

Out and about in the County

Thursdays: Farmer's Market, 2 - 6 p.m. at Lindo Lake Park - north parking lot. Local Fresh fruits and vegtables, local fine arts and crafts, California native plants and more. For more information contact: Lakeside Chamber of Commerce at (619) 561-1031.

Dec. 4 & 5: The Grossmont College Music Department's Grossmont Symphony Orchestra, in partnership with the San Diego Ballet, will present two special performances of The Nutcracker at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4, and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5, at the 1,142-seat East County Performing Arts Center, 210 East Main St., in El Cajon. This holiday favorite features 100 costumed dancers, reveling in Tchaikovsky's beloved score on an enchanting journey through a landscape of Yuletide dreams, including swirling snowflakes, leaping Cossacks and the lovely Sugar Plum Fairy. The production is directed and choreographed by Robin Sheretz-Morgan and Javier Velasco. The conductor of the Grossmont Symphony Orchestra is Dr. Randall Tweed. Premium tickets are priced at \$52 per person. Standard tickets are priced at \$42 for adults, \$40 for students and active military, and \$22 for students. Tickets can be purchased online at www. grossmontsymphony.org, or by phone at (619) 440-2277.

Dec. 5: Spirit of Christmas Celebration. The Lakeside Chamber of Commerce is seeking volunteers to be on the Spirit of Christmas committee. Contact the Chamber at 561-1031 if you are interested.

Dec. 5: 21st **Annual Holiday Home Tour** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enjoy a self-guided tour of four unique homes in the Lakeside area. A reception will be held at 2:30 p.m., for ticket holders only, at the Olde Church 9906 Maine Ave., Lakeside. A \$15 donation is asked to preserve the Olde Church. Contact 561-1886 for any questions.

Dec. 5: Lions, Tigers & Bears from 1 to 5 p.m. Why

shop at a crowded mall when you can shop with the Big Cats? A variety of vendors will be on hand for our annual Members Holiday Party to help you complete your holiday shopping. So get your friends and family together and come to Lions Tigers & Bears to make holiday shopping fun again! - \$25 donation for adults, \$15 donation for children under 12. Call the office to sign-up (619) 659-8078. More Info: www. lionstigersandbears.org

Dec. 5: Jingle Paws In December, The ACES Foundation & Camp Bow Wow is holding "Jingle Paws First Annual Walk For Pets" event on Saturday, December 5, 2009, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Wells Park, located at 1153 East Madison Avenue. Registration and check-in begins at 8am, walk begins at 9 a.m. There will be a Santa's Village with Doggy goods vendors - pictures with Santa, a Santa's playground and agility course and a Santa's Adoption Village with local rescue organizations taking part. For more information call (619) 447-3535, or visit ACES online at www.acesfoundation.org

Dec. 5: Antique & Craft Fair at Summers Past Farms in Flinn Springs. Not your ordinary Craft Fair! Over 45 fine craftsman and expert artisans can be found at our Fall Craft Fair. Crafts, collectables, antiques & a garden sale all on our spacious lawn area. Enjoy your day shopping for the holidays at this great outdoor event! More Info: <u>http://www.summerspastfarms.com/events.</u> <u>htm.</u>

Nov. 7: The La Mesa Historical Society presents the 4th annual Home Tour on Saturday, November 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The tour features five historic homes in the downtown La Mesa area. A free shuttle bus will be provided to transport you to the homes. There will also be a showing of local art and vintage cars. Tickets are \$15 for Historical Society members and \$18 for nonmembers. The tour begins at the corner of Palm and Lemon Avenues.

ONGOING

Julian Doves & Desperados every Sunday (weather permitting) 1 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m.: Historic comedy skits located at the stage area between Cabbages & Kings and the Julian Market & Deli. For more information please contact Krisie at (760) 765-1857.

Triangle Club's Old Time Melodrama every Friday, Saturday & Sunday Friday at 7:15 p.m., Saturday at 1:15 p.m. and 7:15 p.m., Sunday at 1:15 p.m. Town Hall. visit: www.julianmelodrama.com

The Barona Cultural Center & Museum is now open Tuesday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The museum will be closed on Sunday and Monday to focus on creating new exhibits and providing community outreach. Dedicated to preserving the Native American history of San Diego County, the Barona Cultural Center & Museum houses more than 3,000 artifacts, photographic displays and archives. The museum showcases many Indian traditions, such as birdsongs, language, gatherings, gaming and artwork and highlights the Barona Band of Mission Indians. In addition, the Barona Museum offers classes and tours for public and private schools, civic groups, clubs and other organizations. There is no charge for tours, and admission is free. For more information, visit <u>www.</u> baronamuseum.org or call (619) 443-7003 ext. 2.

