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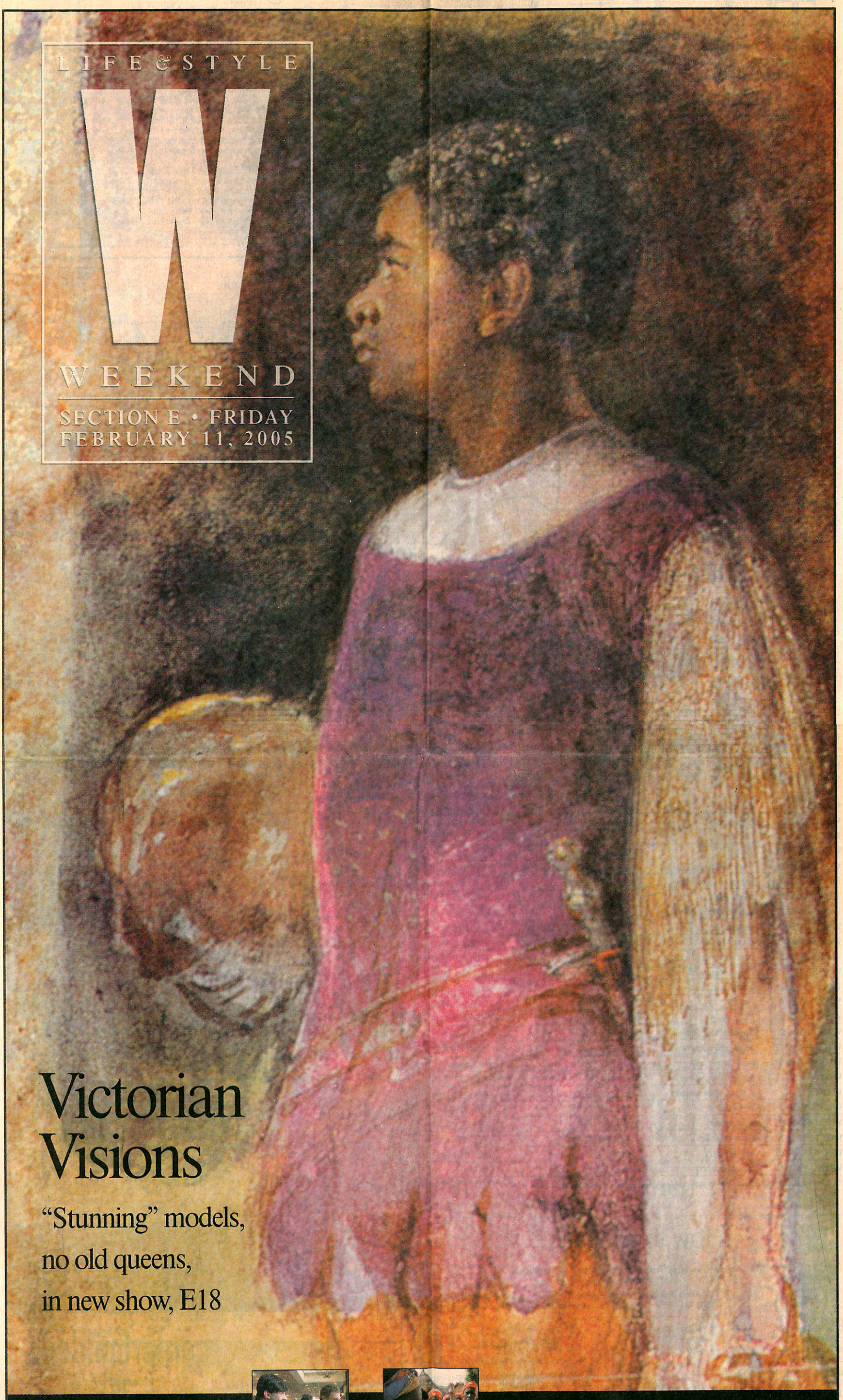
LIFE & STYLE

W

WEEKEND

SECTION E • FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 11, 2005



Victorian Visions

"Stunning" models, no old queens, in new show, E18

Bolt strikes again with a new CD, E11

African-American/International Film Festival opens tonight, E7

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Arts

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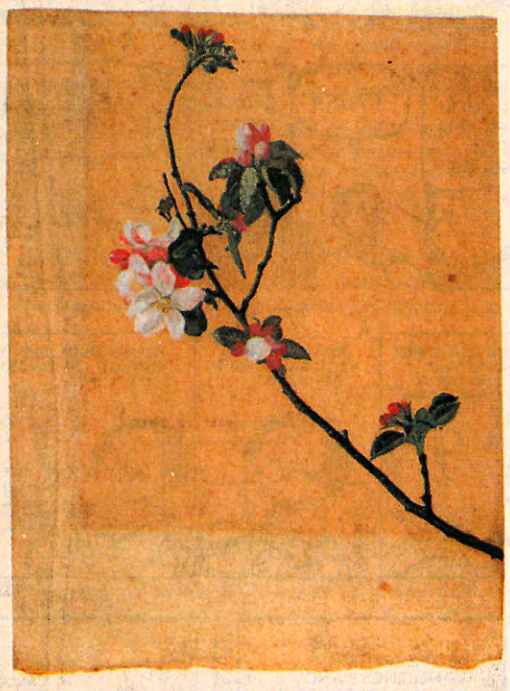
A real VISION

