

Friends

January 2005

What's New for FCFA Volunteers?

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When you attend Center for the Arts performances, you certainly notice the ushers who take your tickets, hand out programs and help you find your seat. But perhaps you didn't know that FCFA members are encouraged to participate in this program as volunteer ushers.

"We work as a team," states Carol Shumate,

Front of House Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, who runs a highly organized program of volunteer ushers for a variety of campus activities. Ushers participate in public arts events held not only in the Center but also in other campus venues such as the Harris Theater, Dance Performance Studio and TheaterSpace.

Ushers are required to work with at least five shows during the fall and five in the spring season. Center ushers must arrive 1½ hours before the performance. Volunteer ushers, unlike the paid ushers, are allowed to see the performance in special seats just inside the doors. Afterwards volunteers must stay long enough to pick up used programs. Other campus

sites may have different requirements.

Shumate stresses professionalism and responsibility when she talks individually with potential ushers or during her training sessions for new ushers during the year. A commitment to

Ways to meet and greet fellow Friends members.

excellence and an understanding of meeting an obligation are the only other necessary requirements. Ushers encounter occasional challenges but have quick access throughout each venue to professional staff who can respond quickly to any minor problem or emergency.

The deadline to volunteer for ushering in the spring is in January. Call Carol Shumate (703-993-8829) for more details. She will answer your questions and is eager to welcome FCFA members to join as volunteer ushers when places are available.

Along with the ushering possibilities, the FCFA supports other volunteer activities for members. Here is a brief summary:

• Lobby information

table – See page 2 for Leadership Corner article.

• **Special pre and post-performance receptions** during the season - Volunteers are still needed to help plan and coordinate some spring events with the Center staff. Contact **Ida Portland**

if you wish to help (iport@verizonmail.com).

• **FCFA Discussion Series** – These

conversations about current productions take place in members' homes. Volunteers are still needed for the two remaining events. Again, contact Ida for more information (iport@verizonmail.com).

• **Writing for the newsletter** – If you have a strong writing background and an interest in writing articles for this newsletter, please contact **John Nash** for more information (jnash2@cox.net).

• **FCFA Board of Directors** - A way to get involved with FCFA decision-making is to serve on the board. If you would be interested in future consideration for such a role, you can send an e-mail to fcfa@gmu.edu for more information.

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Meet and Greet fills an important role



Susanne Zumbro

As Meet and Greet chairperson, I want to thank the many FCFA volunteers who staff the information table in the lobby for every Center for the Arts performance. I also want to thank the FCFA board members and others who volunteer to host the pre-performance and intermission complimentary coffee service. You can recognize these volunteers by the name badges they all wear.

Our volunteers receive free tickets to the performance for which they are volunteering, but with these free tickets come significant responsibilities.

Each volunteer's most important role is to be a welcoming, helpful, and positive representative of the Center and the FCFA. In order to answer patrons' questions, the information table volunteers need to be familiar with brochures for upcoming Center performances, and they must also know locations and directions to Center sites. Both volunteer groups must arrive 45 minutes before the performances and be available during intermission.

From a list of members who have expressed an interest in volunteering, I make assignments twice a year: in the summer for

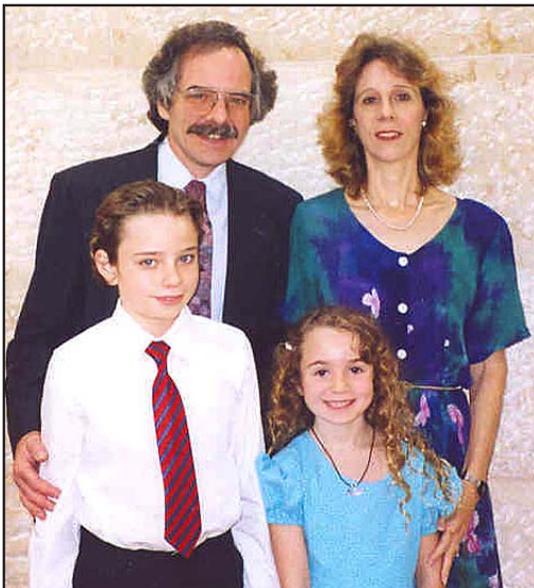
performances from September through December, and in the winter for performances from January to June. Each time, I mail letters to potential volunteers, asking them to designate which specific performances they prefer. Based on preferences, I compile the schedule of assignments and then mail the assignment list to all concerned.

Those interested in being included in this volunteer opportunity can so designate on their membership forms. Alternatively, contact **Susanne Zumbro** (szumbro@rocketmail.com) or **Megan Thornton** (mthornto@gmu.edu).

Member focus

The arts are at home with the Forsleys

"Appreciation for the arts starts at home!" That is the



Larry and Brenda Forsley, with Alex and Amara

view of **Brenda and Larry Forsley**, strong arts advocates, whose children are excellent examples of that statement. **Amara**, 7, a second grader, and **Alex**, 11, in the sixth grade, have been attending productions since they were two years old. Brenda and Larry have always introduced them to an event by telling them the story or playing the music at home to prepare them to watch and listen. Brenda's advice to parents who hesitate to take their young children to the theater is to prepare them thoroughly for the event, bring books or

coloring to occupy them before the performance begins, and leave early if their attention span wanes.

