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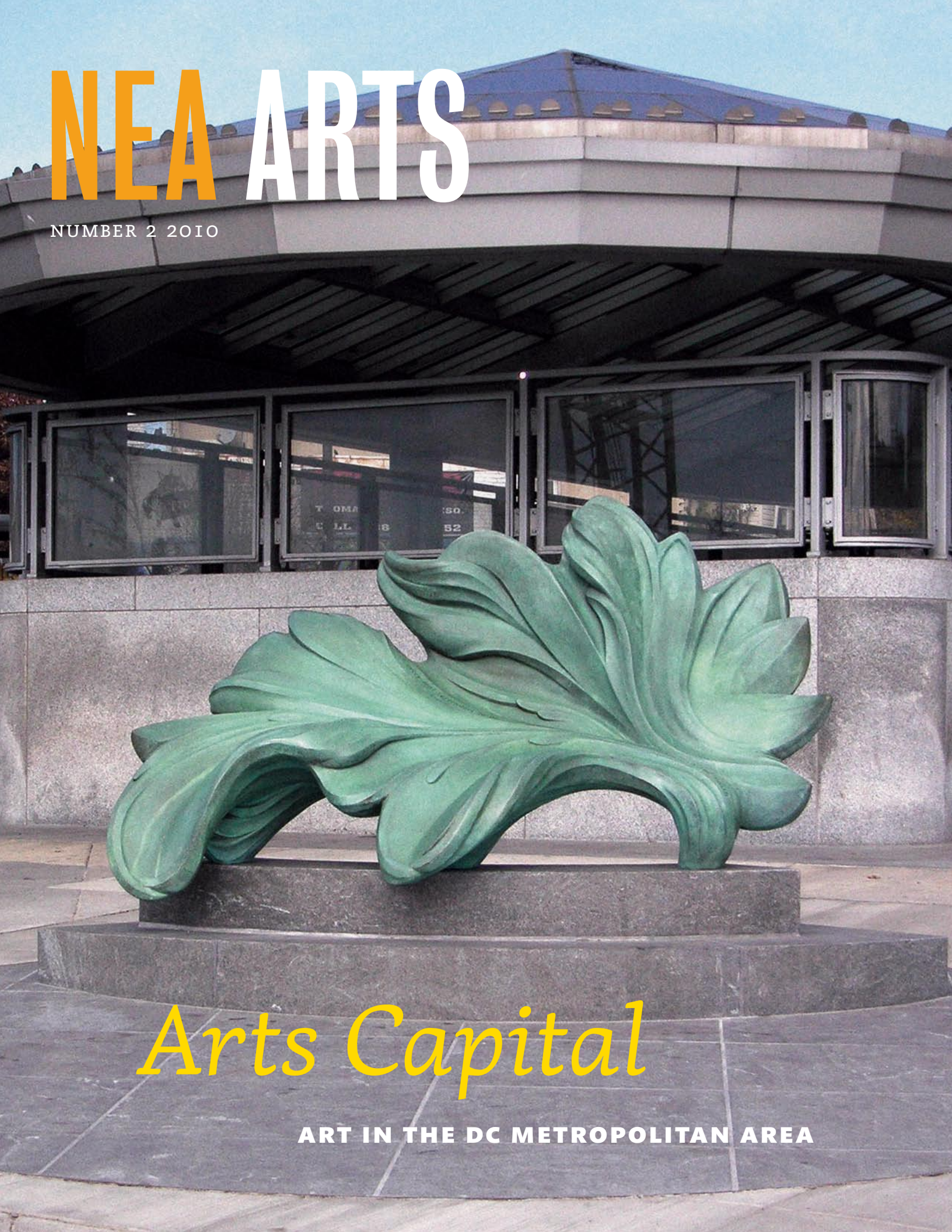

Arts Capital

ART IN THE DC METROPOLITAN AREA

NEA ARTS

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Twenty years ago, boarded-up buildings in the Penn Quarter neighborhood were a legacy from the 1968 riots, while the area around U Street, NW—once known as "Black Broadway" for its plethora of theaters—was a high-crime area, mostly devoid of businesses. Today, both neighborhoods are thriving, in no small part thanks to the arts organizations that call those neighborhoods home. In the Penn Quarter neighborhood, for example, the Shakespeare Theatre has paved the way for other businesses, like restaurants and retail stores, to move to the area. It has further committed to the neighborhood by building its new multimillion dollar Sidney Harman Hall just a few blocks down from its Landsburgh Theater space. On U Street, historic music clubs, such as Bohemian Caverns (open since 1926) have continued to draw business to the area by presenting music legends from Billie Holiday to NEA Jazz Master Ron Carter, while relative newcomers such as Busboys and Poets have become a vibrant community space for the literary and visual arts.

While the arts certainly weren't the only reason these areas revived, they played a significant part in investing in their communities, which, arguably, helped make the transformation complete. In this issue of *NEA Arts* we examine a few of the "neighborhood" artists and arts and culture organizations that help make DC not just the nation's capital, but an arts capital.

Be sure to visit **www.arts.gov** to enjoy some web-only *NEA Arts* features, such as a special audio program on the U Street revitalization and an interview with Phillippa PB Hughes, an arts patron, about the Pink Line Project, a "catalyst for the culturally curious." Also, visit our Art Works blog to comment on this issue or to share information on the arts in your community.

ABOUT THE COVER

New Leaf, 2007, by Lisa Scheer, a sculpture commissioned by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities for the Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metro subway station. "When designing this work," wrote Scheer, "my goal was to find an image and emotion that would speak to the spirit of this neighborhood place. A leaf is a simple and familiar thing yet it can become an emblem for so much that is complex in life." Photo by Lisa Scheer.

Rebuilt Through Art

The Studio Theatre Gives a Neighborhood New Life

BY MICHAEL GALLANT

"TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THE STREETS OF LOGAN CIRCLE were littered with condoms and hypodermic needles," said Washington, DC theater director and arts entrepreneur Joy Zinoman with a wry laugh. "There were lots of robberies and people peeing on the doors and city survival." Fast forward to 2010—the area has a new face and identity. "It's this hip, chic, and diverse neighborhood," she continued. "There's a Whole Foods nearby and new residential condos. It's an extraordinary area which is still at a human scale and has mixed use—shops, restaurants, bars, places to live."

The reason for such a dramatic urban transformation? "It all swirls around the Studio Theatre," said Zinoman, the company's founding artistic director. "The theater is the anchor."

One of the country's most respected regional theaters, the Studio currently boasts four performance spaces with more than 800 seats total, spread across three historic, custom-renovated buildings on P Street in Northwest Washington, DC. Zinoman's theater specializes in cutting-edge, contemporary works and continues to earn a steady stream of Helen Hayes Awards for outstanding theater in the Washington area; 2009 also saw Zinoman recognized for Visionary Leadership in the Arts by the Mayor's Arts Awards. And while the theater's artistic accomplishments are widely heralded, its transformative effects on the Logan Circle neighborhood demonstrate a different

PHOTO COURTESY OF STUDIO THEATRE

sort of accomplishment—realizing arts organizations' potential as engines of social and economic progress.

The Studio Theatre's story began when Zinoman opened a Washington-based acting conservatory in 1975 and a fledgling theater company three years later. Having come to the nation's capital by way of Chicago, a city with a powerful small theater movement, she had a specific aesthetic in mind for her architectural canvas. "In Chicago, it was all about theaters in found industrial spaces," she commented. "When I was in the process of founding a theater in DC, I too went to look for industrial spaces, spaces that had history and architectural distinction from a past life that could have an adaptive use."

PHOTO BY CAROL PRATT

(l to r) Raushanah Simmons and Yaegel T. Welch in the Studio Theatre's 2010 production of *In The Red and Brown Water* by Tarell Alvin McCraney.