Studies, watercolors give insight into a radical art movement (and Angelina's lips)



IMAGES COURTESY COLUMBIA MUSEUM OF ART

'Apple Blossom' by Walter Crane (1869)

By JEFFREY DAY
Staff Writer

ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT in 19th-century British art to appreciate "Victorian Visions," which will open today at the Columbia Museum of Art.

An interest in the "The Lord of the Rings" movies, and an attraction to the lips of Angelina Jolie and Scarlett Johansson, will do.

The exhibition of 60 drawings and watercolors from the National Museums and Galleries of Wales focuses on the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The cultish name came from the artists' inspiration by early Renaissance and late Medieval works — the art that preceded the painter Raphael.

The style was characterized by minute detail, hard lines, a luminous palette of bright colors and subject matter often connected to mythology, literature and chivalry. The most striking and well-known images are of dark-eyed beauties with thick waves of brunette and red hair, strong jaws and miraculous lips.

A founder of the movement, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, called the models "stunners." They had lips that could compete with any on today's movie screen.

Writer J.R.R. Tolkein was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, and the makers of the "Lord of the Rings" movies respected that inspiration. The movie version of the Elf land Rivendell could have been lifted directly from a Pre-Raphaelite painting.

This is a show of studies, dating from 1850 to 1900, so the full impact of the finished paintings won't immediately be available. Fortunately, the museum owns two paintings by Evelyn Pickering de Morgan, who was connected to the group. Her "Undiscovered Country" and "Eos," both painted around 1895, are on the museum's second floor. They are the only de Morgans in a U.S. museum.

Several stained-glass pieces by Daniel Cottier also are representative of the movement. Designs for glass by De Morgan's husband, William, are part of the traveling exhibition.

Unlike other museums where the show has been, Columbia's adds small photographs of the finished works next to the studies. Ann Sumner, senior curator of fine art at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, approves.

"The works in the show are not something the artists would have shown in public," said Sumner, in Columbia last week to deliver the art. "They instead show the inner working of the artists."

The drawings, many by Pre-Raphaelite founders Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, certainly do that. Among the pieces are highly finished portrait-like drawings, studies of drapery, delicate renderings of birds and gridded sketches used to enlarge the images. Some of the drawings are displayed to reveal notes by the artist on the margins.

The work of the Pre-Raphaelites was a reaction to the times. The second half of the 19th century saw great changes in Britain, which was at the height of its power. Industry filled the sky with soot, universal suffrage was being considered, the roles of women and children were changing and the very origin of the human species was in the news.

The Brotherhood ignored the news and looked to an imaginary, romantic past.

"They reacted to social change by turning away from it," said Todd Herman, chief curator of the Columbia museum.

Art historians don't consider most works from the period particularly important; while the Victorians still wallowed in ancient myths and sentimental images, across the English Channel the Impressionists were turning the art world on its head.

"Pre-Raphaelite art is not important to the history of art, at least as we now trace it," said Brad Collins, an art-history professor at USC. "It is important culturally, however, because it offers one answer to the human need to escape the present into a more satisfying past. As such, it tells us what we lack."

