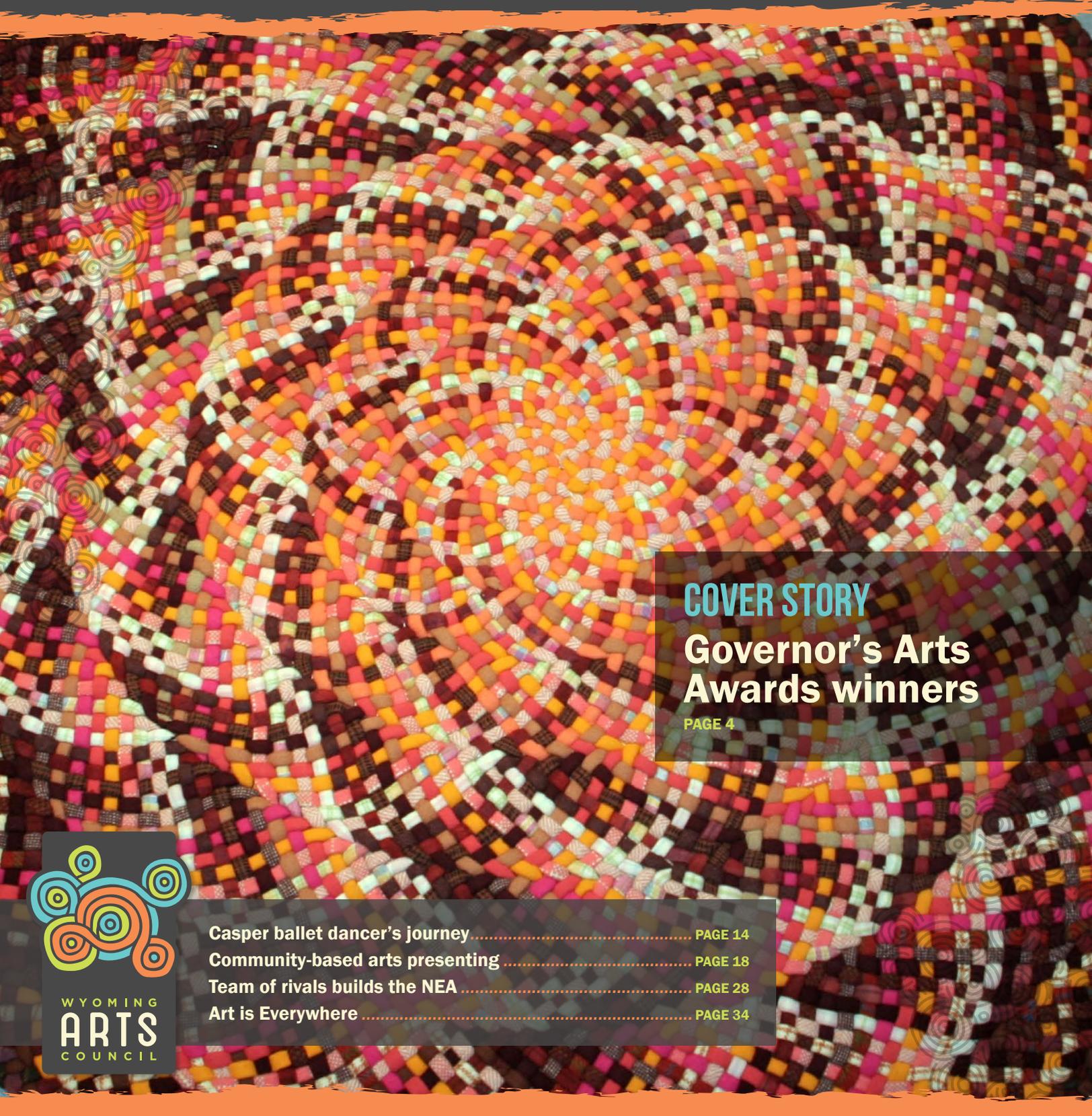


W Y O M I N G

ARTSCAPES

WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL NEWS • WINTER 2014



COVER STORY Governor's Arts Awards winners

PAGE 4



WYOMING
ARTS
COUNCIL

Casper ballet dancer's journey	PAGE 14
Community-based arts presenting	PAGE 18
Team of rivals builds the NEA	PAGE 28
Art is Everywhere	PAGE 34

CLICK!

A WEEKEND FOR WYOMING VISUAL ARTISTS

The next CLICK! A Weekend for Wyoming Visual Artists will take place in Fort Washakie at the Wind River Institute April 4-6, 2014.

The weekend will feature keynote speakers, panels, sessions on a variety of topics and hands-on sessions in the Wind River Institute's Maker's Lab. Among the presenters will be the Wyoming Arts Council Visual Arts Fellowship jurors, who will also offer 1:1 portfolio reviews on Sunday, April 6. Sign up for portfolio reviews at registration.

Friday evening there will be a gallery walk in Lander, and dinner on your own. Saturday evening will be a reception and announcement of the Visual Arts Fellowship awards at Central Wyoming College's Peck Gallery.

A 20/20 will take place during lunch on April 5. To

sign up, email Rachel Miller, rmiller@uwyo.edu at the University of Wyoming Art Museum. Never been to a 20/20? This is an opportunity for artists and arts organizations to share their work with other artists and organizations. The structure is very specific. Each artist has 20 slides, which are shown for 20 seconds each, giving you approximately 6.5 minutes to talk about your work. To participate, sign up, and plan to send in your images to the Museum by March 28, 2014. Then practice your talk, as timing is strictly enforced! It's a fast-paced way to see a lot of artwork, and offers excellent springboards for conversation.

A hotel block is available now at Holiday Inn Express, 307-332-4005. Ask for the CLICK! block, which has a rate of \$77/night single or double. The block expires March 13, 2014.

FMI: 307-777-5305



SIGN-UP
TODAY



OUR MISSION

The Wyoming Arts Council (WAC) provides leadership and invests resources to sustain, promote and cultivate excellence in the arts.

WAC STAFF

Rita Basom : ARTS COUNCIL MANAGER

Evangeline Bratton : OFFICE MANAGER

Katie Christensen : ARTS EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Camellia El-Antably : DEPUTY MANAGER/WAC
EVENTS AND VISUAL
ARTS SPECIALIST

Annie Hatch : FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS/
UNDERSERVED PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Michael Lange : COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND THE ARTS SPECIALIST

Karen Merklin : GRANTS MANAGER

Michael Shay : COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING/
LITERARY ARTS SPECIALIST

WAC BOARD

Karen Stewart (Chair) : JACKSON

Stefanie Boster : CHEYENNE

Duane Evenson : GILLETTE

Janelle Fletcher-Kilmer : LARAMIE

Neil Hansen : POWELL

Chessney Sevier : BUFFALO

Erin Taylor : CHEYENNE

Tara Taylor : MOUNTAIN VIEW

Holly Turner : CASPER

MAGAZINE

Artsapes is published quarterly and supported with funding from the Wyoming Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.

wyomingartscouncil.org

Managing Editor : Michael Shay

Photographers : Richard Collier, Michael Shay

Printing : Pioneer Printing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Manager's Message.....	2
Governor's Arts Awards recipients	
Guadalupe Barajas	4
Babs Case.....	6
Bruce Richardson	8
Norma Sturges.....	10
Bar J Wranglers.....	12
Casper ballet dancer's journey	14
Community-based arts presenting.....	18
Laura Bell receives NEA fellowship	23
Micah Wyatt: Eight Questions.....	24
Team of rivals builds NEA.....	26
We remember Sue Wallis.....	29
Jeff Lockwood's new book.....	30
Buffalo's "Corks and Colors"	31
Creative Douglas students	32
Art is Everywhere.....	34
Tell us about your summer events.....	36
Upcoming events.....	37

ON THE COVER: A hand-braided rug by Casper's Norma Sturges, recipient of a 2013 Governor's Arts Award.



**ARTS. PARKS.
HISTORY.**
State Parks & Cultural Resources



WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL

2320 Capitol Avenue • Cheyenne, WY 82002

Phone: 307-777-7742 • Fax: 307-777-5499

Hours: Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

wyomingartscouncil.org

BE PREPARED



This is a phrase we usually associate with the Boy Scouts, but it is also a motto we should all adopt and follow. While the Boy Scouts are thinking about preparedness for hiking, camping, etc., the rest of us should be considering ways in which we can be prepared for

the unthinkable, like a fire, a major weather event or other “act of God” such as an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. While these may all seem far-fetched and not likely to happen to any of us, there are artists and arts organizations across the country that have experienced these types of things, and wish they had thought about preparedness prior to those events.

While the loss of a studio, office, gallery, performance space or other arts facility is always terrible, it does not have to be the total loss of one’s life work, or of all an organization’s records. And what about the sudden loss of a leader, a vandalism, a P.R. crisis? Are any of us really ready to deal with these types of things?

The Wyoming Arts Council is dedicated to helping Wyoming artists and arts organizations become stronger, more productive and successful. That is

why we are partnering with ArtsReady, a national initiative of South Arts, which is a web-based emergency preparedness platform designed to provide arts and cultural organizations with customized business continuity plans for post crisis sustainability. ArtsReady is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. While this model was created to help organizations in the South deal with the aftermath of hurricanes, flooding, and other disasters, they now want to share what they have learned with the rest of the

U.S., helping others to be more prepared for whatever disaster might strike.

According to research, most arts organizations don’t have a readiness/business continuity plan, and don’t know how to design one.

That’s where www.ArtsReady.org can be of help. Creating a good plan can ensure that ALL of an organization’s resources and activities are protected.

We think some of these same ideas will help individual artists as well as arts organizations, and will be regularly sharing information, tips and resources about this subject through our website, *ArtsScapes* magazine, and at our statewide gatherings. We actually began this work with a session featuring

MOST ARTS ORGANIZATIONS DON'T HAVE A READINESS/BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN, AND DON'T KNOW HOW TO DESIGN ONE.

ArtsReady consultant Suzette Surkamer during the October Wyoming Arts Conference in Jackson, but we think we need to make this information available to all of our constituents.

As we begin the 2014 year, this is the perfect time to start a conversation with your staff, board, volunteers and others about backup plans for your primary activities and your organization's leadership. Visit www.ArtsReady.org or email info@artsready.org to sign up for a free basic membership, and find out if you might be eligible to receive a discount for other ArtsReady services through one of the national service organizations.

Just as we, as individuals, know we need to have a

will, and keep records that can be accessed in the event of an untimely death, we, as organizations, should prepare for the unthinkable before it happens. Disasters have crippled many organizations and destroyed many artists' life works, and they really can happen to any of us, at any time. Let's make a resolution to "Be Prepared" in 2014.



Rita Basom

Wyoming Arts Council Manager



GUADALUPE BARAJAS

Cheyenne has no official Guadalupe Barajas Sculpture Trail – not yet, anyway.

His 13-foot-tall “Open Season” bronze of a family of mule deer in flight occupies prime real estate in front of the Governor’s Residence and is visible from I-25. A quarter-mile northwest at Wyoming Game & Fish headquarters, about the distance a herd of antelope could cover in 30 seconds, sits a group of bronze antelope that look as if they may burst out of their metal jackets at any moment.