Though Washington houses little industry per se, Zinoman did discover what she was looking for in a series of historical 1910 buildings in Logan Circle. "There were these amazing automobile showrooms with giant elevators for moving cars up and down," she said. "They were built in Italian Renaissance-revival-warehouse style with big windows on the ground floor and columns wide enough to put theaters in." Given the destitute neighborhood, ravaged by the riots of 1968, and its subsequent rock-bottom rents, one of the warehouses soon became home to the Studio.

From the theater's birth, Zinoman's eyes were on the future. "The history in New York was that artists would move to ever more marginal neighborhoods and be pushed out when they could no longer afford to live there," she said. "We bought this building so that wouldn't happen. First, we raised money and put a million-dollar theater in a building we didn't own. That was an insane thing to do. But then we bought the building when it became available, and then the two next to it."

Zinoman and her team took their time raising funds to make those purchases and gradually expand the theater over decades, launching a series of smaller, sequenced capital campaigns to achieve their goals. "From a fundraising standpoint, it's harder in Washington than in a theater city that has a big industrial base, or old families that have been there for generations," she said. "The Pillsburys in Minneapolis, for example. Washington does not have that corporate base."

For Zinoman, preserving local diversity is key, as is nurturing a symbiotic relationship with the neighborhood.

Building on the continued success of their modest efforts in the five-to-fifteen-thousand-dollar range, the Studio steadily grew its savings accounts, as well as its cultural and physical footprints. "First, acting students came for our conservatory classes, and then people started to hear about it — and come, and come, and come," she said. "It's remarkable. After the riots, everything was boarded up. Business had left and people were very negative about the possibility of a *theater audience* coming here."

Now, any given night sees theater-goers flocking to

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PHOTO BY SCOTT SUCHMAN

Julia Nixon and Max Talisman in the Studio Theatre 2006 production of *Caroline, or Change* by Tony Kushner.

A GLIMPSE *of the* WORLD

Building THEARC in Anacostia

BY PAULETTE BEETE

PHOTOS BY VICTOR HOLT

Students from the Levine School of Music at THEARC playing at THEARC's 5th Anniversary Gala reception: (from left) Alexander Myree-Powell and Thomas Smoot.

Students and faculty from The Washington School of Ballet at THEARC in performance: (from left) Azaria Rice, Margaret Williamson (teacher), Sydney Wiggins, Aliyah Etheridge, and Jared Kelly.

SAY "DC" AND "ART" AND MOST PEOPLE RESPOND, "Smithsonian" or "Kennedy Center." Some of the more knowledgeable might say "Corcoran" or "Shakespeare Theatre." Probably none of them would think of Anacostia, a neighborhood across the Anacostia River in Southeast DC and home to a mostly African-American, lower-income community. Yet Anacostia boasts one of the more interesting and complex arts facilities in the metro area: the Town Hall Education, Arts & Recreation Campus (THEARC). Developed and managed by the not-for-profit Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR), the award-winning mixed-use campus offers a range of services and activities to the Anacostia community.

THEARC had it beginnings in an ambitious mixed-income housing development, the brainchild of Chris Smith and his real estate company. During the planning phase, he and BBAR co-founder Skip McMahon found there was nowhere for the community's children to regularly take after-school arts classes. "It was a real eye-opener for us," McMahon remembered. "When we got involved in the schools and got involved with the kids, we saw that the rehearsals were always 'somewhere else.' The spaces were always moving, and so we lost kids along the way."

Even before the 110,000-square-foot THEARC campus was constructed, a team led by McMahon—a DC native—lined up resident partners who would provide the arts classes, doctor's exams, after-school sports activities, and other services the community lacked. "The need was so tremendous, and we realized we had to take on the challenge of meeting that need if we wanted to help stabilize the community. So our commitment was we would take on fundraising, design, and the location of the property, if [the partners] would provide the services," said McMahon.

There are currently ten resident partners at THEARC, including three not-for-profit arts organizations: the Washington Ballet, the Levine School of Music, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. These three partners were a natural fit for THEARC, said McMahon, as they were already working in community schools. Also in residence, among others, are a branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Covenant House, and the Washington Middle School for Girls, whose students take their twice-weekly arts electives with the Levine School, the Corcoran, and the Washington Ballet. These resident partners are open on a daily basis, annually providing daytime and after-school services for an average of 65,000 patrons, including more than 2,000 students.

Additional services—such as legal advice and employment training are provided by three non-resident partners: The Center for Self-Discovery, the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, and Training Grounds, Inc. While the non-resident partners do not have dedicated spaces at THEARC, their partner status

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BY ADAM KAMPE PHOTOS OF THE 2009 LATINO FESTIVAL BY RAFAEL CRISÓSTOMO

Vamos a la calle!

Celebrating DC's Latino Arts and Culture

Fifty-five mallets beat against fifty-five drums. Boom. Clack. Clack. Ba-da-da-da-dah, boom. Can you hear that? Da-da-da-DA-DA-DA. Boom! An occasional collective chant, *"Batala!"* rises up from the sea of drummers. Row upon row of women—drums strapped around their waists—rhythmically swing their arms as they attack and release. There's Mia Foreman in the second row, a shock of black curls dance on her head as she controls the sound of a medium-sized *dobra*. Hildi Pardo, smiling, bangs on a large Brazilian bass drum called a *surdo*. Every Saturday a crowd forms at the fringes of the small park outside Farragut West metro

station to watch their explosive, yet disciplined practice. Ranging in age from 21 to 65, Batala DC is entirely directed and conducted by women, the all-female arm of the international percussion group Batala.

Batala is just one of 180 groups who perform at Fiesta DC, the annual Latino arts and culture festival currently based in Mount Pleasant, a multicultural urban enclave in DC. With 60,000 attendees, it is one of the biggest free local festivals in the District of Columbia. By attracting record crowds from all over the metro area, the festival, now in its 39th year, helped lay the foundation for a wave of urban revitalization in the District. Residents and out-of-towners flock to Mount Pleasant Street the last weekend of September, which is also National Hispanic Heritage Month, for what always promises to be an upbeat celebration of Latino culture, food, and, most of all, community. It wasn't, however, always that way.

Historically, the U.S. capital has been a popular destination for immigrants. Due to varying degrees of political unrest and social injustice, the 1970s inspired a very specific wave of migration for Latinos, who came to the District from all over Latin America: Guatemala, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua. These disparate groups of Latino refugees weren't always welcomed in DC, or, for that matter, counted. In fact, the Festival Latino was born out of a protest against what many people of Hispanic descent considered inaccurate Census numbers. The 1970 U.S. Census claimed some 17,300 odd Latinos lived in the DC metro area, but after the first Festival Latino it became apparent that the Latino population was much, much larger. "It was a strategy to demonstrate how many people were here," said Olivia Cadaval, folklorist and chair in Cultural Research and Education at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. "Let the press count us." Or as the current Festival Director Alfonso Aguilar put it, the attitude back then was *"Vamos a la calle!"* (Let's go to the street!).

And that's exactly what politically savvy DC resident Carlos Rosario had in mind. He reached out to and mobilized fellow Latino immigrants. In fact, he held meetings after film screenings at the old Colony Theatre to talk about job skills and progress. Building off the Great Society's wave of social change, Rosario helped establish the Festival Latino in 1971, which, according to Cadaval, "became a catalyst for forming the Latino community in Washington, DC." The event has become such an important tradition and institution to

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connectivity *between* cultures

BY VICTORIA HUTTER

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO DANA TAI SOON BURGESS

THE NATION'S CAPITAL IS ONE OF THE MOST culturally diverse cities in the country, boasting more than 175 foreign embassies, residences, chanceries, and diplomatic missions. This diversity extends further into the city via neighborhoods, restaurants, shops, and festivals—and through the arts.