Guests can be among the hawks, eagles and other birds that soar over the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, as a new tethered helium balloon ride, Balloon Safari, offers visitors exciting and scenic views of the Wild Animal Park's lush grounds. Tickets for the Balloon Safari are available for \$15 at either the main entrance or at the balloon site. Balloon Safari will be operating from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and each launch will last approximately 15 minutes.

ON THE COVER: The Ten Tenors. Photo credit: Broadway San Diego

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The Ten Tenors bring holiday classics to the Civic Theatre

IN CONCERT

by Diana Saenger

ne only has to hear the internationally renowned Australian singing group The Ten Tenors to be hooked. What's not to adore about the masterful voices in "World Anthem." the nostalgic heart-grabbing tones of "Danny Boy," feeling the dance grove of those high pitched voices in the "Bee Gees Medley," or getting goose bumps during their sobering and powerful salute to heroes in "Here's to the heroes that change our lives." The Ten Tenors will perform their Holiday show at the San Diego Civic Theatre from December 8 -13.

Featuring the astounding voices of Dion Molinas, Tod Strike, Benjamin Clark, Jeff Teale, Graham Foote, Steven Snowden, Dominic Smith, Stewart Morris. Boud Owen and Luke Kennedy, the Tenors have garnered world ac-

claim in prominent venues such as London's Royal Albert Hall, the Sydney Opera House and Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. Their repertoire including ACDC (Thunderstruck) Queen (Bohemian Rhapsody) rap, country, opera - includes a cross genre of music that's as varied as the men's personalities.

From their modest 1995 beginnings when the 10 Queensland Conservatorium of Music opera students united to perform at corporate events, the group is now a platinum record-selling and international touring act hailed by many of the world's music critics. In addition to being talented and handsome, the Tenors are also fun as I recently found out when interviewing them on a stopover in San Diego in September to publicize their upcoming show.

Q. I know this must be difficult to be on the road so much and away from family members. But how surprising is it to be where you are today?

Dominic S.: It's a fantastic feeling. As young singers we spent a lot of time in choirs and amateur musicals and developing a passion for our art form. To do it as professional singers and travel the world is a dream come true and unheard of for an Australian singer.

Dion M.: I've been around since the beginning. We used to drive ourselves from town to town and sometimes perform to 60 or 70 people, and maybe have to put the chairs out, too. Now we're traveling all over the world, but I think it's those humble beginnings that keep the group grounded.

Luke K.: I think we are surprised how big it's grown, but also not surprising because of our product. We put in the hard work to bring it to fruition, and that hard work earns the rewards.

Q. How do you decide what

THEATER - TO GO

The Ten Tenors Holiday

Where: San Diego Civic

downtown San Diego

When: December 8 - 13

Tickets: (619) 570-1100

www.broadwaysd.com

songs to perform and who gets

Ben C.: It's a democratic

process. The moment we plan

a new show we throw ideas

around of what songs to do,

how we should arrange them

and about the flow of the

show. But Graham, our musi-

cal director, makes the final

decisions based on his musical

Graham F.: Everyone gets

the opportunity to say what

they think or what part they

feel best to perform. But if it's

about musical interpretation then I have to speak up.

Jeff T.: Because we're able

to do many different songs.

basically it comes down to the

musical director's choice. But

we also select songs based on

Q. The group sings around the world and often in dif-

ferent languages. How many

portant when performing in

a different country to sing in

its language and currently we

perform in seven or eight lan-

guages. We recently went to

Korea, and although we didn't

sing in Korean, we spend a lot

of time studying the language

so it sounds like it's supposed

to and they will hear it cor-

rectly. It's a lot of work which

means getting in early in the

morning and often having

dinner in the theater, doing

a sound check and you're on

Boyd O .: We feel it's im-

the voices in the group.

languages is that?

3rd and B Street,

Theatre,

what parts?

knowledge.

city the next day. Q. Not only do you sing,

but dance! Who does your choreography?

stage. Then it's off to the next

Tod S.: Dion and I share staging, and the group does a lot of different styles. This group is very organic, and if we think something is not working, we're open to change. We know we can't sell something someone is not going to buy.

Ben C.: We're all good dancers, but it's nothing we take seriously. We're not out there doing pirouettes. It's a fun time, and the dance reflects that.

> **Q**. How do you maintain being on the road so much?

Stewart M .: It's what we do. As a musician it's what you strive for; we love touring and meeting new people and seeing what an audience is like. We just went to China and Peru where it was crazy with bodyguards and soldiers

backstage.

