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ON THE COVER: *Celebrated Figure VI* and *Celebrated Figure V*, 1995. Clifton Pearson. Glazed stoneware. Collection of the Huntsville Museum of Art.

© 2022 ALABAMA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
On behalf of the state of Alabama, I welcome you to the 2022 Celebration of Alabama Arts awards ceremony. Tonight, we recognize seven special Alabamians for their talents, contributions to and investments in our creative community.

Congratulations to Wes Chapman, Mary Settle Cooney, Jason Ferdinand, David Hood, Clifton Pearson, Stanley Smith and the late Patty McDonald.

Alabama's artistic and creative community undoubtedly adds so much value to our state, our nation and the world. Arts and creativity make us stronger – they are a backbone of innovation, prosperity and thriving people and places.

The accomplishments of these individuals bolster Alabama's legacy and reputation as a creative place to live, work and raise a family.

Support for the arts is clearly a public and private partnership that ensures all communities in Alabama have access to the many benefits of arts and creativity. Without the generosity of the corporate community and the many citizens committed to a “better Alabama,” the level of arts activity we have grown to appreciate would not be possible. Our award recipients represent the best of the spirit of giving, talent and commitment to community that I know is significant in our great state.

Alabama's artists and arts supporters are essential to the creative economy and increase the quality-of-life factors that stimulate more investment and job growth. They play a major role in our communities and how we share the stories of the people and places of our great state.

Arts and creativity strengthen Alabama, and I would like to express my personal appreciation for the many contributions these individuals have made over the years to improving the quality of our great state through expressions of art.

Alabama has a rich artistic heritage, and tonight's awards are a testimony to the value that arts and creativity bring to our communities, our schools and our lives. Thank you to the Council on the Arts board members and staff for working hard to ensure that funds appropriated for the arts in Alabama are invested in ways that support communities both large and small all over our great state.

Sincerely,

Kay Ivey
Governor
Welcome to the 2022 Celebration of Alabama Arts!

Every other year, the Alabama State Council on the Arts shines a spotlight on exceptional Alabamians and their contributions to arts and creativity. This is a tradition dating back to 1971 when the Council first recognized individuals for significant contributions to the arts. A more structured program developed in 1974 with the first Alabama Arts Convention, which evolved into the Governor’s Arts Award program in 1980. Over the years, the Council shifted to a biennial event and added awards that honor a variety of artists and other special people who make the arts possible.

The awards program has gone by many names throughout the years. We at the Council on the Arts are incredibly proud of the resilience, creativity, and innovation demonstrated by Alabama artists, arts administrators, patrons, educators, and arts organizations – especially these past two years. Transitioning to the Celebration of Alabama Arts allows us to highlight our appreciation for all the art and creativity that abounds within our state – and the people who make it possible.

We hope tonight’s celebration reminds you of the importance of supporting, appreciating, and celebrating the contributions of special individuals that make arts and creativity a vital part of our lives and community. The development and continuation of high-quality arts experiences and institutions require support, dedication, and hard work year-round.

Our honorees reflect the breadth and richness of creativity, commitment, generosity, and leadership that make arts and creativity possible every day. This showcase allows us to express our appreciation and respect for the exceptional artists and people who make the arts happen in Alabama.

This year, we are presenting awards to Dr. Clifton Pearson, acclaimed visual artist and teacher; Dr. Jason Ferdinand, distinguished conductor and composer; Wes Chapman, renowned dancer and artistic director; Mary Settle Cooney, passionate arts administrator; the late Patty McDonald, beloved patron of the arts; Stanley Smith, notable Sacred Harp singer and composer; and David Hood, legendary Muscle Shoals studio musician.

Thank you for sharing your gifts with us and with the world, and thank you to all the arts advocates and supporters who contribute daily to making our communities and our state a better place to call home.

All the best,

Elliot A. Knight
Executive Director
Welcome to the

CELEBRATION of Alabama ARTS

Honoring outstanding Alabamians for their contributions to arts and culture in our state

CLIFTON PEARSON  JASON MAX FERDINAND  WES CHAPMAN

MARY SETTLE COONEY  STANLEY SMITH  DAVID HOOD

In Memoriam: PATTY MCDONALD
OPENING PERFORMANCE
*The Marvelous Wonderettes* • Alabama Shakespeare Festival
Directed & Choreographed by Melissa Rain Anderson

WELCOME REMARKS
Dr. Elliot A. Knight & Dr. Henry Panion, III
Alabama State Council on the Arts

GOVERNOR’S ARTS AWARD
Honoring Dr. Clifton Pearson
“Sometimes I Wonder Why” • INNERGY Inc.

GOVERNOR’S ARTS AWARD
Honoring Dr. Jason Max Ferdinand
“O Perfect Love” • The Aeolians, Oakwood University
Music Arrangement by Stephen Murphy

GOVERNOR’S ARTS AWARD
Honoring Wes Chapman
*The Dying Swan* • Alabama Ballet
Directed & Choreographed by Roger VanFleteren

JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Honoring Mary Settle Cooney
“Walk Softly” & “Rocket Man” • Iron Horse

ALBERT B. HEAD LEGACY AWARD
Honoring Patty McDonald
*Ain’t Misbehavin’* • Red Mountain Theatre
Directed by Keith Cromwell, Music Arrangement by Anthony Smith

ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD
Honoring Stanley Smith
“Chicago” & “Minnesota” • Alabama Shape Note Singers

ALABAMA DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD
Honoring David Hood
“I’ll Take You There” & “Old Time Rock and Roll” • Muscle Shoals Sound
Clockwise from top: A newspaper clipping of Clifton with some of his work, courtesy of the Pearson family; two pieces from the Pearson family private collection. Photos: Jeff White; Celebrated Figure VI, 1995, glazed stoneware, 26.25 in. Collection of the Huntsville Museum of Art; Museum purchase in memory of Mary Jane McCormick and Ann Hay.
Born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1948, Dr. Clifton Pearson is a ceramic artist who was baptized in the crucible of the Civil Rights era. Like so many people who lived through 1968, he felt forced to choose between love and hate. Clifton explains his decision this way, “During that time, there was intense interest in Black power and Black pride. And I couldn’t develop an interest in European history. A lot of artists were making angry statements, but I was looking for a positive statement. I wanted to illustrate beauty and dignity, rather than hostility.”

Looking back over 50 years of Clifton Pearson’s art, there is a beautiful expression of Black power and Black pride that he imbues with a love for humanity. He has the mind of a great teacher who shows us how to find our better selves through kind, careful, and attentive empathy. Like the greatest of great artists, he is a humble man who sees the beauty in others no matter how riddled with flaws they are. Though he does not wear religiosity on his sleeve, he knows whose footsteps he is following. It is no wonder that he spent most of his academic career serving others as a Department Chair at three different universities. As remarkable as he was as a Chair at Alabama A&M, Stillman College, and Montevallo, his passion was for his students whose lives he could nurture, mold, raise up, and press forward into the world.

His award-filled career as a ceramic artist has a definite trajectory from youthful exuberance to sly playfulness, and then finally to a mature career of wisdom and monumentality. He often lectured on Black Art and taught ceramics on Alabama Public Television for five years. Clifton’s dissatisfaction with Western art led him to explore the beauty of African skin scarification, the richness of Hindu ornamentation, and the power of Oceanic carving. His youthful art was dense with complicated form and complex iconography. He understood that the human condition has more than two
Celebrated Figure X, 2000, glazed stoneware, 31 x 11 x 13 in. Collection of the Huntsville Museum of Art; Gift of Alice Chang.

"...I wanted to illustrate beauty and dignity."

Like Clifton Pearson himself, his sculptures are never, never haughty. Instead, they call out for each of us to make something grander of ourselves: every one of us. A similar-looking form is also found in Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller’s 1919 In Memory of Mary Turner: As a Silent Protest Against Mob Violence. If ever there was a work of art that focused on Black obstacles, it is this heart-wrenching sculpture. The key to creating a
positive statement is not found in this work by Fuller, but in how Pearson responded to the horrors represented in Fuller’s art. While Fuller’s Mary Turner looks down at her impending death, Pearson’s *Celebrated Figures* look up to a dream in which we come to celebrate each other’s humanity, each other’s dignity, and each other’s grandeur.