According to Peter DiMuro, director of Dance/MetroDC, approximately 70 percent of the dance companies and independent choreographers listed in his organization's directory are grounded in another country's dance culture. DiMuro noted, "People come from overseas to work in DC and their culture pushes to be expressed and that expression is often through dance."

One dance artist who creatively and quite literally embodies the District's cultural diversity is contemporary dance artist Dana Tai Soon Burgess. Dana Tai Soon Burgess and Company (DTSB) debuted in Washington, DC in 1992, and since then has performed frequently in the city as well as across the country and around the world, presenting work that the *New York Times* has called "attractively sinuous."

Born to a Hawaiian and Korean mother and a father of Irish, English, and Scotch descent, Burgess was raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and attended a bilingual school. At a martial arts dojo, he found a place that both grounded and inspired him, providing him with a sense of home. His father, seeing his son's physical talents, suggested he try a dance class.

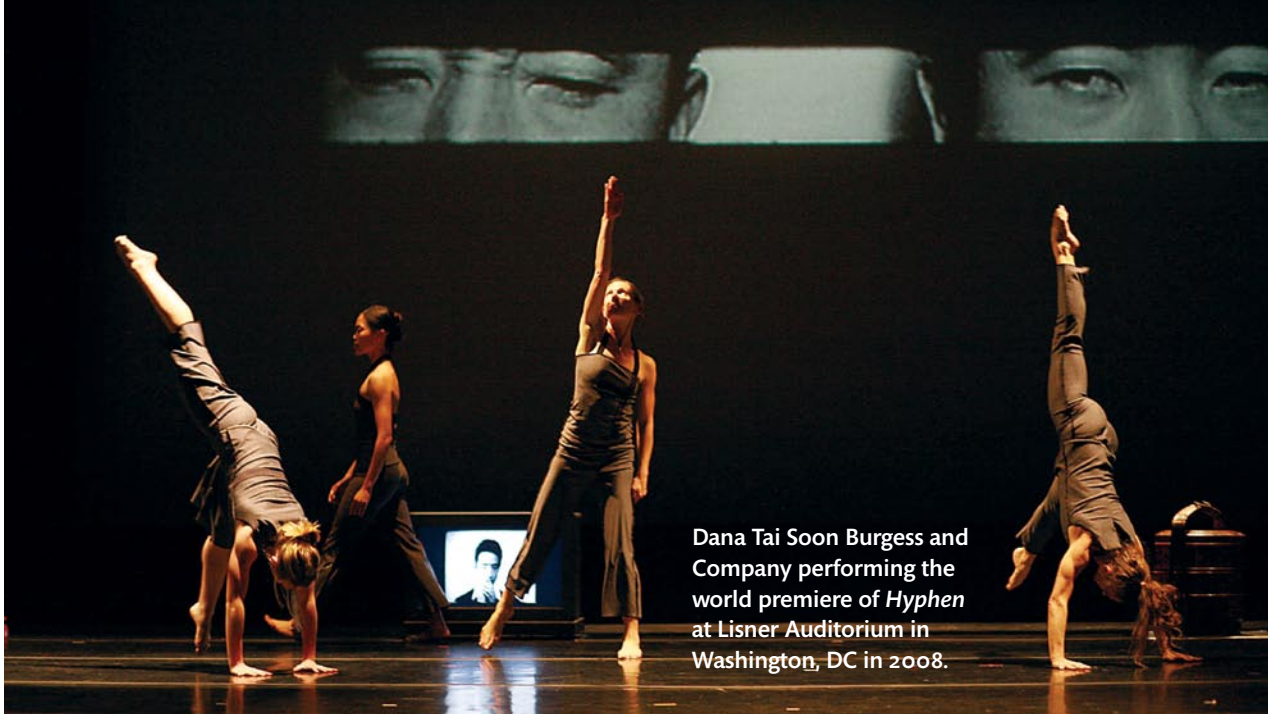
Burgess's dance studies included the work of Michio Ito, a modern dance pioneer who fused Eastern and Western movement styles in his choreography. East and West also meld in Burgess's choreography, which often focuses on what it means to be "The Other" in society. A review in *KOREA Update* described his work as building "bridges between cultures of rice bowls and Coke cans."

"What I'm very interested in, in building dances, is this idea of the archetypal situation, with concepts that are universal and that find connectivity between cultures," explained Burgess. "Those issues can be about love, they can be about family, they can be about death, they can be about an historic event.... There's some shared story or series of stories that all of humanity has. And when you get to the essence of the story and show that through dance, then you take away the language barrier and you start to get to the symbolic."

To illustrate that idea of the shared story, Burgess described an experience in Lima, Peru, performing one of his dances that centered on his family's migration in 1903 from Korea to Hawaii to work in the pineapple plantations. He and the dancers were surprised by the energetic audience response. Later, the company learned that Peru had also experienced a wave of Asian immigration at about the same time and that those immigrants, like those in Hawaii, were agricultural

PHOTO BY MARY NOBLE OURS

Connie Fink and Dana Tai Soon Burgess strike a pose.



Dana Tai Soon Burgess and Company performing the world premiere of *Hyphen* at Lisner Auditorium in Washington, DC in 2008.

PHOTO BY MARY NOBLE OURS

workers. So the Peruvian audience found great resonance in the theme and images that unfolded on stage.

DTSB spends much of its year outside the United States, not only performing but working deeply in communities. The company offers multi-tiered programming, including master classes and setting choreography, tailored for each community. In preparation for these engagements, Burgess conducts extensive research and talks with other artists, cultural officers, and his international network of collaborators.

"When I approach a project, I really assess where the community is in development, what it needs, and then interact with the community and collaborators to try and create a project that will have very positive outcomes for them," explained Burgess. But he emphasized that this process is a two-way street; he in turn gains a great deal from working with other artists, including "how they inform their bodies, what techniques they use, the different sights, sounds, and stories. All expand my ability to create. The larger your world is or your borders as they expand, the more your capacity for creativity or capacity for engagement *through* creativity."

In the U.S., Burgess's choreography has been presented and commissioned by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian Institution, and the United Nations, among many other venues. Internationally, he and the company have toured to a number of countries, including Bulgaria, Colombia, and Israel.

In addition, Burgess has been an American cultural specialist for the United States Department of State six times. He believes his State Department partnerships have been successful because he is able to look at cultural diplomacy as "friendship-building" that is forged on many different levels.

Columbia Barrosse, chief of the Cultural Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the State Department concurred. "Dana is interested in true international cultural exchanges, not just in touring performances but in collaborating with foreign artists and in reaching out to students and young audiences." She added, "The fact that his work also raises awareness of social issues demonstrates the important link that can exist between the arts and substantive policy."

According to Maura M. Pally, the Bureau's acting assistant secretary, "Dana is the ideal citizen diplomat—he combines artistic integrity with generosity of spirit and a fundamental belief that the arts can bridge differences and have a positive influence in our relations with other countries."

When Dana Tai Soon Burgess comes home to DC after working intensely in another country, what does he looks forward to the most? Getting back into his own studio where he can sift through all that he has encountered and see what ideas coalesce. "It's only when you get back home that you realize how intense the experience was, when you step back and think, 'I'm different now, something has changed.'"

A discussion with Peter DiMuro, director of Dance/MetroDC, about incorporating dance flash mobs into the 2010 Dance Is The Answer festival can be found on the NEA website at ***www.arts.gov.***

Positive CHANGE

THE SITAR ARTS CENTER

WHEN FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA RECENTLY PAINTED A MURAL AT DC's Reed Elementary, she worked with students from Reed and also from the nearby Sitar Arts Center. Working side by side with Mrs. Obama was Angel Perez, a junior at the Duke Ellington School for the Arts who has taken classes at the center since he was ten years old.

