

Fall 2006

Pete Ballard: A West Virginia Arts Treasure **By Jeff Pierson**

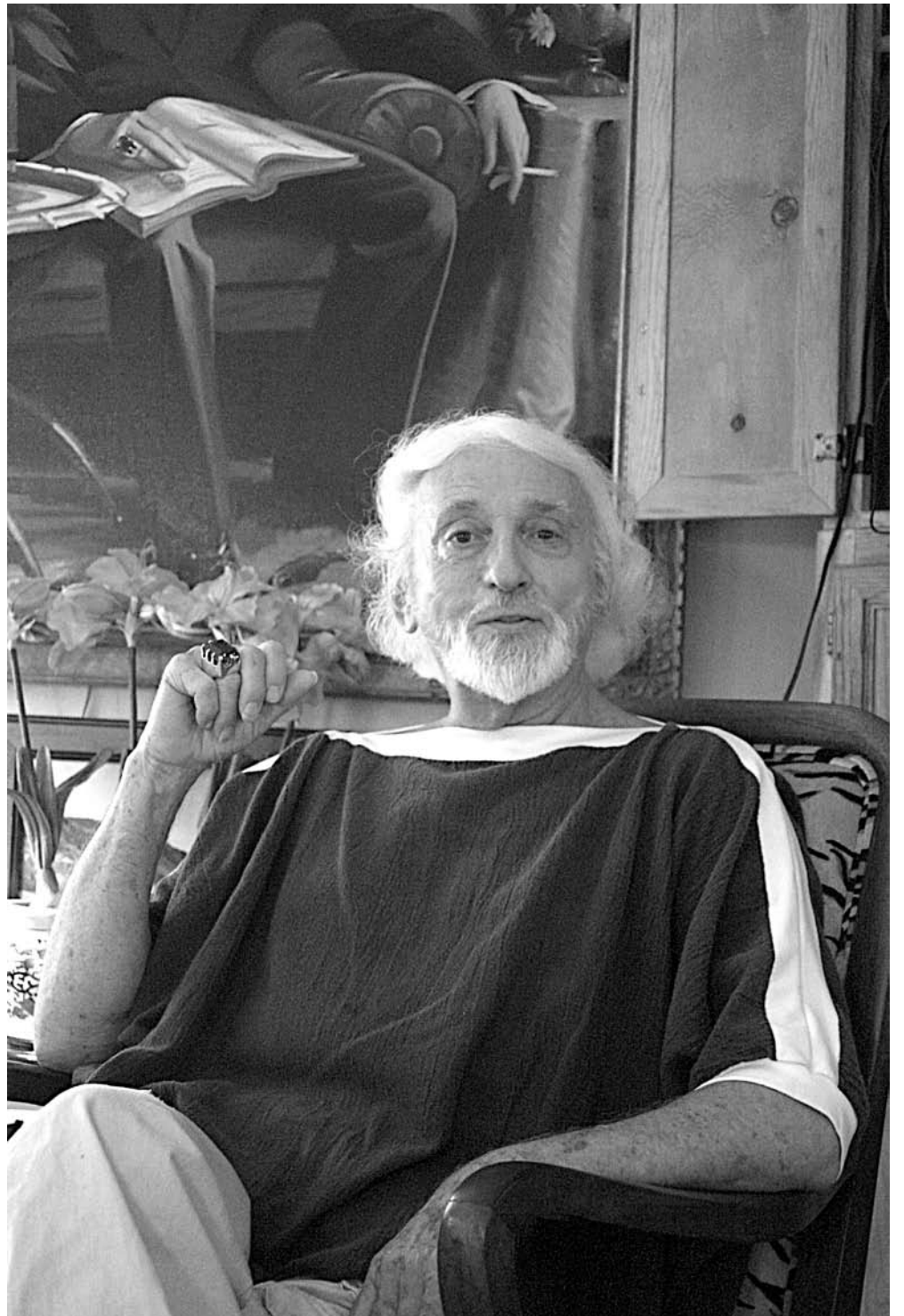
I recently traveled to Peterstown to chat with Pete Ballard, a West Virginia artist with an international claim to fame. His studio is more of a museum than a home. For the interview, we sat surrounded by paintings, photographs and other mementos of his career in the arts.

Ballard was born in Welch, deep in the southern part of the state in McDowell County. He has a real passion for his roots in West Virginia.

"I have always been grateful to have been born in Welch, West Virginia. At the time I was born, the cultural aspect of the town was perfect soil to nurture me as well as others who went on to study the arts," he said. "I have been many places, but West Virginia is my home." Ballard's career in the arts has, in fact, taken him around the globe.

In my study of Pete Ballard, I found myself trying to examine him as an artist. I realized that he has been involved in so many things, worn so many hats, that it is difficult to describe one "Pete Ballard." He is an artist and a teacher, but it goes well beyond that. His passion for the arts and West Virginia spill over into everything he does.

Ballard did leave West Virginia to start his career, which began with teaching. Teaching took him around the world, including an eight-year stay in Saudi Arabia, where he taught English as a second language. He then went to Winston-Salem, N.C., where he taught at the North Carolina



Ballard in his Peterstown Studio photograph by Jeff Pierson

Pete Ballard: A West Virginia Arts Treasure

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Ballard at age four

School of the Arts. While teaching in Winston-Salem, Ballard was asked to become curator at the Reynolda House Museum, the former R.J. Reynolds estate. The museum had a costume collection, and Ballard was hired to curate and conserve the collection. That is not to say that he was not making art during this period; he was always involved in art.

Everything he was doing in Winston-Salem would evolve into the next logical step in his career. He found his way into costume curation at several major museums in North Carolina and the south. His career then moved into costume conservation. In his conservation efforts, Ballard said he went through vast amounts of fabric and would have many leftover scraps when the projects ended.

