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Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts**

**National Press Club Luncheon Address
and 2007 Wolf Trap Summer Season Announcement**

Monday, March 26, 2007

***The Arts and the Environment:
Inspiring a Responsible and Sustainable Future***

Thank you, Jerry, for those generous words of introduction. I am delighted to have this opportunity to join you, the members of the National Press Club, and its distinguished guests. I would also like to thank the members of the Wolf Trap's Boards, the National Park Service, and the many representatives of the arts, education, and environmental communities who have joined us today.

I am especially pleased to have with me one of America's great pop icons and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer who continues to spread "Good Vibrations." Mike Love's commitment to music and the environment has been an inspiration to me for years, and I am delighted that he will share some thoughts with us shortly.

I would like to begin by quoting an old Kenyan proverb: "Treat the Earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children." This poignant invitation reflects my own beliefs on the legacy with which we are entrusted. That belief and my life long passion for the arts and the environment is why I am here today.

As we know, the world we inhabit—the same world that our children have loaned us—is entering an era that is likely to be defined by dramatic environmental changes resulting from human activity. The science behind this interaction between man and nature is complex, but undeniable. And in recent months, scores of reputable sources have reported on the state of the world's ecosystems and the threats posed to our atmosphere, our rivers and oceans, our forests and wetlands, and even our planet's ultimate capacity to sustain a growing human population.

While this recent profusion of urgent, scientific news has awakened many, as my Midwestern ancestors might have put it, we are still not "getting dressed and out the door" fast enough. While there is undoubtedly a growing concern about our imminent environmental challenges, we have yet to truly unite around these issues to compel meaningful legislation in most local and state jurisdictions, or at the federal level. That is not to say that nothing is being done. In fact, the last few months may have signaled a tipping point for environmental issues—it has been on the cover of countless magazines and a frequent lead for television and radio.

Some states and cities are ahead of the curve in protecting the environment, places like California; Eugene, Oregon; and Austin, Texas have all created positive models. A recent issue of *Fortune Magazine* extols the virtue of “zero waste plans” in places like San Francisco and Carrboro, North Carolina, as well as the corporate initiatives at Nike and Xerox. However, I maintain that the issues surrounding global environmental change have yet to be widely embraced by popular culture and inculcated in the performing arts—the ultimate mirror that we hold up to “see” ourselves.

As prominent environmental author Bill McKibben recently stated, “One species, ours, has by itself in the course of a couple of generations managed to...knock [our planet’s] most basic systems out of kilter. But oddly, though we know about it, we don’t *know* about it. It hasn’t registered in our gut; it isn’t part of our culture. Where are the books? The poems? The plays?” ...and I would add, where is the music? And the art?

We have music and literature that convey our historic and ongoing struggles for civil rights; film and theatre created to raise our awareness of the AIDS epidemic; and a seemingly infinite number of artistic works that embrace mankind’s desire for global understanding, tolerance, and peace. But where are the arts that interpret and envision the natural world...teach us about its issues...and the problems we have created...or embody solutions to restoring our ecosystems? Where is today’s “Woody Guthrie” of the environment? Some might say Al Gore, with his Oscar-winning film and his Live Earth Concerts, may be playing that role. But from whomever or whatever quarter it may come, the arts—with its dynamic and creative artists—must continue to sound the alarm.

While environmentally inspired art may not yet be widespread, there are some hopeful signs:

- Described as one of most significant works of art in this generation is Walter De Maria’s *Lightning Field*, a project of art and nature in New Mexico;
- there is the environmental art of Christo and others you might find at the online museum [Green Museum.org](http://GreenMuseum.org);
- or the “green initiative” of the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in Tennessee;
- the insightful music and lyrics of frequent Wolf Trap performers and Teaching Artists Terry Artzner and Greg Leonino, better known as Magpie (and in our audience today);
- and let’s not forget that both the Academy Awards and Super Bowl went “green” this year! (I know what you’re thinking—the Super Bowl is not “art,” but some do consider it “high drama” while others consider it “comedy.”)

Nonetheless, these examples, and others like them, are helping to define, through the arts, our relationship with nature while suggesting a thoughtful, practical and sustainable ecological balance. Even so, one might ask, why should the arts community be charged with finding a path to a sustainable future? Can we, as artists, really accomplish anything? Music, dance, theater and the visual arts cannot magically reverse the environmental degradation or enact policy change.

But what the arts can do is INSPIRE! Since our earliest times, human creativity has been a result of the interdependence of the human condition and nature—and is expressed in what we call art. Although the arts most definitely derive from an instinctive and uniquely human impulse to create; our music, dance, visual art, poetry, and films all reflect our perception of the world we live in; and as such, our collective creativity serves as a gateway to understanding the essence of the natural world—and in turn, our understanding of one another.

