

Friends

September 2005
Fall

Ten years of growth and accomplishment

Congratulations to the Friends of the Center for the Arts as you celebrate your first 10 years. As members, you can be duly proud of your part in making the Center for the Arts at George Mason University one of the premier venues in the Washington, D.C. area and beyond for teaching and performance.

The arts have always provided important ways of expressing our feelings, defining our cultures and bringing people together. It wasn't too long ago that the concept for a major arts center in Northern Virginia was only a dream of a few people. That

dream became a reality, and a wonderful new facility was built to serve as the backbone for teaching and performance at George Mason University.



President Alan Merten

It has provided a venue for major programming to be presented to a wide audience and has brought the university much acclaim. You make up a dynamic organization whose financial support and promotion have helped to bring an expanding array of events to our community.

The Friends play an important role, giving us an identity at each performance, presenting discussion groups and offering social activities. Sally and I have enjoyed meeting members at many of these events.

Again, congratulations on the first 10 years. I look forward to your next decade of achievements. ■

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A grand gift to the Center for the Arts

Thanks to a generous gift from the Friends of the Center for the Arts, the visiting artists, faculty and students performing in George Mason's Center for the Arts concert hall are enjoying a magnificent new Steinway concert grand piano. Membership in the Friends, which topped 500 households last season, made it possible for the organization to play a major role in bringing this world-class instrument to the

concert hall.

FCFA member **Alice Heyer**, concert hall favorite **Jeffrey Siegel** and the College of Visual and Performing Arts piano faculty assisted in selecting the Steinway model "D" at the Steinway & Sons factory in Queens, New York. We also extend our thanks to the Jordan Kitts Music Company for its continued guidance and support to the Center for the Arts. ■

What a difference a decade makes

Ten years ago, through hard work and dedication, a small group of subscribers to the Center for the Arts created the organization that is today the Friends of the Center for the Arts. Building upon that base, FCFA has grown and provided increased financial support for the Center in each succeeding year.



Tom Ezell

In this milestone tenth anniversary of FCFA, I am pleased to welcome our returning members. I also want to extend a special welcome to all of you who are our new members. We have experienced amazing

growth over those ten years, but we cannot rest on our past. Member contacts in the community are among the best ways to expand FCFA and provide the financial and volunteer support for the wide range of performances we all enjoy. I believe that with your help we can make the next ten years even more successful.

FCFA's members-only refreshment bar will again be available prior to performances and at intermission. We also have a number of special events planned throughout the season to enhance your experience at the Center. Those events will be popular, so make your plans

now to attend. And don't forget to consult the latest Friends newsletter, which will give you up-to-date news and information.

I also encourage you to consider our volunteer activities. Contact **Megan Thornton** at 703-993-4188 or mthornto@gmu.edu, or stop by the lobby information table and leave your name and address.

I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you at the Friends coffee area. In the meantime, please contact me at fcfa@gmu.edu if you have any questions about FCFA.

Tom Ezell
President, FCFA

FCFA benefits reminder

♦ Remember to bring your membership card with you

or wear your FCFA pin to identify yourself as a member when you visit the members-only refreshment bar in the house right lobby, open 45 minutes prior to curtain and during intermission.

♦ Anyone at the Contributor level or above qualifies for discounted weekend parking in the parking deck. These passes are sold through the box office -not at the parking garage- in a set of 5 passes for \$20. To purchase a set, go to the box office and show your membership card listing you as a member at the contributor level or above.

♦ Members at the Donor

level or above can reserve seating at pre-performance discussions in advance of the performance and schedule a backstage tour and coffee reception at any time by calling **Megan Thornton** at 703-993-4188 or mthornto@gmu.edu

♦ At the Patron level or above, you have received five free parking passes and four complimentary wine vouchers for use during the Great Performances events at the FCFA refreshment bar. These were mailed at the end of August; please let us know if you have not received them. ■

FCFA Discussion Series

Jeffrey Siegel will lead off this year's highly successful Discussion Series at 7 p.m. on Oct. 29, the day before his performance at the Center for the Arts. He enthusiastically volunteered to meet with FCFA members to discuss the origin and development of his Keyboard Conversations approach to music appreciation and the influences and importance of Mozart, in celebration of the 250th Anniversary of his birth.