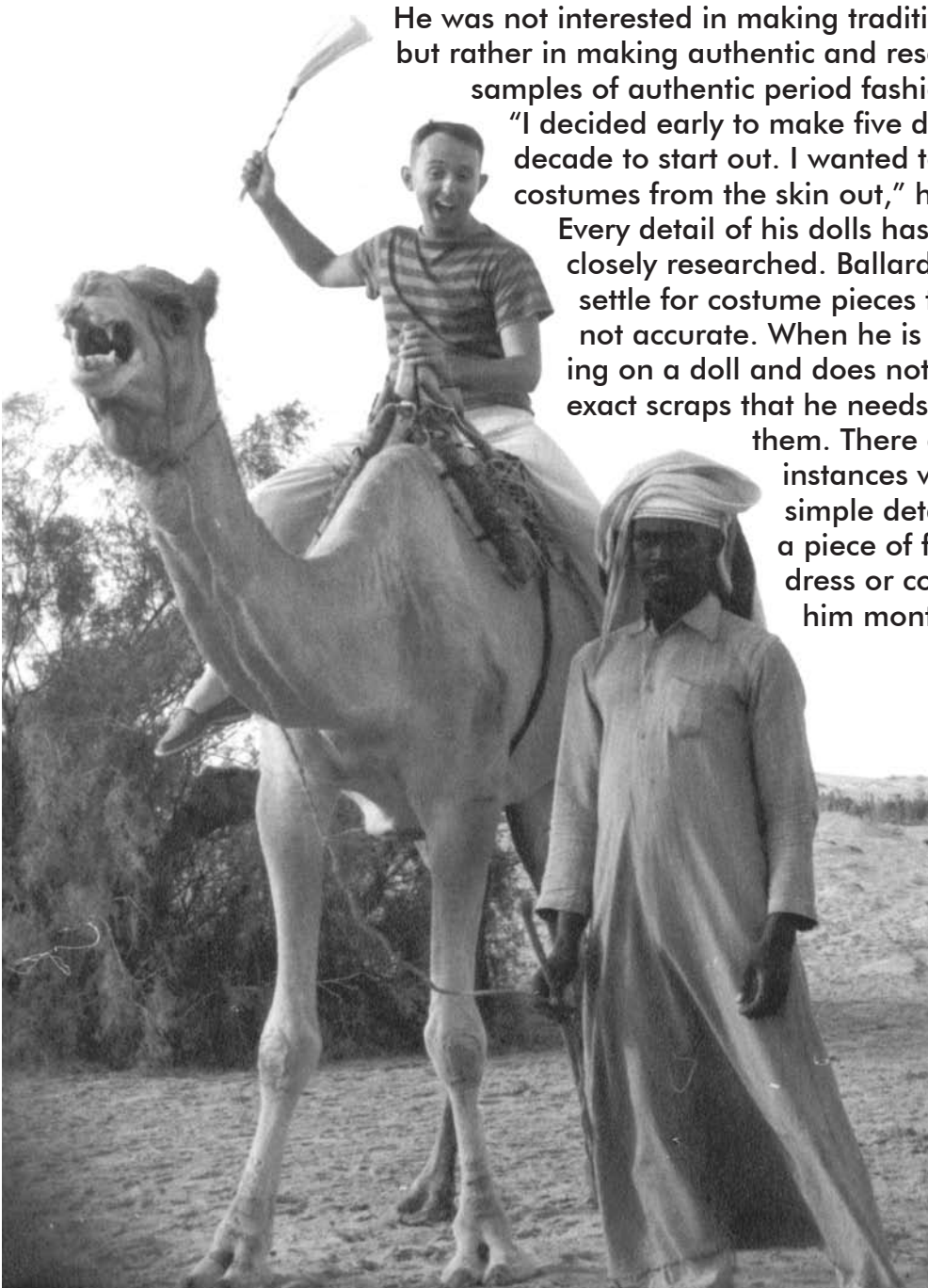
"Over the years, I realized the scraps were getting finer and rarer," he said. "At the point I decided I was no longer interested in museum work, I found I was stuck with a mountain of very fine scraps. I could have burned it all and that would have been that."

Instead, Ballard, after unsuccessful efforts to donate the collection, came up with the idea of creating costumed dolls. Those scraps would launch him into the next phase of his career. Ballard's fashion dolls are now known across the United States. His goals for his dolls were specific.

He was not interested in making traditional dolls, but rather in making authentic and researched samples of authentic period fashion.

"I decided early to make five dolls per decade to start out. I wanted to focus on costumes from the skin out," he said.

Every detail of his dolls has been closely researched. Ballard does not settle for costume pieces that are not accurate. When he is working on a doll and does not have the exact scraps that he needs, he finds them. There are some instances where a simple detail like a piece of fur on a dress or coat takes him months to find.



Ballard in Saudi Arabia, learning to ride a camel



Ballard working on Vivian Leigh's 1939 "Gone with the Wind" costume dress.

The bodies of the dolls, including the heads, are made of papier mache and each is constructed in proportion to the particular costume it will wear. The attention to the bodies is subordinate to the costumes. Like most of his art, the hundreds of dolls Ballard has produced have been donated.

"I do not make money producing my art. I donate it," he said.

Ballard's generosity has extended to Mount Airy, N.C., the North House Museum in Lewisburg, and, more recently, Lewisburg's Greenbrier Valley Theatre.

In Peterstown, Ballard still works, still making art every day. His life in the arts continues.

One of Ballard's fashion dolls. photograph by Mike Keller



"Be Brilliant!"
-Pete Ballard

Crystal Good named Affrilachian Poet

Charleston poet Crystal Good has been named an Affrilachian Poet. A term coined by poet Frank Walker to describe people of color living in the Appalachian region, "Affrilachian" has evolved into the name of a group of like-minded poets who came together for mutual support and encouragement.

The Affrilachian Poets is an ensemble of African-American writers who challenge simple notions of an all-white Appalachian region and culture while drawing on traditions such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement and experiences of the African Diaspora. Members of the group strive to give glimpses of life in the American Black South and Appalachian region. Good is the first West Virginian to join the group. Her induction was held at the Carnegie Center for Learning and Literacy on the campus of the University of Kentucky. She also was featured in a standing-room-only reading at Transylvania University. During the weekend, she participated in two master class workshops and was featured on Kentucky Public Radio. She hopes to participate in upcoming opportunities to teach and read in New Orleans with the Conjure Woman Project, and in Austin, Texas, with The Gibbous Moon Collective. She is currently working on pieces that explore double consciousness, the post-modern family, juvenile justice in West Virginia and Randy Moss.

For more information, contact her by e-mail at cgoodwoman@aol.com. For more information about Affrilachian poetry and poets, visit www.mwg.org/production/documentary/voices/poets/index.html.



Affrilachian Poet Crystal Good photograph by Joel Sites

Other Affrilachian Poets:

Frank X Walker
(<http://www.frankxwalker.com>)
Shayla Lawson
(<http://www.shaylalawson.com>)
Natasha Marin
(<http://www.blackenese.com>)
Sam Fitzpatrick
Bianca Spriggs
Parneshia Jones
Jude McPherson
Stephanie Pruitt
(<http://www.stephaniepruitt.com>)
Ellen Hagan
(<http://www.ellenhagan.com>)
Marta Miranda
Kelly Norman Ellis
Ricardo Nazario-Colon
Crystal Wilkinson
(<http://www.crystalwilkinson.com>)
Gerald Coleman
Daundra Scisney-Givens
Nikky Finney

On February 15 at the Cultural Center in Charleston, Crystal Good will be performing poetry with Ricardo Nazario Colon of the Affrilachian Poets. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. On February 16 at 10:00 a.m., she will be presenting a Poetry and Storytelling program for kids. (Teachers will need to make reservation for this event by calling Bethany Cline at 558-0220 ext 171.)

West Virginia Youth Symphony travels to Europe

By Michael Keller

In July 2006, after a year of planning, I accompanied members of the West Virginia Youth Symphony (WVYS) as they traveled to Europe and performed in Italy and Austria. Over 10 days the group played European and American music before local audiences, enjoyed the local cuisine, celebrated World Cup victories and became immersed in the history of the region.

In 2000, a similar tour to Prague was organized. As a result of the positive feedback he received from the students who participated, Tom Beal, president of the WVYS board of directors, decided another visit to Europe was in the future.

"Over the years, I have occasionally talked with kids who went on the Prague tour in 2000," Beal told me. "They have all mentioned with enthusiasm what a great trip it was for them and in one way or the other what a positive effect it had on them." Beal feels that a youth orchestra should be concerned with more than just the music, but also the culture of the region that inspired it. "One day in Tuscany imparts more knowledge than any book ever can. One can see how the land and sky have shaped the people."

And so, with the help of a lot of people, another trip was scheduled.

Encore Tours, which organizes custom tours for performing arts groups such as choirs, bands and orchestras, made the arrangements. Most of the tour would be spent in northern Italy with visits to classic artistic locations like Florence, Venice and Assisi, with the last couple of days across the border in Salzburg, Austria, home of Mozart.

Finding the performance venues was a bit more complicated, with the final choices falling to conductor Robert Turizziani. Fortunately, public performance of classical music is highly appreciated in Europe, so every location suggested by Encore offered great audiences. Turizziani finally selected two locations in Italy—one a former convent, one a former monastery. The third location was Wandelhalle Concert Hall in Bad Reichenhal, just outside Salzburg.

