

Friends

April 2006
Spring

2006-2007 Season of Great Performances Announced

More than 150 Friends gathered in the foyer of the Center for the Arts on Thursday, April 6, to hear the announcement of the 2006-2007

season of Great Performances.

The attendees enjoyed music, food, beverages and much festivity before they went into the Concert Hall where Dean Bill Reeder introduced Artistic Director Rick Davis, who presented a stellar program for next year that includes more than 50 performances from September 2006 through May 2007.

The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, celebrating its 50th season in 2006-7, will perform for the first time on our schedule. The season also includes new performances by the BBC's National Orchestra of Wales, the Susan Shields Ballet and the Soweto Gospel Choir. Also new this year are performances by Michael Feinstein, Betty Buckley and Bo Diddley.

Popular returning programs include Chanticleer, Canadian Brass, and the Mark Morris Dance Group, along with four exceptional productions by

the Virginia Opera and the continued favorite, Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel.

The new season also will include several receptions, a discussion series and other special events available only to Friends.

Following the introduction of the new season, Friends checked their ticket stubs for a host of wonderful rewards and prizes. Congratulations to Rob and Debbie Spear who won a free season subscription!

Friends are encouraged to enjoy one of the benefits of membership by receiving priority processing of early subscriptions. Anyone with questions can contact Megan Thornton at 703-993-4188 or mthornto@gmu.edu. ■



Friends President Tom Ezell welcomes members to the announcement of the new 2006-2007 Great Performances.

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ The 2006-2007 New Season - 1
- ◆ Leadership Corner - 2
- ◆ Final Season Event - 2
- ◆ Friends Talk - 3
- ◆ Events Pictures - 4
- ◆ Planning Great Performances - 5
- ◆ Calendar - 6

Sept. 30...It's not too early to plan

The College of Visual and Performing Arts will hold its first scholarship benefit celebrating the Arts at Mason on Saturday, Sept. 30. It will showcase the quality and diverse talents of our dance, music, theater, and art and visual technology students in a unique tour through the performing arts building facilities before culminating in the Concert Hall with a sublime performance by Michael Feinstein. Following the performance guests will join Mr. Feinstein onstage for a dessert and champagne reception. Proceeds will benefit student scholarships.

More information will be forthcoming, but put it on your calendar now! ■

Getting to know new Friends

On Feb. 4, during the evening of the Ahn Trio performance, we provided a special Friends table in the lobby and offered a free ticket raffle for prospective members. Our purpose was to encourage patrons to join our Friends group and help us to reach our financial goals for the season to support such events as the one we were all attending that night. In March when we arranged for the table again, we invited interested patrons to join us at the reception in the lobby after the Russian National Orchestra performance.

This special emphasis generated much attention from those who came to the table although I will admit that providing a dish of candy generated great interest as

well. However, most importantly, it gave me the chance to meet new and potential members – something I rarely have an opportunity to do in person!

I believe that it takes a very direct and personal connection from Friends members for a new contributor to feel totally accepted and appreciated. Letters, brochures, advertising – all of these are important, but nothing is quite as effective as connecting a name with a face. So if you are now a Friends member, introduce yourself and make an effort to talk to someone sitting next to you in the theater or to a neighbor who might be interested in buying just one ticket and attending a performance with you. Then encourage that person to become a Friend.

Remember that our major

purpose is to support the Center's programming. Read the article in this newsletter on page five for more information about how a season is chosen, and you will see that cost is a major factor in attracting outstanding performers.

Before the season ends, I encourage you to join other Friends for the pre-performance and intermission coffee and bring a prospective member with you. Your help can make an enormous difference in our success.

Hope to see you soon. Don't forget to renew your membership for next year! And think about moving up to another level if you can possibly do that.

