

# Mayor's Council on the Arts

Susan Green and Lou Andrews, Co-Directors

The Mayor's Council on the Arts was established in June, 1981 as a result of recommendations by the Mayor's Task Force that the arts be made more accessible to all segments of the population. As a result, the Council's Statement of Purpose is:

"To contribute to the cultural enrichment of the citizens of Burlington and the state of Vermont by making the arts available to all, especially those whose social or economic restraints limit their access to the arts."

This purpose is carried out by: (a) directly involving all sectors of the community in the arts process (creation, production, organization, publicity, etc.) as well as in its finished product (plays, exhibits, concerts, etc.); (b) creating a complete spectrum of arts programming of the highest artistic quality at the lowest possible price to our audience; (c) providing community access to the arts by offering technical assistance as well as performance, gallery and rehearsal space, and (d) creating direct links between the business, educational, artistic and governmental communities by forming partnerships in the production of cultural events.

Since July, 1983, the Arts Council has received partial funding from the City which constitutes approximately 20 percent of its annual operating budget. Both the financial and philosophical support provided by the administration reflects the desire of Burlingtonians to express their vitality and spirit through the arts. The impact of the City's commitment to the arts has spread to many other cities in Vermont and throughout the country, and has provided a model for other cities to follow. Mayor Sanders and the Mayor's Council on the Arts has been awarded national recognition by the United States Conference of Mayors for their outstanding work in providing arts to the community, thereby contributing to the "liveability" of our city.

The following statistics from the 1985-1986 fiscal year (July 1, 1985-June 30, 1986) give an overview of the Council's recent accomplishments:

- 132 arts events were produced (either wholly or in part) by the Mayor's Arts Council which served approximately 65,000 people.
- Over \$100,000 in programming funds was



Susan Green

raised from 250 sources.

- Over 300 volunteers from the Burlington area offered their time and energy to Arts Council projects.
- Work continues enabling the Council to offer the Memorial Auditorium Loft to local artists on a full time basis for rehearsals, performances, and classes at very little cost to the artists.
- 25 free arts events were produced or co-produced by the Council.
- Eight businesses, two educational organizations, seven city agencies/departments, six community groups, and three arts organizations worked in partnership with the Council in the actual organization, production and/or promotion of 17 arts events.
- As a member of the Greater Burlington Performing Arts Council, the Mayor's Arts Council joined in the coordination of programming with other presenters from the Burlington area, and together we produced a

television series on the performing arts which was aired during the 1985-1986 season.

The following is a partial listing of arts events produced (either wholly or in part) by the Mayor's Council on the Arts during the 1985-1986 season (July 1, 1985-June 30, 1986).

### **Contois Auditorium, City Hall**

(32 events, serving approximately 3,500 people)

The Mayor's Arts Council keeps the auditorium alive with performances of all types. Below is a sampling of events from the 1985-86 season:

**David Schein Performs:** "Life is not a Country Western Song," "Out Comes Butch." Mr. Schein, a Burlington native, is a founding member of Berkeley's Blake Street Hawkeyes, one of the most influential experimental theatre groups in the country. A writer, actor, composer and sound poet, Schein's current works include the above solos and his duets include "Reverence for the Dead" and with Whoopi Goldberg, "The Last Word."

**Common Ground: Ecology, Culture and Imagination.** Co-sponsored by Wellspring (an alliance of health professionals). A three-day series of lectures and performances focusing on how the individual can work to end the destructive trends in society and the environment. Although many of the presenters are nationally and internationally respected scholars, a playful rather than serious tone ran through the symposium. Presenters included Bert Swartzchild (conservationist, writer, member I.U.C.N. Committee on Education), John Hay (President, Cape Cod Museum of Natural History), and Michael Cohen (Director and founder National Audubon Society Expedition Institute, author of *Prejudice Against Nature* and *Our Classroom Is Wild America*).

**The Celtic Music Series** (serving 1200 people). Co-sponsored by the Champlain Folklore Cooperative. A six-concert series. Highlights include: The Battlefield Band (from Scotland); Jean Redpath (from Scotland); Kinvara (from Ireland).

### **Fifth Annual Battery Park Summer Concert Series**

(seven events, serving approximately 14,000 people).

This series is free and open to the public. July-August 1985.

Events included: Richie Havens, Burlington Oratorio Society, Miss Bliss/The Boyz, Green

Mountain Cloggers/Banjo Dan & the Mid-Nite Plowboys.

### **Memorial Auditorium**

(six events, serving approximately 5,000 people)

The Arts Council usually presents several special events in Memorial Auditorium throughout the year such as:

**Vermont Blues Festival** (serving 2,000 people). John Lee Hooker, Bonnie Raitt, Elvin Bishop, Robert Cray, David Lindley... and many more.

**Steeltown** (serving 1,000 people). The internationally known San Francisco Mime Troupe performed this politically cogent musical comedy complete with its own 6-piece band. "Explosive political incitement and bold, entertaining theatre." *New York Times*.