Auguste Rodin’s *Balzac* also helps us understand the unique character of Pearson’s *Celebrated Figure* with its similar outlines and forms. *Balzac* is a monument to the Romantic individual surveying a world in ruin. Clifton’s art is not about a world in ruin, but about building something better. It celebrates a world of empathy and beauty in which each of us can become majestic leaders to one another. There is no doubt
that his art references Western, African, Indian, Oceanic, and Pre-Columbian art, but his art is not simply multi-cultural. To understand his *Celebrated Figures*, it is important to begin with the obvious. They are single figures. They stand alone and they are monumental. The excellent art critic Tara Cady Sartorius called his *Celebrated Figures* “leaders.” She is absolutely correct, but to understand his art, I must add an asterisk to her comment. What makes Clifton’s art so impressive is not that it asks us to follow a leader, but that it asks us each to become one. This is the teacher in Clifton speaking. Ornamented in clay with the markings of world culture, these *Celebrated Figures* beckon each of us to aspire to take inspiration from Jesus, follow the example of MLK, and demonstrate the courage and love of John Lewis. His *Celebrated Figures* do not ask us to bow down before them, but rather to become one with them in a community of love, respect, and universal admiration. Clifton’s content speaks with the message of Langston Hughes, “Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed.”

The last time I spoke with Clifton, he continued to be a dreamer. He paired his life down to a few simple, beautiful words, “First the situation, then make a form, fold it together, and press it forward. Something might come of it.”

Well, something did come forward. He created generations of students and the most commanding and powerful sculptural art in the history of Alabama.◆

*Clockwise from left:* Clifton Pearson teaches a class at Decatur High School in 1977, courtesy of the Pearson family; pieces from the Pearson family private collection. Photo: Jeff White; Detail of *Celebrated Figure*. Photo: Elliot A. Knight, courtesy of Alabama State Council on the Arts.
Dr. Jason Max Ferdinand first came to my attention by way of an introduction from the legendary choral pedagogue Dr. Nathan Carter, who led the Morgan State University choirs with such distinction for so many years. Dr. Carter was well known not to lavish praise on persons or events indiscriminately. So when he specifically called me on behalf of Jason to recommend him for the graduate studies program at the University of Maryland, I took notice.

After auditioning successfully for our small but highly competitive program (in fact, out of all the applicants, he was the only student accepted that year), Jason arrived in College Park. He proceeded to make good on all aspects of the description that Nathan Carter had provided. He was studious, thoughtful, gracious, and inquisitive. Lessons with him were delightful. His questions revealed a deep thirst for knowledge. His answers revealed a mind that proceeded along both logical and creative lines simultaneously. As time went on, he also shared a sly and knowing sense of humor. But for me, the most wonderful aspect of Jason's apprenticeship at Maryland was watching him in rehearsal with our choirs.

Jason demonstrated from the very beginning a quality in rehearsal that I have tried ever since to encourage and develop in all of our conducting students – what I have named “cheerful insistence.” This quality manifests itself as a calm and seemingly infinite capacity for steady and incremental improvement, for continuous attention to detail, and for artistic commitment and intellectual respect for the musical work at hand – all the while working with joy and an open heart. Jason simply will not settle for less than what the music demands or less than what
Clockwise from top: Dr. Jason Max Ferdinand, contributed; Jason conducting his students. Photo: Eric Gray. The Aeolians perform during Oakwood University’s winter concert, 2017. Photo: Teymi Townsend, Oakwood University.
the ensemble is capable of producing. But he does it in such a way that the ensemble members always feel energized and inspired to travel that path with him. There is no pressure, no negativity, no judgment. There is accountability, a high standard of achievement, a clearly defined goal. But it is all done with Jason’s “cheerful insistence.” And everyone in the room commits to it. It’s the closest thing to a choral music magic trick that I have ever witnessed!

...a bona fide superstar in the choral world.

Since completing his studies at the University of Maryland and returning to his undergraduate alma mater Oakwood University, Dr. Ferdinand has carved out not just an admirable teaching and performing career for himself. He has become a bona fide superstar in the choral world. The Oakwood Aeolians have a fully established national and international reputations for excellence, with prize-winning performances at major music competitions, national tours, and appearances at prestigious professional conferences. His recently formed professional ensemble, the Jason Max Ferdinand Singers, has, in a very short time, garnered worldwide attention and critical acclaim.
Jason is now in demand as a guest conductor and choral clinician throughout the United States and around the globe. As he takes the reins of the program from which he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree, I am so excited and happy for the University of Maryland's students, present and future. They are about to receive a wonderful gift!

So many excellent conducting students have granted me the privilege of guiding their studies over the past two decades at the University of Maryland School of Music. Jason not only ranks at the very top of that distinguished list of artists, but he has also become a treasured and close friend and a trusted and respected colleague. Our discussions about music, conducting, and teaching are conversations that provide me such enjoyment and fulfillment that as soon as one ends, I immediately look forward to the next.
As the transition of my retirement and his leadership of the Maryland program takes shape, I am struck more than ever by his great humanity, generosity of spirit, intelligence and insight, and quiet confidence.

The students at Oakwood University and the state of Alabama’s arts community have been the fortunate recipients of Jason Ferdinand’s presence in their midst for a number of years now. I hope that this opportunity to share Jason’s prodigious gifts with the University of Maryland, the Washington, DC metro community, and the world is celebrated by all.

I am certain that Jason’s musical gifts, pedagogical skills, beautiful spirit, and the magic of his “cheerfully insistent” spell will be displayed fully to everyone he encounters and that his star will burn ever more brightly in the coming years. I look forward to witnessing that and hearing the fruits of his labors.

There is so much great music-making to look forward to! Jason Ferdinand genuinely embodies greatness and grace placed in the service of the arts. 

Above: Jason conducts during the Aeolians winter concert in 2016. Opposite page, clockwise from top: Oakwood University’s Aeolians with Dr. Ferdinand; the Aeolians perform at a concert at Oakwood University. Photo: Teymi Townsend, Oakwood University; Jason in 2018, contributed.
There is no doubt about it: Wes Chapman was born to dance. How else could a young man from small-town Alabama rise through the ranks of one of the most significant ballet companies in the world?

Wes was born in Union Springs, a small historic town in southeast Alabama. At age 9, he began his ballet training with Ms. Emily Caruso and Mr. Duane Dishion, both outstanding teachers. His mother drove him from Union Springs to Montgomery every day so he could train. “I did not feel like I was alive until I started ballet,” Wes recalls.

The first time I saw Wes perform, we were both around 12 years old. I was training under Dame Sonia Arova at the Alabama School of Fine Arts (ASFA), and we took a field trip to the Montgomery Ballet to see the “boy wonder” dance. And that he was!

His technique was flawless. Wes had beautiful lines and could execute complex steps usually achieved only by professionals. That evening, he performed
the lead role in *Les Sylphides*. As a dancer, I was critical and looked for every flaw. Yet, afterward, I walked away thinking, “Now that’s extraordinary talent!”

Wes and I met again during a summer dance workshop held at ASFA. Afterward, Wes continued to study in Montgomery while I studied in Birmingham. We would not see each other again until three years later, at the School of American Ballet’s summer intensive workshop in New York City. We were both ecstatic to discover a fellow Alabamian in pas de deux class, and the two of us became fast friends. That summer, a partnership formed on and off stage.

During that time in New York, I asked Wes to think about training at ASFA, and he joined our class sophomore year. He received many accolades in dance, including the Duane Dishion Award and the Prix d’ excellence de Danse Award, upon graduation in 1983. The following year, Wes danced with the Alabama Ballet under Dame Sonia Arova. I stayed in Birmingham so we could continue working together. Wes was such a natural partner, and we enjoyed an unspoken connection on stage.

We were set to dance together at the 1984 International Ballet Competition in Helsinki, Finland. But that did not happen because renowned dancer and choreographer Mikhail Baryshnikov handpicked Wes (at age 19!) to join American Ballet Theatre (ABT). So once again, our paths diverged... if only for a brief period.

"I did not feel like I was alive until I started ballet."

The next year, a dream came true for both of us when I joined Wes at ABT. Dancing with Wes was like reading your favorite novel repeatedly. The feeling of complete ease on stage. Wes made dancing magical for me. He allowed me to completely abandon myself on stage as Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. We enjoyed competing to see who could do the most turns or balance the longest in *Don Quixote*.

I remember walking together in New York City one day, looking at the Empire State Building. He turned to me and said, “Well, we made it!” It was one of those rare moments in life when it strikes you for the first time that you have realized a dream. Wes had undeniably “made it.” He became a Soloist in 1987 and, soon after, in 1989, a Principal, the highest rank a dancer can achieve. With American Ballet Theatre, he performed all the leading roles in the repertoire, including Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Franz in *Coppélia*, and Prince Desire in *Sleeping Beauty*. Wes also performed in works by many 20th-century master choreographers, including George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Frederik Ashton,
Mats Ek, Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Merce Cunningham, and Antony Tudor.