Held in a member's home, participation will be very limited. RSVP quickly to your invitation when you receive it. Plan to join fellow Friends and Jeffrey Siegel for a discussion that will be fascinating. ■

What's happening, Friends



Celebrate the Best of Broadway

Never been on stage at the Center for the Arts? Join Marvin Hamlisch and his trio on stage for a reception following their performance on Sunday, Oct. 23, to celebrate the music of Broadway. **Lynn Gramzow** and **A.J.** and **Joan Driscoll** are putting together a delicious treat featuring special desserts and coffee which fit the Broadway mood. The evening also will include the dedication of FCFA's recent gift to the Center for the Arts, the Concert Hall's new Steinway grand piano. Circle the date on your calendar and watch for your invitation in the mail – you won't want to miss this one! ■

Come Blow Your Horn...With the Canadian Brass

This year's Friends of the Center for the Arts holiday party will be held immediately after the December 17th performance of the Canadian Brass. This family-friendly special event for FCFA members only will be held on Grand Tier III and will feature holiday desserts, punch, and champagne. Start the holiday season early by joining your fellow Friends for this festive event chaired by **Judy** and **Allen Weltz**. ■



Arts at Mason Sunday Series

Join fellow arts fans for an exciting, stimulating new discussion series sponsored by the Arts at Mason board. "Feedback from audience members," notes **Charles Joyce**, Board President, "indicates a strong interest in multi-disciplinary programs that enhance the understanding and appreciation of the arts." To respond to this interest, a discussion series to be held on three Sundays during the 2005-6 season will draw on the substantial resources of university and regional expertise. These events will be open only to members of all Arts at Mason affiliate groups.

Bill Reeder, Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, comments

that "the series promises to involve a rich community conversation about both the subject at hand and the interplay between the arts and society."

The first event, an afternoon of intellectual enlightenment, with Professor **Rick Davis** presenting "Cross Currents: Politics, the Arts and History in the Age of Enlightenment," will be held at 4 p.m. on Oct. 30 at Grand Tier III. Since next year is the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth and the 2005-2006 Great Performances series includes his opera *The Marriage of Figaro* as well as **Jeffrey Siegel's** four keyboard conversations featuring Mozart's music, this afternoon event will

provide an enhanced context for an appreciation of the composer's genius.

Plans also are underway for the second event which will be held at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 4, on Grand Tier III. The topic will be "*Romeo and Juliet: From the Page to the Stage*," presented by Virginia Opera's **Peter Mark** and Mason faculty members specializing in theater, art and dance following Virginia Opera's matinee performance of Gounod's opera.

The final event will be held in the spring and will bring noted experts on public policy to discuss "Arts and Communities in the 21st Century." ■

A nominal admission fee will be charged to attend Sunday Series events. Watch for your invitations. Contact Megan Thornton at 703-993-4188 or mthornto@gmu.edu for more information. ■

The Arts from halfway around the world

CVPA team visits China

West met East this summer when the College of Visual and Performing Arts Dean **Bill Reeder**, former Director of Development **Julie Green**, and Virginia Opera's Artistic



Shanghai's Oriental Arts Center.

Director **Peter Mark** traveled to Shanghai along with artists who have performed with Virginia Opera to stage Puccini's *Tosca* at the opening of the Shanghai Opera House in the city's brand new Oriental Arts Center.

The production was the initial project of the newly formed International Opera Alliance (IOA), a cultural exchange program designed to develop the

creative abilities of young artists and to foster cross-cultural understanding. The internationally recognized soprano, **Fabiana Bravo**, who will sing the role of Norma for Virginia Opera

this coming spring, and bass-baritone **Sun Yu** performed the lead roles. The

Shanghai Opera House provided all other major singers along with the chorus and orchestra.