Classic examples of nature's direct influence on the traditional arts are obvious and numerous, including Beethoven's 6th Symphony or "The Four Seasons" by Vivaldi; the works of Monet; and the 15th century scientific naturalism embodied in Botticelli and da Vinci. Less obvious examples include using the Fibonacci sequence to generate computer animation or create textile art, as in the innovative work of Rebecca Bluestone's fiber art; and the ubiquitous presence of the golden mean in nature, the human body, and art.

I contend that as our natural environment erodes around us, along with it, so does our art and ultimately our self-awareness. The Roman philosopher, Seneca, espoused similar beliefs with the idea that "everything is the product of one universal creative effort," and Pablo Picasso once commented that there is no *true* abstraction in art. In other words, all art is a product of nature.

I believe the arts have a role; have an obligation to inspire our sustainable future because this collective of visionaries has always communicated the relevance of current events and has long been a bastion for causes of all types, from social justice to education. So now is the time for us to take seriously our role in environmental responsibility.

From folk music's agents of change like Peter, Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Richie Havens; to the powerful and moving music of Mahalia Jackson, Bob Marley, or John Lennon; to committed environmental performers like Bonnie Raitt, Mike Love, Dave Matthews, and Willie Nelson (yes, that includes Willie's bio-diesel tour bus) the arts seek to raise mankind's collective level of consciousness, challenge convention, and inspire societal change.

Some in the arts might still question, shouldn't we really leave the heavy lifting and substantial environmental work to the government, big business, or large environmental advocates? Aren't they ultimately better equipped to share research and technologies, and work together to mitigate global environmental change?

While these entities are certainly a critical part of the big-picture solution, we must realize that every citizen has a voice; has the ability to promote awareness and become a better steward of our environment. And I believe that there is no better example of the power of the individual than what we see in the arts. The arts truly are a testament to what I like to call, the "power of one." One person alone can compose a symphony that changes the way the world sees itself—one person, alone, through the arts, can encourage harmony within the natural world...and inspire others to change. It all begins with that person you see in the mirror each morning—it begins with you and it begins with me!

All too often, we forget about the impact that each of us has on this planet and its inner workings. We forget what it means when we leave that light on, the thermostat too high, or fail to recycle that pop can. This is precisely why each action, every decision we make can be significant. No matter how big or small—our choices can lead to the protection and regeneration of our environment. We can make a difference!

As Albert Einstein once said: “We can’t solve the problems with the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Therefore, I am pleased to share some “new thinking” at Wolf Trap as we announce our own commitment and a new initiative to inspire meaningful and enduring environmental practices.

To facilitate this ambitious goal, I am pleased to announce that The Honorable Norman Mineta has agreed to serve as Chairman of Wolf Trap’s new *National Advisory Council for the Arts and Environment*. This National Council will include distinguished performers, corporate leaders, and environmental experts who will help inform our process—and assist in the further “greening” of Wolf Trap. We are also pleased to announce eco-partnerships with Starbucks, General Motors, PNC Financial Services Group, “94.7 The Globe” FM, and the National Park Service (and there will be others), who will help us advance our effort as well as disseminate the practice of sustainable living within the national performing arts community.

We will begin with a complete assessment of Wolf Trap’s environmental footprint; then work towards minimizing our impact; eventually positioning Wolf Trap as an environmental model and resource for artists and arts presenters across the country.

Wolf Trap has for many years taken environmental steps in the right direction, including recycling; using biodegradable products to serve patrons at our concession stands; the incorporation of numerous “green elements” into the construction of our Center for Education; subsidizing the Wolf Trap Metro Shuttle to encourage and provide public transportation to our performances; and we have recently empowered the Wolf Trap Foundation staff to form an Environmental Task Force to develop new ideas and address issues of concern.

While we are still in the early planning stages, some of the ideas to be implemented with the help of our partners, will be transitioning to alternative fuel and high efficiency vehicles; purchasing wind credits to offset the carbon emissions of our Center for Education, the planting of more trees; and through technology taking steps to move us as close as possible to a “paperless” operation—with the ultimate goal of making Wolf Trap a “zero waste organization” and carbon neutral. In the coming months, we will provide regular updates on our website so that you can follow the Foundation’s progress.

At a time when the world’s natural resources are diminishing and its population is expanding, we at Wolf Trap believe it is crucial to preserve the vitality and beauty of our natural world—a world that inspires masterpieces of a diverse artistic canon.

