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Festival that celebrates women, the arts just keeps growing

By John P. Cleary • Correspondent • February 25, 2010, 12:00 am

Susan Nagle, organizer of the Festival of Women and the Arts, says she is amazed at how the event has grown and grown.

"In our first year, we had 12 events," she said. "The next year, we had two dozen. This year, we will have over three dozen events associated with the festival."

What started as an outreach of the Cantata Singers, a choral group led by Will Wickham, now involves dozens of groups and individual artists in four counties. Performances and exhibitions fill the month of March to highlight the contributions and importance of women in a vast spectrum of art. This year, it will run from Sunday through March 30, and feature events ranging from **concerts**, art exhibits, lectures, tours and literary events.

Nagle said she thinks the opportunity to be part of a larger movement, is what has drawn so many participants.

"I think the collaboration, the cross-promotion is welcoming," she said. "I think people in this region welcome the cultural opportunities available. And I think there is an understanding that women have been an underserved population."

The Cantata singers will open the festival with a **concert** at 3 p.m. Sunday at the First Presbyterian Church in Horseheads. "J.S. Bach and the Ladies: Women's Influence in the Time and Music of Bach," will include work by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and Marianne Martinez, Nagle said. A reception celebrating the festival will follow.

The concert and festival will offer a chance not just to recognize contemporary women artists, but also the work of women artists from the past whose work was, perhaps, hidden or underappreciated, Nagle said.

Other events range from artist exhibits - one artist, Rita Rhodes, is exhibiting at seven different venues during the month - to music, dance and readings.

Among the changes this year is an expansion to three evenings of "Readings by Women Who Write," organized by the Zonta Club of Elmira and the American Association of University Women. One of those readings will take place at the Montour Falls Memorial Library and involve members of the Watkins Glen Writers' Club and the Zonta Club of Watkins Glen, marking the festival's first extension into Schuyler County.

Tioga County, NY, is also now on the festival map, thanks to festival-linked performances of "Steel Magnolias" at the Waverly Storefront Theatre.

Among the other local groups participating are the Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes, the Crystal Chords, Valley Folk, the Chemung Valley [History Museum](#), the Elmira Garden Club, the Near Westside Neighborhood Association, the Chemung Valley Fiber Arts Guild and the Piecemakers Quilters Guild. Individual artists and groups will exhibit work at venues ranging from the Arnot Art Museum and the Rockwell Museum of Western Art to the Corning Community College Academic and Workforce Development Center and the Twin Tiers Racquet Club.

"It's amazing," said Martha Horton, who is helping to organize the festival. "We are thrilled with how it has all developed.

"People look for word to it now," she said. "What began as a twinkle in Will Wickham's eye three years

Festival of Women in the Arts

Here is the calendar of activities for the 2010 events:

Sunday

"J. S. Bach and the Ladies: Women's Influence in the Time and Music of Bach", First Presbyterian Church, Horseheads, 3 p.m.

Monday and continuing through March

"Martha Robertshaw Murals," Big Flats Town Hall; "Women Artists in the Rockwell Museum of Western Art Collection," self-guided highlight tour, Rockwell Museum of Western Art, Corning; "Nevelsonesze Constructivism Sculptures by Rita Rhodes," Corning Country Club; "Pastoral Patchworks by Rita Rhodes," Twin Tiers Racquet Club, Big Flats; "The Works of E.C. Alumna: Diane Janowski," Gannett-Tripp Library, Elmira College, daily 9 a.m. - 9 p.m., March 1 to April 2; "Piecemaker Quilters Charity Quilts"

and "Chemung Valley Fiber Arts Guild-Entangled Fibers," Steele Memorial Library, Elmira.

Tuesday and March 9, 16, 23, 30

"Women Artists in the Rockwell Museum of Western Art Collection," docent-led highlight tour, Rockwell Museum of Western Art, Corning, 1 p.m.

Wednesday

"Inside Out," Mavin Ambrose, discussion of the artist's multilayered silk drawings and paintings, Big Flats Community Center, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 4, and March 11, 18, 25

"Women's History Lecture Series," Chemung Valley History Museum, Elmira, 7 p.m.

March 5

"The Feminine," CCC Academic & Workforce Development Center, Elmira, opening reception 5-7 p.m., then 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., weekdays, March 5-April 9.

March 6

"Encouraging Girls in the Art of Science," Tanglewood Nature Center, Elmira, 2:30-4 p.m.; "Belly Dance in 2010," 171 Cedar Arts Center, Corning, 7 p.m.

March 7

"Weather Gone Wild," Cascata Winery, Watkins Glen, opening reception 2-5 p.m.; The Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes Family Concert, Clemens Center, Elmira, 4 p.m.

March 9

"Sage Daughters of the Muses: The gentle concord of music, poetry and art," Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, opening reception 6 p.m.

March 10

"Readings by Women Who Write, a Zonta/AAUW Project," Zonta House, Elmira, 7 p.m.

March 11

"Women Artists Invitational," George Waters Gallery, Campus Center, Elmira College, opening reception 5-7 p.m., through April 8; Chemung Valley Fiber Arts Guild Needle Felt Spring Sampler Workshop, Steele Memorial Library, Elmira, 6:30 p.m.

March 14

A Spring Celebration of Women in the Arts concert, Cohen Middle School, Elmira Heights, 2 p.m.

March 19

"Steel Magnolias," Waverly Storefront Theatre, opening night. Check dates and times at www.cantatasingers.com

March 20

Valley Folk presents Anne Hills in concert, 171 Cedar Arts Center, Corning, 7:30 p.m.

March 22

"Artists with Green Thumbs," Elmira Garden Club House, 426 Fulton St., 6:30-8 p.m.

March 23

"Readings by Women Who Write, a Zonta/AAUW Project," The Tea Chest, Corning, 4-6 p.m.

March 24

"Standin' in the Shoe: Spoken word lifesongs of Black America," Vicie Rolling, Ernie Davis Community Center, Elmira, 6:30 p.m.

March 25

Herbal Artist, Near Westside Neighborhood, 353 Davis St., Elmira, 10 a.m.

March 27

Sisters in Sound present "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous," Trinity Episcopal Church, Elmira, 4 p.m.

March 30

"Readings by Women Who Write, a Zonta/AAUW Project," Montour Falls Memorial Library, 6-8 p.m.