Luke K.: It's hard for us who are married, but sometimes our wives join us although that's not cheap coming from Australia. But they understand that we are doing what we love, and they support us.

Dion M.: I've recently returned after 12 months off. After 11 years I knew I wasn't finished with the group, but I knew I needed to take a break. I'm so excited to be back; it's like starting all over again.

Dominic S.: Sometimes it's not our decision – it could be something from home calling us back. But we love that we have enough guys to substitute in and keep it all Australian.

Q. You have an incredible camaraderie and seem to truly enjoy each other's company. İs that true?

Tod S.: This is fun but also we're creating what we want to do, and it's from out hearts. The recognition from the audience is the icing on top of the cake.

Graham F.: This job affords me the opportunity to be myself on stage. If I was in a musical I'd be someone else playing a part. Here we're all ourselves, and performing to new countries and cultures is a great opportunity.



Left to right - Dion Molinas, Tod Strike, Benjamin Clark, Jeff Teale, Graham Foote, Steven Snowden, Dominic Smith, Stewart Morris, Boyd Owen, Luke Kennedy. Photo credit: Broadway San Diego

Boyd O.: This group is dynamic. I've never experienced a closeness where everyone gets along. These guys are so loving and giving every night on and off stage. When you've done that for a couple of years; that's a hard thing

enjoy sports when we can like maybe play a round of golf, exercise, and just have fun whether throwing tennis balls around the airport or playing a game with anything we have. Give us five business cards and a book on a table we can make a game of it.

For a sneak peek at these talented singers, KPBS will repeat a previous on-air performance on Thanksgiving

night, Thursday, Nov. 26, 9:30 p.m.: Saturday, Nov. 28, 4:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Nov. 29 at 3 & 11:30 p.m.



For more info go to www.mangia-bene.com or info@mangia-bene.com

to leave. Jeff T.: We also eat right,



PAGE B-5

AT THE MOVIES

Several outstanding performances in 'Precious'



Gabourey Sidibe stars as Claireece Precious Jones in *Precious*. Photo credit: Lionsgate / Anne Marie Fox

Review by Diana Saenger

ey points in the movie *Precious* involve sexual abuse, rape, neglect, and being raised by a monstrous mother. While this film seems horrendously alarming to watch, moviegoers must remember, contrary to what some think, this is not based on a true story. The movie is adapted from the fictional novel *Push* by Sapphire. Director Lee Daniels found the perfect cast to bring attention to unspeakable acts that happen in our

society every day. However, midway through the film I began to feel Sapphire's episodic (and then...and then...etc) approach to storytelling was a bit much to believe.

Claireece Precious Jones (Gabourey 'Gabby' Sidibe), an obese and illiterate 16-year old girl born in Harlem, has lived in hell her entire life. Her father has continuously raped her, impregnating her at age 12, and now again at 16. Mongo (short for mongoloid) is lucky enough to be raised by Precious' grandmother because other than wanting the child around when the welfare worker pays a visit; her mother Mary (Mo'Nique) thinks the girl is a monster. That's hard to believe since Mary treats Precious like an indentured slave, constantly beating her, demanding she cook every meal and do everything necessarv to exist while she watches TV. Mary even orders Precious to pleasure her sexually since her abusive boyfriend is no longer around.

Sidibe is so phenomenal in her first feature film it's impossible not to feel the heart tug of Precious' silent torment every moment. Her mother's mistreatment has brainwashed her into a detached body accepting her fate because she doesn't know how to break the lock on her emotional confinement. Precious meanders through every day one step in front of the next steam roller ready to crush her physically, emotionally and spiritually. She barely speaks, has no friends, is hungry every day, and yet she's been so abused she lacks even one dance of self-pity or any

'Ninja Assassin' — mindless action flick

Review by Michael Black

'haven't seen a Ninja movie since old television re-runs on cable television back in the 1990s. Ninjas are people dressed in black pajamas hiding in the shadows armed with swords and ninja stars waiting to pounce on their intended victims. Ninja Assassin takes advantage of today's advanced computer animation to hope the young impressionable crowd addicted to violent action video games will most likely want to see this equally bloody yet mindless action film.

Razio (Rain) is kidnapped at a young age by a mythical Ninja clan – the Ozunu – and trained to be an assassin. His training is physically and mentally cruel throughout his childhood. A close friend at the school is murdered which begins Razio's quest to destroy the clan. Years go by and Razio finds the chance to strike back at the clan with the help of Mika Coretti (Naomie Harris), a Europol agent who links recent assassinations with the Ozunu. Because of her



Naomie Harris and Rain star in *Ninja Assassin*. Photo credit: Juliana Malucelli / Warner Bros. Pictures

own medaling, she becomes a target.

