

Datebook

Season finale: Philharmonia offers a stirring 'Creation' E2

SONOMA WINE COUNTRY



SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND SFGATE.COM | Monday, April 11, 2011 | Section E



Photos by Laura Morton / Special to The Chronicle

Above: Joy Upshaw (left) and Debbie Deutsch train on the track at Palo Alto's Gunn High School. Below: Upshaw talks with daughter Windy Margerum, 11, after the workout. Upshaw recently set two world records for women 50 and up.

HEALTH & FITNESS

At 50, she's right on track

By Sam Whiting
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

One week after her 50th birthday, Joy Upshaw was right where she wanted to be, 120 feet from the sand. It wasn't a beach, it wasn't outdoors, and it wasn't even in California.

It was in Albuquerque at the USA Masters Indoor Track & Field Championships, and Upshaw, who lives in Lafayette, was in the long jump, her first event in the 50-and-over age group. Down the runway she came, knees high, elbows pumping, her track pals alongside clapping in rhythm.

"I hit it right," she recalls, "and I knew it was far." What she didn't know was how far, 17 feet, 10 inches — a new indoor world record for women 50 and over, wiping out the old mark by 4 inches.

Upshaw continues on E4



Gold-medal tips

Coach Joy Upshaw, who recently broke two world's records in Masters Track, gives her five tips for healthy living:

1. Say "Hi" with a smile to everyone you meet.
2. Make quality time for friends and family.
3. Have good posture.
4. Pace yourself
5. Live "joyfully!"

DANCE

A whirl of dazzle, brilliance

By Allan Ulrich
CHRONICLE DANCE CORRESPONDENT

Christopher Wheeldon's "Number Nine" is, in reality, the seventh ballet the English choreographer has prepared for the San Francisco Ballet. But who's counting? Who had time, as this delectable paint-box of a dance flooded the War Memorial Opera House stage Friday evening at its world premiere?

Set in less than two weeks and danced by four principal couples and eight corps pair, the work disarms in its breathless trajectory and almost symbiotic relationship

San Francisco Ballet: Program 7. Dances by Fokine, Zarella, Wheeldon. Through April 19. War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness, San Francisco. \$20-\$265. (415) 865-2000. www.sfballet.org

with Michael Torke's postminimalist orchestral romp, "Ash." Wheeldon catches the score's jaunty syncopations and seems to toss them back at the composer.

Nineteen minutes have rarely passed so quickly. In comparison with Wheeldon's more meditative, more luxuriously phrased "Ghosts" (on the alternate Ballet program), "Number Nine" discloses no subtext, flies through stage space at high velocity and, in its phrasing, often gives the impression of being created on the spot.

You see that at the micro level. Corps folks can't seem to enter without twirling into position. Almost no woman can be lifted without etching a rond de jambe before her ascent. And none can

Ballet continues on E3

WHAT I DO *Kathy Kennedy, Voice Coach*

Putting a song in students' hearts

By Edward Guthmann
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Paying the bills on a pop singer's income is a rocky road. That's what Kathy Kennedy, a Bay Area music veteran who sings with Big Bang Beat and the Soul Delights, discovered.

In 1995, Kennedy became a voice coach to supplement her performing income. She sees students at her home in the Berkeley hills, and also at the Voice Studio on Potrero Hill, which she co-owns with singer Katie Guthorn. Kennedy is single, and was born and raised in North Oakland.

I teach the Seth Riggs method. It's called speech level singing and it teaches you to how to go from one part of your voice into the next. Nego-

tiating the bridges from chest voice into head voice, back and forth seamlessly.

It's a lot healthier for your voice. I've had sing-

ers come in with nodules on their vocal cords. That can happen if they push their voice too hard, or yell up from the chest to hit the high notes. That totally strains the voice.

I also teach the Seth Riggs method to other voice teachers — I went to Austria, Slovenia and Poland in 2009. And I still take lessons from Seth. He's in his 80s, lives in L.A., and we do a weekly Skype lesson.

Voice continues on E4



Brant Ward / The Chronicle

Kathy Kennedy gives advice to a student during a voice exercise at the Voice Studio in San Francisco. She also sees students in her Berkeley home.

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FROM THE COVER



Photos by Brant Ward / The Chronicle

Kathy Kennedy (left) works with singer Jodie Strecker at her studio. She teaches the Seth Riggs method — not just to students, but to other voice teachers.

Coach helps students to find their voice

Voice from page E1

He's taught Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, Natalie Cole, Luther Vandross, Josh Groban.

I get such a variety of people coming through here. I get moms that want to sing lullabies to their kids at night. I get people that sing in church and want to be better. I get people that sing with their friends or do karaoke. And I get singer/songwriters and people currently performing in bands. I'd say maybe 25 percent of my students are trying to make a career of it.

Some people take half-hour lessons, some a full hour. The first part of every lesson is scales. We're going to get the voice to work from low to high and back and forth on some scale patterns. Then we work on the songs they've brought in.

I love it when people bring in the stuff they want to do. I'm never going to tell someone, "I think you should do this song" unless they ask for specific suggestions. And I wouldn't tell someone what style to sing in, unless a style is really detrimental to their voice.

I had a young boy who just wanted to sing Kurt Cobain — really raspy, yell-y. I said, "Every time you sing with this guy, you're doing all the bad stuff that he's doing. So let's find another singer in the rock style who's not going to encourage such bad habits in you."

I love it when I see a light-bulb go off — when I've said



The Voice Studio in San Francisco is co-owned by Kathy Kennedy and singer Katie Guthorn.

something or gotten a student to feel something they've never felt before. When you get that sort of normal person who never thought they could do anything as a singer, and you get them to experience a huge change in their voice — that's so exciting for me.