"She was right next to me," said Perez. "It was a great honor. She asked advice about painting her butterfly and she asked me about my family and how my parents felt about Mexico…. And she asked me about my art show."

Apparently the First Lady had heard about the 18-year-old's show at the Sitar Center. He'd applied—a two-year process—and was accepted to the center's Cafritz Gallery for a show chronicling ten years of his progress as an artist in various media.

One of many inspiring stories from the center, Perez says he owes his success to Sitar, which received a 2009 Coming Up Taller award from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. According to Perez, "It's like a second home. It's a safe place where I can work in peace, in my own zone, on my own ground. It's a place I can learn something new."

In 2010 the Sitar Arts Center celebrated its tenth anniversary with nearly 500 students—more than 80 percent of which are from disadvantaged families—roughly 150 volunteers, and a wide array of class offerings including ballet, salsa, sculpture, and creative writing, all at a state-of-the-art, 10,000-square-foot facility at 1700 Kalorama, NW. There are classes for early childhood development, which educate both the young child and their parents. And Fridays are now reserved for teens and include a lot of field trips. Not bad for a program that began in a basement with 50 students and a handful of volunteers.

In the late 1990s Rhonda Buckley, a professional musician helping out at Good Shepherd Ministries' day care program, decided to offer flute and saxophone

BY PEPPER SMITH | PHOTOS BY ANDRE DYLEWSKI

First Lady Michelle Obama participates in the Butterfly Garden Mural Project in April at Reed Elementary School in Washington, DC, with help from Sitar Arts Center students.

lessons to the program's children. That program eventually blossomed into the Sitar Arts Center, which Buckley started in 2000 with help from grant writer Maureen Dwyer. The center is named for Patricia M. Sitar, who—as a single woman with four children—started Good Shepherd Ministries in 1986.

Bessy Guevara, 27, was nine years old when Buckley started teaching at Good Shepherd. She remembered it being fun but a bit chaotic. "We would practice at her desk while little children were running around." Guevara followed Buckley to Sitar. Recognizing Guevara's talent, Buckley helped her obtain a scholarship at DC's prestigious Levine School of Music and later at Sidwell Friends for high school, all while still participating in classes at Sitar. Guevara—now a board member and regular volunteer at the arts center—went on to earn a degree from Bryn Mawr College.

"The Sitar Center is a life-changing and life-saving experience," said Guevara whose immigrant El Salvadorean family lived in a section of DC known for gang violence and teen pregnancies. "At Sitar I found an oasis. My parents could only do so much. They were struggling to put food on the table. What I learned at Sitar allowed me to appreciate art, other cultures, and a lot more."

Although Buckley has since left Sitar—she's now associate dean for outreach and engagement at the Michigan State University College of Music—the neighborhood oasis she helped create is going strong. One of the center's strengths is its design. The practice dance floor is made from the same material as the Washington Ballet's dance floor. There are practice rooms for every kind of instrument, and a digital sound lab boasts state-of-the-art computers.

According to Maureen Dwyer, now the center's deputy director, the quality of the facility and its equipment says a lot about the center's mission. "Sitar

Students, like Angel Perez (foreground), study various art activities, such as mural painting, at the Sitar Arts Center.

NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman (left) also participated in the Butterfly Garden Mural Project.

values children, and it lets them know that every step of the way. Part of the reason we want a facility that's beautiful and designed for high quality arts education is so the students know they are valued simply by the environment. And with that we build a community of loving and caring adults around the kids." She added, "The highlight is when I walk around the hall and literally every morning there's the joy of kids making art. It's incredible."

Ed Spitzberg, the center's executive director, agreed. "This is our tenth anniversary, so we're celebrating our origins, we're celebrating our growth, but we still want to keep the essence of who we were ten years ago. So we have to try extra hard to make sure that every student still feels known and loved, nurtured, and mentored."

The powerful advantage of children having safe, quality after-school programs cannot be exaggerated. After-school programs, such as Sitar, help in children's intellectual development—grades, work habits, socialization—not to mention that such programs keep kids safe. Statistics prove that giving children alternative, creative activities has a measurable impact. For example, one year after Baltimore police started an after-school program in a violent area, illegal acts dropped 44 percent.

"Kids in this neighborhood have a lot of choices about how they're going to spend their time after school and a lot of them are not positive," said Rebecca Ende, the center's marketing and communications director. "Here parents know it's a safe place to drop their kids off. They know their children are accounted for." (Students check in with a magnetic swipe ID so the school knows who's in class.)

Sitar augments its paid staff with a group of volunteers from the Washington, DC metro area, including staff from the area's premier arts organizations such as the Washington Ballet, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

Adam Robinson, a volunteer from the Corcoran, recently took his Sitar Center visual arts students to see the Corcoran exhibit of Eadweard Muybridge's famous movement pictures. Robinson used the visit to give his students historical context, a bit of philosophy, and technical knowledge, along with the inspiration of great art. "[I told them], 'This is why it relates to you, and this is why you're going to think it's cool—and this is why it's important for us older people, curators, etc.'"

Robinson is also working with his students on a culminating student project that will be on display at the Corcoran along with the exhibit. "The students see there's so much more to life than just what they might see in their neighborhoods or their communities, which for some of these kids are just broken windows. But they see that whole thing, the hard work equaling achievement, that can happen at Sitar.... That's something I really love. I guess that's the fundamental difference of teaching at a place like Sitar."

Rebuilt Through Art

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the neighborhood and patronizing a vibrant nightlife scene. "That's a lot of people who want to live nearby and who need bars and restaurants," Zinoman said.

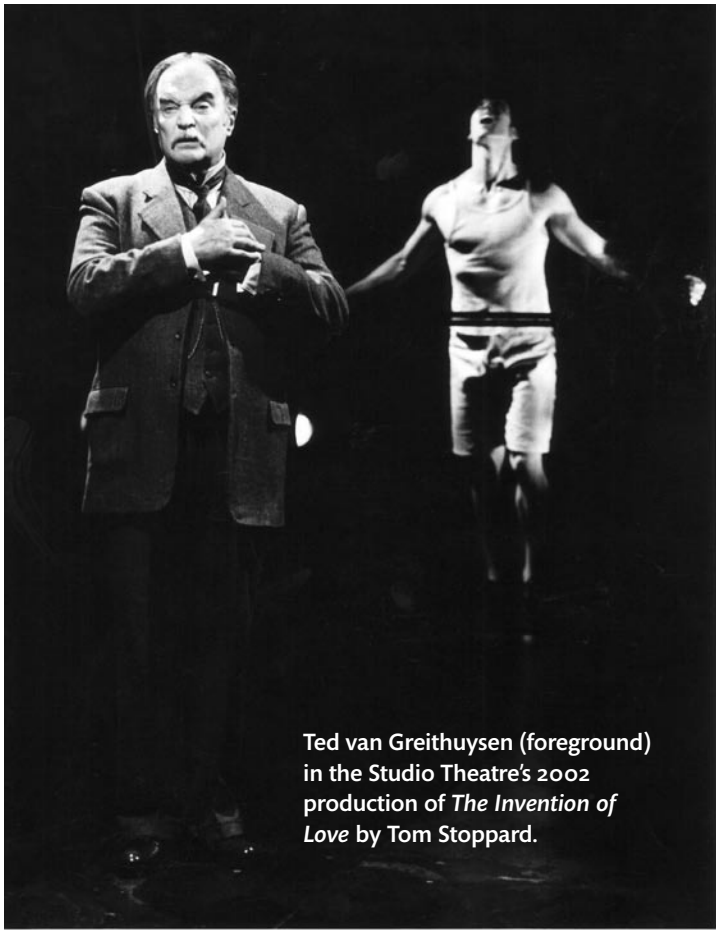
Gil Thompson, the Studio Theatre's resident sound designer and a Helen Hayes award winner, lives on Q Street, half a mile from the theater. He witnessed the neighborhood's transformation first-hand. "I've been here since 1978 and have worked on 23 seasons at the Studio, since the fall of 1987," he said. "One year before the Whole Foods came along, on one block of P Street between 14th and 15th Streets, I was mugged three times in six months, all coming and going to the Studio Theatre. I can't begin to emphasize how things have changed since the Whole Foods, the bistros and restaurants, and the new condos have come along, all led by the Studio originally.

