

SPOTLIGHT

ON *Boston*

by Clint Hamblin



Last year's *Taming of the Shrew*

A *Midsummer Night's Dream*. One of Shakespeare's most beloved plays, this summer we are very fortunate that Citi Performing Arts Center Free Shakespeare on the Common will be presenting this uproarious comedy to audiences on the Boston Common.

Performances begin Tuesday, July 24 and run through Sunday, July 29. Directed by Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's (CSC) founding artistic director, Steven Maler, this year's sponsors include John Hancock and *The Boston Globe*. CSC is a program of the Citi Performing Arts Center.

Last year's *The Taming of the Shrew* drew more than 100,000 picnic and beverage-bringing citizens who flocked to the Common for a night of free and rather enjoyable theater. The fully functional stage, exceptional sound system and sparkling performances make this a great event for families or dates. For more information, visit www.freeshakespeare.org.



Delicious creations at *The Spotted Apron*

Beacon Hill's newest bakery. The Spotted Apron, located at 326 Cambridge Street, had its grand opening on July 4, and residents are rushing to sample the sandwiches on fresh baked bread, individual portions of carrot cake, spicy empanadas and red velvet cakes. Pastry chef Danielle Fishbein and her business partner Rodrigo Tomas took over the restaurant formerly occupied by the Paris Creperie and renovated the space, turning this prime location into an upscale bakery catering to the discriminating tastes of nearby residents and Massachusetts General Hospital employees.

"This is the first bakery business we've been involved with," said Fishbein, the former pastry chef for Radius and a Beacon Hill resident. Heating up the ovens at 4 am, Fishbein reaches the end of her day around 5 or 6 pm, and her creations are beautiful to look at and very delicious to eat. The Red Velvet cupcake has an exquisitely velvety texture, not too sweet and quite delectable.

"I always thought the neighborhood could use a fine bakery. We offer fresh coffee, cookies, muffins and just about anything you might want from a local neighborhood bakery," said Fishbein. Looking more like a runway model than a pastry chef, when asked how she does it, the very trim Fishbein said, "For me to keep in shape, I have to exercise – a lot."

And the prices are great. Unlike other high-end bakeries, you don't need a co-signer to buy a muffin at The Spotted Apron. "Everything is baked fresh daily including cupcakes, white cake, red velvet cakes and our great sandwiches. We try very hard to keep our prices competitive," Fishbein continued. The Spotted Apron also offers corporate and party catering. For more information, visit www.thespotted-apron.com.



The kids love the performances at the Gardner Museum

Neighborhood Nights at the Gardner Museum. Since January 1, 1903, The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum located at 280 The Fenway has attracted art lovers to its incredible 15th century Venetian-style palace. Three stories of galleries wrapped around a sunny garden courtyard and more than 2,500 historic paintings, sculptures, tapestries, furniture, manuscripts and rare books are all on public display.

Again this summer, the museum presents Neighborhood Nights where residents of neighboring communities come to enjoy various musical performances under the stars. Creative themes focus on African-American, Latin American, Chinese and Japanese art and culture with traditional storytelling, dance, music and more. The series includes art-making projects for children and adults, as well as free admission to the galleries and the special exhibition, Stefano Arienti: *The Asian Shore*, running through October 14.

"Isabella Gardner's travels around the world inspired her to collect works from many different artistic traditions, from ancient China to Renaissance Italy," said Peggy Burchenal, curator of education and public programs. "This year at Neighborhood Nights, as we celebrate the diversity of our surrounding communities, we also celebrate Isabella's curiosity about the world's many cultures."

The Gardner Museum is a must-see whether you're a tourist or a resident of Boston. Visit www.gardnermuseum.org for more information.



Back Bay resident Joanna Mongiardo performs for BMO

Affordable opera returns to Boston. Back Bay resident Joanna Mongiardo and a group of young opera singers will perform English translations of Jacques Offenbach's operas at the Tsai Performing Arts Center. Boston Midsummer Opera (BMO) presents *The Tales of Offenbach* running from Wednesday, August 1 through Sunday, August 5.

Making opera both accessible and affordable is not an easy task, but BMO is successfully achieving this goal while adhering to the highest musical and dramatic standards. Visit www.bostonmidsummeropera.org for more information.