

LIFE & ARTS

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Music players come loaded these days ■ **Page D2**

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Parents still struggling with storing the creations of their little Picassos ■ **Back page**

Baring your sole

Ralph Barrera / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Athlete and author advocates running au naturel

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Keep up with Pam and the fitness scene at austin360.com/fitcity.

Suddenly, I'm rethinking those expensive running shoes I buy every six months. Because if Christopher McDougall is right, those very shoes might be causing me harm.

For years, McDougall, a runner and writer, suffered from sore knees, plantar fasciitis and gimpy tendons. He saw all the best sports physicians and podiatrists. Nothing helped.

In Mexico on assignment one day, he saw a photograph of a man in a fiber skirt running down a rocky path with nothing but flimsy sandals on his feet. And enjoying it.

Thus began a quest that led McDougall to Mexico to meet the Tarahumara Indians, a Copper Canyon-area tribe that for centuries has run long distances — 50, 100 or even 150 miles! — without the benefit of modern running shoes.

McDougall details his theories on barefoot running, and his experience training for a 50-mile ultramarathon in the Copper Canyon, in a much-buzzed-about book titled "Born to



PAM LEBLANC
FIT CITY

Run: A Hidden Tribe, Super Athletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen."

He'll speak at 7 p.m. Nov. 11 at BookPeople, 603 N. Lamar Blvd.

When I spoke to McDougall by phone from Pennsylvania a few weeks ago, he'd just returned from a 5-mile run on asphalt streets, sans shoes. All I could think was: What about the cold, the glass and the gravel?

"It's much gentler out there than most people think," McDougall says.

In fact, since he gave up his highly cushioned running shoes three years ago, Mc-

Dougall says his foot and leg ailments have disappeared. Now, through his book, he's spreading the word that barefoot is best. But if you must wear something, he says, a thin-soled shoe is preferable.

"My No. 1 preference is totally barefoot," McDougall says. "It keeps me totally honest in terms of foot biomechanics."

When conditions dictate, he wears the Vibram Five Fingers, which looks more like a neoprene glove for the foot than an actual shoe. "It lets your toes go any direction they want to go."

And that's the point.

Without shoes, all those tiny muscles in the foot constantly engage to balance the body. Modern running shoes provide too much support, and allow those muscles to weaken, he says.

McDougall points out that injuries have increased since the advent of modern running shoes 40 years ago. Prior to that, runners didn't land on their heels when they

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Light up your neighborhood – carefully – with luminarias

We are interested in creating a spectacular luminaria display in our neighborhood. We would like to use safe, local products to accomplish this creation.

— K.E.

Supplies for traditional luminaria displays, which consist of paper bags and votive or tea candles weighed down with sand, can be found in grocery or crafts stores such as Michael's. (If any luminaria veterans have a favorite local place for supplies, please e-mail tips to pmongillo@statesman.com.)

If you want to avoid potential problems with wind and rain or flaming bags, you might consider an artificial display. The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center uses translucent plastic containers purchased online from FLIC Luminaries, www.fliclu-



PETER MONGILLO
QUESTION EVERYTHING

minaries.com, for its annual Luminations event. The "bags," available in white, brown, orange and purple, can be used with candles or strings of electric lights. Starting at \$33.95

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Ralph Barrera 2000 AMERICAN-STATESMAN

If real luminarias scare you, try plastic bags like the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center uses rather than the traditional paper bag filled with sand.

OPERA ■ 'LA BOHÈME'

Young love never goes out of style

Austin production's cast identifies with characters

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin

AMERICAN-STATESMAN ARTS WRITER

Ultimately, "La Bohème" is a young opera.

Since its debut more than a century ago, Puccini's tragic romance about two young lovers struggling in 19th-century bohemian Paris has arguably become the basis of all subsequent struggling-artist love stories.

One of the most beloved and frequently performed operas of all times, "La Bohème," which opens Austin Lyric Opera's season Saturday, never seems to stop ricocheting through the generations. Indeed, a whole new generation copped to the story in the 1990s when the Broadway musical "Rent" — essentially "La Bohème" redux — popped on the scene.

And while the production presented by ALO keeps Puccini's story in the 19th century (created by the San Diego Opera, the sets riff on the art of painter Toulouse-Lautrec), the cast for this "La Bohème" is most decidedly young. Forget not-so-youthful singers playing the part of young lovers. The cast for this "La Bohème" blends right in with the self-proclaimed "Live Music Capital of the World" already filled with emerging singers.

With his boyish good looks, 30-year-old French tenor Sébastien Guèze looks, well, more like a member of a boy band than an opera cast. And the Paris, France, resident has little trouble identifying with his character, Rodolfo, a struggling poet who lives in a garret apartment in that city's Latin Quarter.

Guèze, in fact, lives in a top-floor walk-up apartment just blocks from the Quarter. And like the young artist's character he plays, Guèze also has buddies over to knock back a glass of



Jeanne Claire van Ryzin AMERICAN-STATESMAN

The story of Mimi and Rodolfo still resonates with Dina Kuznetsova and Sébastien Guèze.

'La Bohème'

When: 6 p.m. Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 11 and 13, 3 p.m. Nov. 15

Where: Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside Drive
Cost: \$29-\$133

Information: 472-5992

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To see video of tenor Sébastien Guèze go to austin360.com/seeingthings

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