



PHOTO/DAVID SACHS

Soprano and founding member of EcoVoce Denise Freeland, left, rehearses for the ensemble's upcoming performance with flutist Susan Hayes.

Combining the forces of music and nature

BY DAVID SACHS

Most musical groups, from rock bands to rap artists, stick to one genre, communicating a plurality of messages to the masses. Few have a mission statement like EcoVoce, a group of local musicians that comprise "a musical voice for nature."

EcoVoce ("Eco" stands for ecology and "voce" means voice in Italian) charges itself with creating an experience for its audience that influences thought — particularly thoughts about nature.

"Ideally, our performance raises the consciousness of nature," said pianist Narciso Solero. "We want people to take a look around, not just rush through life in their car while going from one place to another, but to slow down and look around at your surroundings."

The musical ensemble consists of Solero, founding member and soprano Denise Freeland and flutist Susan Hayes — all classically trained musicians.

EcoVoce's style is not po-

litical; it's natural. They are not activists, but communicators, using music as their language.

"We want people walking out of a performance feeling good about the music, but hopefully inspired to make a change as well," Freeland said. "Maybe it's one small change in their lives, but maybe the music helped communicate something to them that they haven't thought about."

EcoVoce will perform Sunday at Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill with the help of poet Ruth Baja Williams, whose readings of Rachel Carson and Mary Oliver are just one additional element to the concert. The performance, "Breathing Naturally: Music, Poetry and Art of Women Inspired by Nature," also enlists a visual presentation of natural scenes put together by Hayes.

And there is no intermission. Rather than take a pause, EcoVoce keeps the show flowing for about an hour, transitioning naturally from poetry to music to visual artistry and back without taking a bow un-

til the end.

"I want the audience to have an experience, not just a show," Freeland said. "I'm thinking of a musical journey. Whatever touches them, I want them to think of it as an experience."

The concert — the experience — is also part of the Virginia Commission for the Arts' spotlight on women in the arts. The distinction does not dictate the performance but informs it, much like EcoVoce's relationship to nature. The group is not constricted to singing about trees and birds, or nature in just the literal sense.

"It's not just literal," Freeland said. "It can also be about how we are changed by our experience in nature, how humans have been touched, moved and impacted by it."

EcoVoce's "Breathing Naturally: Music, Poetry and Art of Women Inspired by Nature" shows Sunday, June 20, at Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill, 3606 Seminary Road at 6:30 p.m. \$10 donation suggested.

CALENDAR

FROM | 10

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill, 3606 Seminary Road

Information: 703-683-0322 or www.ecovoce.org

ACPD SCHOLARSHIP

RECEPTION The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities cordially invites you to attend a reception co-sponsored by the mayor and City Council to honor the 2010 recipients of the Gerry Bertier Scholarship, sponsored by HeimLantz CPAs, and the John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Award. Call ahead for reasonable accommodation.

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: City Hall, Vola Lawson Lobby, 301 King St.

Information: 703-746-314

June 23

KATHY HARTY GRAY DANCE

THEATRE A benefit concert for Haiti for the Lynn Williams Rouzier Institute de Dance in Port-au-Prince. All contributions will go to the Institute de Dance. No tickets required. Garage parking \$1/hour. Donations accepted at the door or by mail. Payable to: KHGDT, P.O. Box 3291, Alexandria, 22302.

Time: 8 p.m.

Location: 3001 N. Beaugard St.

Information: 703-413-3811 or www.khgmt.org.

OPEN LIFE DRAWING SESSIONS - GESTURES

These sessions operate on a drop-in basis so there is no need to register in advance. Bring your supplies and join us at the gallery to draw or paint our live models. We don't supply easels — only plenty of chairs — but you are welcome to bring your own if you want to use one. These two-hour sessions are composed primarily of a series of dynamic 1-5 minute poses. One or two favorite poses may be revisited for 10-15 minutes at the end of each session. Admission: \$6 for members and \$8 for non-members.

Time: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Location: Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mt. Vernon Ave.

Information: 703-836-1468 or www.visitalexandria.com

OPEN LIFE DRAWING SESSIONS: SHORT/LONG

POSES Open life drawing continues at the Del Ray Artisans gallery. These sessions operate on a drop-in basis so there is no need to register in advance. Bring your supplies and join us at the gallery to draw or paint our live models. We don't supply easels — only plenty of chairs — but you are welcome to bring your own. The three-hour short/long pose sessions start with some short 5 minute warm-up poses and progressively move into longer poses lasting 10-45 minutes. Admission: \$8 for DRA members and \$10 for non-members

Time: 2 to 5 p.m.

Location: Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mt. Vernon Ave.

Information: 703-836-1468 or www.visitalexandria.com

June 24

ALEXANDRIA JEFFERSON-JACKSON DINNER

Sponsored by the Alexandria Democratic Committee. The honored guest and keynote speaker will be Gov. Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Special guest Congressman Jim Moran. Call the ADC office for ticket information.

Time: 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. dinner.

Location: Hilton Mark Center Hotel, 5000 Seminary Road

Information: 703-549-3367 or beckya121@yahoo.com

June 26

YMCA ALEXANDRIA'S COMMUNITY WELLNESS

DAY The YMCA Alexandria will host a community wellness event. The YMCA encourages everyone, especially kids and families, to participate in Community Wellness Day, which will help fight childhood obesity. It includes family games and activities, family nutrition information from Whole Foods, a cycling and body pump class, and more activities in the X'RCade, where children play electronic physical activity games. Admission and parking are free.

Time: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Location: Alexandria YMCA, 420 E. Monroe Ave.

Information: 703-838-8085 or www.ymcadc.org