

# Composer Reposes In Toad Harbor

By TRICIA CRISAFULLI

**WEST MONROE**--Along Route 49, between Central Square and West Monroe, a road veers off to the right. The sign says Toad Harbor Road.

Near the end of the road, at the very edge of Oneida Lake, Augusta Cecconi-Bates lives with her husband, her piano and her music compositions.

"There must be 900,000 composers in the world, but I'm the only one who lives in Toad Harbor," she laughed. So what's a musical composer doing in Toad Harbor? Very simply, she's writing music.

Growing up in Syracuse, Augusta was introduced to Italian operas which undoubtedly influenced her musical career.

"I always wanted to write music since I was a little kid," Augusta recalled. Her parents, while encouraging her musical aspirations, insisted she look to the practical.

Augusta attended Middlebury College and Syracuse University and became a music teacher. She then continued her education with special studies in composition at Cornell University and Syracuse University.

In the 1970s, Augusta started composing music as a profession.

"Before then I was composing for the kids I taught at school," she said.

Augusta has been commissioned to write concert band and chamber orchestra pieces as well as chamber ensembles with narratives.

Some of her recent premieres include "Menagerie: Mythical and Musical," "Pasticcio," and an upcoming work "War Is Kind" based on the poetry of Stephen Craine.

It will be performed by the College Band Apr. 5, and will feature soloists Leon and Geraldine Carapetyan.

Augusta was commissioned to set Craine's poetry to music by The College Band after George Cuppernull of the SUNY Oswego music department heard of a program she did at the Market House.

"George wrote to me and asked me to do a work for them," she said. "I like Stephen Craine's poetry. It's very easy for me to set it to music."

The piece Augusta chose for the College Band is "War Is Kind."

"It's very strong," Augusta said. "Obviously, war is not kind."

## Words To Music

As Augusta read Craine's piece the melody line was very apparent.

"The verses seemed to say, here's a melody," she

## Press Welcomes Animal Crackers

Members of the Oswego County Press Club will learn about "Warm Fuzzies" at its next program meeting Wednesday, Mar. 25, at the Hannibal Hotel, courtesy of Animal Crackers Unlimited, an Oswego-based children's theatre production company.

The creation of Donna Inglima, Animal Crackers Unlimited, has been in existence since June, 1978, to foster in audiences of all ages an understanding and appreciation for theatre. The company performs in schools, church halls, summer camps, conferences, state parks, homes for the handicapped, private functions, or any environment where a theatrical presentation is possible. Inglima is a graduate of Los Angeles Cit College professional theatre training program, and worked in New York City as stage manager and actress for five years before coming to Oswego as project director of the Children's Theatre Project for the Oswego County Council on the Arts.

Troupe members will describe for press club the technique of putting together a children's production which uses a minimum of costuming and stage set pieces, encouraging the audience to use its imagination. The actors talk with the children while costuming, according to Inglima, asking for comments and encouragement during the play. When completed, the actors invite the children on stage to work with props and to try on their costumes.

"Warm Fuzzies," the company's latest production, tells the story of the inhabitants of Swabedoo, a friendly and carefree community. The "warm fuzzies" are expressions of friendship and kindness, until a sinister Troll manipulates a warm fuzzies shortage.

The cast includes Liz Loonan, who has an art degree from SUNY Oswego and serves a company costume as well as cast member Paul Magglo, SUNY Oswego graduate who majored in psychology and social work. He has appeared in every production since 1978 and is a former staff member of the Oswego County Council on the Arts Children's Theatre project; Charla Millard, a SUNY Oswego graduate in natural resources conservation who acted with Wildwood Players at the Renaissance Faire in Sterling. She presently project coordinator for Children's Theatre for the Oswego County Council on the Arts.

Mindy Nirenstein, who has a b.a. in theatre from SUNY Oswego, has worked with ACT in Auburn, Wildwood Players, and has studied with Sonja Moore in New York City.

A social hour will be held at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. and the program at 8 p.m. Guests are welcome by calling program chairman Muriel Allerton at 592-5900 for dinner reservations.



**AT THE PIANO**--Composer Augusta Cecconi-Bates sits at the piano, working on her latest composition "War Is Kind." Based on the poem by Stephen Craine.

noted. Augusta's sensitivity to words is apparently important to her craft. "You almost have to be a poet or understand poetry to write a song," Augusta said. "Music should enhance the spoken word."

The total mood of the poem, she added, should be clear to the composer. "War Is Kind... the composer has to catch the harshness and the irony."

While Augusta sings Craine's laurels in some of her favorite musical compositions, she also works with a "living poet" R. Wayne Archer.

"I've done quite a few of his poems," she said. "His poetry just indicates--do something musical."

But composing requires more than sensitivity--or even talent.

## Ideas and Work

In composing, Augusta explained, "It's one percent idea and the rest hard work."

"You have to have an idea to start with--that's the gift," she said, but the techniques must be learned.

"I'm not an experimental composer," she said. "I just want a sound that satisfies me and says something to an audience."

the work will be performed Apr. 5 by the College Band. Soloists Geraldine and Leon Carapetyan will be featured.

And the singers must feel comfortable with the music. Even the best soloist will end up making a gruesome face trying to hit that beyond-reach note.

When Augusta composes for a singer, she takes into consideration their singing style and personality. Like Malcolm and Margaret Smith of Dusseldorf Opera. Their coach recommended Augusta to compose works for them, and the resulting work, "The Ship of the World," will be premiered in New York City during the 1981-82.

To hear a piece performed, Augusta said, is one of the most satisfying experiences.

"It's really a sensational feeling," she said. Each conductor or singer may interpret the piece a bit differently, but in essence, the product is what Augusta first put on paper.

But what makes Augusta's works popular, competing with so many would-be composers, she attributes it to a number of factors. "You have to know how to market your stuff," she said, adding she is also a big fan of lady luck. What Augusta fails to note, probably for modesty sake, is talent.

In the end, that's what separates the melody from the discord.



**RIF DAY**--The second RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) distribution was held at St. Mary's Monday. Each student was given the opportunity to select a book for his or her own. Pictured is the third grade class wearing their

Shamrock People they made to wear on RIF day. Third grade teacher Miss Gallagher was assisted by Mrs. Johnson and Miss Fortino. At the end of the day, two Irish step dancers performed for the children.

## Lions Celebrate Anniversary

The Lions Clubs of Oswego and Phoenix will celebrate their silver anniversary of organization and service to their communities by joining together with Lions from all parts of the state at a dinner dance Saturday at the Elk's Club in Oswego.

Featured speaker will be Robert Way, past director of Lions International. The Camillus resident has been awarded five Lions Presidential awards and Lions Club International's highest honor--"The Ambassador of Goodwill."

Lion Way was designated as one of five General Electric employees world-wide to receive the Gerald Phillippe Award for distinguished public service. In his name, the General Electric Company donated \$1,000 to

the Lion International Foundation, thus making him a Melvin Jones Fellow.

Past international Director Way has many fields of service and is presently on the board of directors of the Empire State Speech and Hearing Clinic (a New York State Lions Project), as well as the Central New York Association for the Hearing Impaired, the Lighthouse of Onondaga County, and the Central New York Eye Bank.

Way, a Lion for 22 years, is a Korean veteran, and holds a masters degree in business from Syracuse University. He is a marketing executive with the General Electric Company. He and his wife, Fran, are parents of one daughter, Wendy.

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