

Arts scene in Tahoe thriving

By Robert Schimmel

I've been involved with and in the arts for too many years to put up with the complaints regarding "there's nothing to do in Tahoe".

Sure, this isn't New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe, Jackson Hole or even Vegas, which may just be why you are here. This is beautifully and uniquely Tahoe, small and spectacular in myriad ways. And trust me, in case you haven't been to the other places, they don't have Big Blue, snowcapped skiable peaks, hiking, camping, boating, fishing, stage shows, five-star dining, etc., all at their fingertips. Nope, they have to drive for hours to find views that can't even match our repetitiously scenic shots or to breathe air they can't see.



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So when someone moans about his or her boredom or lack of stimulating cultural activity, do us all a favor and encourage a return ticket, a Google search class at Lake Tahoe Community College, or getting involved with solutions rather than complaints. Then mention this sampling of events to see if there's any real heart behind the whining as Tahoe's vibrant community of amazing artists and organizations step up to make this as unique and fulfilling a place to live as any traffic congested or glamour saturated, billboard lined boulevard in

this country.

Sure, Tahoe has challenges regarding sustaining and growing the arts like any city, and I fully intend to keep you as aware of them as I can and to offer solutions or involvement opportunities. Meanwhile, let's get a grip and appreciate this sliver of great offerings.

January began with Lake Tahoe Community College's opening of three stimulating and distinct exhibits. This art department holds a candle to no one and seeks the finest nationally known or academically accomplished artists to take part in its Haldan Gallery shows. The "Cadre Show" – Laboratory for new Media at San Jose State University – shook the usual parameters of simple viewing. I loved it once the artists explained their interactive concepts. In The Foyer Gallery, Suzanne Roberts presents her "The World of Streets" photo exhibit that opens ones eyes to just that. And in The Commons Gallery the South Tahoe High School Student Exhibition amazes and encourages anyone regarding creativity in our young people.

All exhibits are up through mid-March.

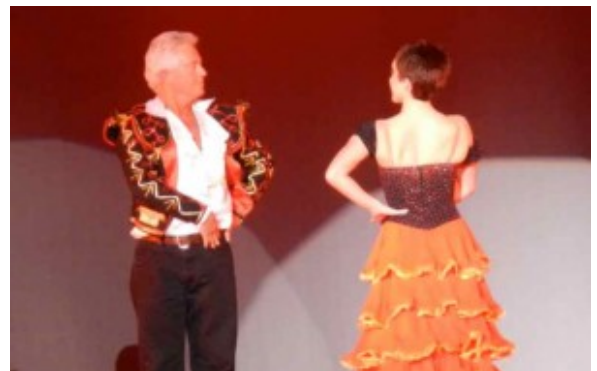
Shifting to classical music and choral performance, Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (TOCCATA) had its eighth winter MusicFest Jan. 19-20 with nationally known violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn performing Prokofiev's Concerto in D major on the legendary red Stradivarius violin in South Lake Tahoe and Incline Village. Trust me, again, this was fabulous and a must-hear when she returns in September.

A similar and equally elegant performance I missed came Jan. 31 – W'intermezzo at Edgewood in Stateline presented by Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe. It featured the internationally acclaimed classical duo of American pianist Deborah Dewey and Icelandic violinist Elfa Run Kristinsdottir performing a selection of works by Telemann, Schubert and

others.

And for the second straight year, Rotary's classy and intimate Off the Wall fine art auction on Feb. 9 at Inn by the Lake in the South Lake Tahoe was a resounding success. Notable artists and guests partook in the social benefit and excitement of the live auction, tasty hors d'oeuvres and Champagne. This small, but warm venue seems to fit perfectly, but I hope over the next few years we will see a larger scale fine art affair developing with the community's support for scholarships made possible by Rotary.

Oh, whispers have it that just maybe LTCC, who partnered a bit this year, will continue and even increase its support. Some of us recall the elegant Art from the Heart events years ago.



Bueno Ketelsen, Bert's Cafe owner, and Casey Bartlemay perform the Paso Doble dance March 1. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On March 1 a full house resulted at Dancing with the Stars, presented by Tahoe Arts Project at MontBleu casino, with more buzz and excitement than I've seen in quite awhile for an informal, non-auction, no freebies event. In this case, the visiting artists were the Utah Ballroom Dance Company that makes their shows unique with an adaptation of the popular TV series "Dancing with the Stars" format in their week-ending public performance. The kids, parents, and entire audience loved the experience, and this particular formula, to me, is a

grand slam as it also brought divergent elements of the community into the mix and expanded appreciation for the arts all the more. Thank you, TAP and UBDC. Are we thinking annual event?

The full list of happenings is lengthy and may or may not fit ones taste or daily needs, but Tahoe's "got game" and don't let anyone tell you differently unless they can buy your ticket, too.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of "Lake Tahoe Art Scene" on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.