In a 1987 review, The Los Angeles Times wrote: “Courtly Southern charm comes in handy when you are the Nutcracker Prince and Alabama-born Wes Chapman – dancing the role in American Ballet Theatre’s The Nutcracker for the first time, Sunday afternoon at the Shrine Auditorium – was the most gracious cavalier imaginable... His beats were clean, his turns finished neatly, and his elegant line retained its nobility in coasting jetes.”

While with ABT, Wes created roles in Clark Tippet’s Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1 and Twyla Tharp’s The Elements. He also guest-starred with several ballet companies – Hamburg Ballet, English National Ballet, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and Finnish National Ballet – dancing on some of the world’s greatest stages.

People often ask Wes what he would be if he wasn’t a dancer. His response: “I would be trying to be a dancer.”

In 1993, he left ABT to join the Bavarian National Ballet of the Munich Opera. His repertoire included Puck in John Neumeier’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Colas in Frederick Ashton’s La Fille mal gardée, and Onegin in John Cranko’s Eugene Onegin. He then returned to American Ballet Theatre in 1995 for one season.
Like Wes, I was born (and trained) in Alabama. What excites me most in reflecting on his career is that Wes never forgot where he came from. After traveling the world, he returned home to Alabama to invest in the dance community that had given him so much.

In 1996, Wes became Artistic Director of Alabama Ballet. He worked to improve the quality of the programs and facilities of the Ballet, as well as its relationship with other arts groups. During his decade of leadership, the company grew from 16 dancers to 44 professionals and apprentices and attracted dancers from all over the world. He led a capital campaign to build a building that houses Alabama Ballet and the Alabama Ballet summer program. Wes restaged many full-length classical ballets for Alabama Ballet, including Swan Lake, Don Quixote, Sleeping Beauty, Giselle, and Coppelia. Notably, he was responsible for acquiring Balanchine’s Nutcracker, which the company still performs. Because of Wes’ vision, the Alabama Ballet is still flourishing today.

Roger VanFleteren, Associate Artistic Director of Alabama Ballet, said, “Wes Chapman is an incredible leader. He put the Alabama Ballet on the map. He increased the budget by over a million dollars and started the Alabama Ballet school. He had the board build a brand-new building. He continued to build our inner-city dance program City Dance. Wes brought in several guest choreographers and also danced for the company. I am honored and proud to have been his ballet master and later associate director and resident choreographer.”
Jennifer Lauren was a member of the Alabama Ballet for nine years, under the direction of Wes. She has now risen to the rank of Principal at the Miami City Ballet. “Wes Chapman is the reason I am a Principal Ballerina. He showed a great amount of interest in me and inspired me to be the artist I am today. Not one performance goes by for me without applying everything I learned from Wes,” said Jennifer.

In 2006, Wes returned to American Ballet Theatre as ballet master. For the next four years, he was artistic director of American Ballet Theatre’s second company, ABT II (now the ABT Studio Company). He oversaw the summer intensive at the University of Texas, Austin, ABT’s Works and Process series at the Guggenheim Museum, Young People’s Ballet Workshop, and ABT Kids.

Wes became Chair of the Department of Dance at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in 2016, following in the footsteps of those who had instructed us some 30-odd years prior.

“The current economic, political, and social climate of the world is asking us to reexamine our curriculum content to better serve everybody and every body that dances out the door. ASFA Dance is working on change. The faculty is currently examining the existing dance curriculum and its relationship to current best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, both in the field of dance and the greater world at large,” says Wes.

Wes continues to be a visionary in shaping young dancers, giving them the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. I have now joined him as a ballet teacher at the school, resuming the partnership that started so many years ago.

As Dance Chair, Wes has inspired many students to push outside of their comfort zone and reach beyond what they thought they were capable of. As a result, there are currently three ASFA Dance alums at Juilliard, and a fourth was just accepted.
“Mr. Chapman instilled a work ethic in me which pushed me to go beyond what I thought my physical and mental abilities were. He revealed the importance of drive, effort, and having an attitude that says, ‘I want to be here.’” said Ellie Crawford, who will be attending Julliard this fall.

“ASFA is where I had the turning point. It helped me to become the professional that I became. Giving back to ASFA as the Dance Chair was full circle for me,” Wes recently told me.

“Wes came to Alabama and made it a better place to dance!” Roger VanFleteren added.

For myself, it is a privilege to work with such an incredibly gifted and talented dancer, teacher, and friend. ♦
It’s hard to meet anyone in the Shoals area who doesn’t know Mary Settle Cooney. It’s even harder still to find someone who hasn’t supported the Tennessee Valley Art Association simply because she asked – and mostly because they love her.

Diminutive in stature and gentle in demeanor, Mary Settle’s presence looms large in the state of Alabama. A powerful advocate for the arts, Mary Settle grew the TVAA in Tuscumbia, Alabama, from a fledgling organization in the 1980s to a multi-faceted, vibrant Art Association in the Shoals area that has inspired arts programming and museums across the state.

Though Mary Settle retired as Executive Director of the TVAA in 2019 after almost 40 years of dedicated service, her influence continues to be a critical component of the Association’s ongoing identity.

“Mary Settle Cooney is an inspiration to me by her example of leadership and service to the art association locally and across the state,” said Andy Mann, president of Progress Bank in Florence and a former TVAA board member. “She is one of those special people that comes across our path in life that is a real difference-maker. This is evidenced by the growth and success of the art association under her leadership for more than 30 years.”

Standing in the Mary Settle Cooney Education Gallery of the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, Mary Settle recalls decades of memories with an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

It was the summer of 1980 when Mary Settle, a 38-year-old wife and stay-at-home mom, accepted a position with the young Association. Board member Betty Dardess told her they needed a volunteer for a new exhibit at the art center.
Clockwise from top: Mary Settle at the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art’s annual “Trees of Christmas” celebration with husband of 60 years, Dr. Joe Cooney. Photo: Mary Carton; Mary Settle at the Museum. Photo: Matt McKeon, Times Daily; Mary Settle visits artist Charlie “Tin Man” Lucas in 2004, courtesy of Tennessee Valley Art Association.
Out of curiosity, Mary Settle showed up. On that day, her legacy began.

Her first task was to assist with an exhibit funded by the National Endowment for the Arts at the Art Center in downtown Tuscumbia. By the end of the summer, Mary Settle had found her calling. She was hired as Assistant Director under then-Director Shirley Mays that fall.

Over the next eight years, Mary Settle was involved with all aspects of the organization’s programs, including the Tennessee Valley String School and Boy Choir, Suzuki School of Music, Community Orchestra, the annual Helen Keller Festival Fine Art and Craft Show, juried art competitions, and annual fine arts exhibitions. She also helped create Center Stage, now a beloved community theatre arts program. And she loved every minute of it.

“Mark Twain said, ‘Find a job you enjoy doing, and you'll never work another day in your life,’” Mary Settle said. “I can't remember a day that I did not enjoy going to ‘work.’ It truly was so much fun, every single day. It never felt like work.”

And, of course, it wasn't. For Mary Settle, it was a passion, a calling – what she was created to do.

As the community arts programs grew, Mary Settle grew with it, quickly realizing she had a powerful opportunity to impact her community. An Auburn graduate with a degree in Elementary Education, Mary Settle knew that art was powerful – and necessary – in elementary curricula. After noticing that local schools in both Colbert and Lauderdale counties were not able to offer art classes to elementary students, she created a free arts outreach program for fourth-grade classes in both counties. The program continued for years until all schools had employed certified arts teachers.
“The educational programming is truly a passion of mine,” she says. “Out of all the work I have done here, I think the educational programming is what is so special to me. It makes such a difference and enriches the lives and opportunities of children in so many ways.

Nelson Mandela said, ‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.’ That is so true. Early on, I came to understand how important the arts are in the lives of every adult and every child. I believe we must empower all children to understand who they are and what special gifts they each have.”

As the community programs escalated throughout the 1980s, the visual arts exhibitions, performing art rehearsals, and performances were all conducted at the Art Center. The facility was constructed in Tuscumbia in 1974 on the city’s Commons and offered two small multi-purpose spaces, one art gallery, and two offices. After hosting plays and what became the Shoals Symphony on the floor of the Art Center for years, it became clear that the growth of the music and theatre programs had exceeded the capacity of the space. In 1983, the Association purchased the historic Ritz Theatre in neighboring downtown Sheffield.

A dormant former silent movie house, the Ritz had originally opened in 1928 and boasted beautiful architecture with a stunning theatre front. Mary Settle was assigned to coordinate the restoration and expansion, which she did with enthusiasm. In 1986, the freshly restored historic theatre opened as a performing arts
facility for the Art Association and other community programs and is still a vibrant component of the TVAA and downtown Sheffield today. Under her leadership, it expanded over the years to include an orchestra pit, extended lobby, kitchen, scene shop, and a black-box type performance space and stage.

