprano, Louise Rogan will also perform. Rogan has been a young artist in residency, with Opera Colorado as well as with the Chicago Opera Theater. Hartford's own James Moore, tenor and Dr. Theodore Jones, bass baritone, are performers in concert, opera and oratorio throughout the country and abroad. For the last several years their performances in Hartford's *Messiah* have elevated this event to new heights of artistry.

The event is free to all, but donations will be accepted.

For more information call (313) 861-1300 or visit hmbcdetroit.org. Hartford Memorial Baptist Church is located at 18700 James Couzens Hwy., in Detroit.



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New Years Eve Jam in Trenton

Jazz flutist Alexander Zonjic (pictured) and his award-winning band will host *New Year's Eve Jam 2017* featuring special guest, Grammy nominated keyboardist Jeff Lorber along with *Serieux* and their *Temptations Motown Review*.

The *New Year's Eve Celebration* will take place Saturday, December 31 in the intimate **Trenton Village Theatre**. Doors will open at 9:30 p.m. and the concert/party will take place from 10 p.m. to midnight featuring a champagne toast at midnight, gourmet desserts and coffee, door prizes and photo opportunities with the artists.

The historic Trenton Village Theatre is a state-of-the-art live performance venue, built in art deco style and recently renovated. It serves as the home of continuing theatre productions and special concerts in a lovely and intimate setting.

Grammy nominated jazz keyboardist Jeff Lorber helped pioneer fusion jazz, combining elements of funk, R and B, rock and electric jazz. He went on to be a key musician in contemporary jazz. Lorber is noted for introducing an unknown saxophonist Kenny G on the Lorber Jazz Fusion album *Wizard Island*.

Serieux is a Detroit-based, traditional soul vocal group that was founded in 1998 by Larry Griffin, Valencia Taylor, Donovan Johnson and Robert Grande to recreate the style of classic soul groups like the Temptations, the Four Tops and the Manhattans. Splitting their time between Detroit and Las Vegas, *Serieux* has opened for the likes of Earth, Wind and Fire, The Whispers and other major acts.

Flutist Zonjic is known for his cool jazz grooves and exciting shows. He has shared the stage with such greats as Kenny G, Bob James, Jeff Lorber and Keiko Matsui. In addition Zonjic is the artistic director of numerous music festivals throughout Michigan and Canada including the *Jazz on the River*, *Cabin Fever Jazz Festival* and *Shoreline Jazz Festival on Lake Michigan*.

For tickets and more information call (313) 964-5050 or see www.dypac.com. Tickets are \$50 per person. The Trenton Village Theatre is located at 2447 W. Jefferson in downtown Trenton.



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December 26, 2016: Closed • New Year's Eve: 9am - 2pm
January 1, 2017: Closed • January 2, 2017: Closed

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Free Family Fun at Historical Museum

The Detroit Historical Museum will be open all week between the Christmas and New Year's holidays and will be offering **Free** programming for the whole family, Monday, December 26 through Saturday, December 31.

Events during the week include: Take photos with fashionable props and create your own fashion designs with "fashion plates" and coloring sheets in the *Fashion D.Fined: The Past, Present and Future of Detroit Fashion* exhibit, which is in the final days of its run. Also design your own record album cover in the Allesee Gallery of Culture and take part in a social media history hunt throughout the museum.

The Museum will also screen favorite films from their film series all week at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the auditorium.

Scheduled movies are:

Monday, December 26- *Detroit: Remember When, Made in the Motor City*

Tuesday, December 27 - *Detroit: Remember When, Houses of Worship*

Wednesday, December 28 - *Detroit: Remember When, History of Detroit Television*

Thursday, December 29 - *Detroit: Remember When, Motor City Memories*

Friday, December 30 - *Detroit Mob Confidential*

On Saturday December 31, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., kids can make their own noisemaker, write out their wishes for 2017 and create their own time capsule letter. At 11:55 a.m., all will gather in the Streets of Old Detroit for a countdown to noon, complete with a balloon drop.

The Detroit Historical Museum is located at 5401 Woodward Ave. (NW corner of Kirby) in Midtown Detroit. The Museum is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free for all, all the time. Parking in the Museum's lot is \$7.

For more information call (313) 833-1805 or see detroithistorical.org.



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CINEMA CULTURE



Rogue One: Same Old Star Wars

By Paul Arlon

The latest installment of the apparently endless *Star Wars* saga, *Rogue One*, will be showing everywhere on the planet by this weekend. But, geewhiz, I'm getting close to saying, 'If you've seen one, you've seen them all.' I've heard that Disney has plans to make one new *Star Wars* movie for the next seven years ahead.

Here we have the ragtag Rebellion waging war against the invincible Empire. How many turns of the handle are left before this gumball machine is empty, anyway? Starring the almost-attractive Felicity Jones as Jyn Erso, the daughter of Galen Erso (Mads Mikkelsen), the scientist directly responsible for building the Empire's most feared uber-weapon, the Death Star. Uh oh, better get a band of hearty outlaws together and in-between exchanging witty

retorts with the turncoat's Droid and gettin' busy and stuff, destroy the heck out of this bad Death Star!