Wander south to the Paul Smith Children’s Village at Cheyenne Botanic Gardens, and you can view Barajas’s playful “Late Again,” *Alice in Wonderland*’s six-foot-tall White Rabbit. At the western edge of downtown, his Martin Luther King, Jr., bust looks out over MLK Park. Head five miles east of town to the sprawling headquarters of Sierra Trading Post. At the main entrance, two life-size bull moose – “Buddies” – seem to be walking down a path enjoying each other’s company.

Those are just a few of the monumental works fashioned by this graduate of East High School who studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and then went on to teach in the Chicago public schools. He retired from teaching in 1994 and returned to his



Guadalupe Barajas works at his Cheyenne gallery.

home town, intent on full-time work as a sculptor.

Known to everyone as “Lupe,” Barajas recently was awarded a proclamation by Cheyenne Mayor Rick Kaysen celebrating the 12 public artworks located in and around Cheyenne. He’s received “Best of Show” awards two years running at Cheyenne’s Western Spirit Art Show and Sale. The National Bison Association has named him “Artist of the Year” and he won a First Place Gold Award from the Foundation of North American Wild Sheep.

In one year (2008) he received “Best of Show” honors at the Western Spirit Art Show and Sale in Cheyenne, the Wild Horse and Western Art Show in Rock Springs and the Platte Valley Festival of the Arts in Saratoga. He also earned a “People’s Choice” award at the Douglas Invitational Art Show and Sale



“Ram Study,” 12 X 6 X 6 inches



Guadalupe Barajas speaks at the dedication of his “Ancient Icons of the Prairie” sculpture at the Wyoming Games & Fish Department headquarters building.

and first place for sculpture in the RSVP Senior Art Show in Cheyenne.

Ann Redman, Barajas’s friend and nominator for the Governor’s Arts Award, says that a trip to the artist’s Grey Wolf Gallery is akin to visiting a gallery in some of the West’s better-known arts towns, such as Taos, N.M., or Cody, Wyo.

As a boy, Barajas liked to draw. It wasn’t until he went off to college that he shifted his attention to three-dimensional forms. He still does an occasional pencil drawing of pets. He obviously can’t get enough of those animals.

In 2012, after an absence of several years, Barajas was accepted into the prestigious Sculpture in the Park

Show in Loveland, Colo.

He sums up his love of sculpture in this quote from his web page:

“Unless one has seriously sculpted, it would seem difficult understanding the feeling of literally taking a lump of clay, and breathing life into it. This is my reality as a bronze sculptor. Unlike painting, where I’ve created illusions of space, sculpture consumes

“UNLIKE PAINTING, WHERE I’VE CREATED ILLUSIONS OF SPACE, SCULPTURE CONSUMES ITS SPACE, AS IT TAKES ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN. EVERY ANGLE OF ITS COMPOSITION PRESENTS A NEW PERSPECTIVE, AND AN ADDED CHALLENGE TO MY CREATIVE ENERGY.”

its space, as it takes on a life of its own. Every angle of its composition presents a new perspective, and an added challenge to my creative energy. Sculpting, for me, is truly an intimate experience. Capturing that inner spirit and energy of one’s subject involves an intimate connection. This is what separates mediocrity from the real deal.”

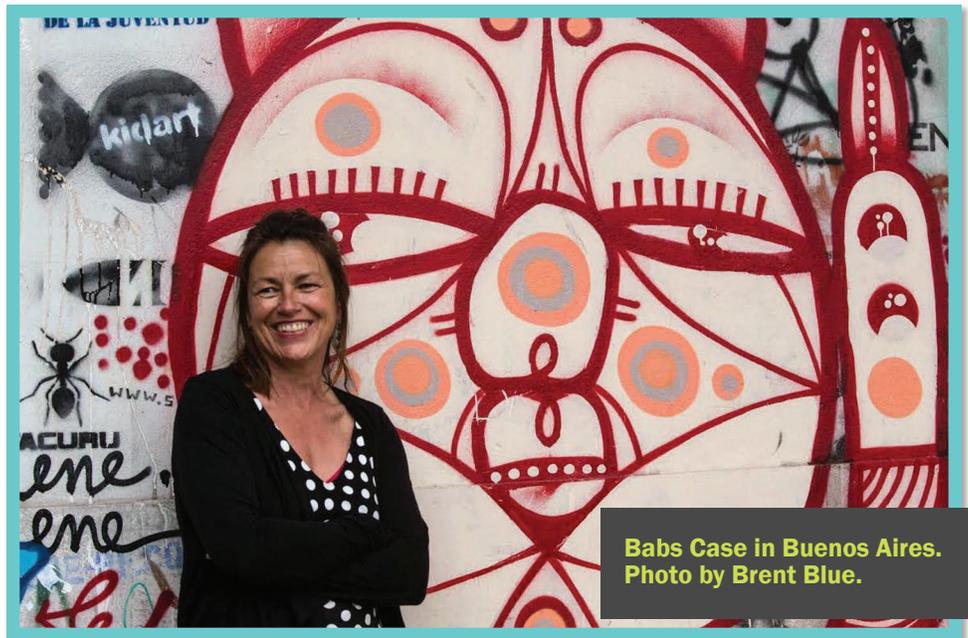
PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR MODERN DANCE IN WYOMING

In 1998, when Babs Case moved to Jackson to take a job with Dancers' Workshop, Wyoming had no professional modern dance company.

Dancers' Workshop was the state's only full-time dance program. Dance existed in some communities but was underserved. Dance curriculum was offered at UW and several community colleges. Local presenters brought dance troupes to Wyoming such as Denver's Cleo Parker Robinson Dance or Ririe-Woodbury out of Salt Lake City. Those groups conducted residencies for young dancers who lacked access to full-time dance instruction. They also provided performances in modern dance, ballet and jazz.

But in grades K-12, ongoing dance instruction was sorely lacking.

Enter Babs Case and Contemporary Dance Wyoming. Fifteen years later, CDW crews tour year-round, bringing performances and classes to communities all over the state: Big Piney, LaBarge, Gillette, Crowheart, Alta, Rawlins, Thermopolis to name just a few.



**Babs Case in Buenos Aires.
Photo by Brent Blue.**

Case is not only the artistic and executive director of Dancers' Workshop, but she's its most seasoned educator. She's taught a variety of classes in creative movement, modern dance technique, improvisation, choreography and multi-disciplinary dance. Her students range in age from three to adult.

Her awards include an Indo-American Research Fulbright fellowship, a Florida fellowship for choreography, a Wyoming Arts Council performing arts fellowship and the 2009 Cultural Council of Jackson Hole Award for Creativity.

Case graduated from the University of Iowa in 1978 with a B.A. in Dance and later earned her master's degree there. She went on to dance and teach professionally in the U.S., Europe, Asia, Canada and

South America with dance companies based primarily on the West Coast. They included Margaret Jenkins, A. Ludwig and Company and Harry Partch Foundation and Company.

“Harry Partch changed my life,” said Case. “He was a true maverick, and is recognized as one of the most important American composers of the 20th century. During and after the Great Depression, he was a hobo and rode the trains, keeping a musical notebook of his experiences, which he later set to music. Between 1930 and 1972, he created one of the most amazing bodies of alluring and emotionally powerful music, almost all performed on the instruments he built himself. He built over 50 instruments from materials at hand. Harry was adamant that his music not be played after his death, and that people should make their own music.”

After teaching at Florida International University and New World School for The Arts in Miami, she moved to Stuart, Fla., where she got her first taste of running an arts organization.

“I made friends with a group of painters and theater artists who were also looking for a place to work,” she said. “We identified a need for an art space and banded together to find land and build a warehouse art facility.”

The 4,000-square-foot, artist-run Center for the Arts opened its doors in 1985. It eventually housed a 200-seat black box performance space, painting studio, ceramic studio, two dance studios, gallery/lobby area and a music-recording lab. For years, it was recognized as the number one multidisciplinary organization in the southern region by the Southern Arts Federation.

Ten years later, she left the organization.

“I was beginning to feel consumed by it,” Case said. “Funding was really hard to find every year and I was still yearning to have more time to do my own work as an artist. I left the Center in 1995

totally depleted.”

In 1997, she was a Lincoln Center Institute artist, performing and teaching residencies all over the country. While at Lincoln Center, she met theatre artist Bob Berky and together they created “The Unanswered Question.” They took it on a tour which included her first visit to Wyoming, with performances in Gillette, Rock Springs, Sheridan and Pinedale.

“That was when I literally fell in love with Wyoming,” she said.

Case can look back on her Dancers’ Workshop tenure and marvel at the changes.

“Only three months into my tenure, the organization experienced a major collapse and lost all staff members with the exception of myself and one other person who worked part-time,” Case said. “I was left ‘holding the bag’ so to speak. The remaining board members looked at me and said, ‘What should we do?’ The path seemed clear to me, and I presented a plan. They asked if I would lead the organization as artistic director, and I agreed to for three years.”

But time passes and here she is in 2013 with an amazing array of credits to her name.

[continued on page 33](#)

**Babs Case dancing.
Photo by David Swift.**



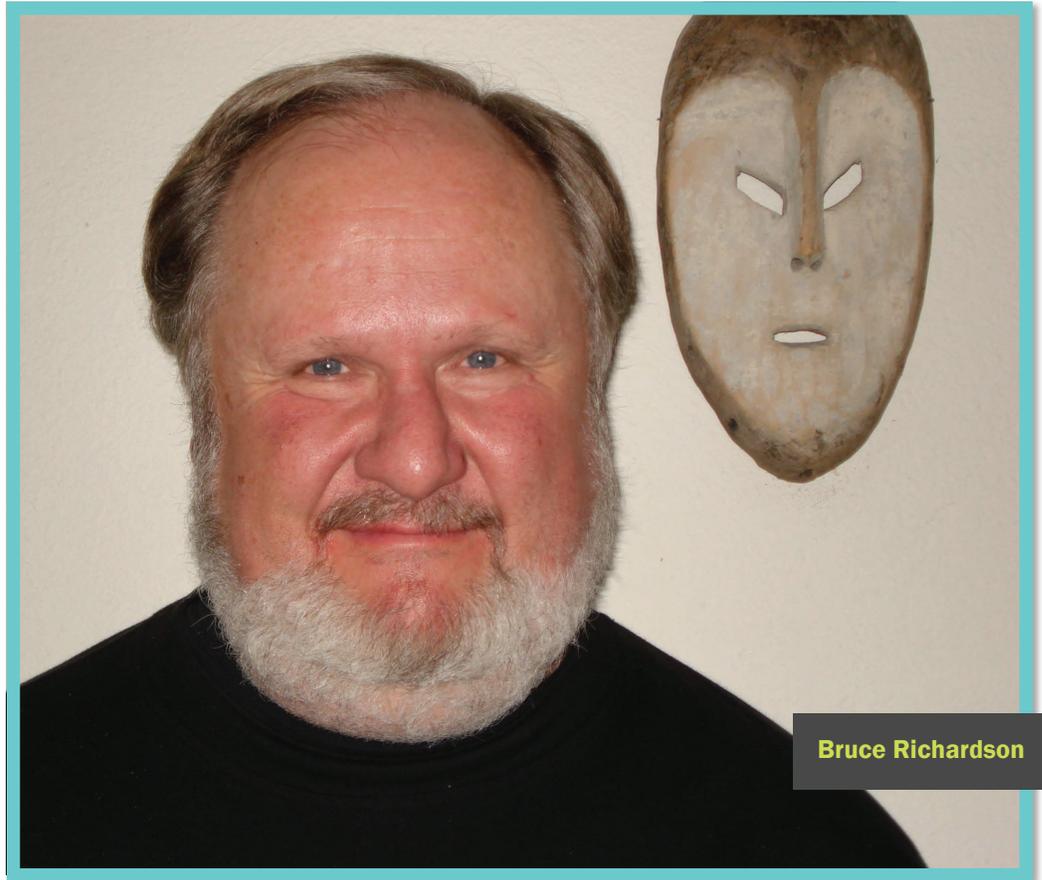
BRUCE RICHARDSON

Dr. Bruce Richardson is the “man in black,” an imposing evangelist for the arts who can cite chapter and verse about the state’s Creative Vitality Index, the number of writers in Wyoming or the huge reservoir of hand-made arts and crafts taking place on ranches in Crook County.