I think I help people feel good about themselves, about their voices. At one point when I was looking at second careers other than singing, I thought about becoming a therapist. And in teaching, I found a way to kind of include the therapy aspect, the music aspect and singing, which I've been doing myself for years in bands.

So for me teaching was kind of perfect — it encompassed all of that. And you know, some people do come in with baggage. "My dad told me: Don't ever sing" or "I sound horrible." Sometimes we have

to talk about that stuff a little bit, just get it out in the open.

I sometimes wonder why people are so self-conscious about their voices. I mean, are keyboard players that self-conscious about learning their instrument? No, because when we sing we are the instrument. Our bodies are what's producing the sound.

I like to remind people: This is all equipment. You just need to learn how to use the equipment a lot better — your breath, your vocal cords, your resonating chambers. Lots of people think, "I'm either born with a great voice or I'll never be good." and that's so not true. You get a little training and you can get a lot better!

Do you or someone you know have a work story to share? E-mail us at datebookletters@sfgchronicle.com.

At 50, she's right on track

Upshaw from page E1

That's the magic of Masters. The older you are, the better you do, which is the opposite of open competition. The strategic position is being the youngest in your age group, which explains why Upshaw was pumped for the indoor nationals a week after her 50th.

In Masters there is no qualifying standard to compete. You just sign up and race. Some champions come out of nowhere. Upshaw is not one of them. She's been competing for 40 years, and in the long jump she carries the best pedigree in the Bay Area.

Her father, Monte Upshaw, 75, broke Jesse Owens' high school long-jump record. Her younger sister, Grace Upshaw, 35, jumped for the United States in the last two Summer Olympics. Her daughter, Sunny Margerum, 18, is a freshman jumper on scholarship at Cal. Sunny's dad is Upshaw's ex-husband, Ken Margerum, the famed All-America wide receiver at Stanford.

Margerum also ran hurdles and met Upshaw at a college track meet when she was hurdling and long-jumping for Cal State Hayward. As a collegian, her best long jump was 17 feet 6, and as a 50-year-old mom, she's already beaten that by 4 inches.

"Masters is about staying balanced and not over-training," Upshaw says. "When you say 'I'm going to do this, I'm going to train five times a week,' that's when you get hurt."

If you want to take up distance running, there are clubs and klatches on every corner. But there is nothing for a middle-aged sprinter and jumper. A workout on the track takes about two hours, with warm-ups, stretching, drills to polish mechanics, sprint intervals, practice coming out of the starting blocks, and cooldowns. You can do it alone, but it's more fun with a partner.

That's why every Wednesday, Upshaw drives an hour to meet Debbie Deutsch at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. Deutsch, who is 51 and lives in Los Altos, ran track at Rutgers, but gave it up when she started a career and a family. She knew "Coach Joy" because their daughters are the same age and run track. Deutsch also has two sons who pole-vault, and after watching enough meets, "I called Joy when I was 49 and said, 'I want to start running Masters track, and I'd like to train with you.'"

Two years later, Deutsch won the 400 meters at the Masters indoors. The next day she took third in the 60-meter dash, just behind Upshaw, who was second and might have been first if she hadn't come directly from her world-record long jump.

"It was one of my best track days," Upshaw says, and also one of the best for Deutsch, who was running her first indoor races in 30 years. Between them

they walked out that day with three golds, a silver and a bronze, en route to five golds, two silvers and a bronze rattling in their bags on the flight home.

Upshaw set a second world record in the 200, and has her four medals stuffed into her track bag. If you express an interest, she'll offer you one to keep. She's counting on there being more, when the World Masters Athletic Championships convene in Sacramento this summer.

Both women are 5 feet 7 with perfect running form, and when they do their drills side by side they could be sisters. They start by jogging a lap. Then they skip, forward and backward, and to the side. Then they sideslip for a lap, swinging their arms up and down like ballerinas.

"It activates you and works all planes," says Upshaw, who sets a tall standard, standing up straight even as she runs. "Posture is big," she says. "Posture, posture, posture."

The two women talk as they are walking back up the track after running a drill, and sometimes the conversation continues through the next set of sprints.

"We talk about our daughters and what they're doing," Upshaw says. Two years ago, Sunny Margerum won the long jump at the Central Coast Section track championship, and Christina Roche won the pole vault on the same day, just like their moms.

Deutsch is a hobbyist who has worked in sales for IBM for 30 years. Coach Joy is on a track every day for one reason or another. She shuttles back and forth to coach high school sprinters and jumpers at both Gunn and Acalanes, in Lafayette. When you ask her for a business card, back comes one emblazoned with the USA Track & Field logo. Among her titles is USA national team coach. She'll be with the women's team at the Pan American Games, a preview to the Olympics, in Guadalajara, Mexico, this October.

The other title on her card is Jack Rabbits Track Club director. Any kid, starting at age 3, can sign up (jackrabbittrack.com), come out to the track and learn to run and jump the right way, from Coach Joy.

The back of her Ford Escape is crammed with a bag of spikes in all kids' sizes, and starting blocks and hurdles, tape measures, bags of buttons, and a box full of binders.

Upshaw designed the Jack Rabbits T-shirts, and she also designed her custom plate with the Olympic rings on it, "JKRBTS."

You can look for it on Interstates 280 and 680, Highways 92 and 24. You will be able to see it on I-80, come July, when Upshaw drives to Sacramento to go after the world record in four events. Riding along will be daughters Sunny and Windy, "my weather report," their mom says.

E-mail Sam Whiting at swhiting@sfgchronicle.com.

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