

SPOTLIGHT

ON *Boston*

by Clint Hamblin



BCM Theatre Division presents "Iolanthe"

Neighborhood theater was never so good. When thinking about theater, music or dance, the Fenway may not always come to mind. However, some of our most talented performers are paying their dues and learning their craft by performing at the Boston Conservatory of Music (BCM).

This fall, the BCM starts with a 50th anniversary production of *West Side Story*. If you've never seen the Broadway version, it's a do-not-miss event.

The lineup also includes three installments of the very popular "Piano Masters" series, three world premieres by the BCM dance division, plus other classical music performances, theater, musicals, opera, children's performances and dance. Many performances are free, and ticketed performances offer low prices. Don't forget the substantial discount for students from any institution. For more information, call 912-9240 or visit www.bostonconservatory.edu.



Tea tastings at the Park Plaza's Swan's Café

Tea many Mar-too-nies! If you think tea is for elderly ladies in large hats, think again. A recent tea tasting at Swan's Café located within the lobby of The Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers brought a new dimension to the activity known as "afternoon tea." Try a Green Tea or Apple Mar-Tea-ni all made with tea and a whole lot of alcohol. Of course, there are the regular blends of exotic teas that are equally as exciting, albeit non-alcoholic.

Even the food is processed with tea. The salmon or Tea Cured Gravlax was to die for, as was the tea-rubbed pork, but let's get back to the bar with a delicious white port infused with tea. Yum!

"Fine tea is like fine wine," said Cynthia Gold, the only tea sommelier in Boston and one of just six in the world, "and a tea cocktail has the perfect balance. With caffeine to energize you, alcohol to relax you and antioxidants for your good health, what more could you want?"

Yes, ma'am. I couldn't agree more. I'm feeling healthier with every sip. I'll have another tea cocktail, please.

Inventive blends of non-alcoholic teas are also available, and they are equally as exciting. Gold knows her stuff as she passionately discusses tea. "I started as a chef and was looking to put together a particular tea list for the restaurant, so I began studying tea," Gold said, "It wasn't long before I was cooking with tea and attracting attention from tea experts in the industry."

During a trip to China, Gold experienced tea farming, and soon after she visited tea estates in India. "The trip was a life-changing experience for me. I learned a great deal from working in the fields and going through the process of preparing tea for consumption," she said.

For the past three years, Gold has incorporated her culinary and tea expertise with her creativity, producing special tea events for the hotel, including a recent "tea wedding." "I worked with the bride and groom regarding which teas were to be served, and the dinner included a tea and spice-rubbed pork tenderloin, a tea-cured salmon all paired with the appropriate teas." Gold created a custom tea blend to the bride's specification to pair with the wedding cake. It was a complete tea event from cocktails to dinner.

So, the next time your old tea-toting auntie comes to town, take her to tea at the Swan's Café. She'll love it.



The Marriott's high-tech ballroom

Boston Marriott Copley Place ballroom is a high-tech wonder. The recently renovated 22,431-square-foot Grand Ballroom at the Marriott Copley Place boasts \$1 million in technical improvements, including new digital lighting systems, sound systems, superior wireless and wired capabilities, and fiber optic cabling. The facility includes outstanding theater-style and décor lighting capabilities, thanks to an easily accessible grid of lighting bars and track lighting. Improved acoustics and independently operable interior walls allow for this flexible facility to be occupied by almost any type of convention activity.

Hanging 20 feet overhead, 29,000 clear and amber crystals adorn three huge, custom-designed chandeliers, and with state-of-the-art sound systems, as well as wired and wireless internet access, this facility can provide just about any audio-visual capability required.

According to Marriott spokesperson Lucy Slosser, this constantly booked facility is "one of the busiest ballrooms in Boston."