Richardson served as a board member of the Wyoming Arts Council for eight years, including three years as its chair, 2007-2010. He represented Wyoming for two years as an officer on the board of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA).

In 2012, he was awarded “Casper Citizen of the Year” for his volunteer work with a number of local arts organizations, including the Nicolaysen Art Museum and ARTCORE, and his attendance at nearly every play, art exhibit, concert, poetry slam and book reading, all the while teaching full-time at the University of Wyoming/Casper College.

According to Arlynn Fishbaugh, the director of the Montana Arts Council who served with Richardson



Bruce Richardson

on the NASAA board: “He is effective in the many arts leadership roles he plays because he is willing to listen, has well-formed convictions and beliefs, is able to think outside of the box and always looks at the possibilities that exist. He is a positive influence on everyone around him.”

Or as friend and former member of the WAC board Susan Stubson said: “Bruce is *the* arts ambassador in Wyoming.”

That evangelism takes many forms. He is a tireless

chronicler of the contemporary arts scene, writing columns on topics from arts education to community arts development for national and regional publications (including this one), and reviewing local art exhibits for the *Casper Star-Tribune*.

Richardson and his wife, Susan Stanton, are art collectors. Their collection was featured in the exhibit “Passion & Discovery: The Impulse to Collect Art” in the fall of 2012 at The Nic. Richardson was interviewed for the show by former curator at The Nic, Lisa Hatchadoorian. When asked “how does the artwork enrich your daily life?” Richardson responded:

“It’s nice to have work from an individual hand and brain and soul around you. The prefab stuff around us lacks the kind of deep meaning and expressiveness of these works. They are emblems that encode the creative spark and something powerful, perhaps the meaning of life.”

Richardson has sterling credentials as a teacher. After earning his Ph.D. at UCLA, he came east from California (or further West, depending on your point of view) to teach at the University of Wyoming, both at the home campus in Laramie and the one at Casper College. He served as both associate dean and interim associate dean at the

UW/CC Center from 1997-2001, and was named a senior lecturer in English at UW/CC Center in 2004.

He’s taught courses on the classics – Shakespeare and Chaucer to name a few – and on topics such as contemporary Wyoming writers and horror literature. He earned the 1991 Ellbogen Award for Meritorious Classroom Teaching, UW’s top teaching honor, and received the Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award in 2009 from the UW College of Arts and Sciences.

And, if all of this weren’t enough, there’s this: he likes dogs. Rain or shine, snow or wind, Richardson takes his dog Toots to Morad Park for a daily workout. As for hobbies, Richardson professes an “absurd interest in pro basketball stats – and games

too” and a passion for geyser gazing at Yellowstone National Park. He and his wife have witnessed one of the irregular eruptions of Yellowstone’s “amazing Fan and Mortar,” with its “multiple vents shooting sideways great distances and a straight-up geyser too,” he said. “It’s like 20 Old Faithfuls shooting in every direction.”

Whether you call him an ambassador or evangelist or just plain Bruce, it’s clear that you can’t talk about Dr. Richardson without talking about the major contributions he’s made to the arts in Wyoming.

“HE IS EFFECTIVE IN THE MANY ARTS LEADERSHIP ROLES HE PLAYS BECAUSE HE IS WILLING TO LISTEN, HAS WELL-FORMED CONVICTIONS AND BELIEFS, IS ABLE TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX AND ALWAYS LOOKS AT THE POSSIBILITIES THAT EXIST. HE IS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON EVERYONE AROUND HIM.”

NORMA STURGES

So you're braiding a rug in one of Norma Sturges's classes. You're making progress, really humming along, when master braider Norma Sturges comes over to take a look at your handiwork. Some 65 years of experience is behind her practiced gaze. "Do it over again," Sturges says in a nice but firm way.

So, chastened, you start over again.

Sturges is a taskmaster. A respected one, author of the rug braiding "bible," *The Braided Rug Book: Creating Your Own American Folk Art*, first published in 1995, revised in 2000 and rewritten in 2006. To date, the book has sold more than 54,000 copies. She is the founder of the Rocky Mountain Rug Braiders Guild in Colorado in 1995, a decade before she moved her studio, equipment, rugs and expertise to Casper.

She has coaxed, cajoled and upbraided hundreds of students during the 65 years since she got her start by making a modest rug for her new baby. She knew very little about the craft, basing her pattern after rugs she had viewed in Colonial homes she'd seen while growing up in New England.

As a master braider, she received a 2012 mentorship grant from the Wyoming Arts Council's Folk and Traditional Arts Program to teach advanced braiding techniques to an apprentice. There are only three



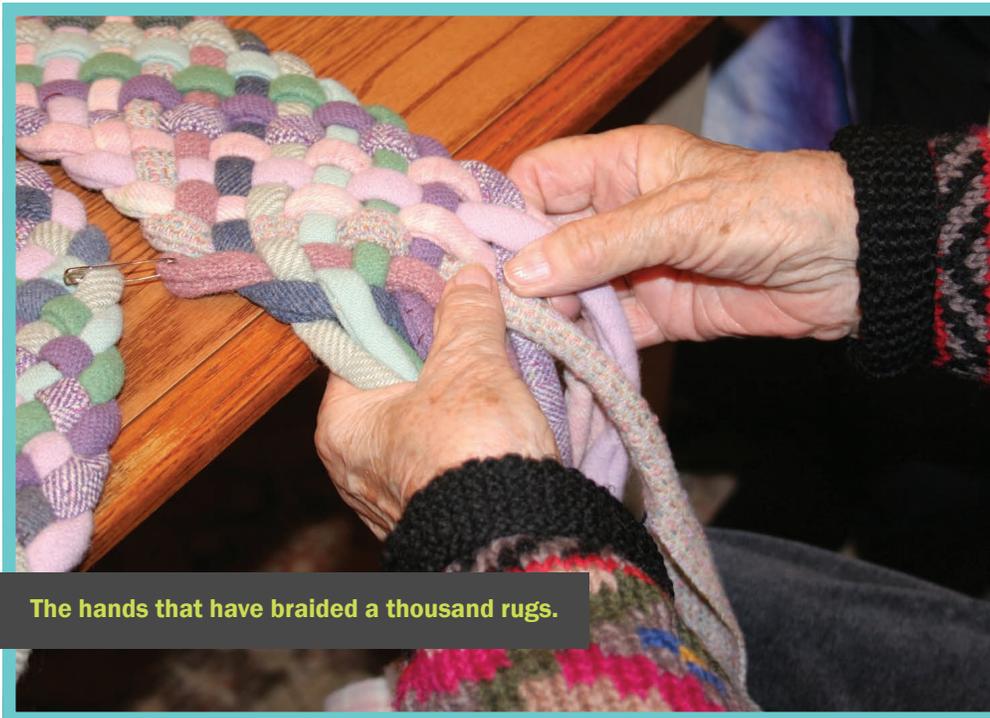
or four known rug braiders in the state and the Arts Council considers it a skill in danger of being lost.

To rekindle an interest in the age-old tradition, Sturges partnered with Ellen Sue Blakey at the Wyoming Fiber Trails project and the National Historic Trails Center in Casper to create a 2013 exhibit, "Step On It: The Rugs of Norma Sturges." The Trails Center may have been the first museum in the country to hold a braided rug exhibit. Sturges is helping to plan a traveling photo exhibit of the show.

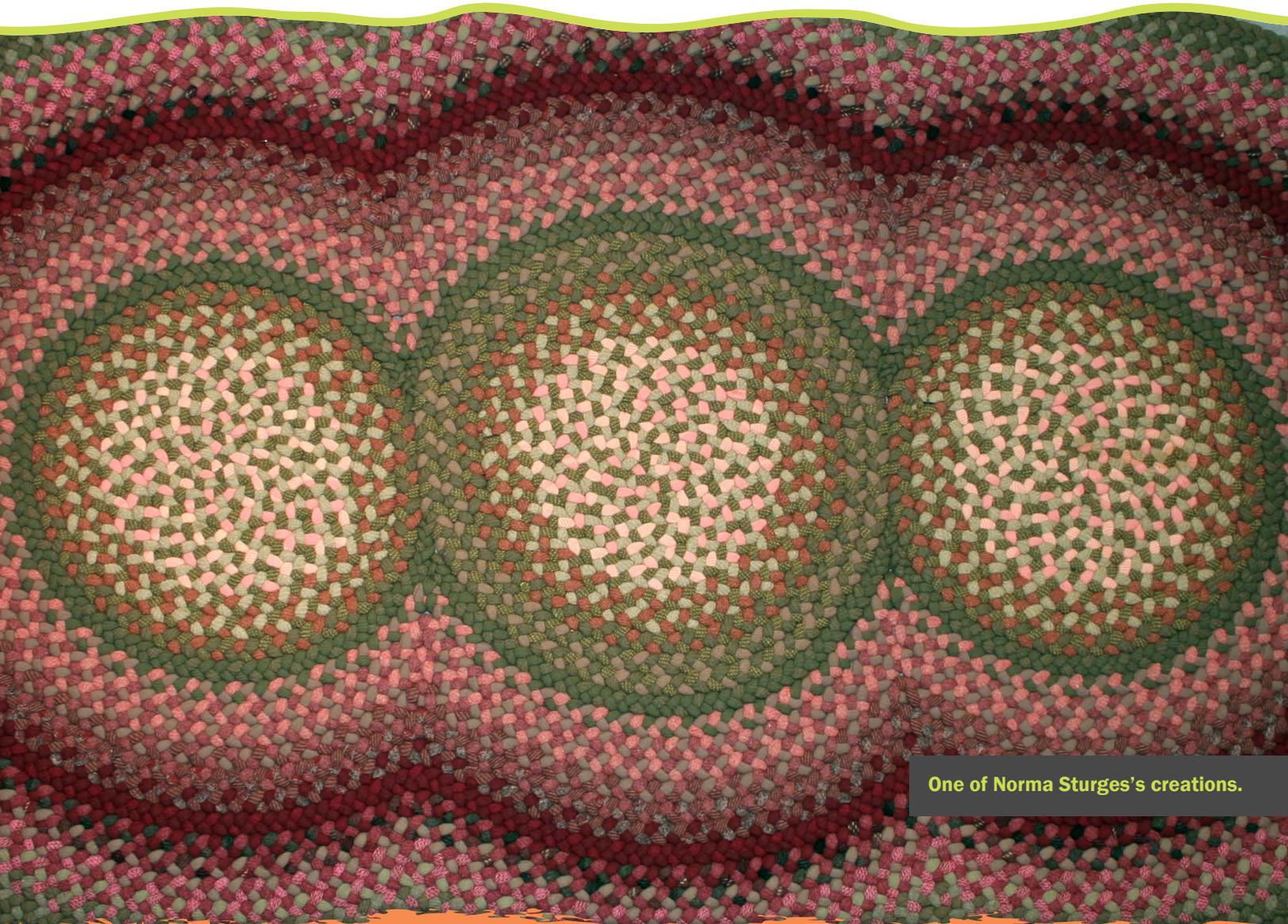
This new focus on traditional braiding caused Natrona County artisans to form a new guild, plans for a touring photo exhibit based on the Trails Center show, rug braid-ins and hook-ins scheduled for

locales across Wyoming, and a resurgence in local fiber festivals, such as the Laramie Fiber Festival in August of 2013.

