

ENTERTAINMENT

World-class pianist grew up loving music

By Deborah Kohen
Sentinel-Voice

A duet by violinist DeAnn Burger and pianist Sandra Rivers March 15 at the Clark County Library highlighted the Nevada Chamber Symphony's final concert of the season.

Burger, the symphony's concert master, is familiar to local audiences, but for Rivers, the featured guest artist, this was a debut Nevada performance.

Rivers, who grew up in New York, was surrounded by classical music as a child. Her mother taught voice and her father taught piano. She dreamed of being a musician, and at four, her father stoked the dream by giving her piano lessons. He would teach her for seven years until he began to suffer from glaucoma.

At 11, Rivers began studying music in the Preparatory Department of Julliard, the top music conservatory in the United States, eventually earning her degree from there and sowing the seeds of an illustrious career.

She has played the finest venues: Carnegie

Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Netherlands' Concertgebouw; and collaborated with the finest musicians: Itzhak Perlman and Kathleen Battle — presently, Perlman is the world's foremost violinist and Battle, an African-American, the top soprano opera diva.

Rivers said her gender, not her race — she is an African American — proved a tougher hurdle to success.

"Men (male performing artists) thought I'd be a distraction on stage, and women didn't want the competition," she said. "But now that kind of thing doesn't happen any more."

Rivers lives in Cincinnati with her husband of 10 years and is a member of the faculty of the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati. She gets away to New York City periodically, where she maintains a small apartment.

Rivers, who enjoys listening to R&B and jazz, but performs only classical music, will be returning to Las Vegas to perform with world-famous and notorious violinist Nadja Sareno-

Sonnenberg at UNLV's Artemus Ham Concert Hall on April 21 at 8 p.m.

Rivers and Sonnenberg, long-time friends and collaborators, have recorded at least one CD together.

Sonnenberg, who has appeared on television shows ranging from "60 Minutes" to "Sesame Street", is known both for her musical mastery and for her pop style of dress and performance. At the end of one of her musical renditions at Carnegie Hall, a critic wrote, she "triumphantly twirled her violin in her hand like a rocker spinning an electric guitar."

Tickets for the concert range from \$17.75 to \$43 and may be purchased at the UNLV Performing Arts Center Box Office by calling 895-3801, or at Dillard's by calling 1-800-654-9545.

Discounts are available for students, seniors, military and disabled. In addition, all greater Las Vegas students may obtain "student rush" tickets one hour prior to the performance for \$10.



SANDRA RIVERS

Rivers impressive in Vegas debut

By Deborah Kohen
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Many of you have seen pianists live or on television put on stirring performances, their hands flying a foot or two into the air at regular intervals, their seats almost bouncing off the piano bench to punctuate the peaks in the music.

Sandra Rivers is the antithesis. The serenity of her understated body language gives the impression that she was born in front of the keyboard — which, in fact, she was.

She makes the most difficult music look easy. For her,

playing the piano is as natural as breathing.

The only other musicians I've seen who make classical music look that effortless are Itzhak Perlman and Yo Yo Mah — presently the world's most famous cellist).

Rivers and DeAnn Burger gave a concert at the Summerlin Library Theater on March 17.

The two women have been friends for years; their rapport was obvious in the quality of their performance.

They played music by Stravinsky, Beethoven, de Falla and Brahms.

My favorite was the Brahms

because it gave more attention to the pianist than the other pieces did.

Too often in duets of piano and another instrument, the piano is the accompaniment rather than an equal voice.

A pianist of Rivers' caliber ought to be featured.

Rivers said that Brahms is her favorite composer. I could see why as I listened to the Sonata No. 3 in D Minor. From the sweet tenderness of the Adagio to the driving, sometimes galloping drama of the Presto Agitato, the piece allowed for the full range of Rivers' abilities and sensibilities to find expression.

If there was any flaw in her performance, it escaped my notice.

It was a performance to remember.



RUN TO MOTOWN...

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

Def Jam pioneer recording artist DMC, center rear, of the duo RUN DMC hosted a luncheon on March 12 at the Motown Cafe with members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Las Vegas.

Dance Arts Recital

The UNLV Department of Dance presents "Poetry and Motion" at 8 P.M. March 27 and 28, with a 2 P.M. matinee Saturday, March 28 at UNLV's Judy Bayley Theatre. A roster of outstanding choreographers will be featured in a concert of all new works.

The performance will showcase the talents of the UNLV Dance Arts Company, comprised of nine UNLV dance majors who were accepted into the company through audition. The concert will include ballet, jazz and

modern dance styles, along with a tap dance and original poetry written and performed by Rodney Lee. Victoria Dale, a recipient of the 1997 Nevada Arts Council Artists' Fellowship Award and Associate Professor of Dance at UNLV, will present a suite of dances set to contemporary gospel music.

Tickets are \$8 general admission and \$5 for students, seniors and military, and may be purchased at the UNLV Performing Arts Center Box Office, 895-3801.

Ebony fashion show

Ebony Fashion Fair celebrates its 40th anniversary with the extraordinary "Jazz Age of Fashions!" The show will take place at Bally's Hotel and Casino on Sunday, March 29 at 7 P.M.

Eleven women and two men will be modeling the creations of Black designers and other top couturiers including Bill Blass, Givenchy, Brioni and Dior. Echoing flapper styles of the 40's, the fashion line for this year's show is uninhibited, sleek and brightly colorful.

Not only is Ebony Fashion Fair an exciting and entertaining experience, but since its inception in 1958 it has donated more than \$44 million to charitable organizations and travels to nearly 200 cities around the world. This year's sponsor is Gamma Phi Delta Alpha Rho Chapter-Las Vegas. Partial proceeds will benefit radio station KCEP, 88.1 FM. Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$35 reserved.

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