"One of those times I was mugged, I was threatened very fiercely with knives and I literally thought I was about to die," Thompson recalled. "Now I've walked home along that same block countless times late at night and there is always a lot of nightlife and activity."

Both Thompson and Zinoman readily acknowledge the controversies and stratified opinions surrounding the topic of gentrification, yet in the Studio's case, Zinoman sees it as a clear turn for the better. "Some people look at Logan Circle and say, 'It's all filled with yuppies now,'" she said. "I see it another way. Sam's Pawnbrokers is still here. There's still subsidized housing. The neighborhood has a high level of halfway houses and services for people in need. I think it's one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Washington. We engaged with our neighbors early on and it was always important for us to stay that way." In addition to the 11 shows it stages each year, the Studio regularly makes its spaces available for meetings by community organizations such as the Logan Circle Community Association, Food For Friends, and the Whitman Walker Clinic.

For Zinoman, preserving local diversity is key, as is nurturing a symbiotic relationship with the neighborhood. "Integrating arts institutions into the places they are is essential," she said. "There are theaters that want to be destinations for tourists or for people traveling to a certain place—but I really think that all theater is local. No matter where the artists come from, they are still creating work within a specific space and time. And whether it's a hillside in ancient Greece or on 14th and P, theater is defined by being in a place. You can't get away from that, so it's best to embrace it. Great things can come if you do."

PHOTO BY CAROL PRATT



Ted van Greithuysen (foreground) in the Studio Theatre's 2002 production of *The Invention of Love* by Tom Stoppard.

One such place-specific benefit is the ability to perform for outstanding local audiences. "Washington, DC has unbelievably sophisticated patrons," she said appreciatively. "Lots of highly educated, young, idealistic people come to this city to work. The Studio has developed a very smart, mixed audience. And that's the best part."

Michael Gallant is a composer, musician, and writer living in San Francisco. He is the founder and CEO of Gallant Music (gallantmusic.com).

An audio interview by Josephine Reed with Joseph Haj, director of Hamlet *at the Folger Theater, and Dr. Gail Kern Paster, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, on the pros and cons of working in theater in DC can be found on the NEA website at* ***www.arts.gov****.*

A Glimpse of the World

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allows them use the facility free-of charge. There is also a community meeting room at THEARC, a response to the dearth of public meeting spaces in Anacostia. As McMahon noted, "We're a one-stop shop. Parents tell us THEARC is a godsend."

One of the distinguishing features of THEARC is that it not only provides the opportunity for high-quality arts experiences, it provides high-quality spaces in which those experiences can take place. A tour with current BBAR Executive Director Edmund Fleet reveals the careful planning that has gone into creating each resident's partner's dedicated facilities. For example, the Washington Ballet, which offers classes for youth and seniors in ballet and modern dance styles as well as Pilates, features not one but two light-filled studios that look out onto Mississippi Avenue. Fleet noted, "We put the arts partners on the exterior of THEARC to give the community a glimpse of a world they don't normally see."

> "We're a one-stop shop. Parents tell us THEARC is a godsend."

Over at the Levine School of Music area, the rooms are soundproofed and feature Steinway and Suzuki instruments. A recital hall provides space for student concerts as well as master classes by resident and visiting artists, such as award-winning pianist Young-Hyun Cho, Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock, and members of the National Symphony Orchestra. There is also an art gallery on the first floor, managed by the Corcoran, which presents shows by local artists as well as juried shows of student work from the on-site Corcoran Art Reach program.

The centerpiece of THEARC is a 365-seat, state-of-the-art theater. The stage is an exact replica of the Washington Ballet's home space—the Eisenhower Theater—which means it serves the needs of the ballet's annual *Nutcracker* performance as easily as it serves as a concert or recital hall or live theater space. And as Fleet reveals during the backstage tour, it has also hosted numerous community events, including a DC Urban Agenda stump speech by then-candidate Barack Obama.

In addition to the professionally sized stage, the space's amenities include four sets of dressing rooms, a hydraulic orchestra pit, storage for a Steinway piano, a scene shop, and two catwalks that, according to Fleet, "were purposely built so that we could teach lighting to young people." In fact, both the Shakespeare Theatre and Arena Stage regularly send their interns to train at THEARC. Said Fleet, "Before THEARC, those groups wouldn't have come across the river."

THEARC also sponsors its own pre-professional theater training program each summer, offering hands-on workshops in lighting, sound, and pre-production. The ultimate goal, according to Fleet, is "so young people can learn a trade. There are so many opportunities in theater arts, and also in working in sound and lights at hotels and other venues."

Somewhat surprisingly, THEARC doesn't have a resident theater company. The omission is purposeful. As Fleet explained, not having a theater company in residence means that more organizations and community members have access to the theater space, which is a rarity across the river. "We're booked with four to eight events every month. Last year we hosted more than 330 events—community and arts events as well as events by our partner organizations. We have become very busy because of our affordability."

"There are 33 movie theaters on Wisconsin Avenue [in Northwest Washington, DC] but not one single theater east of the Anacostia River," added McMahon. "That's why our theater also has a movie screen."

A primary goal of THEARC's fundraising is to be able to keep use of the theater space 50 percent subsidized, so that a range of groups—not just THEARC partners—can benefit from the space. In fact, BBAR's fundraising mission is driven by a desire to continue to subsidize the many costs associated with running a building of THEARC's size so the facility can continue to operate at little or no charge to the resident agencies and remain affordable for whoever would like to use it. For example, BBAR applied for and received a FY 2010 NEA Challenge America grant to support its marketing plan, which can be a costly part of any organization's budget.

Fleet noted that one of his favorite events in the theater is the annual *Nutcracker*. "I enjoy when Washington Ballet premieres the *Nutcracker* because their

Executive Director Edmund Fleet of Building Bridges Across The River speaking at THEARC's 5th Anniversary Gala.

Southeast, Northwest, and Virginia campuses come together. These are groups that wouldn't come together otherwise." According to Fleet, this diversity has come to be reflected in the housing that has been developed around the campus. "One of the things I love about THEARC and the surrounding neighborhood is the diversity of race, socio-economic status, and education. There is housing that runs the gamut from Section 8 to the low $400,000s."

Residents of Anacostia and other parts of DC are not the only ones flocking to THEARC. As McMahon remarked, the staff regularly plays host to an array of national and international visitors who are looking to replicate the THEARC model in their own communities.

First and foremost, visitors are told, a successful project needs a champion. "One thing that was key was Chris Smith," said McMahon. "The William C. Smith Company really stood behind THEARC from the beginning. It took 15 years to get this project from idea to reality. Chris's credibility in city government, the funding world, and the business community was a really important ingredient to keep us going and focused. It's not enough to have a solid idea, you also have to have the clout to carry it forward."

McMahon added that another key to THEARC's success is that the campus really serves a need in the community. "If you have a demonstrable need, that helps you attract money. People will invest when there's an understandable need."

Ultimately McMahon said THEARC is a success because it has changed the perspective on the community it serves. "We've really raised expectations of what to expect from nonprofits in this community. You wouldn't expect to see this state-of-the-art campus in a low-income neighborhood. This community, just like any other community in Washington, DC, should receive the best of services. They shouldn't be treated differently because of the economic situation."

