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*EDWARD G. RENDELL, Governor*

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## **PENNSYLVANIA FIRST LADY ANNOUNCES HONOREES FOR 2006 GOVERNOR'S AWARDS FOR THE ARTS**

**WILKES-BARRE** -- On behalf of Governor Edward G. Rendell, First Lady Marjorie O. Rendell today announced the recipients of the 2006 Governor's Awards for the Arts, honoring outstanding artists, arts organizations and patrons of the arts in Pennsylvania for their excellence and achievement in the arts.

"It is often said that each generation stands on the shoulders of the one that came before," Judge Rendell said. "If that is so, then future generations of artists and those who nurture and support the arts will stand very tall indeed. It will be a great pleasure to recognize this year's remarkable recipients of the commonwealth's highest recognition for artistic talent and service. They ably represent the invaluable contributions of Pennsylvania's cultural community and inspire others to achieve and serve."

The 2006 honorees are:

- Internationally-renowned master artist **Nelson Shanks** of Andalusia will receive the first of two, 2006 Distinguished Arts Awards presented this year.
- The acclaimed **The Dixie Hummingbirds** of Philadelphia will be recognized with the 2006 Artists of the Year Award.
- Tony Award-winning film and theatrical designer **Santo Loquasto** of New York, NY, (originally of Wilkes-Barre) will receive the second 2006 Distinguished Arts Award.
- **Bradford County Regional Arts Council (BCRAC)** will receive the 2006 Outstanding Leadership and Service in Arts in Education Award.
- **Marlene O. "Linny" Fowler** of Bethlehem will receive the 2006 Patron Award.
- **Dr. Vernell A. Lillie** of Pittsburgh will receive the 2006 Pennsylvania Creative Community Award.

Governor Rendell will present the awards at 6:45 p.m. on Tuesday, June 20, at The F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts in Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County. The ceremony, which is free and open to the public, will include presentations and special performances. A ticketed reception will immediately follow the ceremony.

An open call for nominations for the 2006 Governor's Awards for the Arts was issued to arts organizations, artists, arts patrons, elected officials and members of the public. More than 140 nominations were received for 88 different nominees. A panel comprised of members of the Arts Council and its executive director reviewed the nominations and made their recommendations to Governor Rendell.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Profiles of the 2006 honorees follow:

Working from his home and studio in Bucks County, master artist **Nelson Shanks**, the recipient of the first of two 2006 Distinguished Arts Awards, has created a vast body of work whose artistic value and renown enriches the commonwealth. An internationally-celebrated painter, his work is in distinguished European and American collections and has been exhibited in many museums and galleries across the country. An exhibition of his paintings was held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1996.

His commissioned portrait of former President William Jefferson Clinton was recently unveiled to much acclaim by The National Portrait Gallery of The Smithsonian Institution. Shanks was chosen by President Clinton to paint the portrait and the new work joins the nation's only complete collection of presidential portraits outside the White House.

Shanks' portrait of Pope John Paul II was hailed by the Director of Exhibitions at The National Gallery of Art as destined to be "the most enduring painted image of one of the pre-eminent religious and historical figures of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century." Commissioned portraits of noted figures include: Her Royal Highness, Diana, The Princess of Wales, His Majesty King Gustav and Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden, Queen Julianna of the Netherlands, former President of the United States Ronald Reagan, Lady Margaret Thatcher, Luciano Pavarotti, Katharine Graham, and Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

Shanks has further demonstrated a lifelong commitment to teaching and has taught at the University of the Arts, George Washington University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Academy of Design, the Art Students League and the Art Institute of Chicago.

In October of 2002, Shanks opened Studio Incamminati in Center City, Philadelphia, to provide a place where artists can study realist painting and learn other skills necessary to be successful in artistic careers. Artists from across the country and around the globe flock to study with the master artist.

The Distinguished Arts Award recognizes a Pennsylvania artist of international fame or renown whose creations and contributions enrich the commonwealth. Past recipients in the Distinguished

Arts category include actor Jimmy Stewart; artist Andrew Wyeth; opera singers Marian Anderson, Paul Plishka and Marilyn Horne; authors James Michener, John Updike and Chaim Potok; film director M. Night Shyamalan; dancer Judith Jamison; and musician Paul Winter.

Born in Wilkes-Barre, and a graduate of Kings College, **Santo Loquasto** is an award-winning designer for film, dance, drama and opera. He has collaborated with Woody Allen on more than 20 films and enjoys ongoing creative partnerships with contemporary choreographers Paul Taylor, James Kudelka and Twyla Tharp.

Inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 2005, Loquasto has won Tony and Drama Desk Awards and his costume designs for Woody Allen's *Zelig*, and production design for *Radio Days* and *Bullets over Broadway* were nominated for Academy Awards.