At 90 years young, Sturges still is going strong, spending her time braiding, advising long-time students as well as rookie braiders and teaching courses. She continues to learn new and improved techniques, which she plans to share in yet another revision of her famous book.

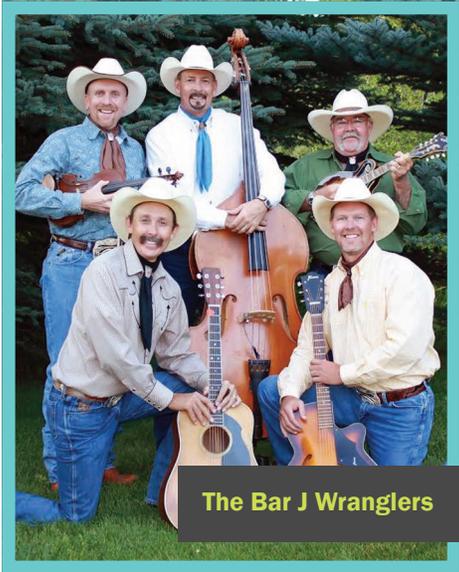


The hands that have braided a thousand rugs.



One of Norma Sturges's creations.

BAR J WRANGLERS



Summer in northwest Wyoming wouldn't be summer without bear jams in Yellowstone.

You might say the same for summer Bar J jams in Wilson, when hundreds of tourists migrate to the Bar J Chuckwagon for grilled meats and some down-home cowboy jammin' by the Bar J Wranglers. By some accounts, 500 to 700 appreciative audience members congregate each evening for the group's renditions of old favorites – "Git Along Little Dogies," "The Old Chisholm Trail" – mixed in with newer tunes, yodeling and healthy doses of humor.

The group traces its roots back to 1978 when founder Babe Humphrey moved to Teton County and began a tradition, training every one of the many Bar J performers who've taken the stage during the past 35 years. That includes his sons, Scott and Bryan. Scott, Babe's oldest son, brought

his smooth tenor and rhythm guitar to the group in 1986. Bryan, Babe's youngest son, joined the Wranglers in 1989. He's the yodeler of the group, plays "doghouse" bass and is a prolific composer of western songs. The two brothers now lead performances, although their father makes an occasional cameo appearance, singing baritone and bass and playing the guitar.

Other band members include Donnie Cook on flat-top guitar, steel guitar dobro and banjo, fiddle player Tim Hodgson (four-time Idaho State Champion Fiddler) and Danny Rogers, known for his "smooth bass" voice.

When not performing at the Bar J, the Wranglers hit the road, performing with such music legends as Randy Travis, Roy Rogers, and Sons of the Pioneers. They have showcased their talents at the Cowboy

Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nev., the Cowboy Poetry Roundup in Riverton, the White House, Walter Reed Hospital, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, USO tours and appearances on the TNN Network. All told, they have performed in 49 U.S. states (still waiting to hear from Rhode Island) and internationally in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Australia.

When the group performed at the Kennedy Center, here's how the Center's program described them: "The Bar J Wranglers deliver some of the purest harmony, best

musicianship and funniest ranch humor ever seen on stage. As soon as the Bar J Wranglers take to the stage, listeners leave behind their busy life and settle into a time long ago -- a time of the singing cowboy."

“AS SOON AS THE BAR J WRANGLERS TAKE TO THE STAGE, LISTENERS LEAVE BEHIND THEIR BUSY LIFE AND SETTLE INTO A TIME LONG AGO — A TIME OF THE SINGING COWBOY.”

The Wranglers support Wyoming communities by performing benefits and fund-raisers, such as the Help for Health "Barn Bash" which benefitted the Riverton Hospice program.

But it always comes back to the music, truly "the best of the Old West."

WYOMING POET LAUREATE ECHO KLAPROTH CONDUCTS A WRITING WORKSHOP WITH FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS AT ARVADA CLEARMONT SCHOOL.



FOR A DANCER, “THE JOURNEY CAN BE REALLY CHALLENGING”

For his senior year, David Neal left Natrona County High School in his hometown of Casper to attend Walnut Hill School for the Arts in suburban Boston.

This cross-county change of venue came with some surprises.

“I realized the differences right away,” said Neal, 28. “I was one of the eight boys in the state of Wyoming who danced and one of eight boys in my class at Walnut Hill – and they all danced better than me.”

More surprising was the fact that he went from being this “weird, artsy kid” at NCHS to being an athlete amongst all of the painters and poets and cello players in his new school.

At Walnut Hill, “ballet dancers were the jock class of the school,” Neal said. “Pretty bizarre.”

Neal was three years old when he took his first dance class, a mix of ballet and tumbling. He then came under the tutelage of former professional dancer Shirley Lewis. According to Neal, “She had been a professional dancer in California. She was

wooed by a Casper oil man who fell in love with her watching from the audience. She opened a school in Casper and I was her student for the last eight or nine years of her life.”

Neal recalls a time when he was 12 and sitting around the dinner table complaining about his aching muscles after another brisk ballet workout. His parents mentioned that he didn’t have to be in ballet if he didn’t want to.

“BUT I WAS HOOKED,” HE SAID. “IT BECAME MY SELF-IDENTITY BEFORE I KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING.”

“But I was hooked,” he said. “It became my self-identity before I knew what was happening.”

Another one of Lewis’s students, Heather Marsh, graduated from the University of Wyoming and returned to Casper to teach. She became Neal’s next mentor.

Meanwhile, in high school, Neal found strength in his “bullheaded nature.”

“I was not the cool kid in school,” said Neal. “People have really unkind things to say to you. The abuse was a big factor in me sticking with it. I didn’t want those guys telling me who to be.”

Casper native David Neal with the Alberta Ballet. Photo by Paul McGrath PMG Image.



© paulmcgrath 2013

The turning point came when he attended his first national level summer program in Detroit conducted by New York City's American Ballet Theatre. He was recruited by an ABT dancer who taught at Walnut Hill. A year later, he was accepted

to New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. He graduated in three years with a Bachelor of Fine Arts as a "crunchy granola modern dancer."

New York City is a mecca for dance in America and

birthplace of alternatives to classical ballet. For his senior thesis, Neal worked with choreographer Bill Young. His dance piece featured him in a sombrero wearing jeans and sneakers.

When the Richmond (Va.) Ballet came calling, looking for a six-foot-tall male dancer, Neal decided to make the switch back to ballet.

“A lot of dancers go from ballet to modern, but not a lot of us go the other way,” Neal said. “A lot of polishing needed to be done after three years of contemporary dance at NYU.”

Neal said that he is “forever grateful” to the ballet master and mistress at Richmond Ballet for putting him through the paces during two years of apprenticeship and three years as a member of the company. It was a small company, with 16 professional dancers and up to eight apprentices. This enabled him to perform on stage immediately.

“As a new guy, I got a chance to perform and to try new things outside of my comfort zones,” he said. “I got broad experience in Richmond, a chance to grow in every direction.

Three years ago, Neal had the opportunity to move to a larger entity in the Alberta Ballet in Calgary, Canada. His first trip across the Canadian border was when he drove the moving van with all of his belongings into Alberta.

The company’s 32 dancers perform at identical theatres in Calgary and Edmonton. “I never get lost looking for my dressing room,” Neal said. “When you space a piece in Alberta, it’s the same format in Edmonton.”

Calgary Ballet has a healthy touring schedule throughout Canada, especially during the holidays when everyone wants to see *The Nutcracker*.

“This is the part of the year that dancers forget what it’s like to sleep in our own beds,” he said.

A typical non-performance day goes from 9:30 a.m. to about 6:15 p.m. He attends a 90-minute techniques class in the morning followed by two three-hour rehearsal blocks. If he isn’t called to both rehearsals, he spends more time on the exercise equipment or in Pilates classes.

Neal said that he feels lucky to have a 44-week contract, as the average contract length in North America is about 32 weeks. “That means I don’t have to track down teaching or other jobs when I’m off, as some dancers do.”

“THE JOURNEY CAN BE REALLY CHALLENGING,” HE SAID. “IT’S HARD TO MEASURE YOUR WORTH. ... THERE IS A LOT OF AMBIGUITY IN THE WAY YOU’RE VALUED.”

As is the case with most dancers and actors in Canada, he’s a member of the Canadian Actors Equity Association. His union status provides better pay and a number of protections. He can’t get fired if he’s injured, nor can he be forced back on the stage before an injury

is healed, which he calls “one of the greatest dangers to a dancer’s career.”

Neal just returned in December from surgery following a June injury. He reinjured knees that he damaged during “stressful landings” as a 16-year-old in Wyoming.

Dancing has the same physical demands of any professional sport. “It’s common for every dancer to have as many injuries as any athlete.” Dancing,

however, comes with an added attraction.

“I see it as a compromise for those of us who find joy in physical exertion and an artistic aspect to our souls,” he said. “You work and you work until you can’t stand up. You go on stage and communicate what it means to be human.”

That dual nature comes at a price. Injuries, curtailed careers and intense competition, to name a few. There have been more than a few films – most recently *Black Swan* – exploring the dog-eat-dog world of dance.

“The journey can be really challenging,” he said. “It’s hard to measure your worth. It’s not like being a real estate agent counting up your sales or being a professional athlete who can measure his home runs or touchdowns. There is a lot of ambiguity in the way you’re valued.”

First there are the years of training and education.

Then come the struggles of breaking into the biz. “You know you are going to get broken some time in your career.”

He recalls his ballet mistress at Richmond.

She was recruited by the New York City Ballet, one of the country’s premier dance companies. At 26, she injured her knee and couldn’t dance any more. “She put in all of that time. She almost got there and got shot down by random misfortune.”

Dancers compete against each other on an ongoing basis. “Your best friend in the world may be standing next to you, but you know that you have to look better.” And you have to keep on looking better, as most dancers are at the mercy of one-year contracts. “You have to justify your presence

every season,” he said.

Still, Neal admits that “it’s pretty amazing to be a dancer. The dances can change hourly, daily, weekly. It satisfies my artistic sense in that you are not only doing the art but you are the art. You can get on stage and form an intense connection with the other dancers. It can be a spiritual moment.”

As he rushed off to his next *Nutcracker* rehearsal, Neal ventured that Wyoming, although a dance-challenged state at the moment, will one day come into its own.

“Casper will achieve its critical mass,” he said, noting that the Richmond Ballet grew out of one dance school “and snowballed into one of the excellent regional companies in the U.S.”

His guess is that Wyoming will most likely accept modern dance before its classical cousins.

“Most Wyomingites really connect to raw humanity,” which comes from exposure to the expansive outdoors where you are “just as likely to run into something on four legs as something with two.”

