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### Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame Announces 2012 Inductees

Seven outstanding individuals associated with the Fox Valley have been selected for induction into the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame. In alphabetical order, the Class of 2012 is composed of the following artists: Gower Champion, Annbritt (Gemmer) duChateau, George Grant Elmslie, Carolyn Hove, Delbert Peterson, John Qualen, and Dominic Walsh. The sixth class to be inducted, they will be officially honored at an awards banquet scheduled for Thursday evening, April 19, 2012, at Piper's Banquets in Aurora.

The Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame sought nominees this past fall from 4 categories of expertise: visual arts, performing arts, literary/media arts, and "other," a category reserved for educators, directors, curators, or benefactors. Two artists in the Class of 2012 represent the visual arts: George Grant Elmslie, architecture, and Delbert Peterson, painting. The remaining five represent the performing arts – music, dance, and film. Three of the 2012 inductees will be honored posthumously.

According to Susie Starrett, Vice President of Selection for the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame, "The board was very pleased with the number of nominations received and the caliber of the candidates. There is no shortage of talent or achievement among the artists who have ties to our communities." Since the founding of the Arts Hall of Fame, the names of more than 110 artists have been submitted for consideration.

**Gower Champion** was recognized repeatedly from 1949 through 1981 as he accumulated 8 Tony Awards from 15 Tony nominations for his legendary choreography and musical direction. Not counting the years he danced as a boy, he was a standout in multiple performing arts fields for 41 years, from 1939 to 1980.

Born in Geneva in 1919, Gower was the son of Beatrice Carlisle and John W. Champion, an advertising executive. His mother brought him to Hollywood as a little boy with his brother. There she worked as a dressmaker. Their first home was originally built by Ronald Reagan. Gower first found performing fame with his wife and dance partner, Marge Champion. Together they starred in the motion picture *Show Boat* (1951) and later hosted their own television show (1957).

As the Hollywood musical and similar TV programming began to decline, Gower turned to the Broadway stage. He had a big hit with *Bye Bye Birdie* in 1961 and then made Broadway history in 1964 with *Hello Dolly!* He was highly respected and sought after by such notables as Julie Andrews, Harry Belafonte, Carol Channing, Bob Fosse, Neil Simon, Ruth Gordon, Ethel Merman, Chita Rivera, Jerry Orbach, and Dick Van Dyke.

In 1980, Gower choreographed and directed the newest version of *42nd Street*, but passed away just hours before the show opened from a rare form of blood cancer. Posthumously in 1981, he was awarded a Tony for Best Choreography and earned the 1981 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding

Choreography.

**Annbritt (Gemmer) duChateau** is recognized as one of the top conductors in musical theatre today, a field usually dominated by men. Born in Aurora in 1965, Annbritt graduated from West Aurora High School in 1983 and then went on to earn both her bachelor's and master's degrees in Music, Piano Performance, at DePaul University in Chicago, the latter in 1989.

Annbritt has performed or conducted the music for Tony and Grammy nominated cast albums. She opened the international showing of *Mary Poppins* in Chicago in 2009 as conductor. The men of ABBA personally selected her to play piano for their concert *Kristina* in Carnegie Hall, also in 2009, and from there, they took the show to the Royal Albert Hall in London. She recorded the music for *Kiss Me Kate*, *Into the Woods*, and *Frogs*, all of which were nominated for musical awards.

Other productions with which Annbritt has been involved as keyboardist, musical director, and/or conductor include *Pal Joey*, *Les Miserables*, *Oklahoma*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and national tours of *Miss Saigon* and *Aspects of Love*. She is currently the New York conductor for the *Billy Elliott* production on Broadway. Annbritt was inducted into the West Aurora Distinguished Alumni Hall of Honor in 2010.

**George Grant Elmslie** was born in 1871 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and came to Chicago in 1884. Although his architectural apprenticeship began in the office of William Jenney, by 1887 George was a co-worker of Frank Lloyd Wright's in the office of J. Lyman Silsbee. Wright referred him to architect Louis Sullivan, and after Wright's departure from Adler and Sullivan's office, George became Sullivan's right hand talent for the next two decades.

George left Sullivan's practice in 1909 to join the firm of Purcell and Feick in Minneapolis. Eventually, they became the renowned architectural team of Purcell and Elmslie, perhaps the most prolific and successful of the Prairie School architects.

In service to his Fox Valley clients, George Grant Elmslie left a legacy of buildings that have made Aurora a tourism destination for architectural enthusiasts from around the world. Within about a ten square block area in downtown Aurora sit five of his magnificent creations: The Old Second Bank building, the Keystone Building, the (German-) American Bank Building (corner of Galena and Broadway), The Healy Chapel on Downer at Chestnut, and the Graham Building.

In 1922, George began a private practice back in Chicago, focusing on commercial designs. He later worked with William S. Hutton on school designs, and in conjunction with Herman von Holst on such buildings as the Elgin Station and the Aurora Terminal. In 1947, the American Institute of Architects awarded him their prestigious Fellowship status.

In his later years, George wrote articles on architecture and accepted speaking engagements. His life work is an American treasure of drawings and realized buildings in the Sullivanesque and Prairie Styles that make him one of the top architects in American history.

