

Desert Scene

SOCIETY SNAPSHOTS



FRANÇOISE RHODES SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

'Last wizard' cosmic show

Dubbed "the last wizard" by Andy Warhol, artist **Jack Armstrong** recently teamed up with the Valerie Mahabir Academy of Ballet and Performing Arts Center in Rancho Mirage for a one-day exhibit and sale benefiting the Desert Youth Ballet.

Armstrong hung 47 of his cosmic art paintings on the walls of the academy in an exhibition dubbed The Last Wizard Collection, which he hosted in person.

For information on Armstrong and a virtual tour of his Cosmic Art, visit jackarmstrongartist.com.

For information on Desert Youth Ballet, call (760) 328-5197.

— BETTY FRANCIS



MARC GLASSMAN SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

Newly elected officers of the Palm Springs Friends of Philharmonic are (from left) social chairwoman **Ann Heavey**, outgoing president **Henry Freund** and incoming president **Eleanor Sidenfaden**.

Philharmonic puts music in their steps

Members of the Palm Springs Friends of Philharmonic are looking forward to the 38th season of six programs featuring orchestras from Russia, Poland, Spain and Austria.

Their season-opening concert, by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by **Gustavo Dudamel**, is scheduled for Jan. 11. The top-ranked Vienna Philharmonic also will make an eagerly awaited first visit to the McCallum Theatre next year.

The group's scholarship and community outreach programs will continue.

For ticket or membership information, call (760) 341-1013 or visit www.psf.org.

— CHARLES MONELL

Shelter From the Storm supporters take the red train to ...

An event full of surprises



PHOTOS BY SHERRI BREYER SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

One of the surprises at the Shelter from the Storm benefit was a fashion model who beckoned guests to walk the red-carpet — which was the train of her dress. **At top:** Attending the event were (from left) Shelter from the Storm executive director **Lynn Moriarty**, underwriter and producer **Denise Roberge** and board president of Sheltering Sisters **Maggie Montez**.

Restaurant, gallery owner covers all expenses of evening

BY GERDA HOOK
Special to The Desert Sun

When **Denise Roberge** rolls out the red carpet for an event, things are seldom what they seem at first glance.

For example, last month's evening of dining and dancing benefiting Shelter from the Storm held at Roberge's Augusta Restaurant-Art-Jewelry-Fashion complex on El Paseo drew 120 guests at \$350 apiece.

The first wonderful surprise was that Roberge covered all the expenses, "so 100 percent of the proceeds, totaling more than \$52,000, went to the charity," said **Jeffrey Kramer**, the shelter's CFO.

"This helps us tremendously, especially this year," said **Lynn Moriarty**, executive director. "Critical state funding was eliminated at a time when the demand for our services rose by one-third over last year. We had to cut nine staff and do more with less."

As the Coachella Valley's only resource for the victims of domestic violence, Shelter from the Storm provides a 24-hour hotline and a 70-bed emergency shelter with transitional housing, schooling and counseling for more than 2,500 clients a year, nearly two-thirds of which are children.

"Without a grant from the Desert Health Care

'That's so Denise'

Charity: Shelter from the Storm
Event: Annual fundraiser underwritten and produced by Denise Roberge
Service: Emergency housing, support and counseling for victims of domestic violence and their children
Information: Lynn Moriarty, executive director, at (760) 674-0400 or www.shelterfromthestorm.com

District and many generous donors, we could not have kept our doors open," said **Maggie Montez**, president of the shelter's year-old auxiliary, Sheltering Sisters, which organized the event with the help of **Roselyn Viramontes**, manager of InSanity clothing boutique and other staffers.

"In difficult times," said Montez, "you must get creative, and I think we've done that this evening. Look at this artwork," she said, referring to canvasses painted by the shelter's preschoolers and displayed in the Roberge gallery.

All the canvasses were sold in the silent auction, along with more than 50 limited-production wines.

Summoned by a bugle, guests strolled to the

dinner tent by way of a long red satin carpet lit by torches. But wait! That wasn't a red carpet! It was actually the train of a stunning red evening gown worn by a beautiful young model.

As one guest commented, "That's so Denise."

Other Roberge touches were vivid bouquets of home-grown bougainvillea and brightly colored place mats decorated by local school children "to help make the kids in the shelter feel better."

The final surprise was three singing waiters — tenors no less — who emerged from the wait staff to belt out lovely arias, plus a rousing version of "It's Now or Never" that had all the guests waving their dinner napkins in time to the music.