Green described the visit as "exciting and exhausting," Reeder agreed, but both were quick to praise the quality of the singers' performances and the talented youthful orchestra.

The performances received enthusiastic applause and standing ovations, but the road to

opening night was not easy. Challenges included language difficulties, delayed rehearsals due to the building's construction delays, and most significantly, absence of an arts management infrastructure. Lack of organizational management, marketing expertise and financial support presented daunting hurdles. Reeder commented that "...the experience made me appreciate the presence, the power and the essence of our vol-

unteer community at the Center for the Arts. I returned from the trip profoundly grateful for the friendships and the partnership that each Friend provides."

The IOA was formed after Mark returned from a trip to China where he had discovered a large talent pool of young, untrained opera voices. He promptly put together a cross-cultural partnership whose goal would be to identify and train these promising young singers. The



Julie and Bill...and Tosca.

IOA leadership includes **Zhang Guoyong**, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Shanghai Opera House, Reeder and Mark. Mason's involvement is an extension of the existing



From Left: CVPA Dean Bill Reeder, Dan Saunders, assistant conductor of Virginia Opera; Joseph Bascetta, international opera stage director; Peter Mark, Virginia Opera artistic director; Handel Lee, Arts at Mason board member, and Doug Whipple, Arts at Mason board member.

student exchange program it has in place with Beijing-based universities.

When asked about the future of the IOA partnership, Reeder responded: "We will probably continue the pilot and indeed develop some dynamic and interesting next steps in China." Stay tuned. ■



GMU visitors join Tosca's opening night reception.

Name changes spell success

What's in a name? This fall, we celebrate our ten-year anniversary without a need to apologize for the three times the Friends organization has changed names! These changes clearly reflect the group's efforts to establish an identity and a mission but also mirror the growth and evolution of both the organization and the university.

However, it is important to remember that we have not replaced the basic premise. Friends' members from many backgrounds and arts interests have found a place where they can contribute and socialize at the same time that they can enjoy the wonderful programming offered every season. That's what keeps all of us going. It all adds up to an extraordinary reason to support George Mason University's artistic endeavors.

"The only requirement for membership is a love for the arts and a desire to help them flourish." This statement from a renewal letter in 1999 reflects the views of **Carole Scanlon**, the founder and first president of the Friends organization. We have come a long, long way, and so has the Center for the Arts.

So how did it all begin? In the spring of 1996, **Sarah Lawless**, then

Director of George Mason's Institute of the Arts, and local arts advocate Scanlon sent out letters to subscribers, asking them to join a new organization. They focused on the social aspects of membership as a way to get to know others who were also excited about

"The only requirement for membership is a love for the arts and a desire to help them flourish."

the arts programming at the two-year old Center. **Jan and Merle Mulvaney** were among the very first promoters whose job it was to "talk up this community treasure, volunteer for various tasks and be a familiar face when ... friends and neighbors came to check it out."

The group was established as the Arts Center Associates (ACA) in the fall of 1996, and in 1997 the organization had 51 dues-paying members. Volunteers were and continue to be the lifeblood of the group. "Meet and Greet" assistance in the Center lobby was and still is a major volunteer activity, and newsletters representing the early ACA and the present Friends organization have both depended upon volunteers.

The first major social event, a successful open

house at the Center in May 1997, involved small musical ensembles, an instrument "petting zoo" for children, and backstage tours. Subscriber receptions followed and eventually became members-only events. **Ida Portland**, a member since the early days, recalls a special New

Year's Eve party where "we drank champagne and danced in the foyer!" Dinners, pre-and post-performance receptions, opera brunches with backstage tours, discussion groups – all continue to be a part of the organization's social and educational agenda. The Mulvaneys describe the salons and pre-performance discussions as highlights in helping them to understand the art and the artists.