There was plenty of other preparation. Last winter involved fundraising on the part of students and parents. The WVYS board had promised \$500 toward each student musician's tour cost, and the additional fundraising included a raffle and

Continued on page 4

West Virginia Youth Symphony travels to Europe Continued from page 3

lots of requests for sponsorships and donations. The musicians spent a week before the departure practicing in an intensive tour camp, with a warm-up performance in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center at the State Capitol.

Eventually, 29 musicians, three conductor/teachers, and nine chaperones boarded a bus in Charleston for the trip to the airport in Cincinnati. From there we flew Air France to Paris, where we ran through the airport for our connecting flight to Rome. In Rome, we met our tour guide, Helen Bremner, and our bus driver, Giovanni, who were our leaders and companions for many hours over the next days.

For sisters Whitney and Morgan Perdue, it was their first trip on an airplane, and of course, it was an eight-hour flight. Whitney, a South Charleston High junior who plays the bass, said it was "definitely the experience of a lifetime. I liked going with my sister and having family along." By the time we landed, Whitney was a seasoned flier; I couldn't awaken her for breakfast on the plane. Turizziani chose the program to not only include Vivaldi for Italy and Mozart for Salzburg, but also to bring some American and West Virginian music to Europe, with compositions by David Williams and Paul Whear. Apparently the audiences enjoyed the music; after the first performance a couple of audience members expressed disappointment that there was no encore. Following that, the group included an encore in each performance.

An 8th grade violinist at John Adams Middle School liked the music because it was "interesting and challenging. I learned some new stuff." Erin Chiparo, a senior and violinist at Capital High, said the music was difficult because "a lot of it was by little-known composers." Most of the other students mentioned that they had stretched their skills as a result of this trip. Morgan Perdue, a freshman at South Charleston High, said when she saw her music she thought she'd never learn her cello parts, but by the end of the tour camp she was ready.

It was obvious to the musicians that the European audiences really appreciated their performance. Alan Riffle, a senior at South Charleston High who played oboe on the tour, said, "being there where the music was first created was inspirational." Whitney thought it was "pretty cool to play the music before people who knew the material." Erin thought their best audience was a group of other travelers "in the hotel during our practice. It was great encouragement because we were messing up and they were still happy. They were taking pictures like we were a tourist attraction."

At one of the venues in Italy, a group of high school students opened for the Youth Symphony. It was interesting to find out that this was an experimental music class in a public school. It seems youth orchestras are unusual in the education system in Italy. Erin thinks that the Americans' youth might have been one reason they impressed the audiences, as was the fact it was a full orchestra. Everyone enjoyed the cultural interactions on the tour. "I loved the food!" Morgan told me. The students were all impressed with how nice and helpful the Europeans were to them, and that there were no language issues, even with their limited Italian. While many of the students had made efforts to learn some Italian, one violinist, West Virginia University freshman Allison Hylton became so immersed in her phrase book that she was pressed into service as a server at one restaurant, and has discovered an aptitude for languages. The group had dinner with the Italian student group

before that performance, and it was obvious that teenagers are the same everywhere, and language issues are no barrier. We were in Chianciano when Italy beat Germany in the World Cup semifinals, and everyone became instant football fans as we participated in the town's celebration.

We also savored several musical activities as audiences. In Venice the group enjoyed a performance of Vivaldi by a local chamber group. Later in Salzburg, we had possibly the musical and gastronomical highlight of the trip, an elegant dinner at the famous St. Peterskeller Baroque Rooms, which featured live music of Mozart played by local musicians and singers in period attire.

All of the students I spoke with are definitely planning to continue their music studies, some with a renewed interest. Both Erin and Alan say they want careers as performing musicians. Morgan said that the trip has encouraged her to continue studying classical music, and while Whitney is more interested in science, she is considering a minor in music in college.

It seems obvious that Tom Beal's desire for the students to "have a positive and rewarding experience performing on international stages" came true. The teen musicians returned home with improved skills, a better understanding of the people and culture behind the music, and a lot of exciting memories.

In 1949 the Charleston Women's Club saw a need for young musicians to be able to perform in an orchestra in order to enhance individual and school ensemble playing. The original Kanawha Valley Youth Orchestra has gone through many changes since that year. The most recent restructuring occurred in 1991 when the Charleston Youth Orchestra became the West Virginia Youth Symphony.

The WVYS is a non-profit arts organization that supports four music ensembles: the full Youth Orchestra for advanced student musicians approximate ages 13-22; the Wind Ensemble comprised of the brass and woodwind sections of the Youth Orchestra; the Youth String Ensemble for intermediate level string students through grade 12; and the Cadet Strings for beginning level string students. The WVYS also offers chamber music ensembles for students who wish to work in the small groups as well as the large ensembles. Members of all the groups come from schools and colleges throughout West Virginia and surrounding states.

<http://www.wvyouthsymphony.org>

About the Author

Michael Keller of St. Albans is the photographer for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. He also operates a commercial photography business, Michael Keller Photo.

A Michael Keller Portfolio



In Salzburg, looking up at the Hohensalzburg Fortress which towers above the city



Violinist Lauren Keller during rehearsal at Wandelhalle Concert Hall in Bad Reichenhal, Austria, the final venue on the tour.



In Venice, this chamber group performed Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" in 18th century dress.



Getting these five cellos on and off planes and through airports was a serious logistical issue



This is the conductor of the Italian student group, Ensemble Citta Murata, that performed at the Chioistro di San Marco, the second venue on the tour.



A group of the WV Youth Symphony musicians at Chioistro di San Marco



Italian student musicians rehearsal

More photos from the tour can be seen at www.mikekellerphoto.com/eurotour/.

FY 2007 Arts Grants Awarded

APPLICANT	GRANT AMOUNT	GRANT PROGRAM
BARBOUR COUNTY		
Adaland Mansion Development Inc.	\$560	Community Arts Project Support
James Cain	\$2,500	Professional Development
BERKELEY COUNTY		
Carol Slovikosky	\$2,494	Professional Development
The Art Centre Inc.	\$3,187	Arts in Education
Apollo Civic Theatre	\$3,720	Community Arts Project Support
Apollo Civic Theatre	\$3,377	Arts in Education
Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library	\$2,043	Community Arts Project Support
The Art Centre Inc.	\$5,680	Community Arts Project Support
		
<p>Greenbrier Valley Theatre Greenbrier County</p>		
<p>Augusta Heritage Center Randolph County</p>		
BRAXTON COUNTY		
Betty Rivard	\$2,150	Professional Development
CABELL COUNTY		
Cigdem Slankard	\$2,487	Professional Development
Emily Ritchey	\$2,092	Professional Development
Claire Sherwood	\$2,500	Professional Development
Carter Taylor Seaton	\$422	Professional Development
Huntington Museum of Art	\$50,000	Major Institution Support
Huntington Museum of Art	\$15,000	Challenge America
CALHOUN COUNTY		
Heartwood In the Hills Inc.	\$1,875	Community Arts Project Support
FAYETTE COUNTY		
Wendy Wassink Ackison	\$1,622	Professional Development
African American Heritage Family Tree	\$4,000	Community Arts Project Support
GRANT COUNTY		
Grant County Arts Council	\$1,000	Community Arts Project Support
Grant County Arts Council	\$475	Arts in Education
GREENBRIER COUNTY		
Trillium Performing Arts Collective	\$600	Professional Development
West Virginia Arts Presenters Inc.	\$74,688	Community Arts Project Support
Greenbrier Valley Theatre	\$15,000	Challenge America Grant
Trillium Performing Arts Collective	\$8,375	Community Arts Project Support
Carnegie Hall Inc.	\$31,427	General Operating Support
Greenbrier County Schools	\$4,800	Arts in Education
Greenbrier Valley Theatre	\$36,359	General Operating Support
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY		
Hampshire County Arts Council	\$3,050	Community Arts Project Support
HANCOCK COUNTY		
Weirton Area Civic Foundation	\$4,000	Community Arts Project Support
HARRISON COUNTY		
Clarksburg Harrison County Cultural Foundation	\$1,000	Community Arts Project Support
City of Bridgeport	\$3,300	Community Arts Project Support

