

BEST BETS

BEST OF THE WEEKEND / Antoinette M. Ford



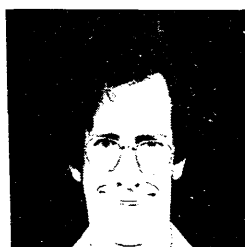
Courtenay Day sings this weekend in the cabaret at Odette's in New Hope, Pa. (215) 862-5216.



Tuckers' Tales Puppets come to the Hamilton Township Library this week. (609) 581-4060.



Mandolin wiz David Grisman appears tonight at Club Bene in Sayreville. (201) 727-3000.



Lorne Elliott is the comedy attraction this weekend at Catch A Rising Star in West Windsor. (609) 987-8018.



Tim Eyermann & East Coast Offering will be jazzing up Havana in New Hope, Pa. this weekend. (215) 862-9897.

Friday

Country voices

Gary Morris, appearing Friday at the Valley Forge Music Fair with Shelby Lynne and Mary-Chapin Carpenter, is neither your average country-popster nor your average hairy-faced outlaw. What he is is a fine, versatile baritone who knows how to sing a melody and shape a lyric.

And he knows music. A singer's singer, he was picked to

sing opposite Linda Ronstadt in her second big non-pop project, the 1984 production of Puccini's "La Boheme" that Joe Papp put on at the Public Theatre in New York City.

Most critics said that it seemed a real stretch for Ronstadt, but Morris, at the time a country music journeyman with a couple of hits to his credit, came through with flying colors.

Over the years he has continued to challenge his abilities and grow as an artist, establishing his name on anybody's short list of great singers.

Princeton-born opener Mary-Chapin Carpenter, one of the music industry's fastest-rising new stars, has a large and loyal following on the East Coast. She was last seen in these precincts in Richardson Auditorium in Princeton in October, in a benefit for the Princeton Day School.

Valley Forge Music Fair is on Route 202 in Devon, Pa. Tickets are \$20.

Saturday

Afternoon delights

Everyone appreciates a good fairytale, especially listeners who are kids at heart. Children of all ages will enjoy the Mercer County Community College's production of "Alice in Wonderland," directed by Maureen West.

This production promises something different from the traditional setting. Done in the Commedia dell'Arte style of clown-like design, each prop is designed to look like a pop-up storybook.

Show times are Saturday at 1, 3 and 5 p.m. and Sunday at 1 and 3 p.m. at the Kelsey Theatre on the college's West Windsor campus. Tickets are \$7.

For more information, call the theater at (609) 586-4695.

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Lions and tigers and bears. Oh, my! Well not exactly, it's more like brontosaurus, pterodactyl and saber-toothed tigers!

They'll all be on hand at the State Theatre in New Brunswick on Sunday at 3 p.m. when The Hudson Vagabond Puppets take the stage in "Mammoth Follies."

The show, a full-scale musical comedy with almost life-size characters, is an educational experience in prehistoric creatures.

Tickets are \$12, \$10 and \$8 and can be purchased at the door. For more information, call (609) 246-7469. ... And don't forget the kids.

British Invasion

In 1964 Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show before 63 million viewers and America hasn't been the same since.



Maggie Burke and Norman Matlock star in the George Street Playhouse production of "Driving Miss Daisy." (908) 246-7469.

The music of these legends of rock 'n' roll is revived in the Broadway National Touring Company's production of "Beatlemania," which you can see Saturday at 8 p.m. at the Raritan Valley Community College Theatre.

"Beatlemania" is a musical journey through the turbulence of the 1960s. Songs like "Yesterday," "A Hard Day's Night," "Help," and "Twist and Shout," paint a picture of the early Beatles style of mop-top haircuts, and matching suits with boots. The second act pushes ahead with the times beginning with the 1967 release of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Songs such as "Come Together," "Day Tripper," and "Revolution" serve as the soundtrack

for the race riots and anti-war protests.

Raritan Valley Community College is located on Route 28 and Lamington Road in the North Branch section of Branchburg.

Tickets are \$17.50 and \$15. For more information, call (201) 725-3420.

Sunday

Call him King

At a time when trendy nightclubs can charge up to \$20 to listen to records, provided your clothes and haircut pass muster with the Fashion Police at the door, it is an occasion for joy and wonder that jazz great Benny Carter and an all-star quartet will play Princeton University's Richardson Auditorium Sunday afternoon entirely free of charge!

The quartet is comprised of top-flight New York musicians who rarely appear in this area, including drummer Kenny Washington and pianist Kenny Baron. Princeton singer Billy Hill will be a special guest.

Carter, known to his fellow musicians as "King" still plays beautifully, and is one of the half-dozen great figures in the history of jazz. He first played Princeton in 1928 as a young sidekick in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra and became the dominant alto saxophonist of the Swing Era, and arguably the finest arranger ever to set notes to paper, with Henderson as the exception.

Carter remains an elegant, technically flawless player, his improvisations graceful exercises in perfection, his choice of material marked by impeccable taste. Any devotee of the saxophone or of the history of American music needs to hear him.

The concert begins at 2:30 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are free, but must be reserved through the Richardson Auditorium box office. For more information, call (609) 258-5000.

Townes Van Zandt headlines an evening of Texas songwriters at the Hearth in Pipersville, Pa. (215) 766-0550.

