

# 2001: AN ARTS

"If you shout loud enough and long enough about the importance of the arts in the future, eventually someone will hear you."

— Bill Cameron, chair of the Theatre and Communications Department at W&J

By Tracey R. Kolodziej

For thousands of years, artists have helped to give meaning to the world around us. Their songs of poetry and canvas of dreams have provided deep insight into the political, social, and economic values woven so delicately into the fabric of our culture.

Now, as we journey through the 21st century, we face a rapidly changing economy with shifting social values that will dramatically affect the way in which we experience the world and, ultimately, the art that helps to shape it.

From innovations in technology to reforms in education, the sweeping changes occurring today will shape the face of the arts tomorrow. In fact, change may be the only constant in the museum of the new millennium, according to Hugh Taylor, chair of the Art Department at Washington & Jefferson College.

"There's a trend to create art that's not permanent," Taylor said. "I'm seeing more and more temporary installations, and more and more young people attend them," he said. The trend away from permanent art is what Taylor calls "a reflection of the rapidly changing world that we live in today."

#### WILL ART BE BLINDED WITH SCIENCE?

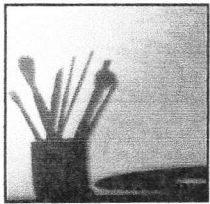
If the trend toward temporary installations is rooted in the notion of a rapidly changing world, it also reflects one of the most powerful forces causing the world's most significant changes — technology.

Just last year, vocalists, composers, producers, and critics gathered at Montreal's Museum of Contemporary Art for "New Op8," a conference exploring the relationship among technology, the human voice, and music theatre. During the conference, composer Zack Settel strapped bioelectrical sensors to his arm muscles and plugged them into his computer to show how performers will soon be able to digitally modify their own voices



# DYSSEY

## 2001: An Arts Odyssey



on stage. With each physical gesture, Settel could change the pitch and range of computer-filtered musical tones by changing the pace of his movement. According to *American Theatre Magazine*, Settel's demonstration raises the possibility that eventually, performers might control an entire orchestral soundscape with their bodies, turning them into composers as well.

Faced with endless possibilities of how technology might affect the arts, Bill Cameron, chair of the Theatre and Communications Department at W&J, has considered whether technology will ever upstage the art it's meant to enhance. "When I ask students what they remember about *Miss Saigon*, they always respond with 'the helicopter, of course,'" he said. Similarly, when he asks them about their favorite scene from *Phantom of the Opera*, the response is always "the one where the chandelier falls down," he said.

"When the spectacle begins to compete with the substance," Cameron warns, "don't become overwhelmed by high-tech sounds and cool-looking visuals." Despite his uncertainty about how new technology will play out on stage, Cameron is sure of one thing — theatre will never die.

"We've lived through change before," he said. "Live theatre has survived through the birth of the television, Internet, and DVD. It's a testament to the power of live theatre, and it shows theatre's amazing ability to meet the basic human need of interaction — technology can't replace that," he said. When technology aids in the prospects of set design and enhanced drama, Cameron hopes that

"it will attract larger audiences and create new and exciting experiences for everyone."

Cameron isn't alone in thinking that technology will lead the charge for change in the arts. For Dr. Kenneth Mason, chair of the English Department, the technological transformation of hypertext is as revolutionary to the writing process as the invention of the printing press. "Hypertext is completely changing the way in which we create, present, and read a story," he said. Dr. Mason points out that, just as people can log on to Internet chat rooms to collaborate with others about their favorite subject, they can also do the same when writing poems or stories. This type of on-line collaboration, he believes, will change the notion of an autonomous author.

"No longer will works of art in literature be born in the single conscious mind of an individual," Dr. Mason said. "Questions will arise about who owns it. What kind of text is it? How do readers engage it?"

In fact, the W&J department chairs who were interviewed for this story agreed, with one exception, that technology would

have the greatest impact on the arts, whether in a positive or a negative way. That impact is also expected to penetrate through W&J's campus. "There will be immense opportunities for artists in the field of technology, and we have an obligation to prepare students for the future," said Taylor.

In preparation for the technological waves still to come, W&J faculty members are considering a newly proposed graphic arts major, additional computer-assisted music technology, and a soon-to-be-proposed writing program that will include a concentration in new media writing. Serving as the melting pot for all of these ideas will be the newly created Vilar Technology Center, a \$30 million facility currently under construction. The center will serve as a unique training ground for creative and innovative solutions to the high-tech demands of the 21st century.

### FUNDING AS A MEANS TO AN END

While most artists agree on the old adage that art should be created for art's sake, they also recognize the realities of creating art



*The Moscow Festival Ballet practices on the Olin Fine Arts Center stage as part of the Vilar Distinguished Artist Series.*

## Leaded Zen

without the necessary financial support.

These realities have hit closer to home ever since federal arts funding began to shrink in the '80s and continued to dissipate in the '90s.