JACKSON COUNTY

Susanna M. Holstein \$446 Professional Development Grant

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Shepherd University \$7,750 Community Arts Project Support
 Arts & Humanities Alliance of Jefferson County \$7,000 Community Arts Project Support
 Shepherdstown Music and Dance \$7,875 Community Arts Project Support
 Harpers Ferry Historical Association \$11,500 Challenge America
 Robin Young \$2,500 Professional Development
 Tamra Natalie Trafford \$2,429 Professional Development

KANAWHA COUNTY

Molly Erlandson \$1,873 Professional Development
 Darrell Murray \$1,538 Professional Development
 Bonni McKeown \$1,254 Professional Development
 Colleen Anderson \$2,190 Professional Development
 Avampato Discovery Museum Inc. \$50,000 Major Institution Support
 Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences \$41,800 Major Institution Support
 Charleston Ballet \$23,600 General Operating Support
 Neil Allen Curry \$1,125 Professional Development
 Step by Step \$8,380 Arts in Education
 Seneca Chamber Orchestra \$5,127 Community Arts Project Support
 Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences \$5,525 Challenge America
 West Virginia Youth Symphony \$3,590 Arts in Education
 Charleston Stage Company \$9,450 Arts in Education
 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship \$3,035 Arts in Education
 Linda Maher-Simmons \$926 Professional Development
 Charleston Stage Company \$7,924 Community Arts Project Support
 Kanawha Valley FOOTMAD \$6,750 Community Arts Project Support
 Allied Artists of West Virginia Inc. \$2,635 Community Arts Project Support
 West Virginia Symphony Orchestra \$45,000 Major Institution Support
 West Virginia International Film Festival \$6,824 Community Arts Project Support
 East End Family Resource Center \$2,250 Arts in Education
 River City Youth Ballet Ensemble \$1,450 Community Arts Project Support

LINCOLN COUNTY

Ric MacDowell \$2,400 Professional Development

MARION COUNTY

Marion County Schools \$2,900 Arts in Education
 Fairmont State College \$7,500 Community Arts Project Support

MARSHALL COUNTY

Cheryl Ryan Harshman \$477 Professional Development
 Marshall County Schools \$3,000 Arts in Education

MASON COUNTY

Mason County Schools \$2,100 Arts in Education
 West Virginia Art & Craft Guild \$3,341 Community Arts Project Support

MINERAL COUNTY

Highland Arts Unlimited Inc. \$1,100 Arts in Education
 Highland Arts Unlimited Inc. \$4,400 Community Arts Project Support

MONONGALIA COUNTY

Arts Monongahela Inc. \$6,250 Community Arts Project Support
 Fairmont Chamber Music Society \$2,880 Community Arts Project Support
 Support
 Jason Bohnert \$2,500 Professional Development

MORGAN COUNTY

Morgan Arts Council \$10,800 Arts in Education
 Thomas Lee Brooks \$2,189 Professional Development
 Rika Bennett \$1,227 Professional Development
 Morgan Arts Council \$1,250 Professional Development
 Morgan Arts Council \$23,515 Community Arts Project Support
 Support
 Morgan Arts Council \$5,375 Challenge America

NICHOLAS COUNTY

Sharon McNeill \$2,500 Professional Development
 Ivy & Stone Council for the Arts \$6,743 Community Arts Project Support
 Support
 Ivy & Stone Council for the Arts \$9,926 Arts in Education



Hannah Johnson
Putnam County

OHIO COUNTY

Oglebay Institute	\$50,000	Major Institution Support
Wheeling Symphony	\$45,000	Major Institution Support

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Allegheny Echoes Inc.	\$3,250	Professional Development
Pocahontas County Opera House Foundation	\$13,325	Community Arts Project Support

PUTNAM COUNTY

Hannah Sue Johnson	\$1,108	Professional Development
Museum in the Community	\$8,294	Community Arts Project Support

RALEIGH COUNTY

West Virginia Professional Dance Company	\$14,559	Challenge America
Beckley Area Foundation	\$4,000	Community Arts Project Support
Youth Museum of Southern West Virginia	\$27,216	General Operating Support

RANDOLPH COUNTY

Augusta Heritage Center	\$25,334	Community Arts Project Support
Randolph County Schools	\$6,090	Arts in Education
Randolph County Community Arts	\$8,944	Arts in Education
Randolph County Community Arts	\$21,460	Community Arts Project Support
Augusta Heritage Center	\$5,000	Professional Development
Don Hall	\$2,398	Professional Development
Davis & Elkins College	\$3,250	Community Arts Project Support

SUMMERS COUNTY

Flannagan-Murrell House	\$1,500	Challenge America
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TUCKER COUNTY

Voices from the Earth Inc.	\$4,700	Arts in Education
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TYLER COUNTY

Tyler County Schools	\$4,000	Arts in Education
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WETZEL COUNTY

ArtsLink Inc.	\$9,065	Community Arts Project Support
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WOOD COUNTY

Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival	\$3,350	Community Arts Project Support
Melinda Maher	\$1,761	Professional Development
West Virginia University at Parkersburg	\$6,500	Community Arts Project Support
West Virginia Theatre Conference	\$1,520	Community Arts Project Support
ArtsBridge Inc.	\$26,362	General Operating Support
Parkersburg Art Center	\$25,270	General Operating Support
Mid-Ohio Valley Symphony Society	\$8,000	Arts in Education
Actors Guild of Parkersburg	\$13,500	General Operating Support
Mid-Ohio Valley Symphony Society	\$10,800	Community Arts Project Support

"I was very excited to learn that I was a recipient of the Professional Development Grant for my kiln building! I wanted to extend a sincere "Thank You!" to you and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts for helping professional artists."

**Jason Bohnert,
potter**

Board Training

Want a clearer understanding of your responsibilities as a board member? Don't miss this unique opportunity to learn about non-profit board governance in West Virginia for FREE!

Secretary of State Betty Ireland's office will offer free training to board members charged with running West Virginia non-profits. Beginning in October a series of one-day sessions will be held in six cities around the state. The training sessions are designed to teach board member duties, from financial responsibilities to issues that might arise over conflicts of interest and state non-profit law.

Courses will be held as follows:

Oct. 2, 1-4 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Wheeling

Oct. 3, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at West Virginia University at Parkersburg

Oct. 9, 9 a.m.-noon at Christ Church United Methodist in Charleston

Oct. 9, 2-5 p.m. at Tamarack in Beckley

Oct. 16, 1-4 p.m. at WVU East Health Sciences Center in Martinsburg

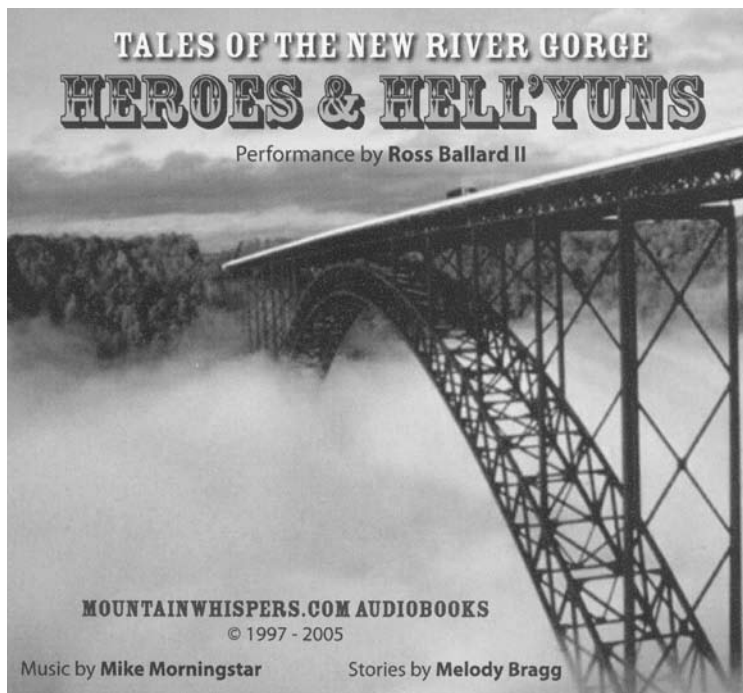
Oct. 17, 9 a.m.-noon at Suncrest United Methodist Church in Morgantown

The sessions represent the first time such a group has partnered with the state to make training available on a larger scale. The program is co-sponsored by Mission West Virginia, the Well-spring Center and West Virginia University Extension Service.

