

Ardenwood Farm Celebrates Traditional Christmas

By Arlene Boado
Staff Writer

Ardenwood Historic Farm combined holiday festivities with olde English tradition during a Victorian-style Christmas celebration last weekend.

The transformed Ardenwood Farm was filled with actors adorned in Victorian regalia as officials billed the event "a trip to Christmas past."

The event emphasized olde time activities including marionette puppet shows, train rides, Christmas crafts and a Yule log hunt.

Visitors were transported back to the late 1800s as they toured the Patterson Mansion, which was decorated in all its Christmas holiday splendor. Curious visitors walked through rooms filled with antiques such as an old piano, an original wood-burning stove and a 100-year-old teddy bear.

According to docent Stephanie Hees, George Washington Patterson was a successful farmer who owned Ardenwood Farm and thousands of acres surrounding Coyote Hill, Piedmont and parts of Livermore. His Victorian mansion has since become a restored historic landmark.

"Everything in this home is time-

appropriate and 90 percent of the items here are authentic," she said.

Visitors participated in creating Christmas chain decorations made of paper and felt, and ornamental clusters of mistletoe.

"I liked making the candy canes—it's easy," said Arthur DeLeon, who made the holiday candy out of pipe cleaners.

Children and adults swarmed the outdoor Country Kitchen, which provided candy canes dipped in chocolate in an old-fashioned black kettle pot.

Outside, Father Christmas — England's equivalent of Santa Claus — greeted starry-eyed kids eager to reveal their Christmas wishes.

The traditional Yule log hunt is where the biggest log was chosen to burn during the 12 Days of Christmas.

Visitors were also entertained by Christmas carolers singing holiday favorites and a marionette puppet show version of the "Nutcracker" on the outside lawn.

East Bay native Joy Joven, who took her family to the event, said it was a good experience.

"I learned a bit of local history today and the kids had a fun time," she said.

'Stkee Phl0,' Gatsby Discuss Budding Music Careers

By Michael Chung
Staff Writer

When one thinks of great musical duos, Brooks and Dunn, Hall and Oates, Peaches and Herb, Wham! and the Carpenters come to mind.

One day, Stkee Phl0 (pronounced stick-EE-flow) and Chris Gatsby hope to join that exclusive list.

While no one can accurately predict the future of the co-CEO's of Blaccout Entertainment, these local rappers say they have the potential to reach the pinnacle of musical success.

Stkee Phl0, whose real name is Dean Ramos, was born and raised in San Jose and began rapping in the sixth grade. Ramos said he and Gatsby attended St. Francis High School in Mountain View, but rarely spoke.

"I found out (after we graduated) that he had a record label (Blaccout) through Friendster.com, and we started doing gigs together after that," Ramos said.

Gatsby, who was born in Santa Clara and also raised in San Jose, said his goal for Blaccout is to sign artists and produce albums.

"We would also like to venture into film and clothing," Gatsby said. "Basically, in five years, we want to be recognized as one of the best independent labels in California."

With regard to their favorite artists, Ramos does not listen to much music on the radio, but is interested in "underground" rappers. Meanwhile, Gatsby listens to everything.

"If it sounds good, I'm listening to it," Gatsby said. "I listen to everything — Nas and Tupac — love Tupac."

Ramos, a multi-tasker and self-proclaimed 'king of all trades' who is involved in Web and graphic designing, music and filmmaking through his Web site, Stkeebeatz.com, said he typically raps about his personal experiences.

"I'm going to college and I'm in a fraternity," said Ramos, who attends San Jose State University. "I think to myself, I'm always online, instant messaging. If you listen to (my songs), I got songs where I'm feeling guilty, I got other songs that I sound like I'm stressed out because I've got a lot to carry on my back. But I really take heart to everything I do. If I lie, I'd feel bad, because it's not right."

Gatsby, who attends Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, is inspired by his family, as well as his own experiences.

"Everything in my music is everything I've seen," Gatsby said. "I'm for real with it. I'm not going to lie, I don't have to front. I think there are a lot of rappers that go, 'blah, blah, blah.' If you listen to my lyrics, you know I'm not that way. (While I'm a rapper), I'm going to school, educated. That just shows that, in my life, I've seen both spectrums of life."

Ramos and Gatsby encourage their fans to visit their Web sites for lists of times and dates for their upcoming performances and contact information.

"Remember to support hip hop, jump on the bus now, so you won't have to be a handwagon fan later," Gatsby said.

For more information on Stkee Phl0, Gatsby and Blaccout Entertainment, visit www.stkeebeatz.com and www.blaccout.com.

'A Christmas Carol' To Open Friday in University Theatre

By Rachel McCarter
Staff Writer

The Cal State East Bay theatre department will perform its annual holiday production of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" in the University Theatre.

The production is a CSUEB tradition and will be performed by a cast comprised entirely of students.

"People come and see it because it shows Christmas spirit; it's just a good way for families to come together and watch a good show," said Jermaine Alexander, who will play Fred, Scrooge's nephew.

The production is a rendition of Charles Dickens' novel, with some changes in order to make it more stage-oriented. Ed Wright, former CSUEB theatre staff member, adapted the story for the stage.

"Our annual production continues to change each year," said Thomas Hird, chair of the CSUEB Department of Theatre and Dance. "Because Charles Dickens wrote 'A Christmas Carol' as a book, not a play, the story is open to interpretation."

The play will be enhanced, not only with costumes and accents that were common during the Victorian era, but also with narration and special effects by the cast.

The production will also feature original music scores by CSUEB assistant music professor Rafael Hernandez.

"The whole production will have the sweep of a musical, minus the songs, with lots of incidental and mood music," said Marc Jacobs, who

will direct the play this year.

The cast has been preparing for opening night since the beginning of the fall quarter.

"Our director makes sure that each element of the play is given a purpose; there are no weak parts," said Alexander.

"A Christmas Carol" will open tomorrow at 8 p.m. with performances also scheduled for 2 and 8 p.m. on Saturday.

This year, from Monday through Dec. 16, the theatre will put on two productions each morning for 2,500 local school children.

Tickets can be purchased through the CSUEB box office, or by calling 885-3261.



Bah Humberg: Bong Dizon, left plays Bob Cratchit and Amanda Sao is Tiny Tim in the CSUEB rendition of "A Christmas Carol" this weekend in the University Theatre.

Photos/ Diane Daniel

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