**“IT SATISFIES MY ARTISTIC SENSE
IN THAT YOU ARE NOT ONLY DOING
THE ART BUT YOU ARE THE ART.”**

When the dance boom happens, it will probably be the “crunchy granola modern type,” Neal said. “It’s the raw instinctive form that can connect to the Wyoming spirit.”

He’s not ruling out a place for ballet, especially in Casper with its symphony and other strong classical music traditions. “A synergy will develop with a local dance company.”

Then who knows what may happen?

COMMUNITY NEEDS SHOULD BE THE WELL-SPRING OF QUALITY ARTS PRESENTING

By Michael Lange

WE KNOW THAT...

The arts build a strong workforce. A 2008 study from the Conference Board and Americans for the Arts shows that creativity is among the top five applied skills sought by business leaders. The report concludes that “the arts — music, creative writing, drawing, dance — provide skills sought by employers of the 3rd millennium.”

The arts add to the economic well-being of the state. In 2011, The Creative Vitality Index reported that the creative economy was directly responsible for creating 8,249 jobs and over \$200 million in taxable revenue to the state of Wyoming. Additionally, tourism dollars gained from those traveling specifically to enjoy and engage in the arts show twice as much expended in local communities as from those who travel for other areas of interest.

Education in the arts, both stand-alone and integrated, provides students with deep learning and the development of critical thinking skills, creativity and innovation.

University of Pennsylvania researchers have demonstrated that a high participation rate in the arts leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, increased child welfare, and lower poverty rates. Dana Gioia, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, also asserts that

arts participation correlates with positive individual and civic behaviors. Those who engage in the arts are more active in community life than those who do not.

The arts have a demonstrable impact on personal wellness. Americans for the Arts research shows that nearly half of the nation’s healthcare institutions provide arts programming for patients, families, and staff because of the healing benefits to patients through shorter hospital stays, better pain management, and less medication.

It’s clear the arts offer an impressive array of positive outputs.

SO WHY ARE WE EXPERIENCING A DECLINE IN ATTENDANCE AT TRADITIONAL ARTS EVENTS?

A 2008 study by the National Endowment of the Arts reports that three-quarters of Americans interact with the arts but only 35 percent of those do so through traditional arts events such as attending concerts and plays. More recent numbers from the NEA and the U.S. Census Bureau show that, between 2008 and 2012, play attendance fell significantly for the first time since 1985. Attendance at musicals was off 9 percent in that four-year period; non-musical play attendance decreased by 12 percent. Meanwhile, museum visits fell 2 percent.

These numbers above suggest that people want to be involved in the arts but are not as interested in

attending events in the traditional sense.

HOW DO WE ENGAGE AUDIENCES?

Think in terms of community involvement. A hot topic in the world of arts is: How do we get more people to our concert, gallery opening, performance, lecture, book reading, etc.? Fair enough. Those in the arts want to share their passions. It is a noble effort, and one that is easily understandable. However, this type of mentality that focuses efforts on “butts in the seats” is missing out on delivering meaningful experiences to the very communities organizations endeavor to serve. Both organizations with poor attendance and sold-out seasons can be caught in the pitfall of not offering meaningful experiences.

We are at a turning point. Arts presenters need to reimagine what presenting the arts means. The argument that “everybody just wants to sit in their houses and watch movies on their flat screen TVs while playing on their I-Pads” is not completely accurate. For good and bad, people have access to an ever-expanding list of activities at the click of their fingers. They can access quality performances, theatre productions, and millions of photos of amazing works of art from around the world while sitting in the comfort of their own living room. If local arts organizations are not offering something other than what people can get from clicking through YouTube videos while sitting on the couch, then why should anyone leave the house? People are looking for sincere, meaningful experiences that are at the heart of their beliefs.

Arts organizations need to look at what they can do to be more responsive to engaging their community. Doug Borwick, author of *Building Communities not Audience*, puts it like this:

“Perhaps the most critical transformation necessary is a re-imagining of the arts world’s understanding of and relationship with the community in which it exists. Our communities should not be seen as a collection of market segments to be tapped in an

effort to sell tickets or extend ‘reach.’ Communities are not resources to be exploited in the interest of furthering the health of the organization or even the arts as a sector. It is from community that the arts developed and it is in serving communities that the arts will thrive.”

SOME IDEAS TO HELP SPARK ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY

Think inventively

Organizational structures need to function in a way that allows for new ideas that focus on community needs. This is true for those presenting the arts and those funding the arts. Most structures are rigid and hierarchical and are that way by design. This makes sense as it creates stability. However, it can also hinder creativity. The bureaucracy of any organization can suck the life right out of its members/attendees as well as the desire or time to try something new. Don’t let the paperwork define your organization’s output.

Use some of the structures inherent to the bureaucracy to create space for creative thought. For all the bad that a bureaucracy brings to the table, it also is meticulous at following up and documenting everything. A great deal of innovative ideas are never developed or implemented because they are created and lost over dinner conversations or shot-down in a board meeting because there is a “full” agenda that needs to be followed. Find an environment where ideas can flow in a non-judgmental, forward-thinking way. Don’t just come up with a couple of ideas, but with a hundred ideas. Take copious notes, and follow up on those ideas – don’t just file them away. Make this as important as the next grant that needs to be written, or the class that needs to be taught, the show that needs to be hung, or the concert that must be planned for. This will make your organization stronger. Make it happen by shifting a couple of the regular to-do’s: Does your organization hold a monthly board meeting? Is it always in the same location,

at the same time, while sitting at a table with a printed agenda? Hold meetings at different board members' houses over potluck dinners. Have your meetings in the living room on couches, creating comfortable spaces for individuals to share ideas. Don't make every meeting about details, but allow space for ideas to be shared.

If something is not working, have the ability to change it. It doesn't have to wait until next year, the next season, or the next whatever. Set up a structure that gives decision-making powers to those "in the action," those involved in what is happening. If your organization's marketing plan didn't bring in the numbers you wanted it to, investigate why and change it. Don't keep making the same mistakes over and over.

Invest in and support those who serve on boards and work in the arts, full-time, part-time, or as volunteers. Gaining new information by having time to research, travel to conferences, and attend both informal and formal gatherings with other art professionals is imperative to bringing new ideas to the table. These expenditures are usually looked at as frills. Unfortunately, this train of thought leads to stagnant mediocrity. It is better to have one less program if the rest of your programs are of high quality, than to have more mediocre programs. Find the resources to invest in people because the new ideas will bring more meaning to your organizations actions and engage your community!

Invest in true collaborations

While attending a recent training at the Western States Arts Federation, I was stunned to hear how some of the organizations that present the performing arts were looking at collaboration. I heard time and time again that "we" planned a Cinco De Mayo concert and invited the Hispanic population or "we" planned a Jewish Opera and then invited the Jewish community to attend. To the presenter's surprise, they had little attendance from these populations at their events. This is quite simply because there was no "we" involved.

Planning something and asking others to come is not collaboration. Telling someone what you do and hoping they want to be involved is not collaboration. Understanding the needs and cultural context of a partner and working with them to mutually benefit all parties involved is true collaboration. Reach out to others and let them know the power of the arts and that your organization cares about the community's needs and want to be part of solutions to address those needs.

Spark creative conversations

While attending a master class by the STREB Dance Company a few years back, one of the dancers was explaining her approach to choreography. She said that she would purposely set arbitrary boundaries to help her begin the creative process. She would not use her left arm, or would tape off a small space on the dance floor and not dance outside of the space, or not dance inside of the space. She would dance blindfolded with a partner, or dance in a dark space without any music. This forced her to approach her space and body differently, bringing a new perspective to how she worked. Many times I get caught in approaching issues from the same frame of reference even when I am trying to think "outside of the box." The problem with thinking "outside of the box" is that there really is no such thing. Everything is "in the box;" we sometimes just need help finding a way to get into that space. As mentioned above, finding time to have broad overarching conversation is important. Once you have done this, try to set some arbitrary lines around the conversation. Try some ideas like, "If we could only do one thing, what would we want to do?" "What if we didn't have our space for a year, how would we function?" "With limited amounts of money, what would we do first?" "With unlimited access to the school system, how would we define our role?" "With no access to the school district, how would we reach out to students?" Many organizations have a multitude of roadblocks already set -- money, staffing, volunteers -- the list goes on and on. By putting that list aside and thinking about how your organization can best serve the community from

another frame of reference, it may create solutions to the problems that have caused you to “beat your head against the wall.”

Rethink audience interaction

Some arts disciplines have made major strides in making their presentation of the arts a collaborative process. Museums have been using smart phone technology for years, and have created interactive spaces for hands-on activities and spaces for children to draw and play while surrounded by art. Many are even focusing on pre-kindergarten audiences with the belief that by having children involved at a young age, they will feel “at home” in a museum, and will be engaged as they grow older. While on a tour of the Whitney Gallery at the Buffalo Bill Center for the West, I even heard the curator tell a visitor to get up really close to a particular painting before taking a picture so she could get the fine detail of the brush strokes.

In stark contrast, how the performing arts approach audience interaction is abysmal. Only being able to clap at the right time, stay sitting, no photos, no recording, no making noise, no running around, no...pretty much anything. There is something seriously wrong with an arts event when it is more acceptable to fall asleep than to clap at the wrong time. I even heard a radio ad the other day for a performance stating that no children under 10 were allowed to the show, not because of its content being inappropriate for a young audience, but because they didn't want kids distracting from the performance. As a performing artist myself, I am the first to recognize that not all of these are fair analogies. Performing artists are creating their art on the spot while visual artists are displaying their art. I do however think the performing arts need to re-think many of their “rules” for those attending their events. Arts being performed in a truly community form include interaction with the audience, involvement from kids, and the sharing of emotion. At a recent holiday concert, my four-year-old daughter got excited when she heard the organ play a song she recognized. She started

clapping and said “Daddy, look, they are playing *Jingle Bells!*” My first reaction was to hold her hands from clapping and tell her not to talk. It is very disappointing that we, as a society, frown upon portraying this happiness that music brings us, and even worse, teach our kids the same thing.

A great deal of folk and traditional music is still performed in settings that allow for audience interaction. I have never attended a drum circle where kids are not running around and having fun or sitting and standing right next to where the music is being performed. It is culturally acceptable for them to be part of the musical experience, and their silence does not outweigh their enjoyment. Nor have I attended a rock concert or indie concert where individuals are not dancing, swinging their arms to the music, or yelling out parts of the lyrics. In both of these cases, those attending the events are engaged in the arts. I don't believe it is the simplicity of the lyrics or harmony, or the repetition created in most popular music that draws such large crowds as many music critics allude to. I believe it is the ability of that music to let individuals engage in a way that they feel connected.

I do see the performing arts shifting to take some of this into account. While attending a concert at the Wyo Theater in Sheridan, a sold-out crowd was told by the performers to take as many pictures and as much video as they wanted, and to make sure to upload them to Facebook and tag them in all of the pictures. Many theatres and orchestras are experimenting with setting aside areas of the audience for “tweet seats” where individuals are allowed to share their feelings and thoughts about the performance in real time via the social media site Twitter.