Sessions are free for the first 30 participants who sign up for each course. To register, call John Hazlett or Stephanie Kappel at 232-8073 or visit www.wvnonprofit.org.

Martinsburg audio studio makes an impact

By Rebecca Conrad



Cover art for Mountain Whispers audiobook

Although I was initially doubtful that the new audio version of "Lost Highway," recently recorded and released by Ross Ballard of Mountain Whispers, would match the quality of the readers I'd grown accustomed to hearing during the 25 years I've been listening to audio books, I had nothing to fear.

Ballard is the proud owner and founder of Mountain Whispers, an audio studio located in West Virginia. He does an extraordinary job showcasing West Virginia authors with realistic dramas in audio book form. His diligent determination has produced some audio masterpieces.

As a blind person, the quality of the reader is nearly as important to me as that of the writer. Many of the commercially produced audio books I'd listened to seemed lacking, with monotone voices that often put me to sleep. But Ballard's handling of "Lost Highway" could not have been better. He literally carried this reader into another world and kept me there until the last page was through.

Richard Curry's "Lost Highway" tells the story of Sapper Reeves, a gifted country music singer/songwriter working the rainy back roads and smoke-filled taverns of the southern mountains in the years just after World War II. Leaving his wife and son behind in his small West Virginia hometown, Sapper is barely managing to make a paltry living with his music, realizing his talent is as under appreciated as the country that he and his band are traveling through.

Eventually, Sapper reaches a crisis of faith, one that reverberates from the ragged hope of the fiercely independent Appalachian soul to the anguish of Vietnam, where Sapper's son is serving as a Marine.

"Lost Highway" takes right off with bluegrass music, setting just the right mood for a story about a West Virginia musician. As I listened, the background effects pleasantly surprised me. As the book's main character, Sapper Reeves, stops at a diner, I felt as though I was sitting side by side with Reeves thanks to the quiet diner sounds in the background. In the past, I've found sound effects in audio books to be distracting, but Ballard's careful touch with these details only serves to enhance the listener's experience. I never expected that din-

er sounds or crickets chirping could be so instrumental in making me feel a part of the story, as if I were experiencing it, more than simply listening.

As the reader, Ballard performs his role to perfection as the talented Sapper Reeves. He not only portrays the singer in the novel, but also sings the lead in a musical rendition of the fictional band's biggest hit, "Miranda."

When Ballard talks about his creation, you can sense his heartfelt emotion.

"When I look out at my state and see how desperate libraries have become, how West Virginia history is in danger of being removed along with its mountains, and how our writers are finding it so difficult to get their work out to the public . . . well, I had to do something," Ballard said. "Sitting on my hands is not my style. Roadblocks and miscommunications be damned!"

Ballard's roots and love of West Virginia run as deep as our mountains, and his connection to the people and the culture are real. Born and raised in Boone County, Ballard is the eldest of 10 children. His father was a lifelong CSX railroader, and his mother one of the best political orators in southern West Virginia. His grandfather, Opie C. Bias, was a well-known leader of the United Mine Workers of America. Ballard himself was once an underground coal miner.

Perhaps it was his close relationship with the mining world that made Ballard's rendition of "When Miners March" so special. His magnetic tenor voice swept me into that turbulent time in West Virginia's history and the Battle of Blair Mountain. His performance shows in stark detail the struggle for survival as dozens of its main players are brought back to life.

Ballard got into the audio book production business after, as he says, "a family tragedy left me with no direction. Then my wife developed a deteriorating eye disease, which prompted me to look into audio books. I'd already found a love for them while my job kept me on the road much of the time."

In 1997, Ballard found his new direction when he began MountainWhispers.com Audio books. He believes in the need for preserving oral history and tales of Appalachia. Remembering the great storytellers he knew while growing up on a small farm in Low Gap, his stories are told from the heart. I appreciate Ross Ballard's efforts.

It has been difficult to find my fellow West Virginians' work in a form that I'm able to read. My hat goes off to Ballard for making it possible for me—and many others—to have the opportunity to read these wonderful works of art, and another tip of the hat for the splendid way they are presented. I'm eagerly awaiting his next book—"Crum" by Lee Maynard.

Ballard currently lives in Martinsburg and teaches at Johns Hopkins University School of Professional Studies in Baltimore, Md. Visit his website at www.mountainwhispers.com.

About the Author

Rebecca Conrad is a writer from Burnsville.

ADIA
ARTS for ALL

Beckley Newspapers sponsors gallery

By Stacy Kepple



View of the BN Gallery in Beckley photograph by Rick Barbero

From watercolors to pen and ink drawings, abstract art to youth art, different mediums of local artists have found a rather unusual home—the lobby of the Beckley Newspapers offices. Located at North Kanawha Street in Beckley, the spacious lobby offers a gallery for two-dimensional hanging art, free admission to the public and ample convenient parking. The newspaper, a non-arts organization, has maintained this gallery for 24 years, embracing a nurturing and supportive attitude towards the arts in West Virginia.

The Gallery offers four or five exhibits a year, allowing artists to showcase their work. To maintain a higher level of quality in the artistic works, artists must have won previous awards and have exhibited their pieces in other shows. In addition to regular exhibits, there have been 22 juried art shows in the Gallery's history, run once a year December through January. This offers a tremendous opportunity for local artists—a chance to have work critiqued, to win prizes, purchase awards and to garner recognition for their work. The amazing thing is the newspaper funds these shows, paying for the judges, and running ads for exhibits free of charge to the artists. The newspaper has run innumerable stories on exhibits, artists and winners of the juried shows. It also handles all sales of

exhibited paintings, and has an employee to serve as the contact for the gallery program. Since the conception of the Gallery, Beckley Newspapers has had several new publishers, all of whom chose to perpetuate the Gallery and its effect on the community.

In 1982, the publisher of the Beckley Newspaper, Charles K. "Charlie" Connor, had the opportunity to oversee the construction of a new building for the newspaper. In an effort to use the abundance of space available in the lobby, the art gallery concept was born. Connor employed the help of Ellen Anderson and Lou Gates, then partners at the Paint Box Gallery and experienced artists in their own rights, in developing the plans for the gallery. Anderson and Gates continue to be an integral part of the success of the gallery, hanging the artwork for exhibits and shows, and choosing the judges for juried art shows. The exhibits are enthusiastically supported by the public, drawing contributors statewide to sponsor prize money and purchase awards, in addition to what the newspaper supplies. Artists submit pieces by the hundreds, and viewers enter the gallery over the course of a year by the thousands. Local schools often take field trips to the gallery. Three years ago, the newspaper committed a third wall of the gallery for the Student Art Gallery, displaying art from area schools and art classes. In the beginning of the Gallery's history, there were very few opportunities for local artists to showcase much less obtain revenue for their works. Here, even young budding artists can find a home for their promising work.