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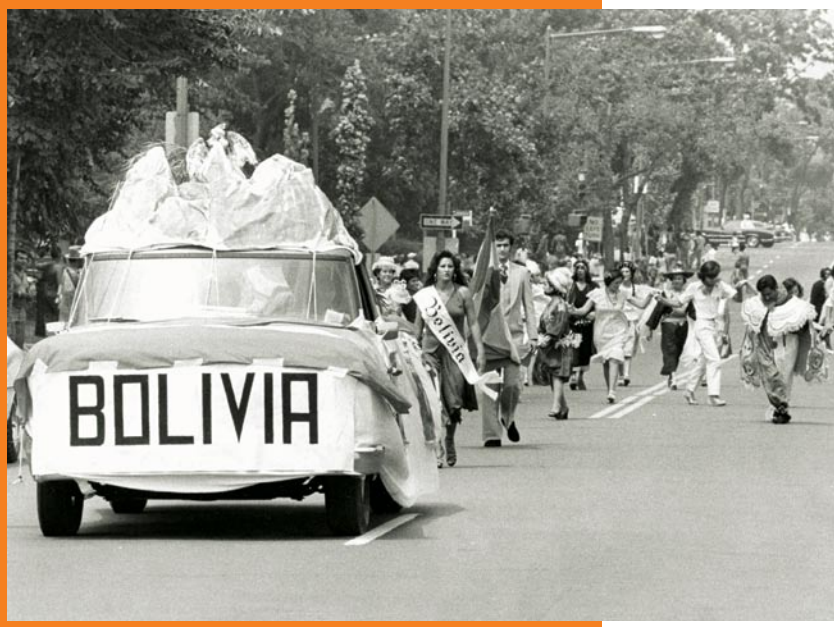
The Bolivian float and marchers head down 16th Street, NW, during the 1977 Hispanic American Festival parade.



Vamos a la calle!

continued from page 9

area Latinos that Cadaval made it the focus of her 1988 dissertation: *Creating a Latino Identity in the Nation's Capital: The Latino Festival.*

Originally, the festival called Adams Morgan's Kalorama Park home. In the mid- to late 1980s, as the gathering swelled in size, it moved to the National Mall to accommodate the masses and the massive floats. Then, 9/11 happened. This tragedy coupled with a mix of conflicting ideas and internal differences led to Festival Latino's sudden demise. Mexican-born Alfonso Aguilar and a small staff resuscitated the cultural celebration—renamed Fiesta DC—in 2004. Today, unlike in the past, the festival is an actual not-for-profit organization with a broader scope. In a single day, Aguilar and a host of volunteers manage the following: 40 musical acts across five stages, a Children's Festival, a Health Fair, a Science Fair, a Tourist Pavilion for embassies and consulates, a parade of nations, and a lot of art. "Our priority is local artists," Aguilar explained. "It's good exposure, and you can really help them." In addition to coordinating September's jam-packed one-day festival, Fiesta DC also puts on smaller festivals throughout the year and produces its own publications, such as the comprehensive *Latino Cultural and Business Guide.*

The choice of Mount Pleasant as the primary festival site was a strategic one. Located just northwest of Columbia Heights, Mount Pleasant has been affectionately dubbed the "Village in the City," and, walking down its eponymously named main street, it's easy to see and feel why. Anchored by a traditional town square, the community is self-contained, comfortable, and quaint. Brimming with cultural diversity, the area has a reputation as "a little UN," as highlighted on one of Cultural Tourism DC's historical markers. As you walk around the area it's impossible not to notice the presence of Latinos and Latino markets or restaurants like Pupuseria San Miguel and Haydee's.

Haydee's proprietor, El Salvadoran-born Haydee Vanegas, moved to Mount Pleasant 20 years ago and ever since she has attended every Festival Latino (or Fiesta DC). "When I arrived," Haydee noted, "I had never seen a festival like that before. I remember it as if it was yesterday—the people, their customs, the art from all over Latin America. I'd never seen so much art in one place!" Even after opening the restaurant in 1990 with her husband, Mario Alas, she always makes time to step outside Haydee's doors and take in the sights and sounds. She especially loves the parade. On that note, she's most certainly not alone.

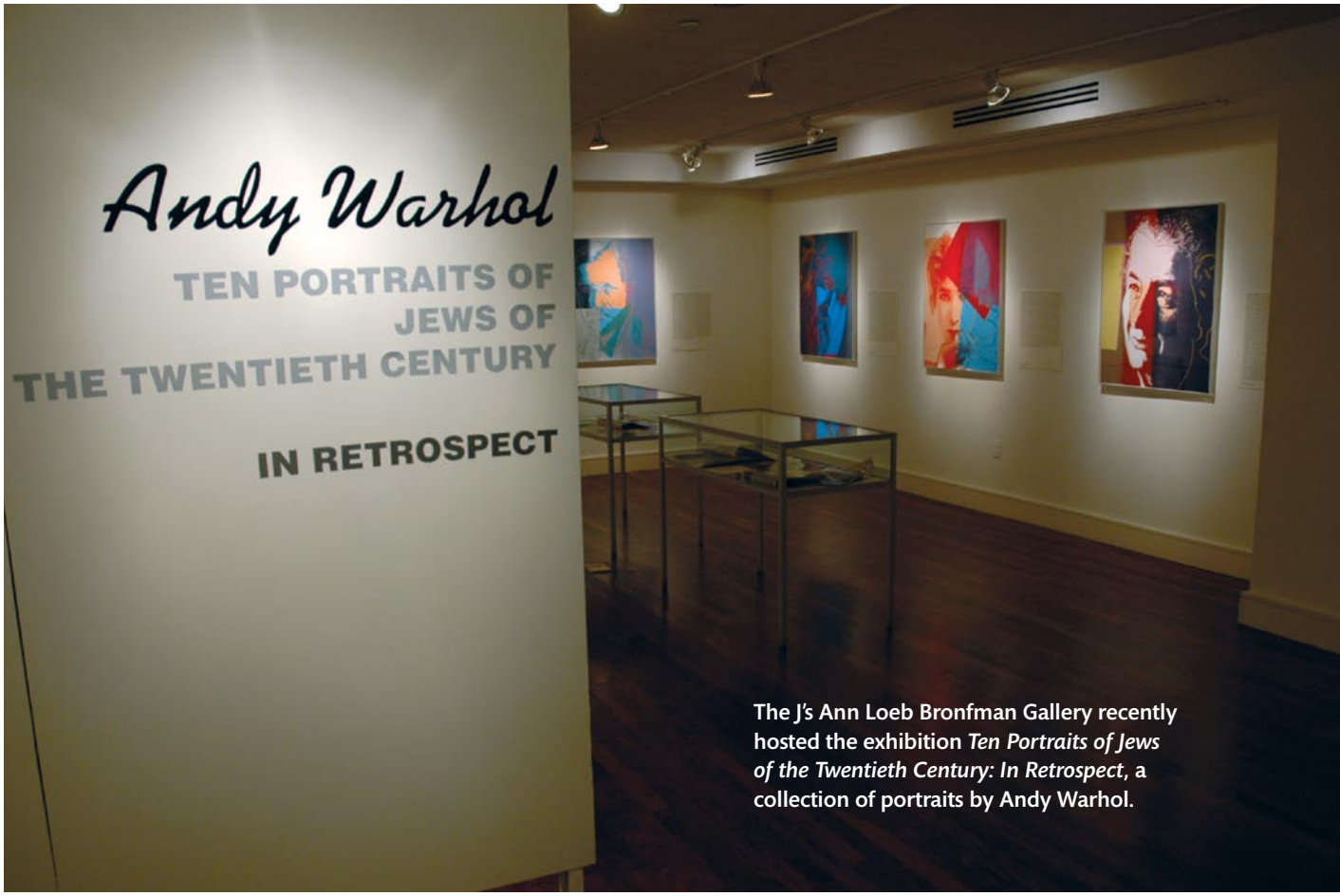
Enrique Rivera, who was president of the festival from 1982-83, and Aguilar both agree that the heart of Fiesta DC is the parade of nations, or *el desfile de naciones.* Aguilar pointed out that "there's roughly 1,000 dancers from approximately 20 different countries. You see something different from each one. And you see babies, grandparents, all the generations represented. It's all very family-oriented." Rivera, who today volunteers as the parade coordinator, emphasized, "It's so culturally rich and colorful. In fact, it is

the only event at which groups from all over Latin America and Spain come together to demonstrate their dance, their dress, their folklore. Mariachis from Mexico, Spanish Flamenco dancers, Bolivian folk dancers. You name it." Rivera joked that he's never actually been able to see the parade live because he's too busy running the show. "Okay. Who's next? Cuba, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Brazil…"

