

Inspiration

The Muses Creative Artistry Project brings artful sounds to area

In Greek mythology, the Muses were goddesses or spirits who inspired the creation of literature and the arts throughout history. That passion for "the impractical arts" is being carried on by their namesakes in Hot Springs: The Muses Creative Artistry Project.

A nonprofit organization, the Muses is dedicated to preserving classical art and music through performance, education, outreach programs and live events held at different venues around the city, introducing local residents to all the different aspects of the arts.

The group was the brainchild of Deleen Davidson, a professional opera singer who relocated to Hot Springs from New Orleans in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina and immediately joined forces with the musical and art community here. "When I got to Hot Springs, I discovered a healthy arts community already existed," Davidson said. "They approached me and asked me what they could do to help me stay here."

More and more supporters came forward, trying to build support for the musical community, and the Muses project grew out of that need and desire, she said.

The Muses, in collaboration with the Hot Springs Film Institute and the University of Central Arkansas, recently completed their first DVD project together, which documents the

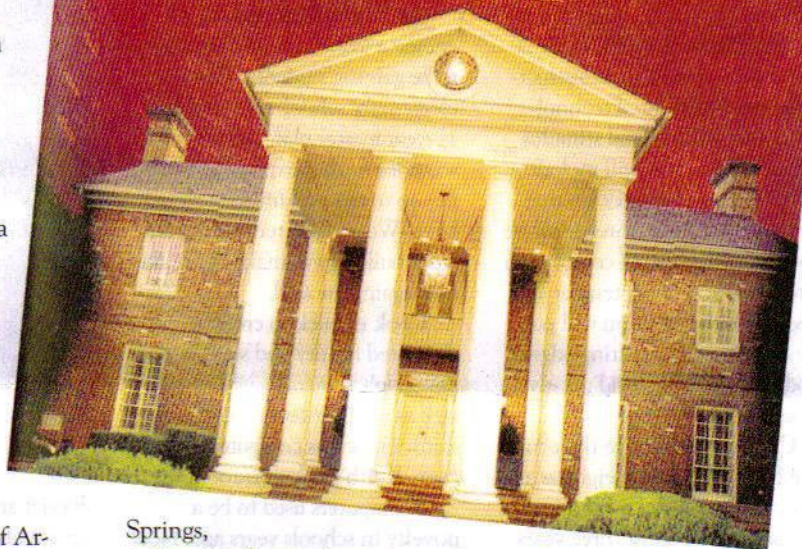
Muses' first annual Gala Fundraising Concert last September at the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock. UCA's film department "set it all up" and had four camera people filming the event and then pieced it all together, Davidson said, noting, "It came out really well."

The event was a rousing success, having in attendance Martha Shoffner, treasurer for the State of Arkansas, and Gov. Mike Beebe. Davidson sang a selection from the musical "Cats" especially requested by the governor. Shoffner, who served as mistress of ceremonies, has expressed her support for the Muses project and named Davidson Arkansas' Treasurer for the Arts after the event.

Davidson said, "It was a magical evening and a fantastic way for the Muses to be introduced to the people of Arkansas." She noted she hopes the HSFI, led by Dr. Ben Meade, will undertake to film this year's event. The Muses project looks forward to its fundraiser for the upcoming season, to be held on Sept. 30, at the Governor's Mansion.

Another upcoming event will be a trip by two of the Muses musicians, Davidson and pianist Hee-Kyung Juhn, a native of South Korea now living in Hot

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LIVE
at the Arkansas Governor's Mansion



Springs, to Japan in September to perform in Hanamaki with the Sister City Program.

A preview concert showcasing the pieces the duo will be performing in Japan will be held Aug. 30 at First Presbyterian Church on Whittington Avenue, where Davidson is choir director.

Davidson stressed that the Muses productions don't just involve classical music, but also incorporate jazz, opera, Broadway and "a real diversity of styles."

"That's one of the hallmarks of the Muses performances is there is something for every person's taste."

She said they combine the performing arts, creative arts and healing arts through concerts, creativity workshops, seminars and outreach programs, performing at Garvan Woodland Gardens, the Arlington Resort Hotel and Spa, Hot

Springs Village, area churches and other venues. "We believe Hot Springs will have a fine performing arts center in the near future," she said. "We don't want people to have to travel to see art. We can build it right here in Hot Springs."

She said a lot of people have not been exposed to classical music or opera and the Muses presents it in a "very accessible way" with "no snob factor."

She said the Greek Muses were "the embodiment of that which expanded humanity's existence and intelligence" and influenced philosophy, astronomy, poetry, history as well as the creative arts.

"The things a civilization leaves behind are its arts and literature and history," she said.

The DVD costs \$15 and is on sale through the Muses, Inc. at www.themusesproject.org.