In 1989, after almost a decade with the Art Association, Mary Settle was named the Executive Director. Under her leadership, programming at both the Ritz and the Museum expanded exponentially, along with community support of the Association. In 1998, she guided the expansion of the Museum facility, more than doubling its space. The expansion included adding two additional galleries, climate-controlled art storage for the permanent collection, a set shop, additional office space, and the permanent exhibit of Colbert County’s prehistoric Martin Petroglyphs, on permanent loan from the University of Alabama Museums. Her passionate and visionary support of the arts led to creative and innovative exhibits, theatre productions, musical performances, and educational programming for school children. She hosted countless field trips...

"...to see the transformative power of the arts – there is simply nothing like it."
during which children from several states traveled to the art museum to create, view, explore, and discover their own talents.

Mary Settle Cooney was part of it all each day, often arriving at 5 am and working long past midnight, scrubbing floors and cleaning bathrooms, cooking and serving refreshments, setting up chairs and exhibits, curating art shows, painting walls, meeting with artists, writing countless grants, crafting budgets, securing sponsors, handwriting letters to members, and dining with potential donors. No job was too big or too small for Mary Settle; she recognized the value of every single act, and she was grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Realizing the need for long-term financial support for the Association, Mary Settle became the Incorporator of the Tennessee Valley Foundation for Endowment in 2009. A separate 501(c)3 organization, the Foundation invests and raises funds to support Association programs and facilities. It now boasts a record $1.5 million.

While the Foundation has a board that actively fundraises and invests, no one has raised more money for the Association over the years than Mary Settle, simply because no one can tell her no.

“It really never occurred to me that people wouldn’t find this valuable and want to contribute at whatever level they could,” she said.

Pat Shoemaker, widow of the late Tuscumbia mayor Bill Shoemaker, laughs as she recalls her husband saying nobody’s wallet was safe when Mary Settle entered the room. “No one could resist her request to support the arts,” she said.
Mann, who now serves as Finance Chair for the TVAA Foundation, credits Mary Settle Cooney’s fiscal responsibility with the organization’s success, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. For many years, Mary Settle told the TVAA board that the organization must keep enough in reserve to operate for at least one year with no income if the unthinkable happened. Because of her conservative fiscal leadership, the organization had reserves to rely on that enabled it to remain open and vibrant despite a worldwide shutdown.

“She made the TVAA what it is today and established funding to position the organization for success for years to come,” Mann said. “If not for Mary Settle’s fiscal responsibility, the TVAA would not have been able to withstand the pandemic. She made a difference, and her influence continues to have a positive impact on the TVAA.”

Over the years, the TVAA has flourished, impacting the Shoals community in a myriad of ways because of one woman’s vision, passion, and unwavering advocacy. Her leadership has inspired generations of artists, musicians, actors, and community volunteers who credit Mary Settle with their opportunity and success.

And yet Mary Settle remains humbly grateful. Now retired with her husband, Dr. Joe Cooney, enjoying – at last – time to visit grandchildren, she remains dedicated to the Association. She left her heart there.

“I miss how stimulating it was to work in an environment like that,” she says. “The interesting people, the creativity, the talent, the tremendous investment in the community. It was truly a wonderful life there. I believe in the arts and the impact they can have on our lives. The opportunity to help people find their creativity, their voice, and their talent – to see the transformative power of the arts – there is simply nothing like it.”

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Clockwise from top: Photo by Nik Layman, courtesy of Birmingham Museum of Art; Liza Minnelli and Patty McDonald in 2010, courtesy of UAB’s Alys Stephens Center; Patty McDonald and Keith Cromwell promoting The Wizard of Oz, 2007. Courtesy of Red Mountain Theatre.
From his lofty perch 1,025 feet atop Red Mountain, the statue of Vulcan, the Roman god of the forge, has been keeping a watchful eye on Birmingham since 1936. Among the most startling changes he has witnessed in the Magic City over those years has been the development of a vibrant arts community consisting of professional theatre groups and several world-class venues for the performing arts. While Birmingham will forever be indebted to the many individuals who played key roles in the development of that arts community, few have made a more lasting and widespread contribution than Patricia “Patty” McDonald.
A SHINING LEGACY

A glimpse at some of the awards and accolades bestowed on Patty by a grateful community is a stunning testament to the impact she had for enriching the lives of others through theatre and the arts:

**Distinguished Service Award**
from UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center

**Outstanding Service to the Community Award**
from the Birmingham Area Theatre Alliance

**Albert B. Head Legacy Award**
from the Alabama State Council on the Arts

The recurring theme in the numerous tributes to Patty McDonald is in the void that now exists with her passing.
Patty excelled in numerous fields. Success in any one of them would have been adequate to claim “star” status: performer, sponsor, mentor, and tireless advocate for the role that theatre, music, and dance play in enriching our lives. In addition, her unwavering philanthropic support significantly impacted the multitude of causes she championed.

Born in Denver, Colorado, Patty attended Colorado State University and graduated from the University of Denver. She and her husband, Pat, a veteran of the U.S. Navy, settled in Birmingham in 1975 after Pat's 26-year naval career ended.

Patty quickly immersed herself in the Magic City's arts community, both as a gifted performer and as an avid supporter. She began attending classes at Samford University and connected with Samford’s School of the Arts. Her keen interest in the University's arts programs led to her serving on the Advisory Board and playing a significant role in initiating sponsorships of events in the School of the Arts.

“Patty was both a friend and counselor to the School of the Arts,” stated Joe Hopkins, Dean of Samford's School of the Arts, when learning of Patty’s passing in 2021. “We will miss her wisdom and leadership.”

Patty’s impressive stage presence led her to be selected for a number of memorable thespian roles. She played “Melissa” in Virginia Samford Theatre’s Love Letters and she sparkled as “Glinda the Good Witch” in The Wizard of Oz at Red Mountain Theatre. Particularly dear to Patty was Patty’s Piano Bar. In the cabaret-style fundraiser event for the Virginia Samford Theatre, Patty's cast dropped by her piano bar for a night of songs. The cast included some of the city's favorite performers, including Kristi Tingle Higginbotham, Tam DeBolt, Celeste Burnum, Bill Bugg, Carl Dean, Boots Carroll, Jack Mann, and Jan D. Hunter. “She was a natural performer,” Hunter recalled.

Patty has been lauded for her many attributes, not least of which was her philanthropy. “My hard and fast rule,” she once stated, “is that I cannot and will not do anything that will not benefit a number of people.”
Strict adherence to that rule led to Patty’s name frequently appearing on the list of sponsors of various local theatre productions and among the board members of a myriad of organizations. She served on the advisory boards of UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center; the Alabama Ballet; Opera Birmingham; Red Mountain Theatre; Virginia Samford Theatre; Birmingham Music Club; Samford University Arts Executive Council; VSA Arts of Alabama; Oasis Counseling for Women and Children; and Steel City Men’s Chorus. She also served as Honorary Chair for Birmingham AIDS Outreach Arty Party.

“I would be hard-pressed to think of an arts board she did not sit on at one point or another,” stated Keith Cromwell, Executive Director of Red Mountain Theatre.

Lili Anderson, Executive Director, UAB Arts, met Patty many years ago when the former worked at the Birmingham Museum of Art. “Patty was truly an arts encourager for the entire Birmingham community,” Anderson explained. “She would not hesitate to pick up the phone to offer words of reassurance for the UAB Arts staff and me, or pen long, handwritten letters letting us know the work we were doing was important. Those calls and letters were especially appreciated and essential during the pandemic over the past two years.”

Patty’s support of arts education helped establish several scholarships in the belief that a strong commitment to education through the arts provided opportunities for youth. Her passion for instilling an appreciation of the arts in young people is
perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in a letter Patty wrote to Allen Montgomery – who at the time was serving as Chair of the Advisory Board of UAB’s Visual and Performing Arts, which includes the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center.

“The arts are fundamental to our humanity,” she wrote. “They bring us joy, help express our values, and build bridges between cultures. For the arts to remain a significant part of our society we must pass along our passion for the arts to the younger generation. We must encourage children to embrace the arts that give them the resources they need to succeed in life.”

Patty practiced what she preached. Kelly Allison, Chair of the UAB Department of Theatre, reminisced about meeting Patty in 1998 during his first year at UAB. “Patty and her husband, Pat, helped the UAB Department of Theatre launch Ovation, our student support fund that helps offset the cost of tuition for students who are cast in shows and work backstage on Theatre UAB productions.”