*Jane Tombes
Vice President for
Membership*

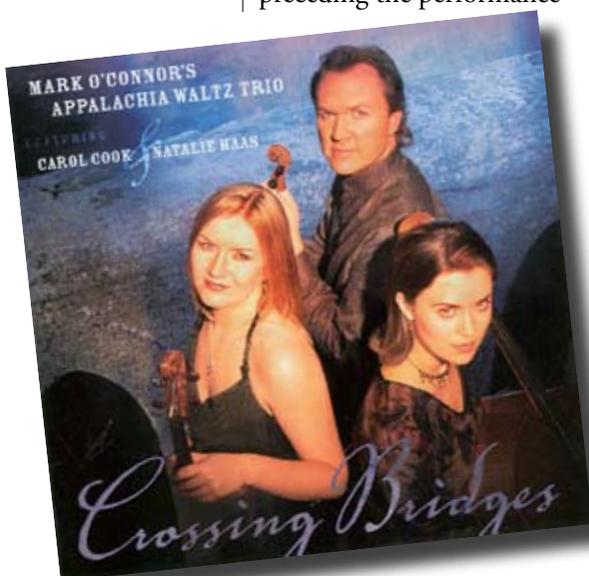


Jane Tombes

FCFA's Final Season Event

Come join the Friends of the Center for the Arts on Saturday, May 6, for a festive bluegrass supper preceding the performance

of Mark O'Connor's Appalachia Waltz Trio, a chamber ensemble. The group features composer/violinist/fiddler O'Connor, along with violist Carol Cook and cellist Natalie Haas. This family-friendly event marks the close of the 2005/2006 season of the Great Performance Series at Mason. Guests will share traditional country fare on Grand Tier III prior to participating in the pre-performance discussion led by Marty Ronish of National Public Radio who will focus on the Trio's unique American musical style. RSVP now if you haven't already done so. This is guaranteed to be a light-hearted and entertaining evening. ■



Did You Know?

Are you aware of the ticket exchange benefits that are available to subscribers?

If a conflict comes up, subscribers are able to exchange their tickets for another event within the season by bringing the tickets to the box office or by calling the box office at 703-993-2787.

Exchanges must be completed by the day prior to the performance, and subscribers can apply the entire amount they paid for the ticket to the cost of the new ticket. This is just another benefit of subscribing at the Center for the Arts! ■

“What do you like about the new season?”

The 2006-2007 Great Performance season at the Center for the Arts was introduced on April 6. It promises to be another spectacular array of performances. Several Friends were asked what they were especially looking forward to in the new season. Here's what they said:



Evelyn Kiley
Last year's rendition of the somewhat lesser-known *Macbeth*

by the Opera Verdi Europa was innovative, moving and spectacular. I'm looking forward to seeing the company's creative touch applied to the world-renowned *Tosca!*

Melinda Bloom
I'm looking forward to another exciting season with the Virginia Opera performances. They are terrific. But we'll try some new things, too, such as bluegrass, dance and jazz. The new season has great variety.



Mary Presta
The diversity of entertainment and the world class performances just gets more exciting each year. From the preview of performances, I'm sure my husband and I will be attending more performances than ever.

Enid Weber
I'll see anything performed by the Acting Company, one of my favorites. And, I'm pleased that the Cirque Eloize is returning. I'll bring my grandchildren for a great evening of entertainment.



Berry Dunbar
The Center always seems to give us a mix of the tried-and-true along with some new artists. I like what the new season is offering in a mix of music, theater and dance. And the flexible ticket plans are wonderful.



Buck Gibson
Over the past several seasons, my wife and I have watched the Center grow with the caliber of performances being offered. With such a variety in the new season, I look forward to growing along with the Center.



Frank and Bert Boyd
We are jazz fans and look forward to the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra. Christopher Parkening will be high on our list, too. Of course, the gala reception tonight was great.

Don and Pat Kassilke

For us, the Virginia Opera selections are wonderful. They combine great variety with excellent presentation and some of the best singers we've heard anywhere.



This spring, members of the Friends of the Center for the Arts continued to enjoy the benefits of membership: opportunities for social and educational experiences. There were informal as well as elegant receptions. And there were lectures and discussions that gave added perspectives to the excellent performances. Here are photographs of three popular events this spring. Plan to maximize your membership by attending future events.



Mary Hall Surface and David Maddox, creators of "Lift: Icarus and Me" discussed the musical with Friends.



What could be better than incredible music performed by the Russian National Symphony under the baton of Vladimir Jurowski and an elegant reception in the Grand Foyer following the performance.



It was the well-attended Opera Brunch that had Virginia Opera Artistic Director Peter Mark, assisted by opera cast members, discussing Mozart's opera, The Marriage of Figaro. Friends also toured backstage and enjoyed a wonderful brunch along with many of their friends and supporters of the Center for the Arts.



What goes into planning the Great Performances season?