Recently, Beckley Newspapers was nominated for a Governor's Arts Award—the Creative Community Spirit Award, given to a city, town or community-wide non-arts organization using the arts in a significant way for community development or betterment. A decision was made to offer the juried art show every other year. It seems there are several other juried shows in the area, rising from a growth in local artists and numerous display opportunities. The Beckley Newspaper Gallery paved the way.

Focus on the Fellowships: An Interview with Kevin Oderman

By Jeff Pierson

Jeff Pierson: Do you remember the first book you ever read?

Kevin Oderman: That would be "Chip the Dam Builder." As I remember it, and this could be wildly wrong, the story follows a young beaver sent out to find his own place in the world. Has difficulties. The streams he follows get narrower. Escapes dangers. Happy ending. Very touching for a five-year old!

Before that, I remember my mother reading to my brothers and me, and I think those times were really what got me started with literature. My mother read well and had a great love of books, of language. She read us poetry, mostly Victorian poetry, and fiction. That was magic, whole worlds called up—I saw them so clearly then—right there in our kitchen, while I sat maybe on the hem of her skirt or, as I was the youngest, in her lap. I understood right then the power of language to open the door.

JP: Your travel writings are very unique, how do you choose your locations?

KO: Thanks, Jeff. I'd like to have a thoughtful answer to your question, but serendipity probably has been the main thing. That, and places not too expensive. Many of the travel essays I've written have come out of my two stints abroad as a Fulbright lecturer, first in Thessaloniki, Greece, and subsequently in Lahore, Pakistan. I traveled to those places, and then widely from them. From Thessaloniki, I saw the Balkans, from Lahore, many places in Asia. Then I wanted to go back, or to the places I didn't quite get to, and when I got the chance, I did. One step leads to the next. Pretty soon you've left footprints far and wide...

JP: What artists do you look to for inspiration?

KO: A cast of thousands! Writers, painters, architects, musicians. We are so lucky! My nonfiction has been most influenced by modern poets, Ezra

Focus on the Fellowships: An Interview with Stanley Sporny

By Jeff Pierson

Jeff Pierson: Do you remember making your first painting?

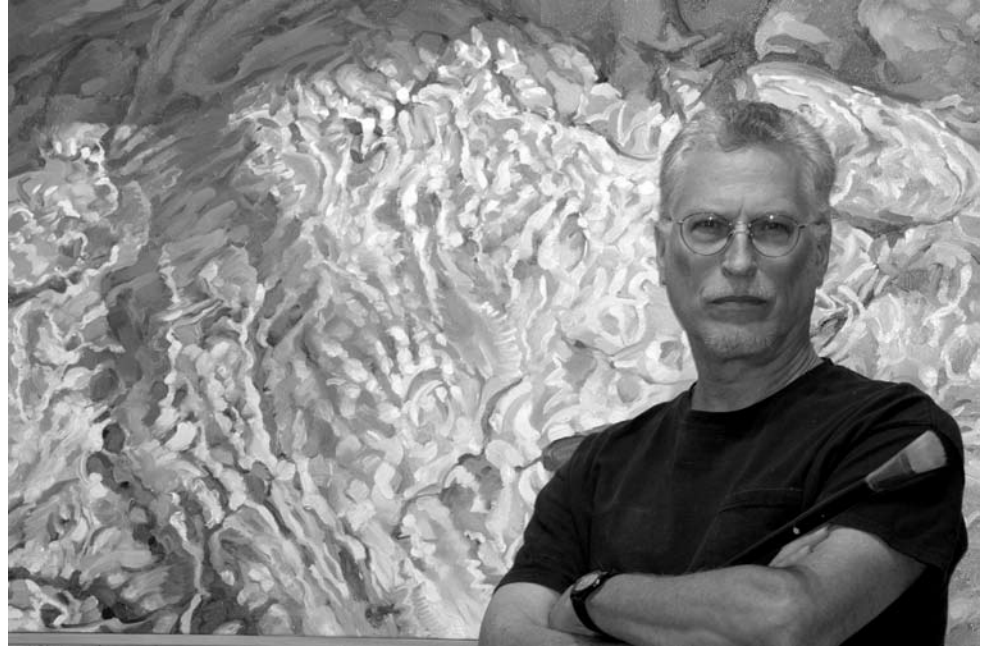
Stan Sporny: The first oil painting was when I was about 12 or 13. It was a very long horizontal, with a track athlete running, stretched from end to end. Oddly enough, I have done about 23 commissioned paintings over the years with this elongated format—both landscapes and cityscapes. No runners.

JP: What artists do you look to for inspiration?

SS: To my teachers—Sidney Goodman, Paul Georges, Alex Katz, Red Grooms, Elaine de Kooning, Alice Neel and Neil Welliver. I think Willem de Kooning and Diebenkorn still influence me for application of paint, and Lucien Freud, too. I also like the hopelessly romantic Bouguereau, and the way Reubens designed his paintings. Degas, Sargent and Homer are also painters I respect a lot, especially the watercolors of the latter two.

JP: How does living in West Virginia affect your work?

SS: It has to be the purity of the light and water up-country. Some people who have never seen a clear stream like the Buckhannon, and other waters up near their sources, do not quite believe some of my paintings. I like the purity of West Virginia country folks who, for the most part, will help neighbor and stranger alike, and enjoy doing it.



photograph by Rasmi Sporny

JP: What's next for you?

SS: I am starting over. I am now with someone I love deeply and the feelings are returned, far beyond what I could imagine or hope for. I expect this amazing relationship will have an effect on my work in a very lively and positive way—more clarity, more intensely focused, a rediscovery. I am beginning a couple of commissioned works at the start of a new series of water paintings. Revisiting some of the discoveries I have made on this journey, I will attempt to perfect the optical illusion of clear water done with opaque paint. It means more than just mere representation. The successful water painting plucks at the heartstrings of every viewer. I touch on an emotion that is universal.

"Always remember, if you cannot imagine it you cannot achieve it."

Kathleen Arnason

"The song was there before me, before I came along. I just sorta came down and just sorta took it down with a pencil, but it was there before I came around."

Bob Dylan

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

Albert Einstein

Pound, Hilda Doolittle, William Carlos Williams, and other practitioners of collage strategies in verse. I have a big file of individual essays that have taught me how to pursue my craft, but few books. I guess I would single out John Haines' "The Stars, The Snow, The Fire." In fiction, I have looked to Kent Haruf, Lawrence Durrell, Andre Gide, and my favorite novelist, Heimito von Doderer.

In West Virginia, I have been most inspired by the poet Irene McKinney, by the novelist Richard Currey, by Morgantown painter Sharon Goodman, Morgantown potter Louise Lamar-Fuller, my colleagues in creative writing at West Virginia University, and, of course, my wife, the writer Sara Pritchard—the best writer in the house, which keeps me humble.

JP: What's/Where's next for you?

KO: My novel "Going" was published by Vandalia Press, the literary imprint of the West Virginia University Press, on Aug. 15. Short term, I'll be doing whatever I can to support that book, an expat novel set in Granada, Spain. I've nearly finished a volume of literary travel essays, which I intend to submit to publishers next year. Beyond that, I have another novel in mind, one strand of which would be set in Preston County...



Earlier this year, Stanley Sporny and Kevin Oderman received fellowship awards from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. These interviews by Jeff Pierson, individual artist coordinator for the Division, are part of a series of articles featuring fellowship recipients.

photograph by Kevin Oderman

Celebrating the Literary Arts at The West Virginia Book Festival

By Belinda Anderson

When the model for an action figure says book festivals are important—and fun—it must be true. “Book festivals are wonderful opportunities for authors and readers to come together in a celebration of books and the literary arts,” says Nancy Pearl, one of the featured speakers at this year’s West Virginia Book Festival. National Public Radio listeners know Pearl from her reading recommendations. The Seattle resident also is the model for a librarian action figure and the author of “Book Lust.”

