

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21-27, 2008 A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SCENE



reiko celebrates 25

Concertmaster Reiko Niiya notches a quarter of a century with SWFL Symphony

BY NANCY STETSON
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Reiko Niiya was only six years old when she heard her first concerto: Tchaikovsky's "Violin Concerto in D Major."

Her aunt, Taeko Yamauchi, a renowned violinist in Japan and Niiya's first violin instructor, taught it to her students.

"I used to hang around with her, and her older students played that piece a lot," Niiya remembers. "So I was constantly listening, listening, listening. 'What a nice piece,' I thought. 'I can't wait to play it when I grow up.'"

She did.

After graduating from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in Japan, she went to Indiana University to study with Franco Gulli.

"I auditioned, I was accepted," Niiya says. "I learned a lot of pieces, but I also learned, quite deeply, the Tchaikovsky concerto with him."

SEE REIKO, C4 ▶



Reiko Niiya

if you go

>>**What:** Special concert to celebrate Reiko Niiya's 25 years as concertmaster
>>**When:** 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Feb. 22 and 23
>>**Where:** The Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, 8099 College Parkway
>>**Cost:** \$15 to \$50
>>**Information:** Call 418-1500 or go to www.swflso.org.

WEEK at-a-glance



'Forum:' wonderfully silly

The classic musical comedy at the Florida Rep is one glorious, continuous series of jokes and humorous situations. **C18** ▶



Chamber music

The Afiara String Quartet performs at the Foulds Theatre Monday as part of the Chamber Music Society series. **C12** ▶



Great art

Don't miss the Naples National Art Festival this weekend **C17** ▶

Silly knights: Tony winning musical opens at Mann

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

"Monty Python's SPAMALOT," lovingly "ripped-off" from the internationally famous comedy team's most popular motion picture, "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," opens at the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall on Tuesday, Feb. 26. The hit show runs through Sunday, March 2.

"Monty Python's SPAMALOT" is the winner of three 2005 Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Director (Mike Nichols), as well as the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for Best Musical.

The original cast recording won the 2006 Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album.

The national touring production continues to do record business across North America, a London production opened last year to rave reviews at London's Palace



COURTESY PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS

Michael Siberry as King Arthur and Jeff Dumas as Patsy in the National Touring Production of Monty Python's SPAMALOT.

Theatre, a Las Vegas production opened at Wynn Las Vegas in the spring of 2007, and a Melbourne, Australia production recently opened at Her Majesty's Theatre in December.

if you go

>>**What:** "Monty Python's SPAMALOT"
>>**When:** 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, Wednesday, Feb. 27, and Thursday, Feb. 28; 8 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 29 and Saturday, March 1; matinees are Saturday, March 1 at 2 p.m., Sunday, March 2 at 1 and 6:30 p.m.
>>**Where:** The Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, 8099 College Parkway
>>**Cost:** Tickets range from \$50-\$85
>>**Information:** Call (239) 481-4849 or online at www.bbmnpah.com

Directed by Mike Nichols, "Monty Python's SPAMALOT" features a book by Eric Idle, based on the screenplay of "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" by Monty Python

SEE KNIGHTS, C16 ▶



Food news

Karen Feldman has her finger on the pulse of local restaurants. **C30** ▶