

The Focus

contributed story
for The Portland Observer

There ain't no mountain big enough to hold today's divas plus their hair and egos.

First used in Bellini's 1831 opera *Norma*, the word "diva" has gone from describing an extraordinary singer whose onstage passions often spilled into her daily life, to encompassing any finger-snapping female celebrity with a bad attitude. VH1's hugely successful divas concerts, which initially aired in 1998, have unquestionably contributed to the term's current ubiquity.

When the French thriller *Diva* was made in 1981, the film's title character was, as expected, an opera star. But in the forthcoming Whitney Houston remake, she'll be recast as an R&B goddess. Has the aria gone MIA?

This past fall, the diva of old met her modern counterpart when the MTV Music Awards brought an array of vocalists to New York's Metropolitan Opera House.

The ads featured Madonna as *Norma* (a role defined by "La Divina" - the quintessential diva, Maria Callas), and the show hit a haughty high when Diana Ross bounced the exposed breast of her

Diva Diana: A tribute to Diana Ross

co-presenter, Lil' Kim. It was a mentor's move, as if to say "Girl, what are you thinking?"

But while the Supreme Miss Ross knows a thing or two about commanding center stage, she may not have understood that a key characteristic of today's diva is exhibitionism.

This explains a lot - like Madonna's *Sex* book, Jennifer Lopez's recent fashion choices, and Cher's decision to bare her butt in public.

And let's not forget the massive tresses. Any diva worth her weight in wigs understands that high hair brings her closer to "goddessness." Look at Tina, Dolly, Patti LaBelle... At Divas '98 Mariah and Shania sported frizzy falls to give them extra height; unfortunately Aretha had demanded that the air conditioning be turned off to protect her vocal chords, so the girls' curls took a beating in the ultra-humid theater.

The Queen of Soul can get away with such behavior because her voice can still melt the stoniest hearts; skill will always separate the fabulous from the fatuous. Besides, an amazing singer who acted like a down-home gal simply wouldn't be a diva. We require divas

to be demanding, dramatic, and often outrageous. "I could never get away with behavior like that," we shake our heads half in disgust, half in admiration, upon learning about Miss Thang's latest stunt.

The diva creates drama and ritual from life, and that's why we love her: she is a human embodiment of the divine, excused from common behavior by virtue of the gifts she shares with us.

The problem is, there's a very thin line between acting like a prima donna and being a spoiled brat. So have that cake and eat it while you can, diva. We'll look for you in our next yoga class.

come visit us at
www.portlandobserver.com

Meet Your Match

1-900-896-2323 Ext. 1712

\$2.99 per min

Must be 18yrs

Serv-U (619) 654-8434



LAQUISHA'S

BEAUTY & BATH SUPPLY
ANTHONY HUFF



309 N.E. Wygant St.
Portland, OR 97211
TEL: (503) 249-7329

Open

Mon-Sat 9:00am-9:00pm
Sunday 10am-5pm

An Afternoon of Russian Chess

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Oregon Council for the Humanities and Literary Arts Inc., in partnership with the Portland Art Museum, will host Russian Chess Grandmaster Roman Dzindzhashvili for a thrilling afternoon exploring the culture of Russian Chess and the game itself. The event takes place in the Whitsell Auditorium and the Sunken Ballroom of the Portland Art Museum on April 15, 2000, from 1-5 pm.

The afternoon will commence with a lecture by Dzindzhashvili on the culture of chess in Russia. His lecture will address the role chess plays in Russian culture of chess in Russia. His lecture will address the role chess plays in Russian culture and how chess players are selected and trained. He will also discuss the

ways in which the cold war affected the playing style and perceptions of chess in both the Soviet Union and the United States.

Following the lecture, Dzindzhashvili will play 50 games simultaneously with chess players from throughout Metropolitan area including 15 young champion players from the after school chess program Chess for Success. We are also honored to have Portland's own Arthur Dake, the oldest grandmaster chess player in the world playing in the exhibition. The afternoon will close with an informal chess clinic for young players led by Dzindzhashvili.

Winterfest exemplifies the best of community collaboration, enabling a wide and diverse audience to embrace and understand the history, the culture, and the Russian art that Stroganoff brings to Portland.

KENNEDY SCHOOL
McMenamins

EASTER
BRUNCH BUFFET



9am to 2pm in the Gymnasium

Adults \$17.75 • Children 6 to 12 \$8.95

Children 5 and under free

Reservations required for brunch buffet.

Courtyard Restaurant open for breakfast as usual.

McMenamins Kennedy School

5736 NE 33rd • Portland, Oregon • (503) 249-3983

www.mcmenamins.com