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NATIONAL
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NEARTS

A GREAT NATION DESERVES GREAT ART

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In the News

Western New York Visit



NEA Chairman Dana Gioia and Representative Louise Slaughter tour the studio of world-renowned sculptor Albert Paley in Rochester, NY.

Photo: Felicia Knight.

With an anecdote or historical fact at the ready for nearly every corner, bridge, and building in Rochester, New York, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter recently gave Chairman Dana Gioia an energetic tour of an artistically vibrant corner of the Empire State.

“There’s a vitality and a vibrancy to the arts in Rochester,” said Chairman Gioia. “The concentration of artists of international reputation in this region is exciting.”

As founder and co-chair of the House Arts Caucus, Rep. Slaughter has a deep and long-standing interest in the health of the many arts and cultural organizations in her district—and the rest of the country. Rep. Slaughter enthusiastically escorted the Chairman to an editorial board meeting at the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, on a tour of world-renowned sculptor Albert Paley’s studio, through a discussion with directors at the Geva Theatre Center, on a journey through the Strong Museum and its famous toy collection, and to a performance at Garth Fagan Dance.

“I wish I could keep him here. Everywhere we’ve gone, he’s had good ideas for how we can do even greater things!” said Rep. Slaughter, who capped the busy day by prevailing upon the Chairman to hold a poetry reading at Rochester’s famed George Eastman House, arguably the nation’s foremost museum of photography.



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ON THE COVER:

Dancers from the Louisville Ballet perform Paul Taylor’s Company B.

Photo: Vita Limanovica.

NEA Spotlight

Teachers & Writers Collaborative



Poet Hoa Nguyen leads Teachers & Writers Collaborative's Virtual Poetry Workshop. Photo: Matt Valentine.

Teachers & Writers Collaborative (T&W), one of the oldest arts education organizations in the country, was founded on the belief that professional writers could make a unique contribution to the teaching of writing and literature. Since 1967, it has been conducting writers-in-the-schools programs in New York City and publishing and distributing books and magazines nationally that are filled with helpful resources for classroom teachers.

As technology develops at a rapidly accelerating rate, however, it is necessary to create new strategies to interest young people in the art of writing. Following this thinking, T&W developed an online writing program in 1999 called the Virtual Poetry Workshop, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Virtual Poetry Workshop is part of WriteNet (www.writenet.org), a public online forum on teaching writing that also offers book reviews, interviews, and other literary and educational resources. Students from across the country can access the workshop via libraries or from home.

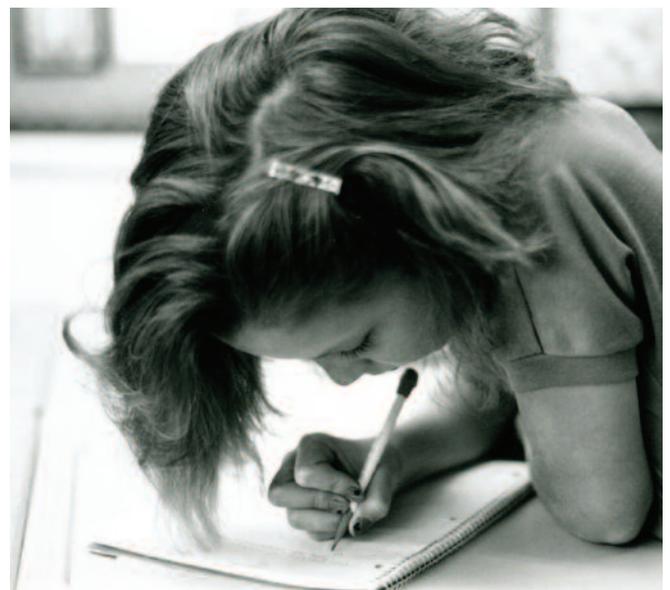
The poet Hoa Nguyen, based in Austin, Texas, leads the workshop, providing participants with new writing strategies to develop critical skills and introducing young writers to contemporary poetry in English. The main

focus of the workshop, however, is on the writing exercises—there are currently 65 writing exercises to date and more will be created for the spring workshop beginning in March 2006. (These and previous workshop forums are archived online at www.writenet.org/virtualpoetrywrkshp.html.)

Nguyen designs the exercises to provoke the imagination and introduce creative possibilities in writing. Judging from the high “hit counts” on the writing exercise links, teachers regularly mine the workshop for writing prompts or ideas they can use in their classrooms. For each exercise, Nguyen gives both instruction and a sample poem to examine.

In addition to the Virtual Poetry Workshop, WriteNet offers students (and teachers) other resources to improve their writing, such as interviews with noted poets and fiction writers, including Philip Levine, Cornelius Eady, Colson Whitehead, and Lydia Davis; student poems of the month; and tips, techniques, and advice on teaching writing from professional writers and educators.