She says, “It’s always fun to have so many authors and readers together in one spot. One of the reasons that it’s important is that it gives readers a chance to be introduced to authors they might not find on their own.”

Exposing readers to West Virginia writers is one of the goals of the West Virginia Book Festival, scheduled this year for Oct. 21-22 at the Charleston Civic Center. The younger Ohio River Festival of Books in Huntington also features many state writers, but the five-year-old Charleston event led the way.

“There was this core of great writers, but nobody knew about them,” says Pam May, steering committee chairman. “We wanted to get the word out about the great writers that we have in this state or have ties to the state.” She estimates 7,000 people attended last year’s event. The Kanawha County Public Library system sponsors the festival in conjunction with The Library Foundation of Kanawha County, Charleston Newspapers and the West Virginia Humanities Council.

“This is all things books,” says Mark Payne, the council’s program director. “It’s for authors, it’s for readers, booksellers, publishers, illustrators—everybody that’s involved in the book field.” The festival promotes a diversity of subjects through readings, panel discussions and how-to sessions. “One of its intents is to raise the visibility of the quality of the work of not just West Virginia authors, but regional authors and national authors,” Payne says. Or, as author Stephen Coonts succinctly says, “Before a writer can be read, he or she must be noticed.” Coonts, a past visitor to the festival, is a West Virginia native and writer of thrillers that frequently show up on best-seller lists. Another West Virginia native, Keith Maillard, will travel to the festival this year from his Canadian home to participate in a panel discussion. “It’s a great opportunity to see old friends, meet other West Virginia writers and confirm the sense of kinship I have with other West Virginia writers,” he says. “I continue to write, and read, about West Virginia, so, in a sense, it’s coming back to the energy source.”

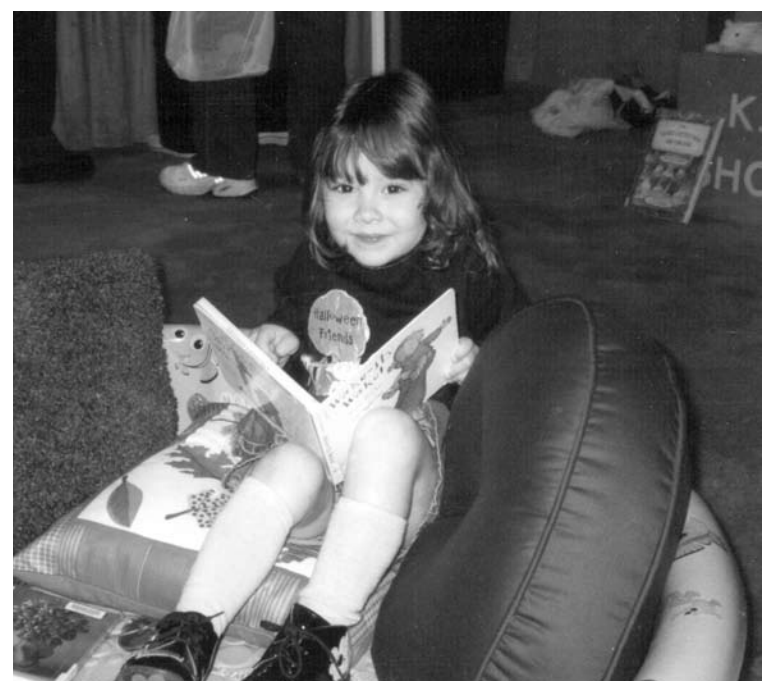
“If you’re a published writer, it’s a great place to be around a lot of people who read. It’s a concentrated crowd for whom books and the written word are important,” says Dawn Miller, editorial page editor at the *Charleston Gazette*. “If you’re non-published, it’s a great place to meet booksellers, a few publishers, and to talk to authors and ask them the burning questions you have.” A book festival also is a way to provide a community event for the usually solo activities of writing and reading. “The work is isolating, and consuming the work is isolating,” Miller says. “It’s an unusual way to enjoy the written word, to do it in a community of people.”

Gazette staffers are likely to be found during the festival inviting youngsters to listen to a story in the *Gazette* Read-to-Me Corner. “We try to make it a warm little space,” Miller says. “We tuck it under a little indoor tent. Children who enjoy being read to don’t think of themselves as being patrons of the arts, but those children are participating in the arts.”

“The impact on the literary landscape in West Virginia is invaluable,” says Kirk Judd, past president of West Virginia Writers, Inc. Judd will be performing poetry at this year’s event. “The festival represents one outstanding way to begin to fill that void. Personal contact and direct interface with successful writers is one of the best influences young or beginning writers can obtain. For those already proficient, it’s a chance to meet and network with peers.”

The festival begins on Oct. 21 at 8 a.m. with the Kanawha County Public Library’s annual used-book sale. More information on festival authors and program schedules is available by calling (304) 343-4646 or visiting the West Virginia Humanities Council website at www.wvhumanities.org.

Belinda Anderson, joined by members of the West Virginia Storytelling Guild, will read from her new collection of short stories, “The Bingo Cheaters,” at noon on Oct. 22 at the festival. Paul Epstein, co-director of the Central West Virginia Writing Project, will perform his original bingo song, and audience members will have a chance to win a tote bag filled with books from publisher Mountain State Press. Visit Anderson’s web site at www.BelindaAnderson.com.



A very young reader at the Book Festival

“Total absence of humour renders life impossible.”

Colette

Artwork covers walls of Entler Hotel

By Lauren Hough



Kate Kirby-O'Connell walks through the Arts and Humanities Alliance of Jefferson County Members Exhibition at the Entler Hotel in Sheperdstown. Kirby-O Connell is one of 65 members featured. photograph by Jason Turner

Light from the slowly setting sun crept in through the windows of the Entler Hotel on the evening of July 19, dancing across the wood floor to glint upon a rainbow of colors, tempting guests to be inspired by, or—better yet—fall in love with, the displayed artwork.

A slow trickle of visitors crept around the designated gallery space, who pointed out paintings, photographs, pottery and jewelry. In its seventh year, the Arts & Humanities Alliance (AHA) of Jefferson County-sponsored members exhibition has drawn more local artists than ever before.

"It's a wonderful exhibit," said AHA! board member Pam Parziale of Sycamore Pottery. "It's very eclectic. It takes a huge amount of effort, but it's worth it." Even receiving the work of the 65 participating artists was a festive time in itself.

"Everyone was talking and looking at what everyone else has done," Parziale said. "Emerging artists and top-notch professionals get together and have a good time."

Finding inspiration in the work of others is only one of a number of benefits the show has afforded local artists of all skill levels, but it may be the most fun byproduct of the exhibit.

"You have the opportunity to look at really good works," said 15-year-old Kate Kirby-O'Connell, a budding artist herself.

A new trend in the exhibition has been the emergence of young artists, such as Kirby-O'Connell of Charles Town, who has two prints of original drawings in marker on display. An entire wall is devoted to the works of talented teens from the area.

"I felt like I reached the skill level where I could show within the community," said Kirby-O'Connell, who recently learned of AHA! through Shepherd University's Shepfest. Providing a public outlet for her art has been important in not only increasing her visibility, but also getting a number of reactions.

"Maybe they like it and maybe they don't," she said. "I'm just getting it out there."

The exhibition opened the morning of Wednesday, July 19, after being hung by local retired architect Kip Stowell, said Tish Appignani, chair of the AHA! Members Exhibit Committee.