Patty’s impact on the Alabama Symphony Orchestra (ASO) is also evident. One of Birmingham’s oldest music organizations, the ASO traces its roots back to 1921. The Symphony has provided professional, symphonic music to Alabamians for almost a century. “I started working for the ASO in 2004,” stated Mark Patrick, the ASO’s Executive Director. “Patty was already a patron and donor at the time. She sponsored many concerts and special events over the years and was the sole sponsor for our Concertmaster and Friends chamber music series for several years. I’ll always miss seeing her at concerts, and I know all of us will miss having her as a supporter.”

Patty’s long-time friend, Cathy Rye Gilmore, the President of Virginia Samford Theatre, has similar memories. “I met Patty McDonald 20 years ago during the 2002 capital campaign to restore the former UAB Town and Gown Theatre,” Gilmore stated. “She and her husband, Pat, were not only major financial contributors to the project, but continued their enthusiastic and generous support for many years.”

Gaynell Hendricks, another of Patty’s long-time friends, underscored that point when introducing her as the recipient of UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center Distinguished Service Award in 2018. “Our awardee has shared, supported, lifted up, endorsed, rejuvenated, sponsored, and kept alive many arts programs, artists, and art initiatives around the region,” Hendricks noted. “Not only does she support them with her dollars, she supports them with her presence. She can be seen all around town in attendance at art functions, and her presence encourages and validates artists to keep moving forward.”

“Patty was the ‘Energizer bunny’ of the arts in Birmingham,” Keith Cromwell added. “She was careful to support everything both with her philanthropy and her time. She will be deeply missed.”

Jeffrey Klinner, Patty’s long-time friend, confidant, and frequent escort at events, pointed out that Patty’s support was not to just one segment of the arts community. “She loved them all,” he noted.

Vulcan will undoubtedly continue his watch over Birmingham and its thriving arts community for many years to come. And Patty McDonald’s legacy will forever be a part of the community that she faithfully served over the 46 years she called Birmingham her home.

“We will be celebrating her legacy for a lifetime,” noted Heath Mixon at UAB’s ArtPlay. “She just got it – LIFE! And wow, did she live it!”

Above: Kathy and Jim Emison, Patty McDonald, and Errol Allan at the 2011 Opera Birmingham Vocal Competition, courtesy of Opera Birmingham. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Patty with soprano Heather Buck and Jan D. Hunter after Opera Birmingham’s production of The Barber of Seville; Patty performs at a Salvation Army Youth Services Christmas fundraiser, courtesy Jan D. Hunter; Graham Boettcher, Patty McDonald, and Carnetta Davis at the Birmingham Chapter of The Links, Incorporated Gala, 2018. Courtesy of Carnetta Davis; Patty McDonald, Yo-Yo Ma, and Ron Bourdages, courtesy of UAB’s Alys Stephens Center; Patty as Glinda the Good Witch in Red Mountain Theatre’s The Wizard of Oz, 2007. Courtesy of Red Mountain Theatre.
Above: Stanley Smith in 2007, photographed by Mark Gooch for *Carry On: Celebrating Twenty Years of the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program*.  
Opposite page: Stanley leads a song at the Capitol City Shape Note Singing in 1993. Photo: Anne Kimzey, Alabama Center for Traditional Culture.
Stanley Smith has been immersed in Sacred Harp singing since childhood. He first heard the music on visits to his grandfather’s farm near Ozark, in Alabama’s Wiregrass. There was a church nearby, and “when the wind blew right, you could hear the singing and they were almost a mile away,” he told a Montgomery Advertiser reporter in 1992. The robust singing and blending of harmonies captivated the boy. When he was 12, he joined the singing himself. In the summer of 1973, his father took him to a singing school where he learned to “sing the notes and keep time. After that, I started bumming rides with the singers, and I’ve been going ever since.”

Sacred Harp is one of the most deep-rooted forms of traditional music in Alabama. A type of unaccompanied singing in which the musical notation employs note heads in four distinct shapes to aid in sight-reading, Sacred Harp is not the province
of any particular denomination and is not usually a part of regular church services. “Singings” are day-long events where the music is sung, one song after another, with a break for lunch. Each song is led by a member of the group, with the pitch set by a singer who “keys” the song for the rest. Many people learn the basics of the tradition by attending singing schools. Others simply attend singings as often as they can. Stanley did both.

As an adult, Stanley continued singing and began composing songs in the tradition. He took an active role in organizing singings. He began teaching singing schools, first in the Ozark area and then around the region. Over time, he taught groups as far away as Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, and California. He also taught closer to home as a master artist in the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Singers in the Wiregrass region primarily use *B.F. White’s Sacred Harp*, a collection of songs also known as the Cooper book. Periodic revisions add new songs to the book to allow for growth within the tradition. Stanley served on both the 1992 and 2006 revision committees. It was his work on the committee in 1992 that would make a bit of history.

For many years, there were both white and African American singings in the Wiregrass region and Stanley grew up attending both. Dewey Williams, a leader in the African American Sacred Harp community and recipient of a 1983 National Heritage
Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, was an early mentor. Stanley tells of often waiting by the road, songbook in hand, when he knew that Mr. Dewey would be passing so that he could ask for help with a particular measure or phrase. Stanley has long been a link between the white and African American Sacred Harp communities. When Dewey Williams’s Wiregrass Singers had a Sunday morning television show on a Dothan station, Stanley was one of two white singers who were part of the group.

As a member of the 1992 revision committee, Stanley proposed the inclusion of “My Mother’s Gone,” a song by Judge Jackson, a leading African American singer and composer from the Wiregrass. When he went to ask Jackson’s son Japheth for his approval, Stanley learned that the elder Jackson had submitted the song for inclusion in the Cooper book 60 years earlier. It was rejected. That rejection led to the creation and 1934 publication of The Colored Sacred Harp, a collection of songs by African American composers and an important piece of Sacred Harp history. Stanley’s successful efforts to include two of Judge Jackson’s songs in the 1992 Cooper book revision brought the story full circle.

...his gracious, unassuming manner belies his influence of the community of Sacred Harp singers.
A prolific composer himself, Stanley often dedicates his songs to the singers he has worked with around the country. His songs “Minnesota,” “San Diego,” and “Texas,” all included in the most recent Cooper book revision, commemorate the singers he met and worked with in those locations. “Haw Ridge” is named for the home community of W.M. Cooper, who lends his name to the Cooper book. Stanley is also past president of the Alabama State Gospel Singing Convention and has written and published a number of songs in this seven-shape “new book” genre.

Stanley Smith’s gracious, unassuming manner belies his influence on the community of Sacred Harp singers and his importance to the tradition. At singings, Stanley makes it a point to welcome and help first-time singers, many of whom go on to become regular participants. His skill as a leader and teacher of singing schools ensures that new singers will keep the tradition living and vibrant. As a composer, he writes songs that add to the repertoire while staying within the stylistic forms of Sacred Harp music. As a singer, he reflects the pride and pleasure that Sacred Harp singers take in the music and the tradition.

Most importantly, Stanley embodies some of the most important characteristics of Sacred Harp: a joy in raising one’s voice in song, a respect for the tradition while creating within it, and a generous nature that invites everyone to share in the music he loves.
The basement walls of 3614 Jackson Highway in Sheffield, Alabama, are lined with records. They sit perched spine to spine, artwork bathed in the glow of rope lights hung from wooden rafters that shake when anyone walks through the studio upstairs where the Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, the Staples Singers, and countless others worked on career-defining music. David Hood is sitting back on an old leather couch and smiling.

“I’m still very proud of this place. I’m sitting here looking at all those records. Every time I come down here, I’ll think, ‘Gosh, I need to play that. I haven’t heard that in years.’”

If he hasn’t listened to all of his own discography lately, there’s good reason. David was a member of the famed Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. Over the last half-century, he’s played some of the most
Above: A promotional photo of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. L to R: David Hood, Roger Hawkins, Jimmy Johnson, and Barry Beckett. Photo: Tommy Wright, courtesy of Alabama Tourism Department; David at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, 2021. Courtesy of Billy Reid.
iconic bass lines in popular music. The unlikely story of a small community in north Alabama having a seismic impact on the world’s stage is well documented at this point, most significantly by the 2013 documentary *Muscle Shoals*, but even David still marvels at it.

“I started playing the bass at 18, and by 24, maybe 25, I’d played on million-selling records. I’m not that good a player; it’s just that we were lucky. We were in the right place at the right time, and we had an attitude that nothing mattered more than us doing our job and doing the best we could. And I think that showed,” he recalls.

While music fans might take issue with David’s assessment of his own skill level, they would undoubtedly agree that the workman-like attitude he and his peers assumed paid off. There is no grandiosity when he points out that he’s played on these massively successful records, only a quiet amazement. He still remembers the first day he was paid to play bass in the studio.

