

1997 Dedication Connecticut: State of the Arts

Connecticut can truly be called the "State of the Arts." We have the distinction of being home to world-class artists, acclaimed cultural organizations, and premier performing arts venues. We are also proud of our rich heritage of artistic excellence that dates back nearly to Colonial times, and of the consistent contributions made by the arts to enhance the quality of life in our state.

The arts thrive in the communities of Connecticut, and indisputably bring millions of hours of enjoyment, delight and inspiration to people who participate in or attend various events across our state. The arts also provide the added benefit of contributing significantly to the social, educational and economic vitality of Connecticut.

Connecticut is home to a dozen major art museums, over 100 art galleries, more than 35 professional theaters and performing arts companies, about two dozen dance companies, over 35 orchestras, and countless performing ensembles which celebrate our state's wealth of cultural diversity.

We provide artistic endeavor a place of prominence in our civic life, and gain much from its fulfillment. We value the extraordinary texture and substance the arts offer us across a broad spectrum of expression -- from symphony orchestras, operas, ballet companies, museums and theatres to ethnic dance ensembles, chamber orchestras, experimental and community theater groups, alternative galleries and young people's programs.

World-renowned actors, visual artists, authors, musicians and dancers call our state home or perform on our stage. The people and places of Connecticut have been recognized and honored on every continent for the essential and lead role they regularly play, and many are recipients of distinguished and coveted awards of the industry. The state's leading arts organizations and cultural landmarks place the active involvement of Connecticut's citizens among their highest priorities, an objective which benefits us all.

Connecticut's artistic tradition has achieved and sustained an influence and impact in the arts community not only within but beyond our borders, from our landmark beginnings to the present day.

Founded in 1842, Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum is the nation's oldest continuously operating public art museum. With over 45,000 works in its collection, the Atheneum is noted for a number of remarkable "firsts" -- the first American museum to acquire a Miro, a Mondrian and a Caravaggio, and the first to present an exhibition of surrealist works.

Connecticut is often considered to be the "birthplace of American Impressionism." In the 1890's, talented artists flocked to our state to capture the beauty of our picturesque rural landscapes and serene shoreline settings. Noted artist colonies were formed in shoreline towns, producing some of the finest works of this important genre.

The New Haven Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1894, can boast of being the fourth oldest symphony in the country. The orchestra, along with others in the state, continues to promote music understanding and appreciation to state residents of all ages through its many concerts, educational programs and community partnerships.

The Bushnell in Hartford, which opened in 1930, is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. It features the largest hand-painted ceiling mural of its type in the United States, and the distinction of hosting not only outstanding local performing artists but most of the major internationally acclaimed performers of the twentieth century.

We can count six Tony Award winners among our marvelous theaters, more than any state in the country. They include the Long Wharf Theatre (New Haven), Yale Repertory Theatre (New Haven), Goodspeed Opera House (East Haddam), Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Center (Waterford), National Theatre of the Deaf (Chester), and the Hartford Stage Company (Hartford). Two former artist colonies -- Bush-Holley House in Cos Cob and the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme -- have been designated National Historic Landmarks. Weir Farm, the Wilton home of artist J. Alden Weir, is Connecticut's only national park.

Summers in Connecticut are highlighted by scores of wonderful events that attract enthusiastic audiences. They include America's longest-running chamber music summer festival, held weekly at Music Mountain in Falls Village; the nearby Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, whose musical roots pre-date this century; the nation's longest-running free jazz series held annually in Hartford; and the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, a series of free readings by acclaimed writers held on the grounds of Farmington's Hill-Stead Museum -- the best-attended event of its type in New England. Autumn's numerous county and community fairs, from Litchfield to New London, include performances and exhibits that reaffirm the arts as an integral and much-anticipated element in the fabric of Connecticut life.

Connecticut also maintains a reputation as a "laboratory" for the development of the arts, and an exporter of artistic products, particularly in the theater world. New Haven's Shubert Theatre, dubbed "The Birthplace of the Nation's Hits," for years served as a "tryout house" for hundreds of shows that went on to the bright lights of Broadway and beyond. The Goodspeed Opera House is the only theater in America dedicated to the heritage of the musical and the development of new works. Fifteen Goodspeed musicals have transferred to Broadway, including such hits as *Annie*, *Shenandoah* and *Man of La Mancha*. The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference has for the past three decades nurtured over three hundred playwrights.

Neighborhood and community festivals, fairs and events, and the hundreds of galleries and enclaves sprinkled throughout our state, provide exhilarating evidence of the capacity of the arts to transcend societal divisions and bring people together in an appreciation of artistic talent, ethnic heritage and culture, and creative expression. Local arts and community productions abound, and our schools place a growing importance on the role of the arts in childrens' educational experience.

Arts organizations throughout Connecticut are reaching out to community organizations in novel and dynamic partnerships, particularly in our state's urban areas, to promote cultural understanding and build important community bonds. Innovative programs have been designed specifically to broaden the horizons of our young people, including at-risk youth, and have provided meaningful opportunities for our young citizens.

