

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Performance season kicks off at Montalvo

By MARIANNE LUCCHESI HAMILTON

**N**ever has the phrase “something for everyone” been more apropos than when describing the brand-new slate of entertainment scheduled at Montalvo Arts Center. From blistering Chicago blues to the soothing strains of chamber music to puppet shows and plays geared for the little ones, Montalvo’s 2008-09 season is sure to please even the most discriminating audiences.

Music curator Wayne Horvitz, himself a former blues musician, has worked closely with the Montalvo staff to put together an eclectic program.

“This season we were interested in looking at bringing in acts that offered intellectual and artistic content as well as entertainment content,” Horvitz says. “We wanted to feature musicians who’d had popular success, but also had cultural and historic significance.”

Pianist and composer David Benoit kicks off the new schedule with a gala performance on Oct. 3. Benoit, who has performed numerous times at the center, is also a fellow of Montalvo’s artist residency program. His performance will feature his fresh takes on classic songs by pop, rock and jazz artists, along with his original compositions. Opening for Benoit will

be comedian Dan St. Paul.

On Oct. 23, the Carriage House at Montalvo will welcome Kay Ryan, the Library of Congress’ 16th Poet Laureate. Ryan will headline an evening of poetry readings and a question-and-answer session, followed by a book signing. A multiple award-winner, Ryan was elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2006.

Just three days after Ryan’s appearance, Montalvo will kick off its popular Sunday afternoon Salon series with the Cypress String Quartet. This acclaimed ensemble’s repertoire ranges from familiar Baroque masterpieces to recent works by contemporary composers. Throughout the 2008-09 season, Cypress will continue its exploration of Beethoven’s quartets with the “Late Beethoven Continues”



**On Oct. 26, the Cypress String Quartet will start off Montalvo's popular Sunday afternoon Salon series with a performance of Beethoven Quartet Opus 130.**

series; on Oct. 26 they will perform Beethoven Quartet Opus 130 with Gross Fuga.

Blues fans, listen up: November will bring several legends to Montalvo. The 2006 Bay Area Blues Society’s “West Coast Blues Band of the Year” award-winner JC Smith wails onto the Carriage House stage on Nov. 14, joined by the Young Guns featuring Chico Banks, Michael Wheeler and 13-year-old guitar phenom “Little Chris.”

The charismatic Smith, who is noted for his energetic performances, has transitioned from a long

career as a drummer into worldwide acclaim as a guitarist. Banks is a devotee of the Chicago blues sound, while Wheeler has been making a significant impact on both the American and European blues scenes.

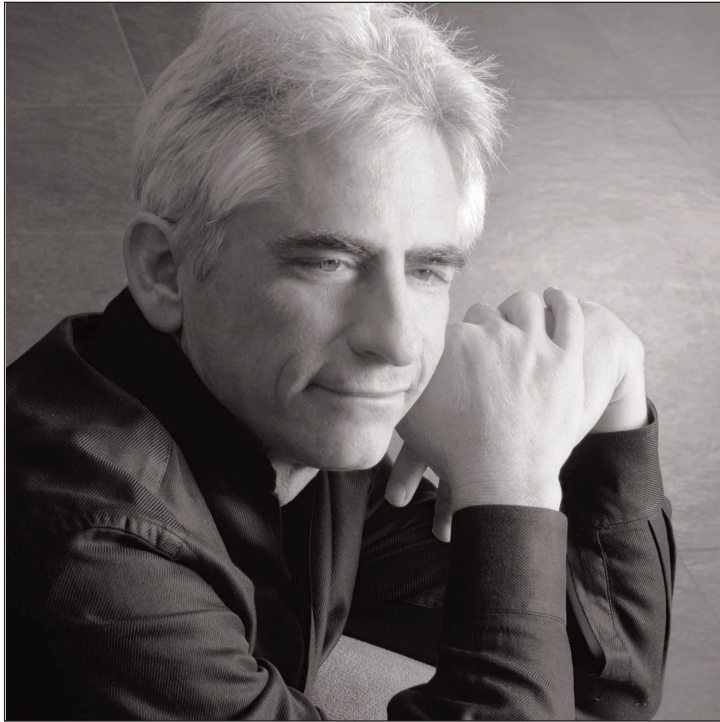
These seasoned pros will be joined by the teenage prodigy, who has already shared the stage with the likes of Buddy Guy, and has blown away audiences at the Chicago Blues Festival and at Guy’s Legends club in the Windy City.

Guitar aficionados will want to mark several December dates on

their calendars as well, as Montalvo will feature legendary British ax man Richard Thompson for a three-night run. Named as one of the top 20 guitarists of all time by Rolling Stone, Thompson has earned renown for his innovative blend of folk and rock, delivered on more than 60 albums.

After the New Year rolls around, the same high-quality entertainment will continue at Montalvo. March 5 will bring jazz trio, The Bad Plus, whose critically acclaimed, hard-driving musical

page 51



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*Continued from page 49*

talent is infused with humor. Leo Kottke takes the stage on March 26, showcasing the acoustic guitar prowess that has kept him at the forefront of the music industry for more than three decades.

Montalvo subscribers can catch a special evening of jazz music on April 17, to be presented at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. Co-produced by Montalvo, the concert will feature the GHS band performing an original composition by jazz trumpet virtuoso Stephen Bernstein, who created the piece expressly for the Gunn band.

Back at Montalvo, rounding out the season will be a May 1 concert with Grammy Award-winning country/bluegrass singer and musician Tim O'Brien, while Grammy-nominated blues artist Eric Bibb performs May 14. O'Brien has released more than 10 studio albums; Bibb earned the title of "Best Newcomer" at the British Blues Awards.

Montalvo has a full slate of family-oriented entertainment planned as well. Nov. 2 will see a production of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Other Eric Carle Favourites*, performed by the Mermaid Theater of Nova Scotia. Closely following Carle's books, these vignettes combine puppetry, music and art to introduce Carle's most beloved characters. On Nov. 30, *The Velveteen Rabbit* comes to life courtesy of Enchantment Theater, which will employ an original musical score, life-size puppets,

masks and magic.

*Trout Fishing in America* brings a mix of folk and pop to the Carriage House on Feb. 7. Bassist Keith Grimwood and guitarist Ezra Idlet combine humor and classic storytelling techniques to create an afternoon of family-friendly music. On March 8, "Two Tales of Beatrix Potter" will be featured, including *Jemima Puddle-Duck* and *The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit*. Hudson Vagabond Puppets will use larger-than-life, bunraku-style puppets to breathe life into Potter's cherished tales.

Yet another literary favorite will make an appearance on March 20, when American Family Theater presents *Pippi Longstocking*. This production of Astrid Lindgren's popular children's story will recount the young heroine's adventures with her pirate father, and the pair's attempts to save Pippi from the clutches of the Child Welfare Board. Montalvo Arts brings its family entertainment season to a close on April 25, with the Das Puppenspiel Puppet Theatre's production of "Beyond the Beanstalk (The Jack Tales)." Stepping beyond the traditional "Jack and the Beanstalk" tales, Das Puppenspiel will perform several stories featuring the familiar character, handed down by generations of storytellers.

*For a full schedule of performances, visit [www.montalvoarts.org](http://www.montalvoarts.org); for ticket information, contact the Montalvo box office at 408.961.5858.*