Enjoying the composed cheese plate, bright chicken Florentine and airy fruit Napoleon were shelter board members **Kevin McGuire**, **Irwin Golds**, **Robert Baltes**, **Mary Heckmann**, **Mary Roche**, **Patty Service** and **Edra Blixseth**.

Other guests included **Mary Kay Tamasi**, **Bob and Lynn Zimmer**, **Jean Ann Herschi**, **Marilyn Mazzarulli**, **Ron and Diane Nobles**, **Meg and David Firestone**, the **Bob Ritchies**, the **James Morris**, **Diahann Carroll**, **Lindi and Geno Biggi**, **Karen Moller**, **Carol Fragen** and Dr. **Douglas Jodoin**.

The hardest partiers rocked on until after 11 p.m. to music by The Arrangement.

Desert dwellers deal at big steamy gala

BY BETTY FRANCIS
Special to The Desert Sun

The big, colorful invitation said: "ACT for MS invites you to A Steamy Evening in the Caribbean," so I immediately RSVP'd, "We'll be there, and we'll bring our own steam."

As it turned out, that wasn't necessary. This event, held at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort, was hot and heavy with entertainment, auctions, celebrities, honorees and colorfully dressed guests — right from the first drum roll by the Caribbean Steel band.

Journalist and TV host **Gloria Greer**, who founded ACT for MS in 1999, was dressed as iconic dancer Carmen Miranda, complete with a foot-high hat made of flowers and tropical fruit. So when Greer called singer **Jack Jones** to the stage, he quipped, "Excuse me, Gloria, I'm feeling a bit low on potassium" as he reached for a banana on her hat.

Then, having delivered the biggest laugh of the evening, Jones began to serenade his close friends, **Jim and Jackie Lee Houston**, who were the evening's honorees. Another surprise serenade came from beautiful opera singer **Patricia Welch**, who per-

Evening in Caribbean

Charity: ACT for MS
Event: Caribbean-themed gala, which netted more than \$100,000
Services: Therapy and individual needs for local victims of multiple sclerosis
Next fundraiser: Evening with Bill Marx and his musical friends July 11 at The Crab Pot. Cost is \$85.
Information: (760) 773-9806 or www.actforms.org.

formed one of each from her magnificent repertory of opera and Broadway songs.

Event chairwoman **Sandy Cooper Woodson** looked surprisingly relaxed, confident that every item on every list was in place — and she was right.

Dr. **Earl and Penny Mason** underwrote the freely flowing wine. Penny Mason serves as co-president of the board, teamed with **Lori Garthwaite**, who does double duty as chairwoman of the ACT for MS Literary Society.

Producer **Richard DeSantis**, whose wife, Lynn, suffers from MS, poured his heart and creativity into every de-



DEL FRANCIS SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

The steamy night creators and honorees were (from left) ACT for MS founding president **Gloria Greer**, gala chairwoman **Sandra Cooper Woodson** and honorees **Jackie Lee** and **Jim Houston**.

tail of the program.

Michael Hammond conducted the live auction featuring many tropic vacations and unique trips.

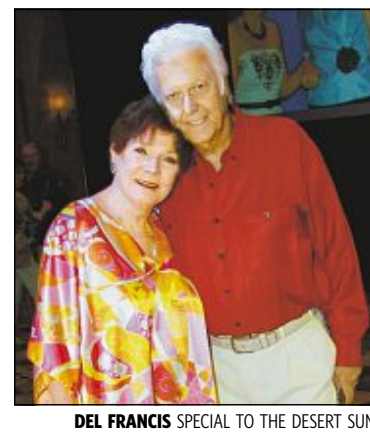
The Houston honorees were also the event's major underwriters, with important support from benefactors **Helene Galen**, **Jo Ann McGrath**, **Harold Matzner** and Eisenhower Medical Center.

Additional support came from

Woodson, Ron and Sherrie Auen, Barton Williams and company, **Cargill and Donna MacMillan** and **Jo Pond**.

From the first papaya and poached shrimp appetizer to the last pastel macaroon, the Esmeralda catering facility outdid itself.

Greer's daughter, **Norma**, was the motivator of ACT for MS when she was diagnosed in 1999. At this event,



DEL FRANCIS SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

Celebrity pals from way back — singer **Jack Jones** and actress-singer **Polly Bergen** — were happy to be among the guests at the gala.

she and her business partner, **Sam Andrus**, supplied the table favors. Norma's twin sister, **Ann**, was everywhere, taking personal responsibility for the comfort of each of the 230 guests.

It was a unique, delightful evening for a worthwhile cause — and that's about as much steam as desert dwellers can handle at the beginning of summer.