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Reality TV invades the opera!

'America's Got Talent' singer in Palm Beach Opera's 'Macbeth.' PAGE D10



Tenor Sean Panikkar will appear this weekend as Macduff in Palm Beach Opera's production of "Macbeth," at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts. Panikkar also sings with the group Forte, a finalist on "America's Got Talent." MADELINE GRAY / THE PALM BEACH POST

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Reality TV at the fair, too!

The Swon Brothers from "The Voice" perform.
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GO ARTY!



Black Bridge Bench, 2011, by Vivian Beer, at Wexler Gallery.

ArtPalmBeach brings best of modern scene to West Palm Beach convention center.
PAGE D10

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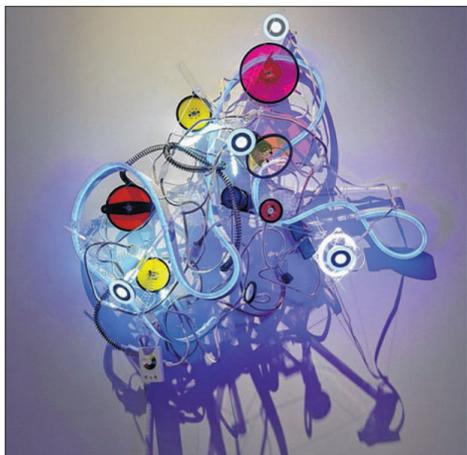
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Thomas Birch (1779-1851), *New York Harbor, 1831*, oil on canvas, 20 1/4 in. x 30 1/4 in., The New-York Historical Society, Gift of Mrs. Ethel McCullough Scott, John G. McCullough, and Mrs. Edith McCullough Heaphy, 1971.118

For additional information and exhibit hours, call 561.655.7226 or visit fourarts.org.

ART



"Sonoluminescenc" by Adela Andea features gear motors, colored acrylic precision disks, flex neon, LED modules and plexiglas. CONTRIBUTED BY ANYA TISH GALLERY

ArtsPalmBeach adds local flavor

International event to also have link to area arts districts.

By Jan Sjostrom
Palm Beach Daily News

ArtPalmBeach prides itself on being international. This year's edition will feature more than 80 galleries from France, Argentina, Chile, Italy, Portugal, Israel, Britain, South Korea, Switzerland, Belgium, Japan, China and the United States showing modern, contemporary and emerging art and design in all mediums. Exhibitions will highlight contemporary Korean, Latin American and Middle Eastern art.

But there's a new emphasis on the local art scene, with the debut of Art Synergy, a showcase of gallery walks, live performances, art demonstrations, fashion shows and more as numerous galleries will be open late in Palm Beach, West Palm Beach, Lake Worth and Boynton Beach during the fair.

"We took a static event that happens once a year and opened up galleries and studios and created a link between the community at large and ArtPalmBeach," fair organizer Lee Ann Lester said.

The 17th ArtPalmBeach, which ushers in the Palm Beach fair season, runs through Monday at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach.

Within the fair, sculpture will be an emphasis. That's proclaimed at the entrance to the fair, where visitors will walk through a site-specific light sculpture by Romanian-born artist Adela Andea. The artist works with LED lights, flex neon, computer parts and even sliced pool noodles to create "immersive environments," said gallery owner Anya Tish. "When you walk in you feel like you're in a high-tech fairy tale."

Albert Paley, whose many public art projects include the recently concluded display of 13 monumental metal sculptures on Park Avenue in New York, will be honored with the fair's Visionary Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ruth Lawrence Fine Art will exhibit seven maquettes (small models of artwork) from the series, along with Paley's smaller sculptures, furniture



"Jester" by Albert Paley, is 38 inches high, made of mild steel and polychrome. It's a maquette from the NYC Park Avenue Project Street: 57th Street. CONTRIBUTED BY RUTH LAWRENCE FINE ART

IF YOU GO
ArtPalmBeach
When: Noon-7 p.m. today-Sunday; noon-6 p.m. Monday
Where: Palm Beach County Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach
For information: Call 239-495-9834 or visit artpalmbeach.com

and drawings.

"He's a master of metal," gallery owner Nan Miller said. "Because of his nearly 50 years of experience, he has tested and used the medium to its maximum potential."

Paley will give a lecture and participate in a book signing Saturday. Two PBS shows about Paley will be screened: "Forge," from the series "Craft in America," today and the special "Paley: On Park Avenue, New York City" on Monday.

Newcomers to the fair include Wexler Gallery, which will exhibit ceramics by Hideaki Miyamura, abstract paintings by Chi-yomi Longo and furniture by Timothy Schreiber and Vivian Beer. She was recently featured in 40 Under 40: Craft Futures at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Overall, fairs such as ArtPalmBeach are a boon to the community, said David Ginn, director of Tagliatella Galleries in Palm Beach, who coordinated the Palm Beach gallery walk for Art Synergy. "I go to all the fairs," he said. "They're a nice cultural thing down here, one of the distinctions of our area."

jsjostrom@pbdailynews.com

THEATER



Sean Panikkar (right) dresses for his part as Macduff in the Palm Beach Opera's production of "Macbeth" with the help of Emily DeAngelis. Panikkar previously competed with Forte on "America's Got Talent." MADELINE GRAY / THE PALM BEACH POST

Pop-opera star Panikkar is in local production of 'Macbeth'

Sean Panikkar and the cast hit the stage this weekend.

