

# Stage View

## The Truant Artist

Other types of artists wouldn't dream of not practicing daily. But many actors seem to think their school days are over once they hit the stage

By Lucia Mauro

At a recent master class for young musicians, renowned violinist Rachel Barton gave some crucial advice.

"In the long run, it's actually more fun when students are not held back by limitations," Barton advised. "They don't get stuck in a rut at a certain level. No matter what someone's long-term goals are, if they don't constantly practice and advance, it's like trading water."

A similarly relentless training program also applies to dancers, vocalists and athletes. But what about actors? When they're not in a show, do they continually hone their craft and fine tune their entire being? According to a varied group of local coaches and actors, the standard answer is, "Not as often as they should," followed by solid arguments in favor of consistent training.

One of the latest buzz phrases



The Actors Gymnasium's training focuses on the physical aspects of theatre.

is "educating the whole body" as theatre moves more vigorously into a physical arena.

"Actors must be committed to a character right down to their toes," says Michael Menendian, private monologue/scene study coach and Raven Theatre's artistic director. "Often their speech patterns are saying one thing and their body is saying

something different."

Movement classes have been on the rise to help performers become more comfortable with their entire instrument on the stage. Just take a look at most of the fall brochures from the city's training centers; courses involving exercise and various forms of stylized movement are as numerous as the scene study

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## Around the Scene

### All Over The Map: Chicago Reader Expands Its Reach

On Oct. 18, the CHICAGO READER is going further than ever in reaching its audience. THE READER'S GUIDE TO ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT will hit the newsstands of the northern, western and northwestern suburbs to bring certain features of the Reader closer to its extended audience.

The publication will be freestanding, covering a select number of Reader sections, including an expanded music, movies and performing arts section which includes suburban events. THE READER'S Critics Choice previews will also appear, along with arts-related columns and parts of the classified section, although fine arts and dance will not be covered.

"We've been reluctant in the past to bring the paper to the suburbs, because we were afraid printing, paper and distribution costs would fall on our advertisers," said Jane Levine, Reader publisher.

THE READER'S GUIDE will look much the same as its sister publication, with the focus being more finely tuned to the suburban areas where it will be distributed. The new publication will have a circulation of 25,000 copies a week.

According to the Reader, advertisers have responded very positively to the additional distribution, which will mean that suburban readers can expect to see the Reader's Guide on a regular basis.

—Eric Andrade

### Television + Theatre = New Audiences For The Arts

When the Chicago Access Corporation (CAC) agreed to work with The Arts Marketing Center of the Arts & Business Council of Chicago, it opened up a new venue of communication to potential new audiences: television.

CAC allows these groups use of CAN-CALL TV 42, an interactive bulletin board service on cable television in the Chicago area.

Cable viewers in Chicago can tune in and receive information about a wide range of arts and cultural workshops, exhibits, performances and other activities.

"Essentially, it allows these groups to expose themselves to audiences they wouldn't necessarily be able to reach, because television is so cost prohibitive," said TAMC director, Julie Franz. "These groups are working in a very visual medium, so it would make sense that they should promote their work visually. With CAC's help, that is now possible."

The project is part of TAMC's Audience Development Training & Granting Program. Selected arts groups received planning grants and training assistance in developing individual marketing plans and evaluation skills to track the results of their exposure on CAN-CALL TV42.

"CAN-CALL TV42 is a 24-hour service that receives about 1,000 calls a day, so it is an ideal vehicle for new audience development," said CAC executive director Barbara Popovic. "We're pleased to be part of TAMC's technical assistance efforts that benefit the visual arts groups."

The Arts Marketing Center provides the link these arts groups need to generate their own income to survive independently. With CAN-TV on cable channels 19, 21, 27, 36 and 42, it enables non-profit organizations like TAMC to reach more than 350,000 cable households in Chicago.

—Eric Andrade

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## Northlight and NJT make it official

By Jonathan Abarbanel

It was the ying and the yang. The Sept. 10 press conference at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie marked the official end of the National Jewish Theatre, and the beginning of the build-out of Northlight's new, 350-seat theatre, with both companies now one entity. Announcing details were Northlight's managing director, Richard Friedman, Northlight board chair Roland Lieber and NJT board chair Joyce Sloane. Village of Skokie mayor Jacqueline Goral, and Center East Authority chair William Novello also participated.

Less than a merger, the agreement by Northlight to ease NJT's demise is a voluntary and limited combining of forces. As approved by Northlight's board just before Labor Day, Northlight has agreed to expand its board of directors by adding members of the NJT board who wish to make

the transition. Initially, NJT chairman Joyce Sloane, and treasurer Milton Jacobson will make the move, perhaps to be joined by others. Also, Northlight has agreed to manage NJT's outstanding debt of \$74,000 (not the \$200,000 suggested by this writer in a PERFORMINK story of Aug. 29), but not to assume legal responsibility for it. Friedman explained that bills would be negotiated down if possible, with payment coming from revenues generated by new Northlight subscribers drawn from NJT's subscription base of 2,700.

Those subscribers received a letter, dated Sept. 5, from Northlight and NJT officials, inviting them to subscribe to Northlight's five-play season at fully discounted rates, ranging from \$75 to \$140 (\$65-\$130 for those 65 and over). Sloane and Friedman predict that at least 1,000 NJT subscribers will make the transition, joining the 4,700-plus subscribers already signed up by Northlight for the 1996-

1997 season.

In the letter, Northlight assured NJT loyalists that the spirit and memory of NJT will live on at Northlight. To that end, the National Jewish Theatre's 10-year history will be featured as part of Northlight's lobby display, and also will be recalled in the printed program (the new Chicago Footlights Magazine, by the way).

The press conference also featured the presentation of a check for \$175,000 from Northlight to the Village of Skokie, the first installment of Northlight's share of build-out costs for its new house. Northlight is responsible for \$1.8 million of the total \$2.4 million cost, with Skokie paying the rest. To finance the build-out, and erase its own lingering deficit of \$200,000, Northlight launched a \$2 million capital campaign last year, and now is 40 percent of the way towards its goal, according to Friedman.