

2005: The year to come in the arts

By Stephen Snyder, Times Staff Writer      Carroll County Times, Friday, January 07, 2005

Carroll County residents will see many big happenings this year in the arts, from an international clay exhibition to a Renaissance festival, to an outdoor theater.

While **county staples like** the Carroll County Artists Guild, **The Children's Chorus of Carroll County**, the McDaniel Gospel Choir, the Masterworks Chorale of Carroll County, September Song, the Little Community Theatre and others will continue to produce annual programs, other highlights are on the horizon.

One of the biggest events this year is the National Ceramic Educators Conference Association meeting in Baltimore, which will attract ceramic artists from all over the world. In coordination with the conference, four local galleries, the Carroll Arts Center, the gallery in the Scott Center at Carroll Community College, the Rice Gallery at McDaniel College and Ain't That A Frame, will exhibit work by NCECA members in February.

According to Maggie Ball, head of the art department at Carroll Community College, the event marks the first time those four galleries have participated in the same event.

"It sort of links us all together through a common medium," Ball said.

The exhibits will take place not only in Carroll, but throughout Maryland.

"We're four of 160 venues that start down at the tip of the Eastern Shore and go all the way to Frederick," said Susan Williamson, visual arts coordinator at the Carroll County Arts Council, which is housed at the arts center.

The arts council will also present a number of new and thought-provoking exhibits, including a multi-generational quilt exhibit that opens on Martin Luther King Day.

The opening will be accompanied by a number of activities, including screening of the films "Selma, Lord, Selma," about the a young Alabama school girl during the civil rights struggle, and "Silver Needle: The Story of Joyce & Elizabeth Scott," about a mother in her 80s passing down her traditional Caribbean quilting styles to her daughter.

The opening will also feature a number of workshops and a child-friendly discussion of the civil rights movement by Charles Collyer and Pam Zappardino of the Zepp Center for Peace Studies.

Other upcoming exhibits include "H2Art," featuring artwork inspired by water, in April and "Nothing is 'Just Black and White,'" a look at how light and dark are actually filled with color, in October.

The arts council also continues a full schedule of performers and movies in the Carroll Arts Center theater, including the second Foreign Film Festival throughout February and singer/songwriter/comedienne Christine Lavin in March.

"Christine Lavin is one of our biggest highlights for the spring season," said Joy Thomas, performing arts coordinator for the arts council.

Named the 2001 Backstage Magazine "Outstanding New York Singer/Songwriter of the Year," Lavin has released 16 solo albums and is known across the country for her combination of folk, comedy and theatricality, which includes pre-show knitting circles and baton twirling finales.

Thomas also said more local groups are opting to rent the theater for their own productions this year. One of those groups is the Carroll Players, which will bring its production of "Steel Magnolias" to the arts center in March.

The show will be the group's first nondinner theater production in nearly 30 years. Whether the Carroll Players continue in this vein depends largely on the success of the new production.

"We really want to see how this goes," said Marcia Bogash, director of "Steel Magnolias."

The Carroll Players will also bring its production of "The Trial of Goldilocks" to the arts center for a full day of children's activities on April 30 and May 1.

Common Ground on the Hill continues its second concert series at the Carroll Arts Center, featuring artists like Guy Davis, Robin and Linda Williams, Rumisanko and Tom Smith.

Walt Michael said Common Ground plans to repeat its popular concert series, which runs from the fall through the spring, "as long as people continue showing up."

"People have come to trust Common Ground for its programming," Michael said.

The big guest artist for this year's American Music and Arts Festival at Common Ground on the Hill, which has previously featured Pete Seeger and Roger McGuinn, will be Hot Tuna, featuring former members of Jefferson Airplane.

In another new feature, the second week of Common Ground on the Hill will be devoted to songwriting and recording.

"I think that'll meet with a lot of success," Michael said.

Over at Theatre on the Hill, cofounder Ira Domser said the company is considering bringing musicals back to the annual summerstock theater after a hiatus last year.

Domser also said he and a few others recently rediscovered an outdoor amphitheater on McDaniel College grounds. He hopes to stage a production, perhaps a classical Greek play, at the amphitheater in the spring after it is finished being restored.

"It's all muddy right now," he said, "but there will be grass in the spring, I hope."

Finally, Carroll Community College will put on a Renaissance Festival, organized by the school's theater director Don Elwell, in the spring. The festival will attempt to combine the efforts of the college's different departments.

"We're going to try to coordinate the visual art, music and theater production," Ball said.

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