

Arts Alive!

Exhibiting artist off to BMoA

Camille Gavin

If you're looking for a cool and culturally rich place to entertain out-of-town guests, consider visiting the Bakersfield Museum of Art in Central Park.

On Wednesday morning David Ligare, one of the artists whose work is now on display at the museum, will be the guest speaker for the monthly First Wednesday program.

The artist's current exhibit, "River, Mountain, Sea," includes large-scale panoramic work as well as a selection of small-scale preparatory studies. His lecture titled, "Scenic Philosophy," will focus on landscape art techniques.

Now known as a California contemporary realist painter, Ligare is a native of Oak Park, Ill., and attended Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. His paintings are held by the Museum of Modern Art in New York as well as prominent galleries in London, Madrid and Florence, Italy.

Dance club

Laf-a-Lot Dance Club is Hawaii-bound — well, almost. Actually they've chosen a Polynesian theme for their event on Saturday, according to Shari Fortino, the club's president and a professional dancer and singer.



"Usually I give the free lesson before the dance starts," she said, "but this time I'm going to do it during the first intermission, about 7:45 p.m."

Live music will be provided by the Bakersfield Jazz Orchestra featuring vocalist Mike



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BAKERSFIELD MUSEUM OF ART

"Mountain" is by David Ligare, whose "River, Mountain, Sea" exhibit is currently on display at the Bakersfield Museum of Art, will speak at the August First Wednesday event.

Smothers. Membership in the club is open to any interested person.

Call to artists

The Arts Council of Kern is looking for artists with an inspirational touch for A Taste of Grace in October. Organized by St. Paul Episcopal Church, the event benefits the Bakersfield Homeless Center and the Alliance Against Family Violence & Sexual Assault. Local artists will be able to exhibit and sell their work at the night of wine tasting, music and silent auctions. The council is seeking 20

artists whose work is spiritual, religious or inspirational. To apply, artists should submit an artist statement explaining their work, contact information (email and phone number) and two JPEG samples. Submissions will only be accepted electronically, emailed to info@kernarts.org. (Artists must be able to attend the Oct. 3 fundraiser at the Gardens at Mill Creek.) Artists will be notified in September if they have been selected.

Camille Gavin's "Arts Alive" column appears on Thursday. Write to her via email at gavinarts@aol.com.

GO & DO

Laf-a-Lot Dance Club

When: 6:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday

Where: Kern City Clubhouse, 1003 Pebble Beach Drive

Admission: \$10

Information: 324-2231

First Wednesday: Artist David Ligare

When: 9:30 to 11 a.m. Wednesday

Where: Bakersfield Museum of Art, 1930 R St.

Admission: \$5, \$4 for seniors, \$2 for students, free for members

Information: 323-7219

Call to artists

Seeking: Artists whose work is either spiritual, religious, and/or inspirational for A Taste of Grace fundraiser on Oct. 3

When: Submissions taken now until the end of August; artist must be able to attend the event

To submit: Email artist statement, contact information and two work samples (JPEGs) to info@kernarts.org

Information: 324-9000 or info@kernarts.org

Review

'Padre' a novel way to enjoy live theater

BY CAMILLE GAVIN
Contributing columnist

Hearty laughter, exaggerated acting and general craziness are key elements in any melodrama and at the locally owned Gaslight Melodrama the fun starts the minute you walk in the door.

Case in point: At last Friday's opening of "A Night at the Padre" my friends and I were greeted by a mustachioed actor (Josh Lubatti) who stayed in character by wearing a chef's hat and keeping his nose in the air as he spoke with a French accent while seating us at a table for four.

More about the show in a moment but despite Lubatti's "Frenchness," I don't want to mislead you; Gaslight doesn't serve European cuisine.

Its snack bar, which is run by

'A Night at the Padre'

When: 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday; runs through Sept. 13

Where: Gaslight Melodrama & Music Hall, 12748 Jomani Drive

Admission: \$12 to \$23

Information: 587-3377

cast members before the curtain rises and during intermissions, offers what I'd call an all-American menu — hot dogs, pizza, nachos, beer by the pitcher, popcorn by the bucketful, soda pop and even ice cream bars.

Audience participation is a given and if it happens to be your birthday or wedding anniversary, be prepared to be sung to

The theater itself is cool and cozy — it seats approximately 140 — and it's a novel way to enjoy live theater in a family-friendly setting during the dog days of summer.

Now, as for the show itself, writer-director Michael Prince, who has a knack for reminding us that we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously, especially when it comes to local landmarks, has selected as his latest venture the Padre Hotel and the late Milton "Spartacus" Miller's rooftop rocket.

As the title indicates, the play is set around the reception desk in the lobby of the Padre Hotel.

And it's not just any night but the opening night gala, with glamorous celebrities like Lady Holiday (Ali Dougherty) and

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GASLIGHT MELODRAMA & MUSIC HALL

Josh Lubatti as Wolfgang Pluck and Jennifer Prince as Carla Calamity appear in "A Night at the Padre."

Eye Street

Well-traveled entertainer on terra firma

Cruise life was tough, but rewarding

BY CAMILLE GAVIN
Contributing writer

Most travelers who have taken a cruise have a story to tell, but none that I've heard can equal Jason McClain's tale.

The multi-talented entertainer's odyssey began two years ago on board a luxury cruise ship where fares range as high as \$8,000 per person and ended on June 21 at a wedding in Brugge, Belgium.