In 1998, as the new ACA president, **Charles Joyce**, established a formal strategy, a logo and new governance procedures. In 1999, the Board decided on a new name. To be called the George Mason Arts Associates (GMAA), it conveyed a small shift in emphasis to a specific connection with the Institute of the Arts. Membership contributions now included levels

and benefits. In 2001, the new College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) was formed from the Institute with **William Reeder** as the new dean. The second of two strategic planning board retreats was held that fall. During Joyce's tenure, membership more than doubled.

In 2003, the name changed one more time to Friends of the Center for the Arts (FCFA), indicating a new weight given to fund-raising for the Center. Today with **Tom Ezell** as president for a third term, the membership now stands at over 500 households. Contributions have risen 186 percent since 2003.

The major reasons for our success thus far have been very dedicated Friends volunteers in addition to an active, working board and a focus on the social component of meeting others who also enjoy the arts. However, as we celebrate this 10-year anniversary and congratulate ourselves on how far we have come, we must not become complacent. Instead we must consider what lies ahead and what goals we need to pursue next. Three name changes in ten years? No problem – just an indication of what it takes to be successful! ■



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For more information,
please call
703-993-4188

or visit <http://fcfa.gmu.edu>

Calendar of Events: Great Performances at Mason September-October-November-December

2005-2006 FCFA Officers

- ♦ Tom Ezell,
President
- ♦ Ida Portland,
Vice President
for Programs
- ♦ Jane Tombes,
Vice President
for Membership
- ♦ John Nash, Vice
President for
Communications
- ♦ Charlie Lawson
Secretary/
Treasurer

FCFA newsletter committee

- John Nash
- Jane Tombes
- Gordon Canyock
- Eileen Duggan
- Megan Thornton

Sept. 15 - Oct. 2 (Thurs-Sun), **Theater of the First Amendment: Three Hotels**, Thurs. & Fri. at 8 p.m., Sat. 2 & 8 p.m., Sun. at 4 p.m. (Harris Theater)

Sept. 25 (Sun), 7 p.m. **Keyboard Conversations® with Jeffrey Siegel: Mozart and Beethoven: Passion and Pathos**

Oct. 1 (Sat), 8 p.m. **Ballet Hispanico**

Oct. 2 (Sun), 7 p.m. **Chanticleer: EarthSongs**

Oct. 9 (Sun), 7 p.m. **The Flying Karamazov Brothers: LIFE, A Guide for the Perplexed**

Oct. 14 (Fri), 8 p.m. **Virginia Opera: La Traviata**

Oct. 16 (Sun), 2 p.m. **Virginia Opera: La Traviata**

Oct. 22 (Sat), 8 p.m. **Munich Symphony Orchestra with Phillipe Entremont, conductor/pianist**

Oct. 23 (Sun), 7 p.m. **Marvin Hamlisch: The Broadway Songbook**

Oct. 28 (Fri), 8 p.m. **King's Singers and Sarband: Sacred Bridges**

Oct. 30 (Sun) 7 p.m. **Keyboard Conversations® with Jeffrey Siegel: Mozart and Schubert: Romantic Fantasies**

Nov. 5 (Sat), 8 p.m. **Aterballetto**

Nov. 6 (Sun), 4 p.m. **Opera Verdi Europa: Macbeth**

Nov. 11 (Fri), 8 p.m. **John Mayall and The Bluesbreakers: Rockin' Blues Revue**

Nov. 13 (Sun), 7 p.m. **CHI**

Nov. 19 (Sat), 8 p.m. **Ballet Flamenco José Porcel**

Nov. 20 (Sun), 2 p.m. **Ballet Flamenco José Porcel**

Dec. 2 (Fri), 8 p.m. **Virginia Opera: Romeo & Juliet**

Dec. 4 (Sun), 2 p.m. **Virginia Opera: Romeo & Juliet**

Dec. 16 (Fri), 8 p.m. **Alison Brown: Winter's Eve**

Dec. 17 (Sat), 8 p.m. **Canadian Brass: Canadian Brass Christmas**

