

SPOTLIGHT

on the *Back Bay*

by Clint Hamblin



Chef Aldo Velaj

Vlora Mediterranean Restaurant Opens. Husband and wife team Aldo Velaj and Cindy Tsai will open Vlora, located at 545 Boylston Street, in early May. This authentic family style Mediterranean restaurant is named after Velaj's home town of Vlora, Albania and promises Bostonians a taste of true Mediterranean cooking.

Vlora's menu items will be made up of dishes from the Northern Mediterranean region, mostly from Southern Italy, Greece and Albania. Vlora will offer unique menu items at reasonable prices, with side dishes ranging from \$5 to \$6, appetizers at \$12 and entrees under \$30.

Around 11 pm daily, this 171-capacity restaurant will transform itself into a lounge, featuring music, small bites and drinks.



Joan Collins in *Legends!*

Joan Collins said "Toodles" to Boston. Top of the Hub's Executive Chef Mark Porcaro prepared special farewell party treats for actress Joan Collins just before she exited up stage center on to her next play date. The still quite beautiful 71-year-old Collins was reportedly captivated by the view from Back Bay's highest restaurant.

Collins is on a national tour of *Legends!* along with her favorite actress she loves to hate, Linda Evans. It was great to see these two divas slugging it out sans lily pond, but frankly my dear, *Legends!* was a bust. Consider yourself lucky if you missed it.

Daffy Duck plays Symphony Hall. Boston's Classical Station 99.5 WCRB returns to Symphony Hall on Saturday, March 31 for the 9th Annual Classical Cartoon Festival, in association with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Classic Warner Brothers cartoons will run all day on a big screen with additional performances from the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Children's Chorus and Steven Karidoyanes leading the New England Conservatory Youth Symphony.

Additional attractions include an Instrument Petting Zoo, an interactive demonstration of percussion instruments, Caricature Artist Clowns To Go from Big Apple Circus, face painters, music, magic and more.



Lisa Kempskie and Jon Bumstead from the *New England String Ensemble and Young Audiences*

Presented by Fidelity's U. Fund College Investing Plan, net proceeds from the Cartoon Festival ticket sales will benefit the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts.

For ticket information, visit www.wcrb.com.

"That's all folks!"



Whittard of Chelsea opens on Newbury Street

Another Boston Tea Party. Whittard of Chelsea, England's best-known 120-year-old specialty tea retailer is opening a tea boutique at 170 Newbury Street on Thursday, April 5.

The first of several US locations, the new Whittard (pronounced Whit-TARD) boutique will have a quintessential Englishness about it, from the store's knowledgeable London-trained staff, to the company's custom-designed classical English collectors teacups and serving sets, right on through to the shop's upmarket contemporary emporium décor. Whittard will also feature an interactive Blend-Your-Own tea bar for customers to experience the art of creating their own tea blends, as well as a tasting bar for connoisseurs and novices alike to fully experience the preparation and tastes of a proper pot of tea.

"Boston had kind of a disagreement with Britain over tea a few years back," said Andrew Richardson of Whittard referring to the Boston Tea Party of 1773. "But we believe the market may be a bit more receptive now."



Donald McKayle, Carmen de Lavallade and Tommy Coye

Back Bay Dances. Sheraton Boston's Grand Ballroom was jumping when Boston Youth Moves held its seventh gala this year honoring international dance legend Donald McKayle. If you don't recognize the name, McKayle choreographed numerous dance concerts, movies and television specials, including *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Golden Boy*, *Raisin*, Disney's 1970 *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, *Harry Belafonte* and *Tina Turner*.

Now at a very young 76 years old, McKayle graciously accepted the award. "As long as your dreams are bigger than your memories, you'll never grow old," he said.

Boston Youth Moves is a non-profit arts educational organization presenting dance training programs for teenagers in the Greater Boston area. "This year's fundraising effort raised more money than ever before," said Jeannette Neil, one of the organization's original founders.

For more information, visit www.bostonyouthmoves.org.

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