Ninja Assassin will appeal to only one type of audience, young people who are addicted to violent and bloody video games. The movie is filled with plenty of gruesome scenes of blood and fighting. Director James McTeigue, who did a wonderful job on his directorial debut of V for Vendetta, delivers on the action but due to the extremely week dialogue and unoriginal plot, doesn't live up to V.

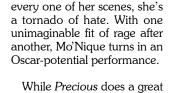
Acting by international singing sensation Rain is surprisingly good and his physically fit image - required for such a role - is incredible. The stunt work is exceptional and action sequences are exciting but the buckets of blood flying out of every knife or sword hit was extremely overdone and in my opinion brought the quality of the film way down. Ninja Assassins is entertaining for those looking for mindless and downright bloody action with nothing much else to offer.

trace of embarrassment. Sidibe had her character down pat. "She's sweet, but at the same time she's learned to be defensive," she said. "When there's trouble coming, she's ready for it. She's a warrior, I think."

When Precious gets kicked out of school and sent to the alternative school. Each One/ Teach One, her life changes. There she meets other misfits who – after harsh beginnings - eventually find a common bond. But it's the patient handling by her teacher Ms. Rain (Paula Patton) that helps Precious begin to overcome her past and believe she's worthy of a fruitful life. Patton is terrific as the gentle guide who loves Precious and opens new doors for her.

Stripped of her glamour, Mariah Carey gives a surprising performance as a bare-bones social worker existing in a job where people become folders on her desk. Precious is the flashing red light that brings both women to realize they are each more. I hope to see Carey in more feature film roles.

However, this movie belongs to Mo'Nique (Welcome Home, Roscoe Jenkins), the late-night talk show host and comedian who offers a tour de force performance as Mary. In



job bringing some of these true-life situations to the forefront, I was expecting to be more wowed by this movie, especially after all the hype. The film has garnered many festival awards already, but incredible performances aside, some elements of the movie lessen its impact. To escape her torment whether being ridiculed at school, raped by her father, or told she is HIV positive, Precious goes into an imaginary world where she's a star on BET or a movie star on the red carpet. One of these scenes was enough for me to understand one way Precious coped with her situations. However, after the first pop-up scene, each one that followed pulled me away from the emotional impact of the film.

I believe *Precious* – with its outstanding performances – is a film worth seeing for those who can handle the subject matter. I like the way the movie opens a somewhat hopeful door. But to me, the rainbow ending comes across as a tad too conventional for everything that happens to Precious.

REEL FACTS

Precious Studio: Lionsgate Gazette Grade: B-MPAA: "R" for child abuse including sexual assault, and pervasive language

Ninja Assassin Studio: Warner Bros. Pictures Gazette Grade: D+ MPAA: "R" for strong bloody stylized violence throughout, and language. Who Should Go: Rain fans





Open 7 Days 11 am

Ben Foster talks about 'The Messenger'



Woody Harrelson and Ben Foster play Army soldiers with a tough assignment in *The Messenger* CREDIT: Oscilloscope Laboratories

Interview by Diana Saenger

While more recent films about the Iraq war seem to weave in a particular agenda, *The Messenger* tackles a subject Americans know little about. The Army's Casualty Notification service is a team made up of two soldiers who must go to the NOK (next of kin) of fallen soldiers and notify them their loved one has died in service to our country.

The movie stars Ben Foster as Staff Sergeant Will Montgomery and Woody Harrelson as Captain Tony Stone, both assigned to this important service. Captain Stone has been doing the assignment for some time and is strictly concerned with procedure. Will, himself just returning from service in Iraq, is newly assigned to the job and feels inadequate to handle it. "This mission is not simply important, it's sacred," he's told by a superior officer.

Will replies, "Sir, I've never received any grief counseling let along given it; I'm not a religious man, Sir."

Clearly setting up an interesting dynamic that takes place between Will and Captain Stone throughout this film, Stone responds, "We're just here for notification – not God, not heaven."

Ben Foster, who acknowledges *The Messenger* made a life-changing impact on him, is quickly gaining a reputation as an actor with incredible talent. He garnered critical acclaim as outlaw Charlie Prince in 3:10 To Yuma opposite Russell Crowe. He played two characters of the same person in X-Men the Last Stand, held his own in the thriller *Hostage* and is well known for this role in TV's Six Feet Under. Foster graciously agreed to an interview about the film. Like his attention to detail in transforming the characters he plays before our eyes, Foster was equally precise and most thoughtful in his answers. Through a soft-spoken voice, he often paused, was reflective and yet came across as genuinely earnest.