“May 15th, 1966, we cut the Percy Sledge song ‘Warm and Tender Love.’ It was the follow-up to ‘When A Man Loves A Woman.’ And it was a gold record. I thought, ‘Good Lord, I think I’ll keep doing this.’"
Through working at studios like FAME and with producers like Rick Hall and Quin Ivy, David Hood developed the now-famous rapport with drummer Roger Hawkins and guitarist/engineer Jimmy Johnson. In 1969, they opened Muscle Shoals Sound Studio after bringing in keyboardist Barry Beckett as the fourth partner.

“It was a big deal to borrow money, and no rhythm section had ever owned their own studio. We made a deal that we were not going to work for anybody unless they worked here, at our studio. And they weren’t going to break us up. If they wanna use any of us, they’ve gotta use all of us.”

That deference to the group, love of the craft, and service to the song is a common thread when he speaks about music. He gave up ambitions with the guitar after realizing “the other guitar player was a whole lot better than I was” in his first band. He picked up the bass and started listening closer to records.

“I love playing the bass. My ear has always gone to support instruments. I played trombone in the school band, and I loved the different parts, you know, the different parts than just the lead parts.

None of us were rich kids or anything. My father had a tire store, but I worked my ass off at that tire store, and I’m so glad I’m not there. Jimmy’s father worked out at the aluminum plant, and Roger’s father was a shoe salesman,” said David.
Everybody knows what a guitar player is doing, you can hear the guitar player, but the bass, you don’t really know what they’re supposed to do. And I had to listen to James Jamerson and Duck Dunn and all these people on records because they weren’t copying anybody. They were coming up with their own stuff. But it couldn’t be too much, it had to work for sessions or for records.”

It all goes back to the records and the studio. David Hood and Roger Hawkins toured with English rock band Traffic in the 1970s but otherwise made a career by compelling music industry legends like Jerry Wexler of Atlantic and Al Bell of Stax to send their artists to a small town in Alabama.
“Our business was people cutting records, and they won’t come back if you don’t do something where they have a success. We stayed busy. And the times we would get unbusy, we’d all sweat and worry about it, but we’d get busy again. And that was good. We worked for a long time.”

And he’s still working. David can be found in the studio on any given day with younger generations of Shoals artists, playing with that same dedication to craft that makes being a musician in Alabama seem feasible to the countless people following in his footsteps. His stories supply a glimpse into what’s possible, and his attitude of humility and quiet confidence in those around him provide a blueprint for musical community. It’s a cliche that artists can grow jaded with success and time, so I have to ask how he feels if a song like “I’ll Take You There” comes on when he’s in public.

“I can’t not say something. [My wife] Judy has heard me say, ‘Oh, I played on that record!’ And I know she goes, ‘God, I know he’s played on all these records…’ I’m sure she gets tired of it, but she’s a good sport. And you know, I love to hear it. I love to hear stuff that we did.”

As he leaves the basement of the studio he helped make world-famous, he looks across the highway towards the sprawling Oakwood Cemetery and notes that his childhood home was just on the other side. His father’s tire shop was down the road, he says, pointing southwest along Jackson Highway.

“I think it’s the greatest thing I ever did, was stay here.”
TONYA TERRY
EMCEE

Tonya Terry doesn't fit any mold! This child of God has been blessed to be a boy mom, grandmother, and fitness buff who champions the cause of curvy women and their quest to be seen as healthy, attractive, and competent. In fact, Tonya's life work is being a mentor to women and children who desire to experience their best life, and she does it by living her best life.

Tonya is actually known by a lot of people for her years as a morning news anchor and reporter at several radio and television stations across the Southeast. It's that effervescent, Southern charm that made her a household name. But the pandemic woke Tonya up to some of the possibilities and capabilities that she had never imagined. In early 2021, she literally stepped out on faith, stepped away from the world of TV news in Alabama and branched out on her own! It is one of the best decisions she's ever made!

Now, Tonya is enjoying a new position as the Marketing Director at Wesley Gardens Assisted Living in Montgomery. She is also building a network of women who want to change the world… one story, one project, and one campaign at a time. Look out for her podcast, “Very Tonya Terry,” her new books, and her continued work with the annual WOW Walk, the EVE Expo, and The WonderFULL World of Fashion!

Tonya created the WonderFULL World of Fashion that features only plus-sized models. She says it is a way to show these ladies they are beautiful, just the way God made them. She also hosts EVE Expo, which is a women’s conference that has brought hundreds of women together annually to uplift and encourage each other. And to set a healthy example, she hosts the annual WOW Walk and an outdoor boot camp to share her secrets to losing weight and taking control of her wellness and fitness!

Most importantly, Tonya is an advocate for victims of domestic violence, bullying, and any form of discrimination. She also works daily to maintain her passion for life and create a legacy for self-discovery, health & wellness, and empowering women!
From Nat King Cole to Lionel Richie, the history of soulful music in the River Region includes dozens of legends that laid the groundwork for aspiring musicians. And it’s Amon Robinson’s mission to preserve and teach the history and importance of music to Montgomery’s youth.

The director of bands at Baldwin Magnet School earned his degree in professional music from Berklee College in Boston. But his love and appreciation of music comes from his late grandfather, Wilbur Terrell, a professional musician who often played with Clarence Carter. Amon was able to honor his grandfather and biggest fan in 2009 by developing a jazz ensemble bearing the elder Terrell’s name at his alma mater, BTW Magnet High School.

Music education for Amon continued with a Master of Music Education from Alabama State University. His dedication to the creation, education, and preservation of music comes at a time when many schools have discontinued music from their curriculums. But the smooth jazz performer remembers the support he got from his hometown too well to stand idly by. Amon belongs to numerous organizations, including the Alabama Jazz & Blues Federation, which provides opportunities for young musicians to learn, practice, and perform.

When not teaching music, Amon enjoys music and movies with his wife, Shelecia. And as an accomplished musician in his own right – having played with Kirk Whalum, Willie Nelson, and Kevin Eubanks, among others – Amon also continues to write and produce music, including his new EP, “Contemplation,” which streams on all platforms.
Performers (in order of appearance)

Andrea Dotto
THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES, ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Andrea Dotto is deeply honored to be performing at ASF! She has toured the country, including performances at Lincoln Center, Papermill Playhouse, Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, John W. Engeman Theater, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Making her Broadway debut in Bandstand, Dotto gained herself a Chita Rivera Award Nomination for Outstanding Female Dancer in a Broadway show. Her television and film performances include the 71st Annual Tony Awards, Good Morning America, and Bandstand (film). Dotto is the Creative Producer & Co-Creator of The Reading League’s “Reading Buddies” on PBS (Check your local listings!). “Endless love to my family.” IG: @msandreadotto

Meadow Nguy
THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES, ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Off-Broadway: Interstellar Cinderella (Cinderella) at NYCCT. Regional: White Christmas (Betty Haynes) at The John W. Engeman Theater, The Little Mermaid (Ariel) at Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, Annie (Sophie) at Alabama Shakespeare Festival; Joe Schmoe Saves The World (Afarin) at Indiana Festival of Theatre, West Side Story (Fight Captain) at Cardinal Stage Theatre Company; Spring Awakening (Martha) at Stray Dog Theatre Company. Film/TV: The Blacklist; The Artist’s Wife, The Honeypot, Law and Order: SVU, Madam Secretary, and Hunters. BFA from Indiana University at Bloomington. meadownguy.com

Alanna Saunders
THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES, ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Alanna’s excited to be making her ASF debut! She is a Seattle-born and now NYC-based actor-singer-dancer-musician-video editor-absolutely not professional painter (but she loves it)-cat mom. Most recently, she was in Clue at Papermill Playhouse! Credits include: Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (Broadway); Scotland, PA (Roundabout); White Christmas (BTG); Once on This Island (Pioneer Theatre); Into the Woods (Natl. tour); TV/film: CBS’s Bull, 18 1/2 (Bugeater Films), NBC’s Peter Pan Live! (Tiger Lily). Love to her family and her fiancé Samuel! Thanks to her agents at BLOC. thesaunderscollective.com

Leanne Smith
THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES, ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Leanne is overjoyed to be doing this show again! Previous credits include Hairspray/Amber (OSF), Ragtime/Evelyn Nesbit (Barrington Stage Company), Marvelous Wonderettes/Suzy (Rep STL), Rock Of Ages/Sherri (NCL/The Eagle Theatre), Legally Blonde/Elle Woods (ABT/MacHaydn), Rocky Horror/Janet (Wolfbane), A Christmas Carol/Belle (Palace Theatre), Xanadul/Kira (MacHaydn), 9-5/Doralee (LaComedia), Smokey Joe’s/Delee (MacHaydn), Christmas on Ice/vocalist (Gateway Playhouse/Spirit Productions), State Fair/Margy (MacHaydn), and Disney’s Believe/Sophia (cruise line). Follow me on Instagram: @leanneamanda
Alyshia Sheree Harper
INNERGY Inc.