And speaking of artistic masterpieces, you can experience many of them, great and small, in a magical natural setting at *your* National Park for the Performing Arts... and of course that is Wolf Trap! As always, it is my pleasure to announce the summer season at this luncheon. I begin by offering special thanks to our friends from PNC, who are once again the Season's premier sponsor.

We have a summer full of extraordinary performances, including Doug Varone's masterpiece, *Bottomland*—an interpretive dance and multi-media exploration of Mammoth Cave National Park, accompanied by extraordinary HD video captured on location, in the delicate ecosystems beneath the Earth's surface. The work was originally commissioned by Wolf Trap as part of our groundbreaking artistic adventure series, *Face of America*, which uses the rich language of the performing arts to explore and celebrate the natural and cultural treasures found throughout our National Park system. On the same night, this award-winning dance company will also present the world premiere of another new work commissioned by Wolf Trap.

Additional performances in the summer dance series include the only Washington area appearance by the Trey McIntyre Project, featuring innovative dance, set to the music of Beck and the Beatles. The Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre brings its unique style offering Twyla Tharp's masterpiece, *Nine Sinatra Songs*; and the grand dance "finale" arrives with the Paul Taylor Dance Company showcasing the work of one of the greatest choreographers of our generation.

The Wolf Trap Opera Company, one of the country's most highly regarded Opera residency programs, presents three full-scale productions this summer, including a new Barns production of *Volpone*, the critically acclaimed comic opera commissioned by Wolf Trap.

Mozart's *Magic Flute* returns to the relaxed opera house setting at the Filene Center along with a concert production of Bizet's *Carmen* with the National Symphony Orchestra, featuring Wolf Trap Opera Company alumni Denyce Graves and Simon O'Neill. *Carmen* is also this year's Kay Shouse Great Performance, honoring Wolf Trap's founder and her vision for artistic excellence amid a natural setting.

I am pleased to announce the return of NSO@Wolf Trap Conductor, Emil de Cou and the seven National Symphony Orchestra performances throughout the summer, including collaborations with pianist Lang Lang, James Galway, Marvin Hamlisch, and *Bugs Bunny*. The NSO will also present a night of spectacular high-definition imagery courtesy of NASA, that is set to the music of John Williams, Aaron Copland, and others during an appropriately themed program called *Earth, Sea & Sky*.

Several artists are making their Wolf Trap debut this summer including Rock and Roll Hall of Famers Steely Dan; hip-hop artist Common; Paulina Rubio; Pink Martini; Squeeze; and Alejandro Sanz, to name just a few...

Wolf Trap's commitment to programmatic diversity will be showcased throughout the summer with the best in R&B, jazz, Cajun, Zydeco, folk, country, pop, rock, Latin and world music...including performances by Diana Krall, Joss Stone, Lyle Lovett, k.d. lang, Natalie Cole, Chris Isaak, Shawn Colvin, Johnny Mathis, Michael McDonald, The Indigo Girls, Vince Gill, Amy Grant, The Boston Pops, the Gipsy Kings, Cesaria Evora, Randy Travis, Arlo Guthrie, Celtic Woman, Robert Cray, Michael Feinstein, Linda Eder, the Pat McGee Band, Chicago, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Little Feat, The B-52's, the Steve Miller Band, The Doobie Brothers, and Huey Lewis & The News.

And of course at D.C.'s favorite summer party, Wolf Trap's 18th Annual Louisiana Swamp Romp, the lawn will pulsate with the music of The New Orleans Social Club, Steve Riley, Sonny Landreth, and others.

A Concert for Peace and Love, a real Hippiefest for those who remember the days (or wish they did) features performances by The Turtles, The Rascals, The Zombies, Mitch Ryder, Badfinger, and Country Joe McDonald.

We are delighted that one of America's musical living legends, and Wolf Trap Board member, Tony Bennett brings his "Best is Yet to Come" tour to the Filene Center. Other American icons stopping by this summer include Bill Cosby, Aretha Franklin, Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, The Smothers Brothers, and America's favorite radio host Garrison Keillor with *A Prairie Home Companion*...and of course "America's Band," The Beach Boys.

As always, we have an extraordinary lineup of musical theater.

We offer a new production of *Camelot*, starring Michael York; Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's original rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar* starring Ted Neeley, the classic *West Side Story*, and back by popular demand, the 10th appearance of the worldwide phenomenon, *Riverdance*!

With nearly 100 performances in 100 days at the Filene Center, I invite you to escape this summer to our natural environment—where the arts come out to play.

And when you visit the friendly environs of Wolf Trap, remember these simple words of Native American wisdom, "We are a part of everything that is beneath us, above us, and around us. Our past is our present, our present is our future."

Thank you.

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