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
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.

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.

“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.

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...
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 few 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; she 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 Chipar, 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 gastronomic 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 Photography.
More photos from the tour can be seen at www.mikekellerphoto.com/eurotour/.

A Michael Keller Portfolio

In Salzburg, looking up at the Hohen-salzburg Fortress which towers above the city.

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

In Venice, this chamber group performed Vivaldi’s “The Four Seasons” in 18th century dress.

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

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

Violinist Lauren Keller during rehearsal at Wandelhalle Concert Hall in Bad Reichenhal, Austria, the final venue on the tour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>APPLICANT</th>
<th>GRANT AMOUNT</th>
<th>GRANT PROGRAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARBOUR COUNTY</td>
<td>Adaland Mansion Development Inc.</td>
<td>$560</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Cain</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERKELEY COUNTY</td>
<td>Carol Slovikosky</td>
<td>$2,494</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Art Centre Inc.</td>
<td>$3,187</td>
<td>Arts in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apollo Civic Theatre</td>
<td>$3,720</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apollo Civic Theatre</td>
<td>$3,377</td>
<td>Arts in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library</td>
<td>$2,043</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Art Centre Inc.</td>
<td>$5,680</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAXTON COUNTY</td>
<td>Betty Rivard</td>
<td>$2,150</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABELL COUNTY</td>
<td>Cigdem Slankard</td>
<td>$2,487</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emily Ritchey</td>
<td>$2,092</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claire Sherwood</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carter Taylor Seaton</td>
<td>$422</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huntington Museum of Art</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Major Institution Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huntington Museum of Art</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>Challenge America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALHOUN COUNTY</td>
<td>Heartwood In the Hills Inc.</td>
<td>$1,875</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAYETTE COUNTY</td>
<td>Wendy Wassink Ackison</td>
<td>$1,622</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American Heritage Family Tree</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRANT COUNTY</td>
<td>Grant County Arts Council</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grant County Arts Council</td>
<td>$475</td>
<td>Arts in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREENBRIER COUNTY</td>
<td>Trillium Performing Arts Collective</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Virginia Arts Presenters Inc.</td>
<td>$74,688</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenbrier Valley Theatre</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>Challenge America Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trillium Performing Arts Collective</td>
<td>$8,375</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carnegie Hall Inc.</td>
<td>$31,427</td>
<td>General Operating Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenbrier County Schools</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>Arts in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenbrier Valley Theatre</td>
<td>$36,359</td>
<td>General Operating Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAMPISHIRE COUNTY</td>
<td>Hampshire County Arts Council</td>
<td>$3,050</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANCOCK COUNTY</td>
<td>Weirton Area Civic Foundation</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARRISON COUNTY</td>
<td>Clarksburg Harrison County Cultural Foundation</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of Bridgeport</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>Community Arts Project Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**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 Support      $2,880  Community Arts Project
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 Support      $23,515  Community Arts Project
Morgan Arts Council      $5,375  Challenge America

**NICHOLAS COUNTY**
Sharon McNeil      $2,500  Professional Development
Ivy & Stone Council for the Arts Support      $6,743  Community Arts Project
Ivy & Stone Council for the Arts      $9,926  Arts in Education
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 Wellspring 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.

Jason Bohnert, potter

“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.”
the listener’s experience. I never expected that din
ful touch with these details only serves to enhance
in audio books to be distracting, but Ballard’s care
background. In the past, I’ve found sound effects
with Reeves thanks to the quiet diner sounds in the
a diner, I felt as though I was sitting side by side
book’s main character, Sapper Reeves, stops at
a West Virginia musician. As I listened, the back
music, setting just the right mood for a story about
as a Marine.
anguish of Vietnam, where Sapper’s son is serving
the fiercely independent Appalachian soul to the
one that reverberates from the ragged hope of
traveling through.

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 railroad worker, 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 under-
ground 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 play-
ers 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 story-
tellers 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 Vir-
iginians’ 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 Pro-
fessional Studies in Baltimore, Md. Visit his website

About the Author
Rebecca Conrad is a writer from Burnsville.
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 danger. 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—that 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, Ezraendant.
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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.
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.”

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 website at www.BelindaAnderson.com.
Artwork covers walls of Entler Hotel
By Lauren Hough

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 his work 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.”

Copyright © 2006 by The Journal, Martinsburg. Reprinted with permission.

“Creativity is as important as literacy”
- Ken Robinson
Upcoming Grant Deadlines

**West Virginia Commission on the Arts**
[www.wvculture.org](http://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**
[www.midatlanticarts.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.wvhumanities.org)
- April 1, June 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1 and Dec. 1: Mini Grants

**Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour**
[www.pennpat.org](http://www.pennpat.org)
- **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

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.

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.
Inside this issue:

WV Youth Symphony travels to Europe......................3
FY 2007 Grant announcements..............................6
Focus on the Fellowships........................................11
Grant Deadlines...................................................14