Larry Forsley believes that if you have made the arts experience a part of your life, it will become a part of your children's development. A computer researcher with an engineering background, he was exposed to the arts as a student in Boston and attended theater and ballet in many major cities during his overseas travels. Brenda studied cultural anthropology in college but also has a strong performance back-

See Forsleys, page 3

What's happening, *Friends*

Take me out to the ball game

Come join us at the “ball park” on Grand Tier III for an exciting night of food and fun on Saturday, Jan. 29. This “pre-game” event precedes the MOMIX: *Baseball* performance and begins at 6:00 p.m.

Enjoy “stadium fare” from hot dogs to cracker jacks, try your skill at a game and enter our “Name the Mascot” contest. Tickets to this event are \$14 for FCFA members, \$16 for non-members and half price for children age 12 and under. Look for your invitation to arrive with the New Year. So mark your calendars and come join us for a “home run” evening! ■



Don't try this at home but enjoy it at the MOMIX performance.

FCFA Discussion Series

The first successful Discussion Series event began with a review of jazz led by Mason Professor **Jim Carroll**.

The series continues next with a discussion led by **Kevin Murray** on the new play, *Open the Door, Virginia*, on Jan. 23, at 6 p.m. Held in a member's home, participation will be very limited. RSVP quickly to your invitation and join us for a discussion about this significant production. ■

The Seductions of Seville

FCFA members **Pat Carroll** and **Fae Ann Lawson** are putting together a wonderful reception following the Jan. 30 performance of *Carmen*. You'll think you are in Seville, Spain, when you dine on delicious Spanish cuisine and clap to the torrid flamenco dancing. FCFA members will receive an invitation in the mail, so circle your calendar now for this grand event. ■

Venice Baroque Orchestra

Following the performance of the Venice Baroque Orchestra and the talented LaBeque sisters on Saturday, Mar. 5, FCFA members can relish an enchanting evening in a European coffeehouse, enjoying delicious desserts and a variety of European coffees. It will be on Grand Tier III and seating will be limited. Watch for your invitation and respond to this elegant event. ■

Thank you!

Ida Portland, vice president for Programs, thanks the following chairpersons and all others who helped make the fall 2004 FCFA programs and events successful: Mrs. Pat Carroll, Alice Heyer, Florence Adler, Thelma Weiner, Brenda Forsley, Judy Weltz.

Volunteers, from page 1

No one expects all of you to become active volunteers, but there are other effective ways to become involved and to get to know other members. You can attend the pre-performance or intermission coffees, join us at the discussion series, attend the pre and post-performance receptions and talk to friends and co-workers about the Center and the Friends. We welcome your participation! ■

Forsleys, from page 2

ground, having been a circus performer and an ensemble dancer. While living in Europe, she directed children's theater and circus programs and has continued that tradition by teaching dance and theater classes for children at the Jewish Community Center in Fairfax.

With a thorough exposure to a wide range of artistic

expression, the Forsleys have let the children find their own paths. They spend much of their free time either as audience members or participants in arts activities. Alex is learning to play the violin while Amara is taking dance lessons. Alex prefers opera but has also participated in a summer drama camp. Amara helps her mother with her drama classes, but her perfor-

mance choice is clearly the ballet. Along with his love of opera, Alex also likes rock music. Both of them listen to classical music and musical theater soundtracks.

In a time when arts professionals worry about future audiences, it is good to know that one family is making certain that their children will have the arts as an integral part of their lives. ■

Thank you for your support!

We would also like to recognize the following businesses which provided discounts or in-kind donations for FCFA events this fall:

- ◆ Red Hot & Blue
- ◆ Arrowine, Inc.
- ◆ Burke Florist
- ◆ Costco of Fairfax
- ◆ Whole Foods
- ◆ Trader Joe's

Here are pictures of some successful events this fall. Many performances have activities before or after the event, provided by FCFA for its members and other guests. Plan now to attend some or all of the remaining activities of the season. It's a great way to enjoy your membership in the Friends of the Center for the Arts.



During the FCFA Discussion Series event held before the performance of *Dr. John and His Band*, attendees learned about jazz from Mason Professor **Jim Carroll**.



A gala reception was held before the performance of the Brazilian dance troupe, Balé Folclorico da Bahia.



After the performance by the Boys Choir of Harlem, a reception allowed Friends to congratulate some of the choir members.



Theater of the First Amendment: cutting the edge of performance

The Theater of the First Amendment is doing it again. On Jan. 12, TFA will present the world premiere of a powerful new play, *Open the Door, Virginia!*, based upon the grassroots actions in Farmville, Virginia, that set



Dianne McIntyre, Rick Davis and Kevin Murray.

the stage for the landmark Supreme Court ruling – *Brown v. Board of Education*. From interviews with many participants in that first protest about inequities in education, nationally known director and choreographer **Dianne McIntyre** assembled and directed the new play.