By no means do I believe that every arts event needs to have dancing and/or be a sing-along, nor do I mean to suggest that audience engagement is only the responsibility of the presenters. There is plenty of blame to go around for a drop in attendance at many traditional performing arts events. Artist's

agents and management have historically wanted to control all media of their artists, thus one of the main reasons no photography or video is allowed. They also want to control all recording rights, which is why recording is prohibited. Presenters, many times are contractually obligated to follow these rules. As an industry, there has not been a push to have the rules changed. Then there are the audience members. We all know the ones. When you cough they turn around and give you the glare, as if you personally sank the Titanic. They roll their eyes when you show up to a concert with a kid, or dare to clap between the first and second movements of a Beethoven symphony. Make a note to yourself to not become that person, and if you are that person, STOP!

The only thing that is for sure, is that the adage of attending a performing arts event and it only being a one-way street of artists on stage performing for audience members quietly sitting, will have to revert back to a tradition of interaction, or attendances of these types of arts will dwindle to non-existence.

Provide quality programs and services

Every one of these ideas builds on an organization's ability to provide quality programs and services. While home visiting my folks in a small rural town here in Wyoming a few years ago, my dad and I decided to go out to a movie. We walked the two blocks to the theater, paid our money and grabbed our seats. All was fine, and then about halfway through the movie, the projection went just a little out of focus. Not bad enough that they stopped the movie, but bad enough to annoy a person. It startled me that nobody seemed very upset. I asked my dad about it and he said told me that it happens all the time and they just deal with it because there is really nowhere else to go to catch a movie.

A strong parallel hit home with me when thinking about this story and the arts. Just because you are the only small-town group presenting the arts in your community does not mean that the quality

doesn't matter as much as if you were in a place where people had multiple choices. All communities deserve quality arts, no matter the size. By not offering quality artistic engagement, over time, organizations can lose their reputation. Awhile back I was talking to a gentleman who runs a performing arts series. He has seen a steady decline in the attendance at his organization's events. When asked how the community was involved, he said that it was a pretty well-oiled machine as he has been doing it for so many years and knows what the community wants. Don't fall into this trap! Once you have lost the reputation of providing quality programs and services, it is not easy to get it back. Sure, advertising, social media, giveaways, etc., are important, but building a reputation of quality is the number one goal. Strive to do better, even if you have huge audiences. Your community will be better because of it.

It's challenging – but worth it

The arts bring many benefits: better grades for students, stronger workforce, engaged citizens, lower crime rates, and a stronger economy. What is harder to quantify, and just as important, is the intrinsic value that is added to the life of a community by having the ability to engage with quality cultural programs and events on a regular basis. The work of presenting the arts is hard and brings many challenges. Those doing this type of work are usually under-valued and underpaid, are doing the work of several people, working more hours than many other professions, and dealing with budgets and an ever-changing field. To those of you doing this work, we say "thank you." It is meaningful. Keep striving to do better, keep fighting the good fight, because the opportunity for children to grow up in communities filled with the beauty of the arts is worth the effort.

Riverton native and UW graduate Michael Lange is the Wyoming Arts Council's Community Development and the Arts Specialist.

LAURA BELL OF CODY RECEIVES NEA CREATIVE WRITING FELLOWSHIP

National Endowment for the Arts Senior Deputy Chairman Joan Shigekawa announced Dec. 10 that Laura Bell of Cody has been selected to receive a FY 2014 \$25,000 Creative Writing Fellowship.

A long-time resident of Wyoming's Big Horn Basin, Bell has chronicled her experiences as sheepherder, ranch hand, wife, mother and conservationist. Her work has been published in several collections, and from the Wyoming Arts Council she has received two literature fellowships as well as the Neltje Blanchan Memorial Award and the Frank Nelson Doubleday Memorial Award. Her memoir, *CLAIMING GROUND*, was published in 2010 by Alfred A. Knopf.

Bell was awarded this fellowship based on the manuscript submitted in the application and reviewed through an anonymous process in which the only criteria for review are artistic excellence and artistic merit. Bell's new work in fiction reflects the landscape that has shaped her—the high desert ranges of northwest Wyoming—and evolving themes of loss and transformation.

"This is a formidable group of both emerging and well-established writers," said NEA Acting Director of Literature Amy Stolls. "They demonstrate an impressive range of styles and subject matter. We are proud to recommend each of them for an NEA Creative Writing Fellowship."

"I feel deeply honored to be called out and supported by this fellowship," Bell says, "to feel included in

Laura Bell
and friend.



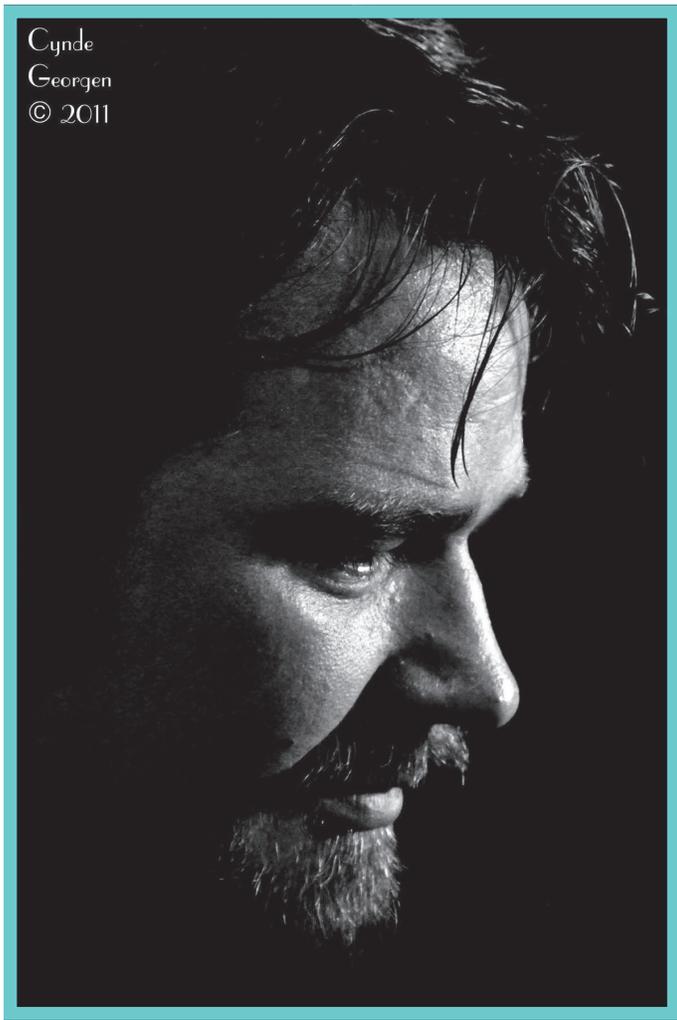
the company of such talented writers. The acknowledgment really challenges me to reach further for what I have to share in my work, to make a difference. The timing feels powerful."

In this round, the NEA will support 38 fellowships in prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) totaling \$950,000. The 38 fellows range in age from 27 to 60 and hail from 18 states around the country. NEA fellowships are highly competitive, in fact for this round the NEA received more than 1,300 eligible manuscripts.

NEA Creative Writing Fellowships provide non-matching grants of \$25,000 to published writers that enable them to set aside time for writing, research, travel, and general career advancement. Successful manuscripts are selected through an anonymous, panel-review process for which the sole review criteria is artistic excellence and merit.

For a complete listing of the FY 2014 NEA Creative Writing Fellows, please visit the NEA website at arts.gov.

MICAH WYATT: LEGAL EAGLE FLIES FROM SHERIDAN TO SEATTLE



In the fall 2013 issue, we featured a sampling of Wyoming-bred musicians and music groups who live beyond the state's borders. We asked them all the same questions and came up with some intriguing responses. In this issue we continue our "Eight Questions" series with Micah Wyatt a.k.a. The Barefoot Band. Wyatt grew up in Sheridan, earned a law degree from UW, and

now lives and works in Seattle.

What's your connection to Wyoming?

I was born there, lived there, graduated from high school there, worked there, got lost in the mountains there, went to university there (for too long), and played all kinds of music there. I recently did the math and realized that I've lived in Wyoming 35 of my 36 years – which I know isn't very complicated math, but nobody said I could calculate.

Where do you live now?

I moved to Seattle in September. The weird coast. Just booked my first gig at a legit Seattle venue after a couple months open mic-ing and busking.

Why did you become a musician?

In one very important sense because it's the only thing I've ever been good at and could do for hours on end without developing some sort of self-imposed ADHD symptoms. My folks, who must have recognized this, bought me piano lessons when I was five, a cello when I was seven and they keep encouraging me to do this. Mostly, I've purchased my own guitars, but when I put out CDs (which I've put out two – whoo hoo!). I borrow the money for pressing from my mother, because she's really neat-o that way and I pay her interest even though she pretends it doesn't matter. In another very important sense, because it's now what drives me. I maintain a law license in Wyoming and do some legal work, but all I really want to do is stay up too

late at bars and clubs, crooning away or listening to others croon. In another not so important sense, I was an artistic kid in a football school, and even when I wasn't very serious about music, I did it because it was a way of escaping the monotony. In a very final sense, I never became a musician. I just picked up instruments. Eventually, I started to play some instruments with other people. Sometime later, I wrote some songs. Then a guy conned me into recording them and paying him for their production. It's really a lot like an addiction.

How would you describe your work in five words or less?

Acoustilunical Indie-pop and House beats.

What is your favorite song, either yours or someone else's?

I have to choose two, because I'm a Libra (and also, because I'm a Libra, I'm just totally going to make my own rules): "Here Comes the Sun," The Beatles, and "Impossible Germany" by Wilco.

If not a musician, what would you be?

Dead, probably. There's so little money in being a musician that I may be dead from it, as well.

I guess I'm also pretty good at event planning. Let's say I got my arms cut off – I'd likely get a job as a concert promoter. You know. If the arms-cutting didn't kill me. Let's change the subject, huh?

Do you ever see yourself moving back to Wyoming?

Yes! In fact, I pretty much see my move to Washington as a broadening of my nomadic trails. I've already come back to Wyoming once to tour with another expatriate, a comedian now from L.A., originally from Buffalo, Josia Elliott. I was back in late December 2013, as well. I still write and play with a bluegrassy trio, Shot In The Foot, and the other members are perhaps inextricably tied to Wyoming. I mostly realized that, if I wasn't ready to commit to a lifelong career as an attorney (no), or fit into one of the many careers that Wyoming

Micah Wyatt



offers, or have babies (no), or live with learning and writing more country songs (no), I'd have to try out somewhere else. At least for part of my time. Still, there's really few better crowds than the ones I've played to in Wyoming. Things like the WHATfest and various other Wyoming festivals I've played are probably the coolest things I've known ever, and I've known some pretty cool things. I also have a penchant for singing to 17 beer drinking folks in smoky bars at the top of mountains. It's really hard to do that anywhere but in my home state.

What's your booking information?

micah.wyatt@gmail.com or 307-460-0860.

See samples at

www.reverbNation.com/thebarefootband

<https://soundcloud.com/barefootandproud/sets/the-shouldve-been-tapes-9-25>

KENNEDY AND NIXON CREATE AND SHAPE A BIG IDEA: A NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

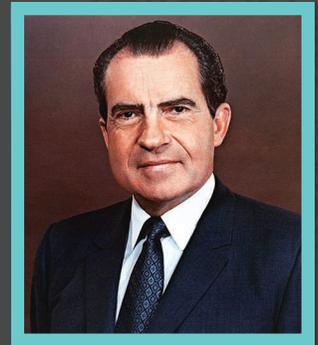
By Bruce A. Richardson

“A nation reveals itself in its artists” – John F. Kennedy speaking at a memorial for poet Robert Frost at Amherst College.