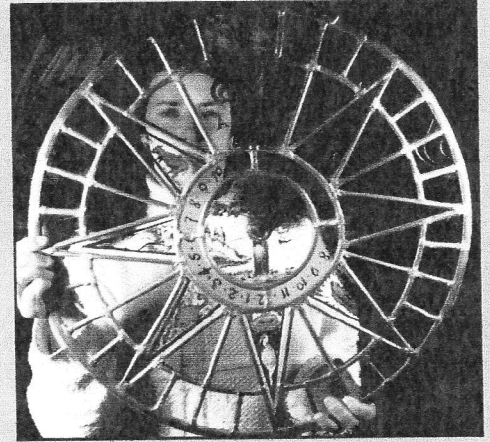
Today, roughly one-tenth of one percent of all federal discretionary funds is allocated to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) combined. Despite its modest funding, relative to other public interest entities, the NEA and NEH have helped to make the American cultural experience possible for citizens across the country, throughout local communities, and in the small county seat of Washington, Pennsylvania.

A grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the NEA, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has helped to energize the spirit of the arts by funding the W&J Arts Series. This year alone, the series combined experiences in dance, culture, music, and drama for W&J students and community members. The series featured national and international performers, including Cambridge University's Stage Tour of *Hamlet*, award-winning pianist Paavali Jumppanen, the Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana Spanish Dance Company, Chicago City Limits, and the Eastman Jazz Ensemble.

In addition to these performances, the W&J faculty has incorporated an educational component into the series. Several series performances are accompanied by master classes and lectures for W&J students and the community. "The only way we can gain future support for the arts is to offer educational opportunities with experiences in the arts," said Dr. Susan Woodard, chair of the Music Department at W&J. "The arts won't be able to survive solely on federal funds anymore.

**Funny how things in life work out in the long run. That's truly the case for Regina Muzika MacDowell '86.**

**Growing up in the rural hills of Lemont Furnace, Pennsylvania, Muzika let fate steer her toward W&J after high school. Muzika says there was "no real, logical reason" for her attending W&J. After all, she had spent her early years studying the arts and preparing herself to study art in Paris. "Fate just guided me there," Muzika recalls.**



**Energetic and motivated, Muzika was able to graduate in three years and recalls her W&J years well. She says, "It was wonderful. I spent all of my time at W&J working. I made many friends in the campus offices where I worked." The self-proclaimed "non-sorority type," Muzika worked for then Deans Lake and Wyland, and current W&J Registrar, Joe Amendola.**

**Muzika, considered one of the most skilled leaded glass workers in America today, only took one art course at W&J. "I have my degree in history and a minor in education, so I went into teaching. It was something I always enjoyed doing," she explains. "I taught middle school social studies in Massachusetts. That only lasted a year. For some unknown reason, I was pulled back to Pennsylvania. I now know that the reason was to meet the master of my art."**

**In 1987, with what some people would proclaim to be a calling to come back to Pennsylvania, Muzika did return and met leaded glass master Leonids Linauts (read about Linauts and his work at [www.apostlesucc.org/Mainglass.htm](http://www.apostlesucc.org/Mainglass.htm)). Linauts, who has since passed away, was in his late eighties at the time and was considered the greatest master of leaded glass works in the country. Living in Reading, Pennsylvania and looking for work as a teacher, many of Muzika's new friends directed her to Linauts as someone she should meet because of her love for the arts. Muzika decided to pay him a visit, not knowing how famous he was. "When I went to visit Linauts, we sat and chatted about art. He eventually decided to come out of retirement and take me under his wing," Muzika recalls. "Even Linauts said fate brought us together."**

**"I served an apprenticeship with Linauts," Muzika explains. "There are no such things as formal apprenticeships in leaded glass work in this country, so I got a completely different kind of training than anyone else in this country.**

**"When I first picked up a glass cutter and cut that glass, something had come alive in me," exclaims Muzika. Today, she calls her work with leaded glass her "life's blood."**

**When the apprenticeship ended, Muzika began working independently. Now she does leaded glass work mostly for churches across Pennsylvania. Today, you will find Muzika working in her studio, an old Greene County, Pennsylvania horse barn across the street from her 250-year-old log cabin. She shares the home with her W&J alum husband, Jay MacDowell '78, who also works in the arts as an ornamental blacksmith.**

**Once a year, Muzika shares some of the secrets of her craft with others. She holds a class at Touchstone Center for Crafts in Fayette County, Pennsylvania (see more about Touchstone at [www.touchstonecrafts.com](http://www.touchstonecrafts.com)). People from around the world come to learn what many of her students describe as "Zen and the art of glass cutting." The class focuses on cutting flat glass the way it was done in the 1500s. "It's therapeutic. It's contemplative. It's a wonderful way to work," according to Muzika.**

**See more of Muzika's work at [www.washjeff.edu/EZine.asp](http://www.washjeff.edu/EZine.asp).**

**— Matt Conn**