Students can access the Virtual Poetry Workshop via libraries or from home. Photo: courtesy of Teachers & Writers Collaborative.



A Moving Partnership

The NEA's 40 Years of Support of Dance



In the last 40 years, the NEA has awarded more than \$300 million directly to dance companies, producers, choreographers, filmmakers, presenters, festivals, historians and critics, workshops, and service organizations that have transformed American dance. So it's hard to believe that despite a history of embracing literature, theater, opera, and symphonic music, the United States was slow to consider dance as a serious and legitimate art that spoke to the soul and explored the American experience.

Throughout 18th- and 19th-century America, dance performances, such as they were, were concentrated in a few large cities. Audiences were largely ignorant of dance literature, and training opportunities for aspiring performers were limited.

By 1965, American concert dance was still a relatively young art form. The Martha Graham Dance Company was 39 years old. The San Francisco Ballet and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival both were 32. The New York City Ballet had existed for only 17 years. Not insignificant ages for performing arts institutions but a long way from an established legacy. American dance was young but vital—and waiting to be propelled from a boutique discipline based almost entirely in New York City into a national phenomenon. All it needed was a catalytic spark.

When President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, establishing the National Endowment for the Arts, that spark ignited. With its very first grant of \$100,000, awarded to American Ballet Theatre, the Arts Endowment began its effort to create an environment in which professional dance could not just survive, but thrive.

From the beginning, the Arts Endowment had an unusually intimate relationship with the American dance field. Its national perspective allowed it to address the needs of an entire field and to respond to the ever-shifting landscape of a quickly growing art.

The NEA's grantmaking process made Washington the central source for information on and communication within the dance field. By convening panels to review applications as well as to discuss challenges and priorities within the discipline, the NEA's dance panels became the think tanks for ideas to respond to changing needs. They also became legendary for knitting together a field that, prior to the establishment of the Arts Endowment, had existed with almost no sense of itself as a national cultural force.

The NEA's Folk and Traditional Arts program has supported the artistry of traditional dance makers whose vernacular, social, and ritual dance traditions give such enormous depth and richness to the nation's history. The NEA National Heritage Fellowships awarded by the Folk Arts program have recognized the talents of such notable artists as Lindy hopper Frankie Manning, and tap dancer Jimmy Slyde.

The Expansion Arts program that began in 1971 supported artists and organizations that presented culturally specific traditions and reached underserved communities and populations. Those grants nurtured what are now among the dance field's most prominent companies and artists, including Dance Theatre of Harlem in New York City and Philadanco in Philadelphia.

Dance-related grants in the area of Arts Education gave a new generation of students access to dance and helped to develop a professional educational base that allowed artists and students to interact and learn from each other.

American dance has matured and changed substantially in the 40 years of the National Endowment for the Arts' existence. The growth of dance outside the traditional cultural centers and its spread across the nation is one of the Arts Endowment's greatest legacies. What were

once fledgling dance companies have grown into flagship cultural institutions. Dance companies and schools are now part of the landscape in all 50 states. Audiences both urban and rural, young and old, in every state, can expe-



From left to right: Cynthia Gregory as Odette and Ted Kivitt as Prince Siegfried in American Ballet Theatre's production of Swan Lake. The Dance Theatre of Harlem perform Dialogues. Photos: Martha Swope. 1999 NEA National Heritage Fellow James "Jimmy Slyde" Godbolt received the award for his tap-dancing prowess. Photo: Joseph T. Wilson.

rience the wonder of American contemporary dance.

The role of the NEA in fostering that growth and artistry cannot be underestimated. Its resources and leadership have helped make dance a vibrant cultural resource that serves all Americans, enriches the national patrimony, and provides a firm foundation for the next 40 years of artistic excellence.

In the News

White House Conference on Aging



Delegates at the White House Conference on Aging attended a reception and visual art exhibition sponsored by the National Center for Creative Aging and the American Society on Aging. Photos: Gene Feldman.

Every ten years, since 1961, The White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) convenes to make policy recommendations to the President and Congress. The first WHCoA of the 21st century was held in Washington, DC, in December 2005. Its theme, “The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action,” reflected its charter to develop recommendations for research and action in the field of aging—including 78 million aging baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964.

Contained in that discussion were recommendations from the White House mini-conference on “Creativity and Aging: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” held last May at the Arts Endowment. The mini-conference focused on the issues of Arts and Healthcare, Lifelong Learning and



Building Community through the Arts, and Universal Design: Designing for the Lifespan.

Despite an explosion in the number of older Americans, many still have limited access to our cultural institutions. This underscores the importance of the mini-conference and the 2005 White House Conference on Aging.

Of more than 3,000 recommendations submitted to the 1,239 WHCoA’s delegates, only 50 were selected as WHCoA resolutions. So it is significant that two of the final 50 resolutions emanated from the NEA mini-conference:

- Expand Opportunities for Developing Innovative Housing Designs for Seniors’ Needs, and
- Encourage Community Designs to Promote Livable Communities that Enable Aging in Place.