Alyshia Sheree Harper is a freelance artist and proud member of Actors’ Equity Association. An Alabama native, she began her dance training at Shoals Dance Academy in Florence, AL, before going on to earn a BA in Dance from the University of Alabama and an MA in Dance and Studio Related Studies from Florida State University.

Tyra J. Ike-Asogwa, MFA
Founder & Co-Artistic Director, INNERGY Inc.

Tyra J. Ike-Asogwa is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch Master of Fine Arts in Dance program. She is also a graduate of the University of Alabama’s Department of Theater and Dance program and is the founder and co-artistic director of INNERGY Inc.

Emory Grace Smith
INNERGY Inc.

Emory Grace Smith was born in Huntsville. She started her dance training at Dance Theater of Huntsville. Emory is a graduate of Alabama State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance.

Alicia Nicole Thompson
Co-Artistic Director, INNERGY Inc.

Alicia is a dancer, choreographer, and educator. She is committed to creating equitable access to the arts and creating a stronger presence for dance forms of the African Diaspora in Alabama.

Alexandria Daily
INNERGY Inc.

Alexandria is a native of Mobile, AL, and trained with “The Lynn Robinson Dancers” at Robinson’s School of Dance. She was a member of the Moving Images Dance Company at John L. Leflore High School and co-captain of the Lovely Lady Strikettes. Alexandria is currently a senior studying dance at the University of Alabama.
Chesroleeysia Bobb
THE AEOLIANS

Chesroleeysia Bobb – known to most as Chessie – is a graduate of Oakwood University, where she obtained her Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance & Pedagogy. She is a multi-instrumentalist in violin, piano, drums, and even handbells! Some of her pastimes include art, writing, dancing, and many other things. She has known music all of her life and prays that God will continue to make a path for the rest of her life journey.

Kobe Brown
THE AEOLIANS

Kobe Brown is a multi-talented graduate of Oakwood University in Music Education. Growing up in Huntsville, he has been interested in many contrasting career paths such as graphic design, nursing, photography, and pharmacy. However, since joining the world-renowned group – “The Aeolians” – he is committed to instilling an appreciation of music in youth and young adults. Having been selected to direct the Aeolians on occasions, he strives to be well-disciplined and well-respected as he continues to seek high honors.

Alexander Chambers
THE AEOLIANS

Alexander Chambers is from Darby, Pennsylvania. He is now in his senior year at Oakwood University, studying Music Vocal Performance. Alex plans on going pro as a multi-genre recording artist, vocal arranger, professional drummer, and more. Outside of music, he likes to learn about different animals, play volleyball, eat, and enjoy spending time with the people he cares about.

Laila Darville
THE AEOLIANS

Laila Darville is a singer, songwriter, and musician studying vocal performance at Oakwood University. She is a proud Aeolian with a passion for creating and sharing art with the world.

Lincoln Liburd
THE AEOLIANS

Lincoln E. Liburd, II, born and raised in Maryland, is a recent graduate of Oakwood University, where he has received his bachelor's degree in Biochemistry. He plans to go to graduate school and pursue a PhD in Pharmacology, in hopes of doing pivotal research regarding personalized medicine.
Carl Reed, Jr.
THE AEOLIANS

Carl Reed was born and raised in Baltimore, MD. His journey with singing started at a young age, singing at church as a part of his youth choir, in the Maryland State boy choir, and with the Milford Mill Concert Chorale in high school. Those experiences led Carl to a great opportunity to study music and sing at Oakwood University as a part of the Aeolians. During his time at Oakwood – where he is currently studying – he has been a part of some remarkable achievements with the Aeolians. It has molded him to embrace the beauty in choral music, as well as the beautiful gift of singing. “Only what you do for Christ will last.”

Holland Sampson
THE AEOLIANS

Holland Sampson is a recent graduate of Oakwood University. She obtained her degrees in Spanish and Biology and plans to further her career in the medical field by pursuing a Master's in Biology this coming fall.

Jalen Scott
THE AEOLIANS

Jalen Scott is a Music Composition & Recording Arts major with a minor in International Business. Jalen plans to use a mix of artistry and business to become an artistic director and a music business executive. Since the age of four, he has been a multi-instrumentalist and is still growing musically. In his free time, he enjoys arranging for voice, going on long drives, going to the beach, and spending time listening to a cappella music.

Natrickie Louissaint
THE AEOLIANS

Natrickie Louissaint is currently a graduating Vocal Performance and Pedagogy major at Oakwood University, located in Huntsville. Before college, Natrickie attended Dr. Phillips High School, a performing arts magnet school in Orlando, FL, where she grew up for most of her life after moving from Port au Prince, Haiti, at the age of 5.
Patricia Bianco
ALABAMA BALLET

Patricia began training at Alabama Dance Academy under the direction of Pamela Merkel. She has accepted scholarships to summer intensives with Boston Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and Alabama Ballet. In 2011, Patricia received top twelve in her region at Youth American Grand Prix. Since joining Alabama Ballet in 2012, her favorite repertoire includes Cowgirl in Agnes DeMille's Rodeo; Sugar Plum Fairy, Dewdrop, and Lead Marzipan in George Balanchine's The Nutcracker®; Blue Girl in Sir Frederick Ashton's Les Patineurs; Bomb Squad Lady in Twyla Tharp's In The Upper Room; Odette and Odile in Swan Lake; Aurora in The Sleeping Beauty; Juliet in Roger VanFleteren's Romeo and Juliet; and Russian Girl in George Balanchine's Serenade. Patricia teaches at the Alabama Ballet School and is very excited and honored to be in her tenth season with Alabama Ballet.

Vance Henry, Anthony Richardson, Tony Robertson, & Ricky Rogers
IRON HORSE BLUEGRASS BAND

Anyone listening to the innovative, hard-driving instrumental licks and strong, precise harmonies of Iron Horse will want to strap in to their seat and prepare to be thrilled with the ride. These guys are uniquely gifted in arrangement and presentation of lyrics and melody. The belief that a group of men, with the help of God, can do anything certainly has found wings within the hearts of members Vance Henry, Anthony Richardson, Tony Robertson, and Ricky Rogers.

Vance Henry (guitar) began learning music at age 11, strumming the guitar and singing. Vance has enjoyed traveling and performing with Iron Horse for the last 20 years.

Anthony Richardson (banjo) started playing guitar and banjo around the age of 10. Traveling and playing with Iron Horse has been the highlight of his musical endeavors.

Tony Robertson (mandolin) started learning to play music at age 13 and has spent 45 years traveling the country playing and singing quality bluegrass music.

Ricky Rogers (bass) first learned guitar at the age of 12 and has been performing ever since. He is the bassist and baritone vocalist for Iron Horse.

Carl Dean
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Carl Dean is an award-winning director, choreographer, and performer, and the director of the Jefferson County Academy of Theatre and Dance in Birmingham. He is grateful for the chance to honor Ms. Patty with this performance and celebrate the love and support she gave and shared with so many.
Belinda George-Peoples
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Award-winning singer, actress, educator, and humanitarian Belinda George-Peoples is a maverick in the music world. She is a two-time fellowship recipient of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and a mainstay in many Red Mountain Theatre company productions for the past 20 years.

Kristi Higginbotham
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Kristi has been performing in the Birmingham musical theatre scene for many years. She is a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College, a vocal coach, and a pilates instructor. Kristi is honored to be a part of this celebration for the lovely Patty McDonald!

Jan D. Hunter
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Jan is well known in the Birmingham theater community and was recently seen in Company at the Virginia Samford Theatre. Tonight, she is happy to be part of the celebration for beloved arts supporter Patty McDonald. Patty meant a great deal to her. She’s so grateful for the support Alabama shows to her artists.

Kendall Johnson
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Kendall has appeared in Red Mountain Theatre's productions of Once on This Island (Armand), Porgy and Bess (Sportin' Life), My Fair Lady (Harry), Ain't Misbehavin', and Sophisticated Ladies. Kendall is most thankful to God above for life and all opportunities to impact the lives of others in a positive manner.