“The full richness of the nation’s cultural life need not be the province of relatively few citizens in a few cities.” – Richard Nixon proposing a doubling of the NEA budget.

The National Endowment for the Arts, perhaps the most famous small agency in the national government, was conceived by John F. Kennedy, signed into law under Lyndon Johnson and shaped and funded by Richard Nixon. How about that? A team of rivals, over time, built this highly effective little thing. The NEA is bipartisan in the best sense — shaped by the insights of opposing political philosophies — both conservative and liberal at the same time. There is meaning in this story.

For John F. Kennedy, the New Frontier included the moon, personal sacrifice, and the arts, an essential part of a great nation and creative people. In his inaugural address, he promised to strengthen American arts and soon followed many high profile arts events at the White House, an arts advisor, an arts council and a proposal for a National Endowment for the Arts. The



idea fizzled in the Congress, but was revived by Lyndon Johnson and passed into law in 1965.

The NEA aimed to stimulate and promote American art and creativity to compete with the Soviet Union internationally which Kennedy felt made good use of their arts, especially music and ballet, in extending influence around the world. The NEA had a good start, but was hindered by a small budget that could not accomplish Kennedy’s idea of an agency that would be the center and funder of an explosion of high art in America.

A small agency was never going to compete with European nations such as Italy and France whose governments fully fund opera, classical music, and art museums. Over time, the national government had moved into direct support of the arts through commissions and purchases, funding for a National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian with its Museum

of American Art, a music program in the military, arts in diplomacy and odd things, such as the CIA's promotion of Abstract Expressionism. This is all a very small effort that had little to do with major American arts promoted by institutions such as the Metropolitan Opera, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, philharmonic orchestras, and theater companies. The American model, discussed in detail by Tyler Cowan in *Good and Plenty: The Creative Success of American Arts Funding*, has always been diverse with the largest role for the national government coming from tax breaks for donations to arts organizations.

Nixon Builds the NEA

Richard Nixon, who campaigned for a "New Federalism," a balancing of resources and power among national, state and local institutions, saw how the NEA could be effective and promote his political vision by promoting partnerships between the states and national government and use government funds to stimulate, but not dictate, the content of private and local efforts in the arts. Small amounts of money could yield large results and local control. Working with and through state arts agencies — which had been formed along with the NEA — it would be possible to extend arts access across the country including rural and underserved areas and let these areas take the lead in arts programming.

Nixon was also ready to put some money into these ideas. He started by arguing for and getting a doubling of the NEA budget and by the time he resigned, NEA funding had grown spectacularly from \$8 million to \$70 million and ultimately

\$114 million when Gerald Ford finished Nixon's term. This is the greatest funding increase in the NEA's history.

How has this worked? The NEA today continues to follow the Nixon model with partnership grants, 40% of its budget going to state arts agencies, efforts to bring the arts to everyone and support for all the arts from opera to bluegrass. The agency emphasizes research, training for nonprofits, partnerships with other agencies (such as the military which has a very large arts program), arts education, stimulus grants to improve areas (such as the Our Town program) enhances its identity as an agency that helps, but does not fully fund, arts. This is a direct result of Nixon's New Federalism.

You can explore the issues in this essay in Donna M. Binkiewicz's *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts 1965-1980*, which I have consulted for the essay. I credit my ideas here to a wonderful discussion Anne Hatch and I had with Jonathan Katz, head of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Katz, resolutely bipartisan in his advocacy for the arts, is quick to stress the contributions

of Republicans and Democrats to the arts and points to the strong support of the NEA by George W. Bush and all of our current Wyoming delegation.

A Great Nation Deserves Great Art

What did Kennedy contribute? I would say a vision for the value and significance of the arts. His legacy appears in the philosophy and stimulus to the spirit that the agency embodies. We have seen this in speeches and writings of agency directors such

**WORKING WITH AND THROUGH
STATE ARTS AGENCIES — WHICH
HAD BEEN FORMED ALONG WITH
THE NEA — IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE
TO EXTEND ARTS ACCESS ACROSS
THE COUNTRY INCLUDING RURAL
AND UNDERSERVED AREAS AND LET
THESE AREAS TAKE THE LEAD IN
ARTS PROGRAMMING.**

as Nancy Hanks and Jane Alexander. Many of us in Wyoming remember George W. Bush's NEA Chairman Dana Gioia's inspiring and riveting speech that opened the Wyoming Arts Summit in Casper. He argued that arts and reading are marks of places with volunteering, high voting, community service and students who stay in school and talked about the outlaw past of his family and the role of arts in pushing them all forward to success and wisdom, which for Gioia include his terrific poetry and a robust career in business. The speech, unfortunately not recorded, is the stuff of legend among Wyoming arts people, but my notes and memory suggest he discussed the utterly amazing growth of arts nonprofits and art museums since 1965.

Kennedy's passion for arts and service appears powerfully in a speech, largely written by him, at Amherst College in 1963. You can listen to it at the JFK Library website. I recommend you listen. It's true: Kennedy was eloquent and inspiring. His constant theme, America will rise to its challenges

and each person will play a part, is connected to Robert Frost, who had read a poem at Kennedy's inaugural, and had recently died. Kennedy challenges the students at the gathering: "What good is a private college unless it is serving a great national purpose." Making art is part of the great work of a nation and, indeed, "creativity is the hardest work there is." His famous call to serve — "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country" — was also a call to make great art.

Kennedy did bring big art to the White House with quite a flourish. A dinner and concert so impressed French writer and Minister of Culture Andre Malraux that he

allowed the *Mona Lisa* to visit the U.S. in 1962, one of the first "blockbuster" exhibitions.

Was Kennedy personally interested in high art? Maybe not. His wife, Jackie, joked that his favorite song was "Hail to the Chief" and the metaphor for his administration, *Camelot*, honors a popular musical not an Italian opera. Nonetheless, as Leonard Bernstein reported at a memorial for Kennedy, artists all "loved him for the honor in which he held art, in which he held every creative impulse of the human mind."

Artists may not have loved Nixon so robustly, but perhaps they should. Besides playing the piano, he had

acted in community theatre (where he met his wife, Pat). This experience gave him a good feel for the meaning of art in Middle American life as a vehicle of self-improvement and self-expression. Nixon saw that art was for everyone, not just people in New York. He would have loved the scene in

**HIS FAMOUS CALL TO SERVE —
"ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN
DO FOR YOU. ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO
FOR YOUR COUNTRY" — WAS ALSO
A CALL TO MAKE GREAT ART.**

Wyoming that mixes community concerts, local theatre, art-making centers, dancing and some grand, big things too, assisted and sometimes stimulated by small grants and advice from the Wyoming Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The NEA, a most American and democratic invention, shaped by political opponents who brought their own competing visions and insight to the creation of one of the great American ideas.

Bruce A. Richardson is Senior Lecturer of English at the University of Wyoming, Casper, and former chair of the Wyoming Arts Council

WE REMEMBER SUE WALLIS



Rep. Sue Wallis of Recluse died Jan. 28 in Gillette.

Wallis, 56, was not only a four-term member of the Wyoming State Legislature but also a long-time member of the Wyoming Arts Council's artist roster. She and her late husband, Rod McQueary, were accomplished cowboy poets and participated for many

years at the National Poetry Gathering at the Western Folklife Center in Elko, Nevada. First an invited poet at the gathering, Wallis later worked at the center as a program assistant, coordinator, manager and director.

Western Folklife Center Artistic Director Meg Glaser said that Wallis was a huge asset to the program. "We were very fortunate to have someone who knew ranching culture and poetry," Glaser told the *Elko Daily Free Press*. "She brought that knowledge to organize the event."

Wallis was scheduled to leave for Elko the day she died, according to her friend and fellow cowboy poet, Waddie Mitchell. Wallis and Mitchell had been friends for about 40 years.

Many of the bills Wallis sponsored in the Wyoming Legislature had to do with agriculture. But she also was a staunch supporter of individual rights and the arts. She served on a number of peer panels for the WAC and was a board member for the Wyoming Humanities Council.

Wallis's poetry emerged from her life as a Campbell County horsewoman and rancher. She performed widely and taught writing workshops for people of all ages. For several years, she taught at Gillette's Advocacy for Visual Art (AVA) for its "Leadership for Girls" summer program. In 1994, Sue was commissioned for poetry that reflected the spirit of the West. Her six poems were set to a symphonic score, *Sagebrush Suite*, which was performed at the annual cowboy gathering in Elko. In 2005, this work was transformed into a ballet, and Sue again recited her poetry for the performance.

"Wyoming lost a great voice today," said Gov. Matt Mead. "Rep. Wallis was a poet and her eloquence was on display whether she was writing or debating on the floor of the House or in my office. The strength of her convictions was clear as was her commitment to the West and our way of life. I will miss her."

Wallis's approach to life was best summed up by her colleague, Sen. Ogden Driskill, as quoted in the *Casper Star-Tribune*: "She was an absolute dynamo."

Wallis published a new collection of poems in 2013 entitled "Love, Life and Politics." She also was a consistent blogger, posting many of her poems online. Here's a stanza from her poem "The Gift" that appeared Sept. 10, 2013, on her blog:

*Each day is just a day
and nothing more.
One full turn of the seasons
merely marks the supreme indulgence
of walking this ground,
sentient and alive
for that many days.*

Happy trails, cowgirl.

JEFF LOCKWOOD'S NEW BOOK EXPLORES THE CREEPY AND CRAWLY AMONG US

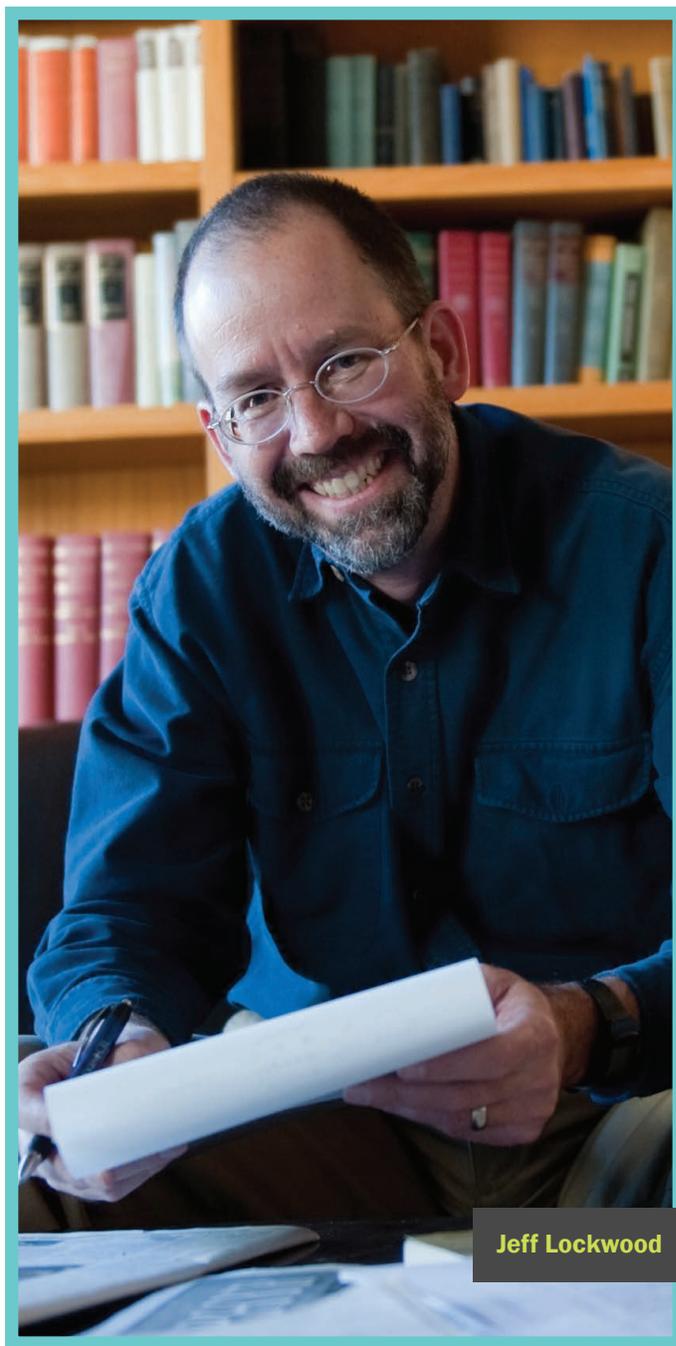
University of Wyoming Professor Jeff Lockwood published his ninth book, “The Infested Mind: Why Humans Fear, Loathe and Love Insects.”