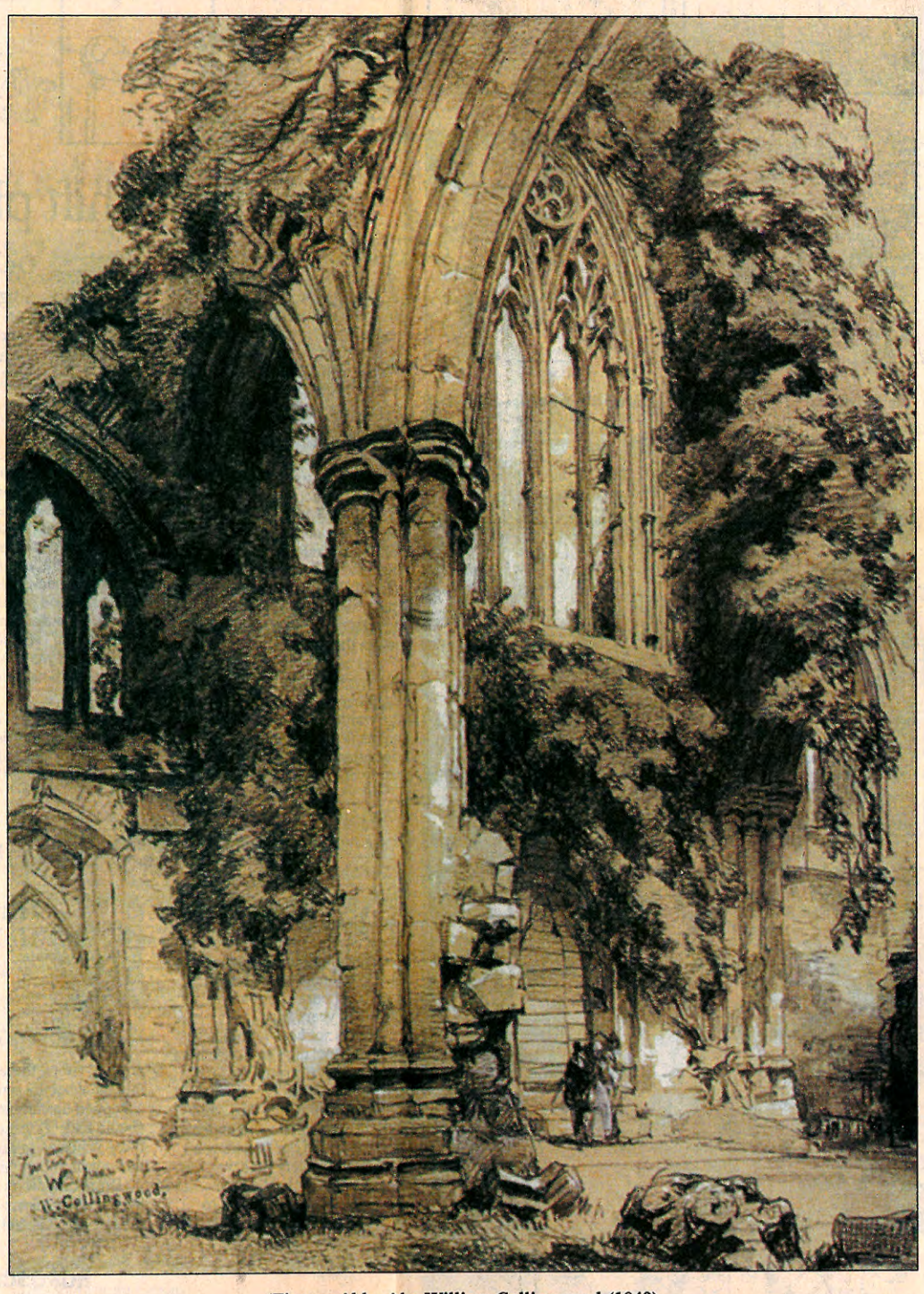
The formal life of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood lasted less than a decade after its founding in 1848, but the artists continued to produce and influenced many others. Like many onetime radicals, they became the establishment. The artists had a huge influence in the decorative arts and did public projects, the largest being Edward Poynter's mosaics for the House of Parliament. The show includes 10 of his studies for that project.

Sumner worries that the word "Victorian" in the exhibition title might mislead audiences. "Victorian" brings to mind a large, stern queen, overdecorated parlors, houses covered with gingerbread and uptight people. Such things were part of the era, but the period was a long one, coinciding with the record-setting reign of Queen Victoria from 1838 to 1901.

"I'm afraid people might think it's composed of paintings of Queen Victoria and her family around the Christmas tree," she said.

It's not. And after all, the queen wasn't a "stunner."

Reach Day at (803) 771-8518 or jday@thestate.com.



'Tintern Abbey' by William Collingwood (1842)

IF YOU GO

"Victorian Visions"

When: Through April 10

Where: Columbia Museum of Art, Main and Hampton streets

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; until 9 p.m. Friday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Cost: $5 for adults, $2 for students, $4 for seniors. Free for members. Free every Saturday.

Information: (803) 799-2810; columbiamuseum.org

"Victorian Visions" programs and events follow. All are free with regular museum admission.