The show, which ran through the weekend, is a prime outlet for alerting those in the region, and throughout the state, to the array of artistic skill possessed within Jefferson County.

"We have all of this talent, right here at home and we need to honor that," Appignani said. "We need to use those wonderful spirits to help art grow in the Panhandle."

Members of AHA! can show their artwork for \$20—"the best deal in town," Appignani says. Twenty percent of all sales proceeds go toward funding additional exhibits and arts programs within the community.

"This is a service to artists," Appignani said. "It's showing their work, getting the word out and just being proud of the artists who've come from this area."

Last year, an AHA!-funded program called Teaching Arts Creatively distributed 16 grants in the amount of \$500 each throughout Jefferson County. "That helped fund 16 arts programs that might not have taken place," Appignani said.

Along with raising money and arts awareness, becoming better friends of other community organizations throughout the area is a key goal of the alliance.

"We all need each other," Appignani said. Collaborations, such as bringing arts programs into local Boys and Girls Clubs and other nonprofit agencies are acts from which everyone can benefit. "This whole area is emerging right now," she said. "It's a really fun time to be a part of the Panhandle."

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**"This is a service to artists".
"It's showing their work, getting the word out and just being proud of the artists who've come from this area."**

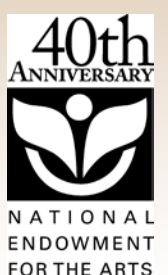
**"Creativity is as important as literacy"
-Ken Robinson**



Poetry Out Loud is going statewide! The National Endowment for the Arts is sponsoring Poetry Out Loud, a poetry recitation contest for high school students. Please contact your public library or Language Arts teacher to participate.

Arts in Education/Challenge America Grant writing Workshops will be coming near you this fall and winter for the March and April deadlines.

For more information contact Gregg McAllister, 304.558.0240 or gregg.mcallister@wvculture.org



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Upcoming Grant Deadlines**West Virginia Commission on the Arts**
www.wvculture.org

Feb. 1, 2007: Challenge America and Professional Development Grants for individual artists and organizations.
Rolling Deadline: Mini-Grants, Emergency Fast Track Cultural Facilities and Accessibility Grants

MID ATLANTIC
ARTS FOUNDATION

**Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation**
www.midatlanticarts.org

Jan. 15, 2007: Round I of USArtists International
May 7, 2007: Round II of USArtists International

**West Virginia Development Office**
www.sbdcwv.org

Ongoing deadline for reimbursement grant for website design and maintenance training. Group training preferred. Click on "Small Business Work Force Training Grant Application." For more information, contact Kimberly Donahue at kdonahue@wvdo.org or call (304) 558-2960 or (888) 982-7232.

**West Virginia Division of Tourism**
www.wvtourism.com

The Cooperative Tourism Promotion Fund is a matching reimbursement program to assist tourism destinations/attractions by using direct advertising to attract visitors to West Virginia. Rolling deadlines are Jan. 1, April 1, July 1 and Oct. 1. For more information, contact the Division of Tourism at (304) 558-2200.

**National Endowment for the Arts**
www.arts.endow.gov

Jan. 8, 2007: Literature Fellowships-Translation Projects (postmark deadline for applications)
Jan. 31, 2007: NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships (tentative postmark deadline for nominations)

**West Virginia Humanities Council**
www.wvhumanities.org

April 1, June 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1 and Dec. 1: Mini Grants

**Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour**
www.pennpat.org

Oct. 16: For projects scheduled between Feb. 1, 2007, and Aug. 31, 2007
Oct. 16: Presenter Deadlines for Fee Support and New Directions Grants
Rolling Deadline: Tour Planning Program
Note: The 2006 Artist Roster Book is now available.

Reid-Smith appointed commissioner of Division of Culture and History



Randall Reid-Smith with Commission on the Arts member Jeanne Mozier at a recent NEA Retreat in Berkeley Springs.

Governor Joe Manchin III has appointed Randall Reid-Smith to serve as commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. A native of Barboursville, Reid-Smith has worked primarily as an advancement officer for the Division since November.

"Randall's background, knowledge and enthusiasm should serve the state well as he takes on this important position," the governor said.

"I am grateful to Governor Manchin for the trust he has placed in me and am thrilled to be given this opportunity to lead an agency with a mission that I believe in so strongly," said Reid-Smith. "As a performing artist myself, I am well aware of the life-affirming power of our arts and culture. It's vital to the state's future that we nurture the artistic and cultural interests of our people, and I look forward to working with the staff at the Division to accomplish its important mission."

Before joining the Division, Reid-Smith served as the director of education and outreach, production manager, and special events coordinator for the Toledo Opera Association in Toledo, Ohio, from 2002-05. Prior to that, he was an assistant professor of music at the University of Michigan School of Music, and enjoyed a long career as an operatic tenor, both in the United States and abroad. He has a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, Ohio, and a master's degree in music from the Indiana University School of Music.

ArtWorks Fall 2006

State of West Virginia
Joe Manchin III
Governor

**Department of
Education
and the Arts**
Kay Goodwin
Cabinet Secretary

**Division of
Culture and History**
Randall Reid-Smith
Commissioner

**West Virginia
Commission on the Arts**

www.wvculture.org

ArtWorks welcomes proposals for non-fiction articles of 500-750 words. Articles should focus on West Virginia artists, arts organizations and the performing, visual or literary arts. Of special interest are unique and successful community arts projects and new trends in West Virginia's arts scene. Artist profiles must also reflect some activity of significance to West Virginia or some enlightening aspect of their work. Photographs and other illustrations may accompany submissions. For submission guidelines and terms of payment contact: **ArtWorks**, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. **ArtWorks** does not publish advertising for commercial services or businesses, but welcomes announcements which may be of interest to the state's arts community.

All publications and application forms are available in alternate formats. Contact Rose McDonough Accessibility Coordinator at 304/558-0240, ext. 152, (voice) or 304/558-3562 (TDD).

WVCA Public Comment Meeting

The West Virginia Commission on the Arts (WVCA) of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History will hold its annual public comment meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 15, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the North Briefing Room of the Cultural Center, State Capitol Complex, Charleston.

The purpose of the meeting is to give citizens the opportunity to address members of the Commission and to make recommendations related to the Commission's grant programs. Information may be presented to the Commission either in writing ahead of time or in person at the meeting.

The deadline to submit written comments is Nov. 8. Send comments to Arts Section, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East, Charleston, W.Va. 25305-0300.

Those who address the Commission in person should limit their presentations to 10 minutes. Interested parties are encouraged to call in advance to facilitate scheduling of speakers. Individuals who plan to appear before the Commission should submit their comments in writing at registration on Nov. 8.

For more information about the public meeting or to register to appear, call (304) 558-0240, ext. 714.

The WVCA serves as a citizen advisory board to the Division. The group provides guidance in the establishment of a state arts plan, and approves and distributes grants-in-aid and awards from federal and state funds.

Resources/ Opportunities

Please see the **West Virginia Division of Culture and History website at www.wvculture.org for updated Internet Resources and Opportunities/Events listings.**

ArtWorks is free!

If you would like to have your name added to the mailing list for *ArtWorks*, please call (304) 558-0240 or e-mail jeff.pierson@wvculture.org.

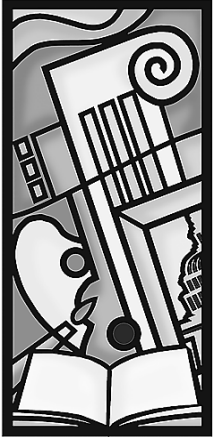


WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF
CULTURE AND HISTORY

Fall 2006

West Virginia Art Works

A free quarterly newsletter from the Division of Culture and History and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts



West Virginia Division of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd., E.
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

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