Twyla Tharp's *Push Comes to Shove* marked the beginning of his relationship with American Ballet Theatre. In his work with ABT he also collaborated with choreographers Jerome Robbins, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Kenneth MacMillan, Agnes de Mille, and Mark Morris. As designer for the Paul Taylor Dance Company, he has designed such works as *Speaking in Tongues*, *Spindrift*, *Company B*, and *Funny Papers*.

Last year, his scenic design for the Broadway revival of David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* was nominated for a Tony Award and won the 2005 Drama Desk Award. He won both the Tony and Drama Desk awards in 1989 for his scenic design of the New York Shakespeare Festival's *Café Crown*, and in 1990, he again won both the Tony and Drama Desk awards for his costume design for *Grand Hotel*. He received his first Tony in 1977 for costume designs for *The Cherry Orchard*. Other productions for which his designs have received Tony nominations include *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *That Championship Season* and *Ragtime*.

Last season, he designed *Faust* for the Metropolitan Opera and *An Italian Straw Hat* for National Ballet of Canada.

Most recently on Broadway, Loquasto's work has been represented in the productions of *Three Days of Rain* (with Julia Roberts) and *Movin' Out* (Billy Joel/Twyla Tharp).

The 2006 Artists of the Year, **The Dixie Hummingbirds**, have passed their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a musical phenomenon and celebrated with a cut on the soundtrack of Bob Dylan's film *Masked and Anonymous*, a richly detailed book published by Oxford University Press that documents their legacy and an album, *Diamond Jubilation*. One of the most influential groups in gospel music, they began their remarkable journey in 1920s Greenville, South Carolina, organized by gospel great James B. Davis, then 12 years old.

In 2000, the "Birds" were awarded a prestigious National Heritage Fellowship recognizing their stature as the last of an entire generation of artists who provided the foundation of Black music in the U.S. today. While they have always remained deeply rooted in the gospel tradition, their influence has made itself known far and wide in American popular music. Artists they have influenced include the Temptations, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Bobby Blue Bland, Al Green and Shirley Caesar.

The group broke into the popular consciousness in 1966 when they prompted a standing ovation at the Newport Folk Festival, and still greater fame was in store in 1973, when they backed Paul Simon on his smash hit “Loves Me like a Rock.” The Birds’ own rendition of the tune won them a Grammy in 1974.

The group moved to Philadelphia in the early 1940s, where easy access to a range of venues allowed them to make a name for themselves on a larger scale after 10 years of ‘wildcatting’ – taking their act on the road to build a reputation – in the South. By 1942, they were wowing audiences at Café Society, New York’s first integrated nightclub, backed by legendary saxophonist Lester Young. In the 1950s, they routinely brought down the house at the Apollo Theater.

Jerry Zolten of The Pennsylvania State University describes their journey in a highly acclaimed history *Great God A’Mighty! The Dixie Hummingbirds*.

The **Artist of the Year Award**, which is known as the Hazlett Memorial Award (named for the first chairman of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts), recognizes an artist for his or her contributions to the excellence of the arts in Pennsylvania. Past recipients of the award have been pianist Lang Lang, conductor and composer André Previn, dancer LaVaughn Robinson, poet Gerald Stern, architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, sculptor Thaddeus Mosely, ceramist Rudolph Staffel, and photographer Mark Cohen.

The 2006 **Patron Award** will be presented to **Marlene O. “Linny” Fowler** of Bethlehem, PA. During the last 17 years, Fowler has become the Lehigh Valley’s leading arts philanthropist, providing not only monetary support but also her time, talent and wisdom to countless arts and cultural organizations. Her philanthropy and hands-on advocacy is credited with having made a greater impact on the accessibility of the full range of artistic and cultural opportunities to children than anyone else in the region.

Much of her energy is devoted to introducing children at risk to the arts, supporting educational programs for youth and improving the quality of life through art for all people. A longtime advocate for arts in education, she recognizes the importance of the arts in the development and education of all children. An artist herself, she provides art supplies and lends a hand in art lessons to the poorest of elementary schools and Head Start Centers. She supports art therapy at Valley Youth House for runaways. Through “Linny’s Kids,” a scholarship program at the Baum School of Art, she provides support for children to attend art classes at the school. Her sponsorship of Free Sundays at the Allentown Art Museum has increased attendance by those who might not otherwise be able to enjoy the Museum’s treasures and this single act of generosity has benefited 30,000 visitors.

She has served on the boards of directors of Lehigh Valley cultural organizations for more than 30 years and supports many more. Without her leadership and vision, the Banana Factory, a community arts center and gallery in Bethlehem, would never have been established. She was involved in the project from the beginning, serving on a committee to find the right abandoned building to develop so artists could have individual studios and children could learn art. Her initial contributions spearheaded a successful capital campaign of which she was co-chair.

