

Gem City: Artistic Jewel of the Miami Valley

By Brian S. Reid, Editor

New Children's Book Showcases Arts of Dayton

Dayton has championed the careers of some of the most celebrated artists in U.S. history. More importantly, the city continues to support the arts as a way for children to learn the skills necessary for them to enjoy a bright future. Since 2001, Children's Historical Publishing (CHPS) has made their mission to enrich the lives of children through the arts by publishing 17 learning-activity books. Their latest publication, *Amazing Arts of Dayton*, spotlights the many arts available to the youth of the Miami Valley.

"For decades, Dayton has raised some of the brightest stars in every field of the arts," says Joyce Kasprzak, Executive Director of CHPS. "From jazz great Billy Strayhorn to world-renowned author Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Nancy Cartwright, the voice of Bart Simpson, to legendary actors Martin Sheen and Rob Lowe the city has cultivated a community that values art and the artist."

Kasprzak points out that true value of the arts for children lies within the intelligence and integrity they inspire. "The arts involve deep emotional and mental reflection and investigation, which are essential abilities children need to advance their capacity to learn." Children's Historical Publishing new learning-activity book serves both purposes well by developing children's reading ability, while nurturing their self-expression.

Amazing Arts of Dayton tells the story of two children, Halie and Shawm, who move to Dayton with their mother to help take care of their grandmother. Their new neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Tolson, welcome the kids to town by taking them on a fun adventure to discover the amazing arts of Dayton.

Their first destination is the Victoria Theatre downtown, where they learn how the theater began as The Turner Opera House in 1866 and presented legendary artists for over a century from Mark Twain to Bette Davis. Halie and Shawm venture with the Tolsons onto the Dayton Art Institute and its wonderful Experientcenter. This special exhibit area offers an after-school club, art classes and the Time Warner Cable Museum Kids Club. As club members, kids receive an art kit and enjoy two years getting to know the museum by hunting for various objects throughout it.

The book continues to travel with Halie and Shawm to Dayton's many arts' venues, describing the arts' opportunities for kids around the city. The kids learn about the K12 Gallery For Young People, which offers art classes from drawing to sculpture for grades K to 12. K12 also features an Artist-in-Training program to prepare high school students for college or professional art careers.

A.R.I.S.E. or Artistic Resources In Social Empowerment invites children to see live professional performances and to learn acting and dance from the performers. For children who show an interest in theater, they can try out for the YS Kids Playhouse, The Town Hall or The Kettering Children's Theatre, which offers roles without auditioning.

The Landmark Children's Theatre Company features professional actors, but they also offer roles to local children and adults.

The Human Race Theater, Dayton's only regional professional theater company, features guest stars from around the U.S. and local talent. Plus, they offer Youth Training Programs and After-School Acting Classes for kids and teens. Just down the hall, the highly-acclaimed professional Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (DCDC) focuses on the African-American experience and provides the Teaching, Learning & Caring Program for under-served youth. The founder of DCDC also provides Jeraldyn's School of Dance, which offers scholarships for children.

The Muse Machine presents in-school performances, workshops, discounted tickets to events and performance opportunities. Cityfolk is introduced as Ohio's only full-time, professional presenter of traditional and ethnic performing arts featuring Irish step dancing to African drumming.

The book concludes with the premier site of Dayton's performing arts, the Benjamin & Marian Schuster Performing Arts Center. Offering the best local, national and international performing artists, the Schuster Center is the home of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra and the Dayton Opera. It also hosts performances by the Dayton Ballet. The second oldest professional dance company in the U.S., Dayton Ballet trains more than 400 students through the Dayton Ballet School and Dayton Ballet II. The Dayton Philharmonic teaches students music through its SPARKS program—School Partners with Artists Reaching Kids—and offers auditions for their junior orchestras.

To order *Amazing Arts of Dayton* or for more information about Children's Historical Publishing, contact 937-643-0502 or www.childrenshistoricalpublishing.org.