No, not his wedding, but that of the daughter of a couple he met while working for Silversea Cruise Lines, which is based in Monaco.

"In 2012, I was chosen to be part of the inaugural cast to sail on board the (company's) vessel Silver Spirit," the Bakersfield native said in a recent phone conversation.

"I was one of its six resident 'Artists of Silversea' for a six-month voyage spanning from the Caribbean to the Black Sea and all through the Mediterranean."

McClain, who has been in the arts and entertainment business since his teens, auditioned in San



PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON MCCLAIN

Jason McClain, left, is seen in Brugge, Belgium, where he attended the June wedding of Charlotte Vandembulcke-Lagae, the daughter of Nicole Vanbecleare-Lagae, whom he met while working for Silverseas Cruise Lines.

Francisco.

He was 41 at the time and his age turned out to be an asset.

"They didn't want teenyboppers," he said. "They wanted people who can have a conversation with the guests — socializing was our secondary job."

Artists were selected based on their musical backgrounds and their ability to perform a wide variety of styles and genres.

Silversea is a five-star, high-end cruise line, he said, and guests get many amenities not offered by

other companies. The ship he was on, which has five restaurants, carried 500 passengers, and the service ratio was about two staff for every one person. All accommodations are ocean-view suites, and more than 85 percent have private verandas.

In an effort to establish instant relationships, the artists were required to study each passenger's photo and know his or her name before they came on board.

"I was supervisor of the cast and I had a certain set

of duties," he said. "But we all felt very special and we were given a very long leash."

In 2013, he again was hired, this time sailing aboard the Silver Cloud, boarding in London and sailing around the British Isles, then to Iceland, France, and into the Mediterranean.

During his two-year contract with Silversea, he visited 27 countries and three continents.

Over the past year or so, McClain has kept in touch with the Belgian family via Facebook and email. When their daughter became engaged, they invited him to the ceremony.

"Being able to visit them in their country and attend their daughter's wedding was something I'll never forget," he said. "The reception was at a chateau; I was there as a friend, not an entertainer but I did sing about nine songs."

McClain returned to Bakersfield earlier this year and has no plans to return to

cruising, even though the experience was well worth it.

"Counting three weeks of rehearsal I was gone for seven months at a time and you literally have to abandon everything and everybody," he said. "Communicating (with family and friends) became very arduous and slow."

His Kern County roots are deep: His grandmother came here from Kansas during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s; his mother, Carla McClain, is active in local theater; and his father, the late Mario di Molfetto, once had a dance band.

Since his return he's joined a jazz group, directed "Stages," a Los Angeles show starring Kama Ruby and in April played opposite Jennifer Resolme in Stars' production of "Company."

An East High graduate, McClain has studied visual art and theater at Bakersfield College and Cal State Bakersfield. He has appeared in numerous



PHOTO COURTESY OF JARRED CLOWES

Jason McClain, bottom, is no stranger to the stage in Bakersfield. In 2011, he was a victim in "Sweeney Todd," as portrayed by Jack Slider in a Spotlight Theatre production.

shows for both Bakersfield Music Theatre and Stars.

Slightly tongue-in-cheek, he claims his most notable achievement is having starred as Joseph in each of BMT's three separate productions of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

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pompous millionaires like Herbert Von Harrington (Jay Stodder), said to be the richest man in California, expected to arrive momentarily.

Suddenly, things begin to go terribly wrong — the food delivery truck hasn't arrived, the chef quits, the singer's backup band cancels, plus the wait staff and housekeeping crew have gone AWOL.

As you might guess, this puts hotel manager Carla Calamity, wonderfully played by comedian Jennifer Prince — who is a hilarious blend of Carol Burnett and Shirley MacLaine in their prime — into a world-class tizzy. Her only allies are an inexperienced personal assistant (Emily Candia) and a lowly bellboy portrayed by Shawn Rader, who is also one heck of a dancer.

Yet the real villain in the piece is Carla's old school chum James Jameson (Michael Prince) aided and abetted, at least initially, by a fictitious photographer from The Californian called Felix Flavin (Austin Whitten).

The costumes, designed by Diane Baker, are outstanding, especially the form-fitting gowns worn by Dougherty, which are enhanced by eye-popping jewelry with plenty of bling.

There are a number of very nice dance routines within the show and Jennifer

Prince is credited with the choreography.

In addition to the amenities I mentioned in the beginning, you also get two-for-your-money in terms of entertainment on any night at Gaslight because the melodrama is followed by a vaudeville revue produced by pianist Warren Dobson.

His production for this show is titled "Diva Las Vegas," featuring individual cast member's interpretations of female singers. In addition to being excellent in terms of the performances, it's also very funny.

Stodder nearly brought the house down when he appeared onstage as Liza Minnelli, singing "All That Jazz" and "New York, New York" while clad in a short black skirt and gartered net stockings.

An equal hit was Dobson as Liberace, donning a glitzy white dinner suit and white faux fur overcoat.

He invited a few in front-row seats to stroke the fur, saying: "Polyester and poodle, isn't it lovely?"

Then he played a lively boogie piece that was one of the best renditions I've heard in a long time.

Others, both male and female, did takes on Lady Gaga, Diana Ross, Celine Dion, Tina Turner and Cher.

All in all, the entire evening runs a little over two hours; it continues through Sept. 13.

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