Connecticut citizens can also be proud of a state government that has nurtured its tradition of arts excellence. The Connecticut Commission on the Arts has for the past 32 years contributed to the development of the state's non-profit arts industry and has worked to increase public understanding of, participation in, and support for the arts. The Commission has also administered, since 1978, one of the first and foremost public art programs in the

country, with over 300 works of art commissioned or purchased for display in locations across the state.

The arts have also made a measurable contribution to Connecticut's recent economic recovery. The estimated economic benefit of the non-profit arts industry in the state was over \$1 billion in 1996, including the employment of more than 17,000 citizens. The arts also play a crucial indirect role in economic development by making Connecticut a more attractive site for current and potential employers and employees. In addition, cultural tourism is one of the state's fastest growing industries. Thousands of people now travel to Connecticut each year to sample and enjoy our wealth of cultural events and attractions.

The arts make a difference in the life of Connecticut -- they are, in effect, one of our state's richest natural resources.

In recognition of, and in tribute to, the enduring and beneficial role of the arts throughout our state's history, the 1997 State Register and Manual is dedicated to the people and places of the arts community that have meant so much to each of us and promise so much more for Connecticut's future.

Connecticut's Katharine Hepburn

America is the birthplace of the "movies" and has nurtured the development of what can justifiably be described as an American art form. "Hollywood," as we casually refer to it, is a world that fascinates hundreds of millions and to many seems larger than life. It has an attraction to hyperbole, is accustomed to superlatives, and calls upon them with great frequency and ease.

It seems that every year or season brings us the biggest, boldest or greatest. But, even in such a world, a constellation of "stars," the star of Katharine Hepburn shines as bright as any in that sky. There is something about her that is enduring and eludes easy definition. Certainly there is talent, beauty and intelligence, but many others have possessed these qualities. There is strength and determination -- confidence born of conviction, but even these qualities, as dramatic as they are, don't fully explain the esteemed place she holds with her audiences.

It began here. She was born in Hartford, second child of Dr. Thomas N. and Katharine Houghton Hepburn. She grew up on Hawthorn Street, where she began her acting career in a backyard "theater" that her father had built for her. Her mother, an active suffragist, brought her four year old daughter with her to meetings and lectures that advocated equal rights for women.

From there, the facts are widely known. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College; acted in summer stock theater; and achieved success on Broadway in 1932. She has starred in a series of films that continue to be adored and shown to this day, including *Little Women* (1933); *Stage Door* (1937); *Holiday* (1938); *Bringing Up Baby* (1938); *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), in which she recreated the role of Tracy Lord, another Broadway success of 1939; *Woman of the Year* (1942); *State of the Union* (1949); *The African Queen* (1951); *Summertime* (1955). Throughout the years of success, she has maintained a home in Connecticut and her affection for her native state has never faded.

Although we associate her with the movies, it cannot be forgotten that her early successes were on the stage. She has been in love with the theater for her whole life. She has breathed

life into the words of playwrights from Shakespeare to Philip Barry and has even accepted the challenge of the Broadway musical, singing the role of Coco Chanel in 1969.

Nominated 12 times, she has won four Academy Awards -- more nominations and awards than any other actor. Her list of Oscar winning performances began with *Morning Glory* (1933) and continued with *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), *The Lion in Winter* (1968) and *On Golden Pond* (1981). If there is a common thread running through her most powerful roles, it would be her portrayals of women possessed of true moral courage. The characters she brought to life in films such as *The African Queen*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, and *On Golden Pond* are women who, when faced with a great challenge, find within themselves great reservoirs of strength and resourcefulness.

That strength is always a formidable force. Formidable in real life as well, Katharine Hepburn has been working in theater and film for almost seventy years, still performing in movies with great skill and devotion at the age of 86. She is, unquestionably, one of the most enduring actors in history.

She has been described as radiant, inspiring, and hardworking. But she also treasures a quiet life, avoids the spotlight of celebrity, and is generous in her support of fellow actors, knowing quite well the powerful effect that a few sincere words of encouragement from an accomplished professional can have on an uncertain young actor.

She is an artist, and perhaps that explains it best. We can, each of us, think of one of her films and remember a performance that dazzled us. As we watch her on the screen we cannot help but be caught up in what is happening before our eyes. The willing suspension of disbelief that is critical to the success of any artistic effort is made to appear effortless. We do not see a performance, we see life -- perhaps the greatest tribute that we can pay her. That is the magic that all artists seek and so few find: to be able to capture that spark, that indescribable something that turns the ordinary or the studied into something charged with the truth, an experience that moves us and remains with us forever.

She is an individual whose signature attributes include intelligence and beauty, strength and determination, brashness and conviction, humility and kindness. She has that spark, that something, that we can only struggle to describe. The Connecticut State Register and Manual salutes an extraordinary artist whose artistry we will have the pleasure of enjoying for generations. She is our neighbor and friend. She is Connecticut's "local girl" -- Katharine Hepburn.