The director here, Gareth Edwards, has done everything possible to make Jones, an otherwise pretty girl, into a ratty androgynous Tomboy. As a matter of fact, the film's characters are all crafted to look like none of the rebels practiced proper hygiene – dirty, unshaven to a one, and no change of clothes from beginning to end. I'm thinkin' the Empire could have sussed out this crowd by using just a couple of rebel-sniffing Stormtrooper dog-droids.

The script, written by Chris Weitz and Tony Gilroy, is a basic rehash of the entirety of the *Star Wars* story — an inter-planetary *Perils of Pauline*, where our heroine, Jyn, and her patchwork group of followers, including rebel Captain Cassian Andor



L to R: Sassy Droid, Felicity Jones, Diego Luna

(Diego Luna), the blind Force monk Chirrut Imwe (Donnie Yen), his well-armed bodyguard Baze Malbus (Wen Jiang), a defected pilot Bodhi Rook (Riz Ahmed), and, of course, a smart-metal-assed first-generation Droid (voiced by *Firefly* alumni, Alan Tudyk). Notice anything about this bunch? As one of my savvy social-observer reviewer friends noted: All the rebel

forces are made up of minorities and the all-powerful evil Empire is made up of gaunt, aging white folks. Well, La Dee Da. Another mass media shell in the politically-correct Hollywood propaganda shotgun.

Be this as it may, I would most compare this script to a video game scavenger hunt, albeit with superior special effects (probably the best in the

business, from George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch), where one must battle obstacles to find an object, which leads to more obstacles and another object, which leads to...you get the idea. The ultimate objective here is to disabuse the Empire from using the Death Star on all of those parts of the universe that won't bend a knee to the Imperial throne. And, it really is just one thing after another for Jyn and her band of bandit good guys.

Let's run down the list: Great Special Effects: Check! Totally Familiar Story: Check! Predictable: Check! Billion Dollar Box Office: Check! Worth Seeing On The Big Screen: Half a Check! See it in 3-D at a matinee, if you absolutely must see it first-run. But, if you can wait for the BluRay, or see it in another wired way, I think it would be okay to see it later, as well. Because the story won't change in the meantime, and believe me, it won't be any more exciting if you see it now. ★★

LIVE THEATRE



Carole King is 'Beautiful' at the Fisher

By Marian Sakalauskas

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical has opened at the Fisher Theatre with enough joy and enthusiasm to set the right mood for the upcoming holiday season. The award-winning Broadway hit is about the early life and career of the groundbreaking singer/songwriter.

Very early in the play, Carole says, "Sometimes life goes the way you want and sometimes it doesn't. But when it doesn't, you find something beautiful." This seems to be the underlying theme of this musical.

The musical opens with King's June 1971 appearance at Carnegie Hall and flashes back to 1958 when sixteen-year-old Carole (Julia Knitel) heads into New York City to try to sell her first song to music producer Don Kirshner (Curt Bouril). Carole has wild and wonderful dreams, and her innocence and drive make her



Julia Knitel is Carole King in 'Beautiful'

incredibly appealing.

Carole soon meets Gerry Goffin (Liam Tobin) who collaborates with her, writing lyrics for her music. They marry, and although the musical collaboration works, he is a rather narcissistic and

philandering husband. When she finally cuts him loose, her career really seems to take off.

Ben Brantley of the *New York Times* called *Beautiful* a bio-musical and a jukebox musical. In many ways it is a Carole King song

sheet revue overlaid with a plot which paints the struggles of the young musician. King and Goffin wrote songs and other artists performed them. As soon as the duo come up with a number, we see a performance of the piece. They wrote songs for the Drifters, the Shirelles, Janelle Woods, Little Eva, the Righteous Brothers, and many others.

The plot is enhanced by the story of two other characters who were writing songs at the same time as King and Goffin. They are Barry Mann (Ben Fankhauser) and Cynthia Weil (Erika Olson). The competition between the two songwriting teams is vigorous and adds additional songs to the repertoire.

Of course, the music is familiar and delightful, but the real strength of this show is Julia Knitel's characterization of Carole King. She is touchingly modest and sensitive. She is convinced that she can write a good song, but she seems uncomfortable performing them. It is as if she doesn't feel she deserves the spotlight. Several times she says, "Oh, I couldn't sing

in front of all these people."

The playwright for this musical is Douglas McGrath. He has said that writing about people who are still living is very challenging. Consequently, he spent many hours interviewing the songwriters about everything in their lives in order to flesh out the characters and bring them to the stage.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical first opened on Broadway at the Stephen Sondheim Theatre in January of 2014. The Tony Award winning show is still running in New York and breaking box office records.

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical runs through January 8, 2017. Tuesday through Saturday performances are at 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinées are at 2 p.m. and Sunday evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are on sale at Ticketmaster, by phone at (800) 982-2787, or online at broadwayindetroit.com. They may also be purchased at the Fisher Theatre Box Office.

The Fisher Theatre is located at 3011 West Grand Blvd., in Detroit.

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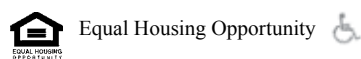
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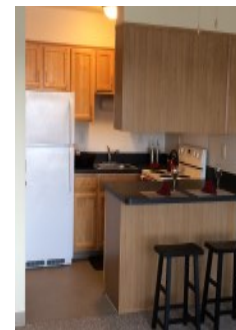
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