Q. What made you say yes to this film?

Ben Foster: One reason was the opportunity to address the war in a way that didn't feel like it was lecturing the audience or pushing a political agenda. Also, Oren Moverman (*I'm Not There*) and Alessandro Camon's script was very spare, human and shockingly funny and universal. We all know what it's like to lose somebody, and it felt like a wonderful question to ask people I respect.

Q. You and Woody took a tour of the Walter Reade amputee unit. How did that visit impact you?

Ben Foster: We saw a side of war in action – the action of healing. Everybody has their political opinions, and from my experience, I'd hear "the names of the dead." That rattled me, but they were just names. Then you see these boys and girls, who are brave, but they are children, with missing limbs and vision, and you don't get those images out of your head.

Q. Was there and an AWE moment during the filming when you realized what Will was really about?

Ben Foster: It was more like feeling safe enough to be exposed (as a character) because of Moverman. That's why he's such an actor's director. He has the whole thing down, and it comes from his own intention and intelligence and empathy. He's not interested in the easy answers in life, or scripts or film. He's interested in the messiness, and the beauty of that messiness is human beings trying to connect. He is awesome.

Q. What was your relationship like with Woody on the set?

Ben Foster: He doesn't do that many dramatic performances, but he's so powerful and his heart is so big. With most comedians and the people who deal in the trade of humor. there's an enormous amount of empathy and suffering that these people endure and handle in different ways. He's turned it into a gift being incredibly funny. When he does choose to do dramatic work, he gives himself entirely. Getting to look at him through his eyes and fuel through him on a difficult subject ... other than the bleeding guts of it all, the reality of it all, the feeling was as good as it gets.

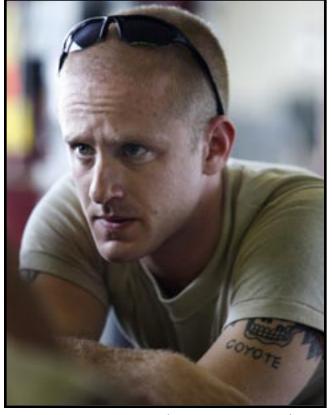
Q. Since there were no rehearsals in this film, how do you account for the realism in your scenes with Samantha Morton?

Ben Foster: It's her (Morton) notification that she's notifying Will. She's one of the great actors...so professional and intuitive, and dangerous in her performance in a very restrained way. Some people just happen to tap into it. She's just magic.

Q. Bottom Line - Why should moviegoers see The Messenger?

Ben Foster: What I like most about it if I was going to recommend it is the same reason why I was drawn to it, which is it doesn't lecture. It doesn't push a political view and it shows a face to the soldier in a loving but human way, and hopefully solders and serious lefties are able to have a conversation about it afterwards that's productive. I hope those who see it feel entertained and have an experience that is not all grim because it deals with a tough subject, and they can have a

conversation about it and get



Ben Foster stars as a returning Iraq war veteran in *The Messenger* CREDIT: Oscilloscope Laboratories

to know some people.

Q. Is there a particular way you get into your characters? Ben Foster: There are so

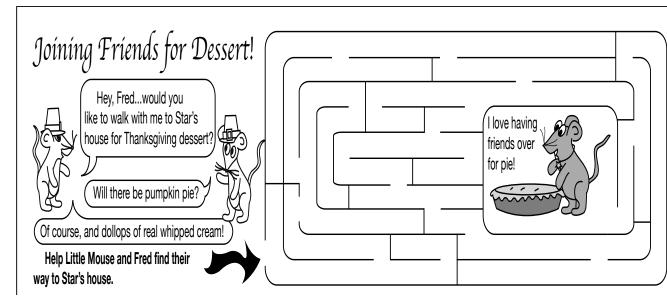
Ben Foster: There are so many doors. That's always a question and whatever door gets you there you've got to love the person and the fight of what they need. So there's not a single way in for me. The beauty of *The Messenger* was spending time with the soldiers and asking them questions. And beneath the surface of the military I think I had to ask my heart, and it didn't take much of a leap. The movie is about endurance, and I hope I never entirely shake this.

Foster will appear in 2010 in *Here* also appear with Jason

Statham and Donald Sutherland in *The Mechanic*, an action thriller slated for a December 2010 release. To read Diana Saenger's full review of The Messenger visit <u>www.</u> <u>reviewexpress.com</u>



The Messenger Studio: Oscilloscope Laboratories Gazette Grade: A MPAA: Rated "R" for language and some sexual content/nudity. Who Should Go: Fans of good movies with great performances



NOVEMBER 26, 2009

Gazette / Class Act