Ba-da-da-da-DA-Boom. Batala DC's Mia Foreman, who helps book the group's shows, has played the Fiesta two years in a row. Though born and raised in Los Angeles, she's lived in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic and feels that for a day, "You're transported out of the States, and you don't even need a passport." She added, laughing, "People go crazy for us. We all like the parade. It's narrow so you graze up against the crowd and lock eyes with people. Kids are dancing. We're dancing. I took a picture of myself and a group of young girls from Guatemala, in full make-up and local dress. They were so happy and proud!"

Fiesta DC continues to flourish as a 'fiesta del barrio' where for a day Latinos and non-Latinos of all stripes congregate to eat and laugh and dance. The next festival is scheduled for Sunday, September, 26; more information is available at **www.fiestadc.org**. *Pues, vamos a la calle!*

PHOTO BY ELANA MCDERMOTT



The J's Ann Loeb Bronfman Gallery recently hosted the exhibition *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century: In Retrospect*, a collection of portraits by Andy Warhol.

A Rich and Vibrant Culture

The District of Columbia Jewish Community Center

BY PEPPER SMITH

The DC Jewish Community Center's (DCJCC) mission is simple: to preserve and strengthen Jewish identity, heritage, and traditions in the DC metro region. Chief Program Officer Josh Ford would say that the arts are essential to that mission. "Our philosophy of providing a rich and vibrant Jewish community involves a rich and vibrant culture that is constantly alive and reinventing itself and reacting to the world around it. Arts are the perfect vehicle for that."

He added that arts are a great outreach to modern Jews who are not interested in religion or more traditional practices. "Their Jewish identity is largely a cultural identity and to get them to connect with the art that we present and to see themselves in it, and be challenged by it, and engage in the process of taking their Jewish identity seriously—if only for an evening of theater—is also a central part of our mission."

In fact, the J—as the community center is familiarly known—has become one of the major arts presenters in Washington, DC. Most DC-area art lovers have been to at least one performance at Theater J, which has received more than 40 Helen Hayes Award nomi-

nations since its inception in 1990. The J's Washington Jewish Film Festival: An Exhibition of International Cinema is one of the best exhibitors of Jewish-themed film. (The festival celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2009.) And then there is the J's Morris Cafritz Center for the Arts, which—in addition to Theater J and the film festival—includes a music festival, a literary program, and the Ann Loeb Bronfman Gallery.

With so many avenues to explore art, the J can showcase an art topic in a wide array of forms and disciplines. Take, for example, Andy Warhol. Recently the Bronfman Gallery exhibited *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century: In Retrospect,* Warhol's 1980 collection of Jewish portraits. Theater J presented Josh Kornbluth's one-man play examining Warhol and Jewish identity, *Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews?* The screening room ran Marx Brothers films (one of Warhol's subjects) and the Jewish Literary Festival featured a biography of Louis Brandeis (another Warhol subject). Even kids in the J's pre-school got involved by painting their own versions of the Warhol portraits. Ford recalled, "One of the greatest comments when we took the pre-schoolers through the exhibit was one of the kids saw the portrait of Sigmund Freud and said, 'Boy, that guy looks crazy.'"

Ford stressed that though the aims of the J are not all artistic, the standards for the art they present are the highest. "We see our competition as the Kennedy Center or the AFI, or other secular institutions."

The Cafritz Center itself is an impressive building with a community hall, a library, a gallery, a theater—all of which the J generously offers to other community arts groups as well. An estimated 50,000 people pass through its doors every year.

The building has an interesting history. Calvin Coolidge laid the original cornerstone for the Jewish Community Center on 16th Street in Northwest DC. As the Jewish population began to move to the suburbs outside the city, the J moved along with them to Rockville, Maryland, in 1967. The District, meanwhile, used the original building as a facility for federal city college. Then in the late 1970s and '80s, as the Jewish community came to have more of an urban presence, a satellite JCC returned to DC using townhouses as locations. Eventually a new JCC incorporated in DC and in 1997 moved into its original spot back on 16th Street.

PHOTO BY STAN BAROUH

Theater J of the DC Jewish Community Center put on a production of *Lost in Yonkers* by Neil Simon.

Chief Executive Officer Arna Meyer Mickelson agrees with Chairman Landesman's slogan "Art Works" and experienced it first hand when the J helped revitalize its neighborhood. "Even though many institutions do quality work, there is nothing quite out there in the public like the arts. It's kind of a noisy community because the arts require that you're reviewed, that you're advertising and that you're sending out this, that, and the other. Who [the J] is and the work it does was immediately present to our neighbors."

In addition to the economic help arts bring to the community, Ford stressed the contribution of art. "I really do believe that we're not here preserving something. We're here creating something important, and that makes a difference to the people who see it."

He knows it makes a difference because people tell him. "Standing outside our theater as people exit a concert or play or a film, they say, 'Thank you for the experience.' They've already paid. There's no need to say 'thank you.' There is a real sense of gratitude for what we're doing, and that's really special."

ART OUT LOUD

Public Art Takes Over DC

PHOTO BY LISA SCHEER

BY LIZ STARK

If you live or work in Washington, DC, chances are you pass by at least one work of public art every day. It could be the mural that replaced graffiti on a nearly 1,000-foot-long wall in Northeast's Edgewood community or the two sculptures at 5th and K Northwest that adorn the center of a neighborhood undergoing urban revitalization. While these are classic examples of visual art, public art can be in any medium as long as it has been designed and executed with the specific intention of being installed in a public space. So the abandoned call boxes in neighborhoods around DC that have been refurbished and painted, the bike racks designed by DC artists, the decorated jersey barriers protecting a government office—all public art.

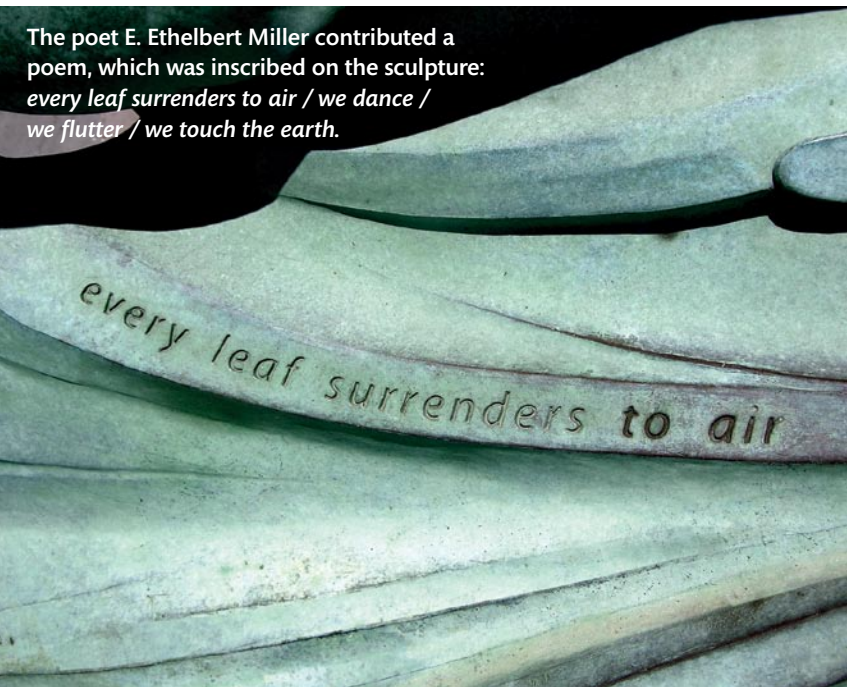
The landscape of public art in America over the past 40 years has changed and grown substantially. "I went to graduate school in the late seventies and in those days I could literally count the number of public commissions there were available in the United States in any one year," said DC-based artist Lisa Scheer. "Now, every single little 'burb seems to be doing it." This growth can be traced in part to federal programs, such as the NEA's Art in Public Places program, which from 1967-1995 funded the creation of more than 700 works. But in addition to programs with national reach, organizations also work on the regional, state, and local levels to develop projects that make public art an integral part of communities. In Washington, DC, the Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCAH) leads the city's efforts to purchase, commission, and install public art through its program DC Creates Public Art.