While the 2006-2007 season was announced only recently, planning for it started almost two years ago. Artistic Director Rick Davis began by assessing how the 2004-05 season was going in order to spot trends, opportunities, or ideas that weren't working. University dates were identified and the standard annual events, such as the Virginia Opera, Jeffrey Siegel, and Mark Morris, were added. Rick says, "From there it's a layering and sifting process," as he tries to balance the types of events with the calendar. He adds that it's "part instinct and part alchemy, part dramaturgy and part showbiz."

Four to six events are selected to fit into each of four broad categories: Magnificent Music, Dynamic Dance, Global View, and American Echoes, and spread as evenly as possible from September to May. By doing so, Rick ensures that the CFA audience has the opportunity to see a "diverse, wide-ranging, and balanced program every year."

Major orchestras usually go on tour for a brief period, so Rick has to sign them up well in advance, while folk dancers are often on tour for months and are more flexible as to dates. The artists all have professional managers who, Rick says, "make sure we are aware of their availability – sometimes rather persistently." He and his staff stay abreast of industry "buzz," relying on recordings, reputation, research, reviews, and occasional travel to other venues.



Soweto Gospel Choir

The annual Association of Performing Arts Presenters Conference in New York showcases new talent. According to Rick, "It was the dazzling experience of seeing Ute Lemper in a crowded downtown club during the conference that led to her two appearances." Finally, the faculty and staff of the College for

Planning the season is part instinct and part alchemy, part dramaturgy and part showbiz.

Visual and Performing Arts as well as subscribers and FCFA members are important sources of information as to what is new and exciting.

There is plenty of talent in the entertainment world, and Rick considers "artistic quality, suitability to our venue and program, including potential for educational impact on our students, and cost" when deciding which performers to engage. He notes that the CFA has been able to host such "absolutely brilliant, world-renowned and expensive orchestras such as the Kirov last season, the Royal Philharmonic this year, and the unmatched Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig next season."

Some wonderful events are still unaffordable. For example, Rick was recently quoted \$400,000 for a certain performer and com-

mented that the conversation did not last very long. Theater presents special problems since most road shows are looking for venues where the company can camp for a week or longer, and it isn't feasible to book a play or musical on stage for that long at the CFA.

Ticket sales account for only about 40% of the program's costs, so private

gifts from Friends and a small but growing number of corporate sponsors provide an increasingly important revenue stream. Rick also values feedback and ideas from any patron, but "especially from Friends because of their wider and deeper experience with the Center."

FCFA members have "invested time, energy, emotion, and financial support in our work," he emphasized, "so we want to hear what they have to say."

Once he has selected the performers, Rick's next task is to negotiate contracts with their management,

covering the date, fee, and program. In addition, each contract contains a "tech rider" which specifies the stage setup, lighting, sound, and any other equipment necessary. The CFA production staff assesses these for feasibility and cost. Also, there's usually a "hospitality rider," which Rick describes as sometimes "quite humorous and specific."



Betty Buckley

backstage snacks, and tying bow ties. With so many artists on special diets, she has found that putting out large bowls of candies and fruit, along with coffee, tea, and juice, is usually best. Occasionally a group descends on the food table like a swarm of locusts, even filling shopping bags to take on the bus back to the hotel, and leaving little for the late-comers. For one Middle Eastern group, their company manager requested milk, dates, and cheese, but the performers didn't touch any of that. Hershey miniatures ruled! ■



Center for the Arts
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, MS 4C1
Fairfax, VA 22030

For more information,
please call
703-993-4188
or visit
<http://fcfa.gmu.edu>

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
- ♦ A.J. Driscoll,
Treasurer

FCFA newsletter
committee

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

Calendar of Events: Great Performances at Mason
April and May

April 23 (Sunday), 7 p.m. **Keyboard Conversations®** with Jeffrey Siegel: *Mozart and Ravel: Elegance and Exhilaration!*

April 26 (Wednesday), 8 p.m. **Marc Bamuthi Joseph: Scourge**

May 5 (Friday), 8 p.m. **The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble: Sacred Space/Margam – The Path**

May 6 (Saturday), 8 p.m. **Mark O'Connor's Appalachia Waltz Trio**

Thanks to all who helped
make the last few months'
events successful:

- ♦ Mariann and Frank Baker
- ♦ Gordon and Judy Canyock
- ♦ Eileen Duggan
- ♦ Brenda Forsley
- ♦ Ida Portland
- ♦ Kay Rongley
- ♦ Judy Weltz

- ♦ The Three Pigs of McLean
- ♦ Trader Joe's of Centreville
- ♦ Swiss Bakery of Burke