**B.B. King in Concert with the Unknown Blues Band** (serving 2,000 people).

**New Performance Works** (serving 400). "I Used to Live Over There," choreographed by Sara McMahan. "Broken Eggs," choreographed by Hannah Dennison. "Everyday Life," storytelling by Peter Burns. Music for the evening provided by Bill Davis and Hannah Dennison.

### **Discover Jazz Festival**

Sponsored by the Mayor's Arts Council and



Lou Andrews, co-director



GLENN RUSSELL

*Ella Fitzgerald performed at this year's Discover Jazz Festival.*

the Flynn Theatre for the Performing Arts (serving 20,000 people) — June 1986.

This event demonstrates the powerful results of the collaboration of two very different arts organizations together with local jazz lovers and musicians. The dream became a reality!

This four day event reaches into all areas of the city with live jazz played in unexpected places. Highlights include: Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Pass in Concert, Flynn Theatre; Jazz Parade; "In Their Words: Jazz Greats Speak for Themselves," a reading by David Budbill accompanied by Ellen Powell on bass and Brian Kent on tenor saxophone; Bourbon Street Dancehall, outdoor dance on Church Street Marketplace; Jazz on the buses, ferries and on the streets; Jazz Worship Service, First Congregational Church.

#### **Nashfull Bash Country Music Festival**

Sponsored in association with Burlington Parks and Recreation Department (serving 1,500 people) — July 1985.

This festival culminates in a complete day of country music and an amazing display of antique cars at magnificent Oakledge Park.

Some highlights include: Rick Norcross and the Nashfull Ramblers, Battery Park; Swing Sisters in Concert, Church Street Marketplace; Performances at Oakledge Park included Banjo Dan & the Midnite Plowboys, Coco and the Lonesome Road Band; Antique Car Parade, through downtown Burlington; Concert on The Spirit of Ethan Allen Paddleboat.

#### **Neighborhood Festivals**

Each year the Arts Council organizes smaller festivals in neighborhoods throughout the city — fairs which draw the local community together in a day of music, dance, food, and children's activities right in their own neighborhood. These include: Old North End Heritage Day; Franklin Square Festival; Riverside Festival; Northgate Festival.

#### **Arts and Letters: Book Delivery & Arts Program for Elderly**

(Eight events serving 1,500 people)

Co-sponsored by the Fletcher Free Library Outreach Program.

This series occurs in many senior centers, as well as larger centralized locations. Through



this program, films, lectures, musicians and other performers bring more art into the lives of the elderly, many of whom have limited access to the arts. Some highlights of the program include:

**Festival of Lights** — Storyteller Mary Bachelder presented stories from Christmas, Hanukkah and Solstice traditions.

**Birds of Prey** — Lecture/slide presentation about hawks and owls presented by Margaret Barker of Vermont Institute of Natural Science.

**Cabaret Night** — An evening of live musical entertainment.

### **Municipal Art Gallery**

(13 exhibits, serving approximately 4,000 people)

Our gallery is located in the lobby of City Hall and is a showplace for artists of local, regional and national significance. The gallery provides a variety of exhibits to passers-by, many of whom may not have previously experienced a range of visual arts displays.

Highlights include: "Faces of the Old North End," photographs by Janice Russotti; Paintings by Lois Foley, Marc Awodey, Max Schumann, Robert Linde; Fashion '85, exhibit of some of Vermont's finest commercial photographers.

### **Community Arts Grants**

(14 projects, serving approximately 3,000 people).

The Mayor's Arts Council awarded 15 grants to low-income or under-employed artists whose projects involved the community. A few highlights follow:

**Rebecca Fogg.** Six to eight two-dimensional artworks have been produced incorporating the theme "Burlington in Transition." The *Transition* motif will be expressed through visual documentation of architectural detail, primarily windows and doors, from buildings throughout Burlington's history. Contrasting details will be combined in the finished images using reflection, photographic overlapping, photomontage, and similar image-combining techniques.

**Seleshe Damessae.** Seleshe is a musician and native of Ethiopia, who performs in a traditional manner. He has developed a performance of song, storytelling and dance to further the understanding of East African traditional music, customs and traditions among the students of Burlington.



*Peter Burns*

SHEILAH CROWLEY

**Peter Burns.** In this project, people with chronic physical pain will make their pain experience into a story. People with chronic pain usually have a strong need to tell the story of their often hidden or seemingly meaningless pain. Through an eight-week storytelling course, participants will learn basic storytelling techniques and discover their own unique performance style. At the end of the course there will be a public storytelling performance.

### **The Burlington Film Society**

(serving 1,900 people)

The Burlington Film Society fills an important gap in this community by screening classic American and foreign films not regularly available at commercial movie theaters. In the comfortable setting of City Hall Auditorium, we presented films every Sunday evening. Members of the society are entitled to discounts on ticket prices, which are set at a reasonable rate for the general public.

The range of movies — 1940s screwball comedies, the best cinema from Europe and beyond, film noir, retrospectives of certain actors and directors, and such — offer something for everyone.