Like his previous titles – which variously explored the disappearance of locusts from the American frontier, the ethics of grasshopper extermination and the history of insects used as weapons of war – “The Infested Mind” is a genre-bending narrative that integrates personal stories, literary writing and cutting-edge science into an investigation of human-insect relationships.

On why he chose to write about nature in a way that transcends the conventions of science writing and fuses memoir with scholarship, Lockwood says, “You want an author to have a voice, otherwise you have what’s called a textbook – and who would want to buy or read one of those unless they had to?”

“The Infested Mind” was inspired by an attack of insect-related panic Lockwood experienced while researching a grasshopper infestation in Whalen Canyon near Guernsey. The book explores the insect-human relationship through a series of questions about fear, anxiety, and disgust – subjects being profoundly reconsidered in the field of contemporary psychology.

In preparing to write the book, Lockwood worked with UW master of fine arts student Ryan Ikeda



Jeff Lockwood

to research the cutting edge of psychological and ecological scholarship. Lockwood also consulted psychology Professor Brett Deacon, head of the UW Anxiety Research Laboratory, to better understand the psychology of fear – an essential aspect of the often uneasy human-insect bond.

Already garnering positive reviews, the book has been featured on Wisconsin Public Radio, in *Popular Science* magazine and *The Atlantic Online*, where a feature post by Lockwood, “How to Cultivate Disgust,” explores the roots of our complex reaction to the creepy and crawly among us.

Originally hired at UW in 1986 as an insect ecologist, Lockwood, the past three decades, has “metamorphosed” into a professor of natural sciences and humanities. He teaches nonfiction writing workshops in the UW Creative Writing MFA Program, as well as courses on environmental ethics and ecology in the UW Department of Philosophy and the Program in Ecology.

In 2002, he was awarded a Pushcart Prize for an essay on grasshoppers collected in “Grasshopper Dreaming: Reflections on Killing and Loving.” The following year, he won the John Burroughs Medal – a prestigious award for outstanding writing in natural history – for an essay on locusts published in *Orion* magazine.

For those interested in Lockwood’s exploration, but too squeamish to jump right into the book (there are photos), Lockwood, in coming months, will blog about fear and love of insects for *Psychology Today* magazine at www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-infested-mind.



“Corks and Colors” workshop

“CORKS AND COLORS” FEATURES A HEADY MIX OF ART-MAKING AND WINE-SIPPING

The Johnson County Arts and Humanities Council sponsors a “Corks and Colors” workshop monthly at the Cimarron Mall in Buffalo.

On Oct. 23, nine adult participants created autumn landscapes while sipping wine or the beverage of their choice. A second acrylic painting workshop with a different theme was held Nov. 20.

According to the JCAHC web site: “Corks and Colors is for adults of all experience levels. Workshops are intended to be low-stress, informal opportunities to explore art materials with guidance from a guest Instructor. Class size is limited to ten adults.”

The event took a break for December but was back on the JCAHC calendar for the new year.

JCAHC invites county residents to participate: “Do you have an idea for a painting theme or other art technique you’d like to explore? Do you want to recommend yourself or another artist or artisan to share their passion for one evening? If so, e-mail us at info@jcahc.org.”

FMI: www.jcahc.org

DOUGLAS STUDENTS CREATE ORNAMENTS FOR 2013 NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE

Emily Jensen and Douglas Middle School students were chosen to design and create the ornaments for Wyoming's tree for the 2013 National Christmas Tree display in President's Park in Washington, D.C., according to the National Park Foundation. Emily and her students joined local artists and youth from each U.S. state, territory and the District of Columbia who were selected to design and create 24 ornaments for their respective state or territory tree.

"It is an honor to be selected because it gives the students the opportunity to create art pieces for the Nation," said Jensen, Douglas Middle School art teacher. "We are excited to be a part of the National Christmas Tree display because we come from a state with a very small population."

The students created cowboy Santa Claus's out of clay with a decorated clay Christmas tree. The cowboy symbolizes the people and the ethics of Wyoming. The cowboy stands for courage, optimism and hard work.

"We are very pleased that the art students of Douglas Middle School will represent Wyoming in this year's National Christmas Tree display," said Neil Mulholland, President and CEO of the National Park Foundation. "This time honored tradition is the perfect way to kick off the holiday season."

Four weeks of holiday events in President's Park kicked off with the 91st National Christmas Tree



Douglas Middle School students display their National Christmas Tree ornaments.

Lighting Ceremony presented by the National Park Service and National Park Foundation, the official charity of America's national parks

As one of America's oldest holiday traditions, the National Christmas Tree Lighting began on Christmas Eve in 1923, when President Calvin Coolidge lit a Christmas tree in front of 3,000 spectators on the Ellipse in President's Park. Since 1923, each succeeding President has carried on the tradition of what now has become a month-long event presented by the National Park Foundation and National Park Service. In addition to the National Christmas Tree display, President's Park hosts a variety of family-oriented holiday attractions, such as the Santa's Workshop, nightly holiday performances, a Yule log, nativity scene, and model train display.

FMI: www.thenationaltree.org.

Dancers' Workshop is now the largest tenant in Jackson's Center for the Arts, occupying over 3,600 square feet and, according to Case, "is one of the most 'stable' nonprofits in our community."

"We are often used as a resource for other nonprofits in the community," Case said, "whether it be as strong collaborative partners or for administrative advice and support. I say 'stable' in quotes because the very nature of a nonprofit is instability unless you are a majorly endowed organization. Viewed positively, this instability can fuel great energy for excellent programming that generates revenue and support which should be reinvested in creative programming."

Dancers' Workshop employs a staff of six full-time and three part-time administrators, and 15 instructors. The school has gone from 85 students in 1998 to more than 650 youth and adult students weekly. It has a career-oriented dance-training program for middle and high school students called the Junior Repertory Company. As noted earlier, Contemporary Dance Wyoming, an eight-member regional profes-

sional modern dance company, is under DW's umbrella.

In addition to all of that, DW presents, in residency, from three to five national and internationally touring dance companies per year in the Center Theater, including the renowned New York City Ballet. While in residence, the companies offer master classes with their dancers, outreach to the schools, and free open rehearsals to the community in addition to public performances.

Case and her colleagues are always on the lookout for collaborations. In the summer of 2011, Dancers' Workshop, Hole Dance Films and Jackson community members spontaneously performed a selection of flashmobs.

Go to YouTube (<http://youtu.be/oKxrMXjbtpl>) to see a video featuring flashmobs from the DW summer camp as well as a multi-generational flashmob at the Saturday Town Square Farmer's Market. The video is a part of the Jackson Digital Media Ambassador program, funded by the Center of Wonder, DW and the Grand Teton Music Festival.

Case inspires her arts administration colleagues throughout the state and region. She was a featured speaker at the 2012 Wyoming Arts Alliance conference in Kemmerer and conducted workshops at the 2013 Wyoming Arts Council's Arts Conference in Jackson.

At the WyAA gathering in Kemmerer, she gave a talk on the "Nine Lessons Learned" as a "default" arts administrator. She summed it all up with this: "Be grateful. It's important to recognize how fortunate we are to be doing something we love to do."



Babs Case with some of her students. Photo by Amy Russian.

ART IS EVERYWHERE



Carbon County Museum Foundation Powwow, Rawlins



Cathedral Home mural, Laramie



Casper Children's Theatre, Casper



Pinedale Fine Arts Council, Pinedale



Fiber Arts Festival, Laramie



Stage III Theatre, Casper



Ark Regional Services performance, Laramie



Lander Arts Center, Lander



Alta Elementary School workshop, Alta



Ballet Emmanuel, Basin



Platte County Art Guild, Wheatland



Off Square Theatre Company, Jackson

WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SUMMER ARTS EVENTS

The spring issue of Artscapes is traditionally devoted to “Wyoming’s Summer of Art and Music.”

Last year, we profiled an array of summer happenings: Flaming Gorge Days, Grand Targhee Bluegrass Festival, Lander Brew Festival, Donkey Creek Festival, Yiddish Food Festival and the Grand Teton Music Festival. We also provided a calendar of other events throughout the state.

We want to feature a different crop of fairs/festivals for the spring of 2014. But we need information from you. Send us the who/what/when/where/why of your event along with contact information to mike.shay@wyo.gov. Label it “Summer Arts Events.” We’ll select six fairs/festivals for feature articles and list the rest on

the calendar. We also need high quality, high-resolution photos of the event, or of at least one of its featured acts or artists. If those photos live on the web, send us a link and we’ll take it from there.

To qualify, your fair or festival must include an arts-oriented event. Music festivals, art shows and writers’ conferences obviously qualify. If your town festival features music or storytelling, send us the info. If your county fair includes concerts, send us the info. If your food festival or farmers’ market includes entertainment, arts or crafts, let us know.

We are curious. So are our readers.

We’re all looking for some summer outdoor fun.



THE WAC CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

27-28

Wyoming Arts Council quarterly board meeting, Cheyenne

28

Governor's Arts Awards celebration and dinner, Cheyenne

MARCH

1

Application deadline for Arts Education grants

1

Draft deadline for Grants to Organizations and Operating Support grants

10

Application deadline for visual arts fellowships

10-11

Poetry Out Loud competition, Cheyenne

15

Application deadline for Grants to Organizations and Operating Support grants

APRIL

4-6

CLICK! Conference, Fort Washakie

JUNE

5-6

Wyoming Arts Council quarterly board meeting, Saratoga

For more information, contact the WAC at 307-777-7742 or go to the web site www.wyomingartscouncil.org



Casper Children's Theatre performers won national recognition at the 2014 Junior Theater Festival Jan. 17-19 in Atlanta.



WYOMING
ARTS
COUNCIL

WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL

2320 Capitol Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cheyenne, WY
Permit No. 7

GROW CONNECT THRIVE

The Wyoming Arts Council provides
resources & leadership to help Wyoming
communities grow, connect and
thrive through the arts.