Established in 1986, DC Creates is part of legislation that allocates up to one percent of the city's adjusted capital budget for commissioning and acquiring artwork. Over the past 30 years DCCAH has installed more than 100 commissioned projects and collected more than 2,000 works of art from DC artists for its Art Bank Collection, which is exhibited in dozens of public buildings throughout the city.

With large numbers of people living and working in Washington, DC, as well as visiting its museums and monuments, DCCAH has targeted DC's metro stations as important sites for public art, commissioning works at 16 of the stations. Lisa Scheer, one

of the artists to benefit from these commissions, has spent her career teaching and working in the DC area. Her sculptures can be seen throughout the city, from office buildings to the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. "Neighborhoods are certainly one sort of way of bringing artworks to where people live," said Scheer, "but the other idea is to integrate artworks with architecture in civic areas where people travel, go through, and move around, come into contact, transportation being an obvious one."

In 2004 Scheer answered an open call issued by DCCAH outlining the project details for the Petworth metro station public artwork, and was awarded the commission. Petworth, an urban enclave in DC's northwest quadrant has—like many other neighborhoods in DC—undergone urban revitalization in recent years, a change referenced in Scheer's community sculpture.



The poet E. Ethelbert Miller contributed a poem, which was inscribed on the sculpture: *every leaf surrenders to air / we dance / we flutter / we touch the earth.*

PHOTO BY LISA SCHEER

Installed at the Petworth Metro station in November 2007, *New Leaf* is representative of her work—primarily large-scale abstract sculptures constructed out of metal and fabricated sheet metal. Scheer said, "My goal is to have a mixture of really interesting references, oftentimes stemming from the sort of program or the site in which I'm installing the work. The piece at Petworth is a sort of abstracted form, but it also looks a tremendous amount like a leaf, or something very organic and growing, and I do mean to do that because I mean to evoke metaphors of growth and change and seasonal time shifts."

When creating a public artwork, Scheer asks four questions related to the community where the object will be installed: Who's there? Why are they there? What are they doing? How can my art speak to that? "When I make an artwork in my studio, it can be shown in a gallery, it can exist in someone's home, it can exist on any wall. But when I'm doing a commission, it's made to live in a certain place."

Public art is unique not only in its reflection of a community, but also in the reaction it elicits from that community. Liesel Fenner, public art program manager for Americans for the Arts, explained, "With public art the community becomes the owners of the art work—they protect it and consider it a part of their place—and because of this the art becomes more understood. For many people public art is their first introduction to art and can serve as an important tool in creating awareness of what art is and can be."

Beyond providing this initial introduction, public art can also serve as a valuable tool for broadening the public's view of art. This is particularly true of temporary public art where, because the pieces are not permanent, artists have more room to experiment and challenge their audiences. According to Dickerson, such public art "can often have a powerful impact on a place because of the way that projects are able to 'push the envelope.'"

In January 2009 DCCAH issued a five-year Public Art Master Plan, calling for more temporary and permanent public art works and outlining the ways public art can be integrated into the city's future: weaving public art into the city's civic and community fabric, building a green and sustainable city, and stimulating the creative economy.

But beyond these goals, public art has a very simple yet valuable result—it helps creates communities where people want to live. "There's something to be said about coming across an artwork every day," said Scheer. "When we go to a museum, we set our minds to a certain way of thinking, and it's about art. We're assuming that activity. Whereas when it's in your daily environment, the artwork has to meet you where you're at, rather than the other way around, and I think that's pretty cool."

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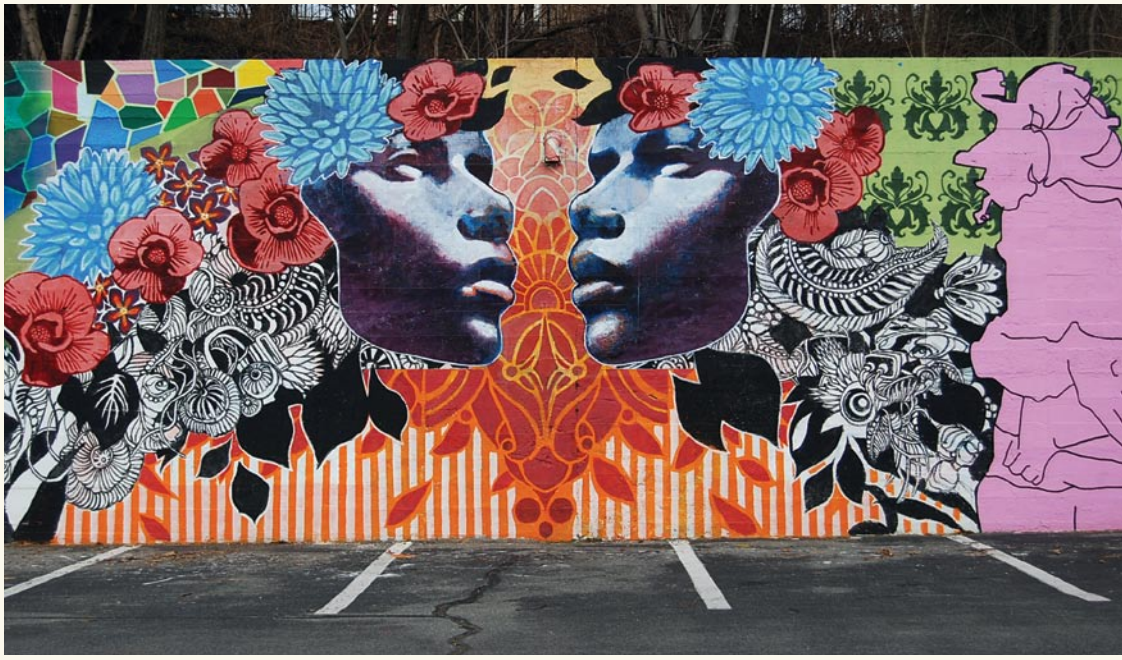
ART AROUND TOWN

In DC, whether you notice or not, public art is all around you. At the Metro subway station. In front of the federal building. Along the side of a street. Here are a few of our favorites, and if you go to our website at **www.arts.gov**, you can find an interactive map that will show you where you can find some of these treasures.



DETAIL OF *EDGEWOOD TO EDGE OF THE WORLD* PUBLIC ART MURAL. PHOTO COURTESY OF MURALLOCATOR.ORG

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE, *ARBRE SERPENTS (SERPENT TREE).* PHOTO BY DON BALL

JUAN PINEDA, *A PEOPLE WITHOUT MURALS IS A DEMURALIZED PEOPLE.* PHOTO COURTESY OF MURALLOCATOR.ORG