Theater of the First Amendment is the professional theater company of the Center for the Arts. Founded in 1990, its mission is to provide playwrights with the resources to explore and create new works and to give audiences the opportunity to experience thought-provoking plays. Its motto is “We entertain ideas.”

TFA is maintained by a small artistic staff and supported by a 12-person Board of Directors. **Rick Davis**, associate dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, is the artistic director, while **Kevin Murray** serves

as the managing director. “TFA pushes the envelope with new adventures in theater production through challenging new subject matter and creative new ideas in staging,” said Murray. The annual *First Light Festival* encourages

local writers to develop concepts for presentation to festival audiences. These ideas often become the source for prospective TFA productions.

Additionally, the company attracts many local actors and technicians. “There is an abundance of talent in this area,” said Murray. “I’m always

amazed at the capabilities of those who show up when we are casting a production, both for acting and technical roles.” A play will usually run three to four weeks and can be staged in the small 150-seat TheaterSpace, the 520-seat Harris Theater or the Concert Hall, depending on the production.

TFA serves as a laboratory for Mason students pursuing arts degrees and as a resource for professional job opportunities. “Students can often work and learn with leading professionals in writing, directing, design, lighting and staging,” Murray noted. Mason students can also attend productions at no charge.

TFA also has a strong mentoring program. Students in high school theater programs are given tours, receive guidance and suggestions from professionals and participate in competitions. “TFA has a unique

opportunity to help develop students’ budding interests in the arts,” said Murray, noting that high school students are participating in the fifth annual *First Light Festival* this spring. “The company can be very instrumental in developing and encouraging the talents of these young people.”

How did TFA get its name? “I like to think it relates to the freedom to encourage new ideas and new concepts, all in the spirit of freedom of speech,” said Rick Davis, artistic director. The theater’s name also pays homage to George Mason, who designed the Virginia Bill of Rights that served as the model for the U.S. Bill of Rights. Davis adds, “We take our name and its implication seriously as we stage productions that are appropriate, yet challenging, to our audiences. TFA has no specific agenda other than encouraging new, well-written and well-presented plays that explore new opinions and allow for creative, innovative approaches to production.”

As a leader among the over 80 theater companies in the metropolitan area, TFA has a reputation for quality, innovation and support as exemplified by 11 prestigious Helen Hayes Awards and more than 30 nominations. “The community has such wonderful resources here at George Mason University,” said Murray. “Community support and participation are strongly encouraged. After all, it’s the expression of ideas that causes all of us to grow.” ■

“Open the Door, Virginia!”
Jan. 12 – Feb. 6: Wed. – Fri.
at 8 pm, Sat. at 2 & 8 pm,
Sun. at 4 pm; Feb. 6 at 2 pm.
Tickets: \$25 at the Harris
Theater.



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

For more information, please call
 703-993-4188
 or visit
www.gmu.edu/cfa

January – March Calendar of Events

2004-2005 FCFA Officers

- ♦ **Tom Ezell**, president
- ♦ **Ida Portland**, vice president for programs
- ♦ **Jane Tombes**, vice president for membership
- ♦ **Jerry Salter**, vice president for communications
- ♦ **Eileen Duggan**, secretary/treasurer
- ♦ **Susanne Zumbro**, meet and greet committee

- FCFA newsletter committee**
- John Nash
 - Jane Tombes
 - Bob Armstrong

Jan. 12- Feb. 6 (Wed-Fri at 8 p.m., Sat at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sun at 4 p.m.)
 Theater of the First Amendment: *Open the Door, Virginia!*

Jan. 28 (Fri), 8 p.m.
 MOMIX: *Baseball*

Jan. 29 (Sat), 8 pm.
 MOMIX: *Baseball*

Jan. 30 (Sun), 4 p.m. Opera
 Verdi Europa: *Carmen*

Feb. 4 (Fri), 8 p.m. Moiseyev
 Dance Company

Feb. 5 (Sat), 8 p.m. Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra

Feb.11 (Fri), 8 p.m. Virginia
 Opera: *Tristan und Isolde*

Feb. 13 (Sun), 8 p.m.
 Virginia Opera: *Tristan und Isolde*

Feb. 18 (Fri), 8 p.m. Mark
 Morris Dance Group

Feb. 19 (Sat), 8 p.m. Mark
 Morris Dance Group

Feb. 20 (Sun), 6 p.m. Young
 Artists Musicale, Main
 Lobby;

Feb. 20 (Sun), 7 p.m.
 Keyboard Conversations®
 with Jeffrey Siegel: *A
 Musical Love Triangle*

Mar. 5 (Sat), 8 p.m. Venice
 Baroque Orchestra, Katia
 and Marielle LaBeque, duo
 pianists

Mar. 9 (Wed), 8 p.m. Anne
 Bogart/SITI Company:
Death and the Ploughman

Mar. 12 (Sat), 8 p.m.
 STREB: *Streb Action*

Mar 13 (Sun), 7 p.m.
 National Black Light
 Theatre Prague: *Alice and
 Gulliver*

Mar. 26 (Sat), 2 and 8 p.m.
 National Acrobats of
 Taiwan