Most recently, she was the major donor for the Fowler Family South Side Campus of Northampton Community College, which will be the hub for 16 arts organizations and the *Cops n’ Kids* literacy

program.

Past recipients of the Patron Award have included Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, The Heinz Endowments, Regina Gouger Miller & Marlin Miller, Jr., Francois Bitz, Lois Lehrman Grass, PNC Bank Foundation, Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, and Binney & Smith Inc.

The Rendell administration initiated two award categories for its Arts Awards – the **Outstanding Leadership and Service in the Arts for Youth and/or Arts in Education Award** and the **Pennsylvania Creative Community Award**. These categories reflect the administration’s recognition of the significant benefits of involvement in the arts for Pennsylvania’s youth and the potential for positive community impact through utilizing the arts to address important local issues.

The **Pennsylvania Creative Community Award** was created to celebrate and recognize those who have used arts and culture to address issues of importance at the community level. The recipient of this year’s award will be **Dr. Vernell A. Lillie** of Pittsburgh whose role as a mentor, leader, catalyst and tireless advocate for African American theatre and culture has fostered the cultural unity of African Americans in Pittsburgh.

Named a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania in 1998, Lillie co-founded Pittsburgh’s Kuntu Repertory Theatre with the late playwrights Rob Penny and August Wilson in 1974. An associate professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh since 1972, Lillie, who is retiring from the university at the end of this academic year, has been acknowledged as a “living legend” by the National Black Theatre Festival.

In her capacity as artistic director of Kuntu Repertory Theatre and as a professor, teaching artist and role model, Lillie has written and directed over 250 plays and has launched the careers of numerous artists. Kuntu Repertory Theatre produces works that capture the essence of culture from the African continuum. The theatre strives for excellence; promoting the West African Bantu philosophy that art is functional and is a way of preserving the positive dimensions of one’s own culture. The name, Kuntu, comes from a Bantu word meaning the “way” of a community – the essence, the cultural unity of a people.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Lillie received the Career Theatre Award in Education from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education in 2003. Previous recipients of this award include Athol Fugard and Edward Albee.

The past recipients of the Pennsylvania Creative Community Awards have been Donna N. Brown & Alfred Brown and the Point Breeze Performing Arts Center; and Art Sanctuary and Asian Arts Initiative.

The award for **Outstanding Leadership and Service in Arts in Education** will be presented to **Bradford County Regional Arts Council (BCRAC)**. Since 1995, BCRAC has developed an exemplary program for arts education in 27 rural school districts in Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Sullivan, Tioga and Wyoming counties. When it began its arts in education work, BCRAC had only one artist on its regional directory and only three days of residency work. Since then, it has grown to promote and support 25 high-quality artists working in 27 school districts. In 2004-05, the total number of students served was 15,532 for a total of 312 artist residency days in 23 residencies.

Selected through a rigorous application and review process to partner with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts to provide arts in education services in the northern central part of the state, BCRAC assembled and led the Northern Tier Alliance for Arts in Education. It identified a doubly-underserved population – both rural and pre-school (0-6 years of age) – for in-depth service and formed the Learning Early Network with other early childhood programs in the region. In 1999, this work was recognized as a “Best Practice” in the arts by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

In 1998, when the local community sought to respond to the tragic suicide of a young child, it sought out BCRAC and the Learning Early Network to employ their work with the arts and communication skills, which in turn led to the development and implementation of the program *Learning Communication Skills through the Arts*.

Working with 16 Head Start Centers in the Northern Tier region, BCRAC provides the services of specially trained artists whose arts activities are designed to improve communication skills in children. In the first year of the project, it brought music, storytelling, dramatic play and visual arts activities to approximately 300 children in the Bradford-Tioga Head Start program. Each of the Centers receives 16 visits from one or more artists and attends at least one live performance in a historic theatre.

*Learning Communication Skills through the Arts* attracted the attention of an education consultant for the Arts Council of England, who traveled to Bradford County for a week in August of 2004. She subsequently initiated an international exchange program with Northern Tier artists and artists from England. The *Learning Communication Skills* program will be featured as one of three international models for work with early childhood and the arts.

Past recipients of the Outstanding Leadership and Service to Youth/Arts in Education Awards are Carole Haas Gravagno, Dr. Sarah Tambucci, and a Lifetime Award was presented to children’s author Lloyd Alexander.

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*The Rendell Administration is committed to creating a first-rate public education system, protecting our most vulnerable citizens and continuing economic investment to support our communities and businesses. To find out more about Governor Rendell's initiatives and to sign up for his weekly newsletter, visit his Web site at: [www.governor.state.pa.us](http://www.governor.state.pa.us).*