10:30 this morning: "This Religion of Art, This Worship of Beauty: Art in the Victorian Age," a gallery talk with Margaretta Frederick, an international expert on art of the period

7 p.m. Friday; 2 p.m. March 12; 2 p.m. April 10: "The Pre-Raphaelite Revolt," film

2 p.m. Feb. 20, March 11 and April 2: "Ruskin's Journey: Teaching People to See," film

6:30 p.m. March 4: "The Art of Evelyn de Morgan," slide lecture by Joelle Ryan-Cook, museum deputy director

6:30 p.m. April 8: "The Art and Literature of the Pre-Raphaelites," lecture by Jamie Ridenhour, visiting professor of Victorian literature, USC

'Three Marys at the Sepulchre' by William Morris (1862)

ARTS LISTINGS

THEATER

"SOUTHERN MEN": 7:30 tonight, Orangeburg County Fine Arts Center, 649 Riverside Drive. Directed by Clarence Felder. $12. (803) 536-4074.

"THE ILLUSION": 8 tonight, Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday at Drayton Hall, USC. $14, $12, $10. (803) 777-2551.

"A LESSON BEFORE DYING": 8 tonight, Saturday, Workshop Theatre, 1136 Bull St. $15, $13, $8. (803) 799-6551; www.workshoptheatre.com.

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM": 8 tonight, Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday, The Warehouse Theatre, 37 Augusta St., Greenville. (864) 235-6948.

"WOUNDED WARRIOR": 7 tonight, Saturday, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 19, 25, 26 at NarroWay, 175 Gethsemane Court, Fort Mill. $24.95; includes meal. (803) 802-2300; www.narroway.net.

"SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD": 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, 19, 24-26 and March 3-5 at Chapin Community Theatre, 107 Columbia Ave., Chapin. $14, $12, $10. Directed by Dedra Daniels Mount. (803) 345-6181; www.chapintheatre.org.

"MORNING'S AT SEVEN": 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, 19, 24-26; 3 p.m. Feb. 20, 27 at Sumter Little Theatre, 14 Mood Ave., Sumter. $12, $10. (803) 775-2150.

"ALWAYS ... PATSY CLINE": Feb. 18-March 5 at Town Theatre, 12 Sumter St. $15, $13, $10. (803) 799-2510.

BEST OF BROADWAY: "Miss Saigon," 7:30 p.m. March 1-3; "Fiddler on the Roof," 7:30 p.m. March 28, 29, at the Koger Center. Single tickets on sale. (803) 799-5055; www.best-of-broadway.org.

ARTS EVENTS

"SHAKING HANDS TOUR: TOUCHING HEARTS": "Authentic Voices," 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sumter Opera House, 21 N. Main St., Sumter. $10. (803) 436-2616.

SUMTER WORKSHOP: 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Saturday at Sumter Opera House, downtown Sumter. For all levels of experience, those 15 and older. Led by Julie DeLong Painter. $25. (803) 436-2616.

TRENHOLM ARTISTS GUILD: 7 p.m. Monday at Forest Lake Recreation Center, 6820 Wedgefield Road, Dentsville. (803) 736-2739; www.trenholmartistsguild.org.

ARTISTS WORKSHOP: Tuesday-Thursday at Forest Lake Park, 6820 Wedgefield Road. Figure drawing, watercolor painting. Conducted by Jo Ann Anderson. $100. Pat Devoe, (803) 788-8447.

AUDITIONS

MULTI-ETHNIC ACTING WORKSHOP INTERVIEWS: 6 p.m. Friday, Saturday, 520 Lady St. Open to those 18, older. No high school students. $50 fee. (803) 254-9732.

"FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE SAME DRESS": 3 p.m. Sunday Feb. 27, 7 p.m. Monday Feb. 28 at Aiken Community Playhouse, Bechtel Experimental Theater, Washington Center for the Performing Arts, 126 Newberry St., Aiken. Roles for five females and one male who can play mid-20s to late 30s. (803) 648-1438.

DUTCH FORK CHORAL SOCIETY: 7 p.m. every Tuesday through February at the Hoefler Gallery, Lowman Home, White Rock. All singers invited. Nancy Gibbons, (803) 345-3736.

ARPAD DARAZS SINGERS: 7 p.m. Thursday Feb. 19 at Ashland United Methodist Church. (803) 333-0918; www.adsingers.org.

LAKE MURRAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: Auditions for all string sections, clarinet players. Rehearsals Tuesday nights, Lexington Middle School. Sylvia Howell, (803) 359-4929.

RIDGE CHORAL SOCIETY: 7:30 p.m. Thursdays at Batesburg-Leesville Presbyterian Church, 103 Mitchell St. All voices welcome. Gib Rogers, (803) 957-3244.

CLASSIC SINGERS: 10:30 a.m. Thursdays at Lexington Leisure Center, 108 Park Road, Lexington. Sponsored by Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission. Open to men and women 55, older. Stacey Craps, (803) 356-5111.

DANCE

COLUMBIA COLLEGE DANCE MAJORS: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday at Columbia College, Cottingham Theatre. Three Columbia College seniors will perform five original works. $10, $5.