By Leslie Gray Streeter
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Every year, thousands of people with a song in their hearts, a spring in their dance steps or a funny voice in their puppet endure long lines, and hours of auditions and tedium to get an audience with Howard Stern, Heidi Klum and Mel "Scary Spice" B. for the TV show "America's Got Talent."

Sean Panikkar was not one of those people.

He actually said "No" the first time he was asked to do it. And even as he found himself sitting in an offstage room, ready for his close-up with Howard surrounded by a drag queen, a sumo wrestler and some little kid dancers, "I was thinking 'Why am I here?'"

See, before he ever thought about being on TV, before he ever joined the vocal group Forte, Sean Panikkar didn't need Mel B. to tell him he had talent, because the opera world that kept him in high demand as a tenor had already confirmed that.

He'd already performed with the Washington National Opera, at Scotland's Glimmerglass Festival and several times at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, singing roles like Tybalt in "Roméo et Juliette," Arturo in "Lucia di Lammermoor" and Cassio in "Otello."

But now, Sean Panikkar is both an acclaimed opera tenor, appearing this weekend as Macduff in the Palm Beach Opera production of "Macbeth," and a finalist, with Forte, on "AGT." And while this distinction isn't something he'd predicted, it's one he's happy about.

"This is exposing more people to opera," he says. "I feel like I'm an ambassador for it."

This isn't the first time that the 32-year-old Panikkar's career path led somewhere unexpected. Growing up in Bloomsburg, Pa., he'd planned to major in engineering at the University of Michigan, but declared a dou-

ble major in music to "set myself apart from the other applicants."

He'd sung in choirs "forever" at school, but was so shy that he never sang at home. Still his private teacher recognized something special in him and encouraged him to keep going. He was selected to go to a prestigious music competition in his native Pennsylvania. But when he took his first college music theory class and realized "that all the other students could sight read, which I couldn't do," he almost quit.

That is, until he noticed a girl named Jane, "the happiest girl I'd ever seen. I couldn't take my eyes off her," he says. Knowing he was required to have an accompanist, he asked Happy Jane to help him. She is now his wife of nine years, with whom he has two kids, 2-year-old Mark and 5-year-old daughter Maria, who plays Macduff's daughter in the Palm Beach Opera production.

That character comes to an untimely end that her father avenges against the titular villain. Panikkar says that "imagining your actual daughter being dead" informs his performance — "I have a big aria after the third act, and the tears start coming down."

He became "a bit of an opera nerd" when a teacher in college introduced him to the genre, and by his senior year, he was officially no longer planning to be an engineer. A graduate of the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program, he's immersed himself in to a world in which a man in his 30s could play the love interest of a woman 20 years his senior and no one bats an eye, or a Sri Lankan singer, like Panikkar, could play the hero in a play set in medieval Scotland.

"Doing my job, I get to put on a costume and play a little bit," he says. "I can't imagine sitting at a desk. A lot of the time I'm living out of a suitcase."

The opera community is "very small," Panikkar says, with criticism in some corners for people seen as going mainstream or pop, for "selling out." So when he got the call

for "AGT," he didn't immediately jump at it.

"I had already been cast (in opera productions) through 2016 and was ready to enjoy my first summer off," he said. When he got word that a "crossover group" would like him to sing with them, he said, "I don't think so."

Panikkar, who had never seen the show, then got a letter from Forte member Fernando Varela, who coincidentally had once been part of the Palm Beach Opera's Resident Artist Program, and was like him a young dad. He, singer Josh Page, and a third member had already gone through one round, but the other guy had withdrawn. There was a clause in the contract that said they could replace him, and he and Page had "been scouring every opera management site. I said 'I'm not doing this,' but my wife said 'Go meet them, or you will regret this.'"

Jane was right, because wives often are, and so Panikkar found himself singing for producers with guys he'd literally just met, and the next day "walking into a room with Howard Stern. After we sang, the only feedback we got was Mel B. saying 'New Guy, how do you think that went?' I said I thought it went well, and she said 'Huh.' I thought we were done."

But Forte was not done, not by a long shot. In fact, "every time we sang,

'MACBETH'

Today-Sunday, Palm Beach Opera, Kravis Center, West Palm Beach. Ticket info: kravis.org. Panikkar also appears with Forte on March 15 at the Festival of the Arts Boca. Information: 561-571-2787

we got better," all the way up to the finals.

Though they didn't win, they got scouted by Columbia Records by a representative who was literally waiting in the wings for them when they got off stage. Since then, they've performed at Carnegie Hall for Kate Winslet's Golden Hat Society for autism awareness, at the lighting of the National Christmas Tree and at the Tropicana in Las Vegas, among other places. In March, they perform at Festival of the Arts Boca in Mizner Park.

"It's been a good experience," he says. "I feel like it's cross-pollinating, between the different musical worlds."

So does he ever regret not following engineering?

"No," Panikkar says, laughing. "That was not in the plan."

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