Kate Wesler
ENSEMBLE, RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE

Broadway National Tours: Chicago (Roxie), Pippin (Fastrada). Off-Broadway: Harmony (Marta). TV: She can be seen in The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel on Amazon Prime, as well as BULL, Billions, and others. In dedication to Ms. Patty. katewesler.com
SHAPE NOTE SINGERS

Chris Ballinger
Larry Ballinger
Nicole Bowman
Jim Carnes
Brenda Chafin
Danny Creel
Lisa Geist
Dennis George
Tom George
Sarah George
Ricky Harcrow
Bill Hogan
Nancy Hogan
Cheyenne Ivey
David Ivey
Karen Ivey
Rodney Ivey
Jeff James
Ann Jett
Henry Johnson
Jesse Karlsberg
Hubert Nall
Pam Nunn
Mary Amelia Taylor
Tim Taylor
Jamie Wootten
Shane Wootten

Shape-note (or “fasola”) singing is one of Alabama’s oldest musical traditions. Introduced in the region in the early 19th century, this vigorous four-part a cappella hymn singing survives in four main styles, each represented by its own songbook – The Original Sacred Harp, The Sacred Harp (Cooper Revision), Christian Harmony, and The Colored Sacred Harp.

These singers have traveled from all over Alabama and beyond to showcase shape-note singing from the “Cooper book” in honor of Stanley Smith.

David Hood
MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND TRIBUTE (bass)

As a session bassist, studio owner, and member of the legendary Muscle Shoals Swampers rhythm section, David Hood has recorded with a vast range of musicians. He has worked with Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, James Brown, Clarence Carter, Etta James, Percy Sledge, Johnny Taylor, Bob Seger, Steve Winwood, Rod Stewart, Paul Simon, Cat Stevens, Joe Cocker, Duane Allman, Linda Ronstadt, Jimmy Buffett, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Glen Frey, the Staple Singers, Boz Scaggs, Jimmy Cliff, Levon Helm, Delbert McClinton, Steve Cropper, Sheryl Crow, Alicia Keys, and many more. Although he has played on hundreds of hit records, he may be best recognized for his signature bass lines in the Staples Singers’ classic “I’ll Take You There,” during which Mavis Staples refers to him as ‘Little David.’ Hood and his fellow musicians in the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section were immortalized as the ‘Swampers’ in the Lynyrd Skynyrd song “Sweet Home Alabama.” Hood was inducted into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 1995 and into the Musicians Hall of Fame in 2008. In 2020, he was rated as one of the top 50 bass players in the world by Rolling Stone magazine, coming in at #27.
Mark Narmore
MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND TRIBUTE (keyboards)

Mark Narmore is a songwriter, keyboard player, and singer from Muscle Shoals. He co-wrote “That's What I Love About Sunday” for Craig Morgan, which was named the most performed song of 2005 by Billboard magazine. He also wrote hit songs for Josh Turner, Brandy Clark, Shenandoah, Toby Keith, John Michael Montgomery, and Alabama. The Alabama Country Gospel Music Association named him Songwriter of the Year in 2006, and in 2009, Mark was honored with a bronze star at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame. Narmore's critically acclaimed albums include This Old Wurlitzer (2016) and Soul Fillin’ Station (2019). His new album will come out in the fall of 2022.

Jimmy Nutt
MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND TRIBUTE (drums)

Jimmy Nutt is a musician and Grammy-winning engineer from Muscle Shoals. After working at legendary FAME studios, Nutt started The Nutthouse Recording Studio in 2006. He's worked with Alabama Shakes, John Paul White, Jason Isbell, James LeBlanc, Jimmy Buffett, Percy Sledge, Clarence Carter, Billy Bob Thornton, Billy Ray Cyrus, and the SteelDrivers – whose album The Muscle Shoals Recordings won the 2016 Grammy for Bluegrass album of the year. He also engineered the song “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” by the Blind Boys of Alabama, which was nominated for a Grammy this year.

Carla Russell
MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND TRIBUTE (vocals)

Carla Russell is a powerhouse vocalist from Huntsville. Influenced by Aretha Franklin, Mavis Staples, and Etta James, Russell has performed and recorded with Alicia Keys, Gregg Allman, Phish, Jimmy Hall, and many others. She's the singer of Kozmic Mama and a featured performer with the Muscle Shoals All Stars. Russell has performed at the Porretta Soul Festival in Italy, Lincoln Center in New York, and the Vancouver Island MusicFest in Canada. Her critically acclaimed album Good Side Of Crazy, a collaboration with the Muscle Shoals All Stars, was released in 2018.

Andreas Werner
MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND TRIBUTE (guitar)

Andreas Werner is a producer, songwriter, guitarist, and owner of the record label Crazy Chester Records. He's worked with the Muscle Shoals Horns, Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section members, Tony Joe White, Donnie Fritts, Jimmy Hall, Bettye LaVette, and Eddie Floyd. Over 100 of the songs he wrote or co-wrote have been recorded by a diverse group of artists. In addition to his production work in the recording studio, he produced Muscle Shoals themed shows at the Porretta Soul Festival in Italy, the Lincoln Center in New York, and the Vancouver Island MusicFest, as well as the Alabama Bicentennial Concert and the Alabama Music Hall of Fame's last three induction shows.
Production Team

CELEBRATION OF ALABAMA ARTS

Jacqueline Viskup
DIRECTOR

Euri Carr
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Rick & Sheila Sutton, Sutton Place Productions
VIDEO

Euri Carr, Tonya Terry, Jacqueline Viskup
WRITERS

Carol Samelo, Teri Sweeney
ASL INTERPRETERS

Al-Jahara Hebrew, Larry Ragland, Jr.,
Amon Robinson, Stancy Turner, Jr.
HOUSE BAND

ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Rick Dildine
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Greta Lambert
DEPUTY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Ahkim Church
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Katie An Siegel
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: MANAGEMENT

Phil Hahn
MASTER ELECTRICIAN

Russell Bush
HEAD OF SOUND

Taylor Broyles
INTERIM TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Tate Bivens
ASSOCIATE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Julie Barnhardt
SCENIC CHARGE

Adam Koch
SCENIC DESIGNER

Natalie Mathis
STAGE MANAGER
SHAWN BLACK, a native of Tuscaloosa, began studying dance at age six. At ten, she trained at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Dance Department. At 11, Shawn auditioned for and was accepted at Alabama School of Fine Arts under the direction of Dame Sonia Arova and Thor Sutowski. After graduation, she represented the U.S. as the only female member of the team sent to the International Ballet Competition in Helsinki, Finland. At 19, she auditioned for Mikhail Baryshnikov and was accepted into American Ballet Theatre and went on to work with world renowned dancers and choreographers on stage, television, and in movies – including Baryshnikov, Agnes De Mille, Twyla Tharp, Anthony Tudor, and Sir Kenneth McMillan. Shawn has restaged and coached ballets for dance companies around the U.S. and started Perdido Bay Ballet in Pensacola, FL. Her teaching experience includes American Ballet Theatre, Ballet Hawaii, Alabama Ballet, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Alabama Dance Theater, Charleston Ballet Theater, Virginia Ballet Theater, Santa Fe Community College, the University of South Carolina, and San Elijo Dance and Music Academy in San El Pijo, California, Southeastern Regional Ballet Association, Dothan School of Dance, Audience of One, Panama City Dance Academy, Jacksonville Dance Theater, City Ballet of Wilmington, and Whitman College.

EDWARD MACLARY is Professor of Music at the University of Maryland School of Music. UMD Choirs regularly collaborate with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra. Graduates of the UMD conducting program are now in professional and academic conducting positions around the country. UMD choral alumni populate all of America's top professional ensembles as well as our nation's military choirs. Maclary has given masterclasses in conducting at Indiana University, the Eastman School, Westminster Choir College, and the Oregon Bach Festival. He has served as the chorus master for many of the world's leading conductors, and his choirs have appeared at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

ADAM MORROW is an Alabama-born musician and writer currently based in Florence. He fronts the band Speckled Bird and collaborates with his wife Natalie on their project Della Ray. He can be heard playing guitar in the studio and on tour with artists like John Paul White, Lee Bains III & the Glory Fires, and Penny & Sparrow, among others.

NIKI SEPSAS is a freelance writer with more than 900 articles published in fifty national, regional, and local magazines and newspapers. He is a contributing author to the Chicken Soup for the Soul series of books, where one of his stories was adapted into a short film that aired on PAX Television. In addition to having written 22 coffee table books, four commemorative books, and seven personal memoirs, Niki’s first novel, Song of the Gypsy, was published in 2003 and is set in the Peloponnesos region of Greece. Another book chronicling the history of Greek immigration to Birmingham was published in 2012.

DAVID STEWART received his MA in Art History from the University of South Carolina in 1980 and his PhD also in Art History from Boston University in 1988. In 1989, he joined the Art Department of the University of Alabama in Huntsville as its sole art historian. As the Art Department grew, he focused on teaching contemporary art to serve the department’s large enrollment of studio students who wished to obtain MFAs in Fine Arts from cities across the country. His most recognized students are the internationally recognized Toyin Ojih Odutola and Chris Hutchinson of the Smoke School of Art.
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