

Noyes Cultural Arts Center Open Studios in Evanston

Extras

- [Photo Gallery](#)

On a chilly Saturday, when many couples were celebrating Valentine's Day weekend, the Noyes Cultural Arts Center Open Studios event warmly welcomed families and all lovers of art.

More than 200 visitors experienced many forms of art Feb. 15 at 927 Noyes St. From the basement to the upper levels guests could choose from rooms of activities.

Open studios meant open arms to enjoy performance art, theatre, 3-D or two-dimensional acrylics. Children were encouraged to sit at low tables to create take-home treasures while parents had the opportunity to chat with experts in the same room.

The well-illuminated basement studio of Alfonso "Piloto" Nieves, an Evanston sculptor, was packed with participants. Upstairs, seats were at a premium in high-ceilinged rooms.

"It's great, it's really fun," said Suzanne Silberman of Glencoe, a 1994 New Trier High School graduate originally from Glencoe.

Silberman, who recently relocated to Glencoe, enjoys taking her children to Glencoe Public Library events. When she heard of the Evanston Open Studios event through a friend, it was a natural kid-friendly outing.

Her son Zach, 4, was busy at a table making his own personal artistic statements. Silberman was happy to spend a bulk of the Open Studios time in this spot.

"Zach has really taken an interest in art here," said his mother, with a smile.

Other rooms were filled with adult art lovers. The sculptures, for example, by Sheila Oettinger, sparked discussions about the fluid lines formed into figurative limbs.

One fan of Oettinger's 3-D art included Heidi Bloom of Evanston and of the Evanston Arts Council.

"The Evanston Arts Council is thrilled that the Noyes Cultural Arts Center has started open houses to showcase the vibrant art of our very talented visual and performing artists," Bloom said. "We hope that these open houses can become a quarterly event."

A large audience gathered around Evanston's renowned Theatre Darko led by Evanston puppeteer Michael Montenegro. Maeve McLennan, 4, of Evanston clapped with delight when original puppets crafted of wire or burlap became moving figures. The experience suggested entertainment offered in a plein-air European park.

And then there was Fay Kaiser of Evanston, a pianist who has made a name on the local music scene as a teacher and performer.

Kaiser played the piano near a table covered in refreshments. Illuminated candelabras evoked a dramatic feeling of Valentine's romance.

Kaiser, who recently appeared with one of Evanston's premiere bluesmen, Chainsaw David Dupont at the January Fleetwood-Jourdain Community Center Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, was in her jazzy element accompanying Kay Daly, a Chicago chanteuse.

One of Daly's songs was Sister Sarah Brown's "If I Were A Bell" from "Guys and Dolls."

"I love it!" Kaiser said, of her passion to perform. "I'm vested."

Kaiser agrees there is an Evanston sound thanks in part to the city's emerging performance venues.

"Because there are so many clubs in Evanston, it's the place for the little combo, it's the place where people can work on their craft," Kaiser said, who spoke from her piano bench. "There are little groups of musicians who play here all of the time.

"But I think the sound of Evanston is diversity, because there are so many different cultures in Evanston, there are so many different types of people," Kaiser added. "If I can bring joy then I can go to sleep at night happy."

Steps from Kaiser was a corner room that featured risers where one could sit to enjoy the music of a teen choir. Mike O'Mara is the director of the etc. Music School. His students include Sophia Westerfield, 13, of Evanston.

Sophia and her peers performed selections from their upcoming musical "Somewhere in Between," a fantasy-themed production.

"Autumn is my role," Sophia said. Of her character Autumn: "I (Autumn) like everything to be perfect but the world is not perfect," she said.

Eliza Segal, 15, an Evanston Township High School sophomore, felt the musical preview "went really well," she said.

Of her character Grace, Eliza said, "She has anxiety but she's very smart and analytical.

"I've always had good grades so I guess I'm pretty analytical," Eliza added.

Ilana Maitino, 15, of Morton Grove and a Niles West High School freshman, sat next to Eliza during the Open Studios musical preview.

"Ever since I joined (etc. Music School), I think I've improved a lot on my musical skills and I've already made friends," Ilana said.

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