

## **Artist Retreat**

Last week, seven artists from varying disciplines gathered for three days at the Pearlstone Conference and Retreat Center in Reisterstown, Maryland for the second annual Artist Retreat. Produced through a partnership between VSA arts Maryland and Quest, the retreat provides artists with intensive training in educational methodology and universal learning (accessible learning environments). Schools are under increasing pressure to have their students pass standardized tests and too often visiting artists are seen as distractions from meeting Essential Learning Outcomes. Those of us who have been in arts education for years are aware of the ever growing body of research that links the use of arts in schools as a valuable asset to learning in all disciplines and to personal growth.

Under the guidance of Master Teachers, Sue Trainor and Tim McCarty, presenter Selene Faer Dalton-Kumins, and VSA arts Maryland Executive Director, Felicia Wilson, the artists learned the principles of good teaching and successful lesson planning. Working in small groups and individual tutorial sessions, each artist developed a lesson plan related to his or her own discipline. Each plan required clearly stated goals and objectives. The artists also had to indicate which Essential Learning Outcomes their workshop met. On the final day of the retreat, each of the artists gave a miniworkshop and received feedback from their peers and the retreat staff.

Because freelance artists are often working in isolation, the retreat provides a rare opportunity for collegial interaction. In the evenings, the artists have opportunities to share their work with each other and to process the day's learning. The retreat staff was deeply impressed by the artists' talent, their enthusiasm, and their dedication. The staff was also impressed with the artists' desire and commitment to learning the skills of good teaching so that they could better serve students. Several of the artists stayed up to the wee hours of the night planning and practicing their lessons. The hard work paid off of the final day with clearly and joyfully presented workshops.

Artists participating in this year's retreat along with alumni from last year's retreat are in the process of developing a teaching artists network. This network will provide those artists who have an interest in working in schools with a communication and support network run by fellow artists. It is Quest's and VSA arts Maryland's hope that this network will continue to grow over the ensuing years.

Quest and VSA arts Maryland are grateful for the support of the VSA arts National Office, United States Department of Education, and the Maryland State Arts Council in making the Artist Retreat possible. Also thanks to Myra Coffield for coordinating the retreat. You can see photos, video, and a listing of all of the retreat artists on Quest's website at <http://www.quest4arts.org/education/retreat/index.htm>

### **Summah Downundah**

Quest's Wings Company is in rehearsals for its production of *Mosaic* which is one of the featured productions at the Deaflympics Cultural Festival in Melbourne, Australia. While weaving new actors into the piece, the cast under the direction of Miriam Ganz is also revising each of the show's scenes. This is one of the great advantages of having an ensemble company. The actors and staff can revisit the work and allow it to grow. The *Mosaic* ensemble departs December 31 for Melbourne and in addition to performing at the festival will also perform in the Opening Ceremony for the Summer Games. You can find information about the festival on Quest's website at <http://www.quest4arts.org/productions/tours/australia/index.htm>

In addition to working on *Mosaic*, each Tuesday, the Wings Company has been exploring the development of new material. Company members bring in poems they have written or ideas they want to develop. Then they break into small groups and explore the material. When a group gets to a point that they think they have something, the entire company gets together for a sharing. All of the company members then provide feedback. It's a rich and rewarding process.

### **Big River Auditions**

Deaf West Theatre in cooperation with Arena Stage and Ford's Theatre is conducting auditions this Sunday for a springtime performance run at Ford's Theatre. If you are interested, the audition information is listed on the Quest website at <http://www.quest4arts.org/productions/auditions.htm>

### **Your Support**

During this season of giving, we hope that you will keep Quest in mind. Our work is simply not possible without the support of people like you. A project like the *Mosaic* tour of Australia costs \$25,000. These types of tours are important for the growth of the Wings Company members. The tours also enable Quest to carry out its mission of using the arts to affect educational, social, and employment change. Yet, corporate or foundation funding for international exchanges is almost nonexistent. Therefore, Quest must depend upon friends like you to sustain this important work. Our goal for the upcoming year is to receive \$100,000 in individual giving to support all of Quest's work.

If you would like to make a gift to Quest, you can do so on line by clicking the "Contribute to Quest" link on our home page at <http://www.quest4arts.org>

You can also contribute writing a check and mailing it to:

Quest: arts for everyone  
7414 Newburg Drive  
Lanham, MD 20706

The Quest family wishes you all the best during this holiday season.