Both of these issues are illustrations of how important design is to our life experience. Innovative design in these areas can enhance and enrich the quality of life for older Americans by giving them more choices to meet their specific needs. In addition to these recommendations, learning in the arts will be included in other strategies pertaining to health care and civic engagement. The 2005 WHCoA report will be presented to the President and Congress by June 2006.

In Memoriam

Janette Carter (1923-2006)



Janette Carter at Capitol Hill ceremony to receive her NEA National Heritage Fellowship. Photo: Robert Burgess.

Janette Carter was awarded the Bess Lomax Hawes NEA National Heritage Award in 2005 for her lifelong advocacy for the performance and preservation of Appalachian music. Her parents and Aunt Maybelle made up the Carter Family, known as the “First Family of Country Music.” In the waning years of her father A. P. Carter’s life, she promised that she would carry on his work. In 1976, she and community members built an 880-seat amphitheater, the Carter Family Fold, beside the store her father operated in Southwestern Virginia. Today, the Carter Family Fold attracts more than 50,000 visitors a year. Janette Carter passed away on January 22, 2006 in Kingsport, Tennessee.

2001 National Heritage Fellow Joe Wilson, President of the National Council for the Traditional Arts, gave this moving reminiscence about Carter on the Crooked Road Web site.

Janette was not the Carter with the husky, penetrating female voice, perhaps the finest country female lead of all time. That voice belonged to her mother, Sara. She was not the lead guitarist who invented country guitar lead with its “church lick” and unrelenting emphasis of melody. That guitarist was her Aunt Maybelle. She wrote songs, but was not the greatest composer and arranger in country music history. That person was her father, A. P. Carter. She never married anyone famous, and individual fame never came to her. The Carter Family was a depression-era band that broke up after a mere 14 years, and Janette and her father returned to the Virginia mountains with considerable fame, but no cash. She worked as a cook at the elementary school, and raised her family. But she promised her father to keep his legacy, and that promise was kept in a hall she financed and her brother Joe built in the style of a burley tobacco barn. There she presented the local artists she adored and the famous who came to borrow bits of Carter magic. She kept the prices low and the quality high. She had time for the most humble, and enough love to fill this valley beside Clinch Mountain.

I came to see her father at age 16, one of hundreds of mountain boys welcomed to his porch. Janette had been working in the garden on a warm July day and spotted the Indian Scout motorcycle that had brought me over 80 miles of twisting mountain road. She asked for a ride, and we roared off down a gravel road to buy Pepsi. She never mentioned that ride until last year at the Carter Fold when Governor Mark Warner was seated between us and a speaker grew long-winded. During a pause her mountain voice rang out: “Wisht you had that motorcycle and we could go for a ride.”

So in my mind the greatest Carter of all has gone for a motorcycle ride, holding on tight, the wind in her face, all promises kept.



The contemporary dance company, Leigh Warren & Dancers, performs Quick Brown Fox at White Bird in Portland, Oregon. Photo: Alex Makeyev.

International Dance Comes to Oregon

In collaboration with the Portland State University (PSU), the dance presenter White Bird holds an annual White Bird/PSU Dance Series that brings international dance companies to the Portland, Oregon, community. This season concludes on March 23-25, 2006, with the Portland debut of one of Australia's most important contemporary dance companies, Leigh Warren & Dancers, performing *Quick Brown Fox*, the result of collaboration between Leigh Warren and Europe's renowned William Forsythe (based in Frankfurt, Germany). Aside from the performances, Leigh Warren will hold a master class for the local dance community.



Josephine Hagerty performs in HERE Arts Center's production of Phenomenon. Photo: Richard Termine.

Theater Residencies Take Shape in New York

The HERE Artist Residency Program, supported by the NEA, is a professional development program for mid-career performing and visual artists and collaborative artist teams. A result of the program is *Phenomenon*, which will play at the HERE Arts Center in New York City March 3-25, 2006. The lead artists are director/designer Alyse Rothman, playwright Gordon Cox, and set designer Michael Moore, and the play tells the stories of five people living at the foot of Mt. St. Helens, just 24 hours prior to the 1980 eruption.

The Oak Grove Freedman's Cemetery Memorial, designed by artist Maggie Smith and landscape architect Sam Reynolds. Photo: Jenn Gardner.

Memorial Celebrates Freedman Cemetery in North Carolina

The Oak Grove Freedman's Cemetery in Salisbury, North Carolina has served as a burial ground for African Americans since 1770. The cemetery has suffered from disrepair, bodies being disinterred, and the removal of all grave markers. To bring the cemetery back into the community, the Waterworks Visual Arts Center, with support from the NEA, hired artist Maggie Smith and landscape architect Sam Reynolds to create a public art memorial to honor the historic site. The memorial is scheduled to be completed in March 2006.