**Carolyn Hove** is solo English horn for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, a position she has held since 1988. Born in Elgin in 1958, she began her career while in high school. She won a

competition and performed the Haydn Oboe Concerto in C major with the Elgin Symphony Orchestra (ESO).

After graduating from the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Carolyn returned to the Chicago area and took the position of principal oboe for the ESO until 1986. During the 1980s, she performed with many groups in the Chicago area, including Music of the Baroque, Chicago Opera Theatre, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Joffrey Ballet, and the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago, and others. She also taught at Elmhurst College and Northern Illinois University before leaving the area in 1986 to play with the San Antonio Symphony.

Carolyn has recorded three solo CDs, arranged pieces by Beethoven and Ravel for English horn and piano, and lectured at leading music schools throughout the U.S., Canada, and Europe, including the Royal Academy of Music in London. She has performed original works written for her by contemporary composers, and recorded with Sir Andre Previn and Esa-Pekka Salonen. In 2003, Carolyn performed the world premiere of William Kraft's *Concerto* for English horn and orchestra, a work commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and written expressly for her.

Carolyn has appeared as a soloist in numerous venues, including a recital for the Dame Myra Hess Concert Series in Chicago. Since 2005, she has conducted English horn master classes annually at Brigham Young University, Ball State University, and Columbus State University, Georgia. She has served on the Executive Committee of the International Double Reed Society and has been a tireless advocate to promote the English horn as a solo instrument.

**Delbert Peterson** was born in Aurora in 1926 and graduated from East Aurora High School in 1944. He began his career after studying at both the American Academy of Art and Ruth Ford's Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, and has been producing award-winning art ever since.

After completing his military service and working for 9 years as an artist for industry with Geneva Kitchens and the Elgin National Watch Company, he opened his own commercial art studio in Batavia. By the 1950s, however, he devoted himself exclusively to the fine arts.

Delbert's paintings have been featured in several national collections and exhibited in 5 states – Illinois, Florida, Missouri, Colorado, and Kentucky. From 1973 to 2011, he won dozens of blue ribbons and best-of-show honors. Some of the more prestigious shows include the Illinois Art Council, Chicago; the Oakbrook Associates and West Suburban Fine Arts Alliance; Watercolor USA, Springfield, MO; Rocky Mountain National Watermedia Exhibition, Golden, CO; Norris Cultural Center; Art in Public Places, Vero Beach and Indian River, FL; Backus Gallery, Four County Juried Show, Fort Pierce, FL; and the Florida Watercolor Society, 40th Annual Exhibition, Bradenton.

Four of Delbert's watercolors were selected for publication in the popular national calendar, *Artists of America* (1980, 1993, 2003, and 2004 editions). In 2010, Delbert received the Artist Award at the annual Laurel Awards event presented by the Cultural Council of Indian River County in Vero Beach, FL. He continues his leadership activities with the 400-member Vero Beach Art Club and continues to teach art classes for the Vero Beach Museum of Art.

**John Qualen** was born in 1899 in British Columbia. His father, a Norwegian Lutheran minister, brought the family to the Fox Valley. In 1920, the year he graduated from Elgin High School, John won an Illinois State High School oratory contest. At the same time, he won a scholarship to Northwestern University, an opportunity that changed his life forever. While at Northwestern, John became interested in acting. He formed the Qualen Concert Company that became part of the Chautauqua Circuit and traveled America honing his skills and characters. Eventually he made it to Broadway.

Later, as a member of director John Ford's stock company in California, John Qualen proved to all he was a skilled character actor, often playing roles that required a Scandinavian accent. He easily mastered the personalities of the characters he played.

From 1931 until 1974, John appeared in nearly 130 motion pictures, including such popular screen successes as *Three Musketeers*, *The Road to Glory*, *Tortilla Flat*, *Jungle Book*, *The Fugitive*, *Student Prince*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *The Sons of Katie Elder*, *Elmer Gantry*, *North to Alaska*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.

John is the only actor to appear in both classics *Casablanca* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. His ability to portray Berger, the Norwegian resistance member, in the former movie, and Muley, the dirt farmer losing his home in *Grapes*, demonstrated his unique abilities as a character actor. John was Historian for The Masquers and Treasurer of The Author's Club, both organizations for actors based in Hollywood. He passed away in 1987.

Born in 1971 and raised in West Dundee, **Dominic Walsh** was initially trained in dance by Elgin's Elisabeth Spalinger Boehm, a 2002 inductee into the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame. Dominic began his professional career in Chicago, and then worked his way up the ranks to become the top principal dancer with the Houston Ballet in 1996. He has been featured in *Dance Magazine* and other national ballet publications.

Prior to joining the Houston Ballet, Dominic was invited to compete in the prestigious USA International Ballet Competition, formerly called the Varna Competition, as it originated in Varna, Bulgaria, and was a finalist in the 1994 competition. As a principal dancer with the Houston Ballet for more than a decade, Dominic received national and international praise for his interpretations of both classical and contemporary roles. He burst onto the choreographic scene in 1998, when he won the Choo-San Goh Award.

In 2002, he founded the Dominic Walsh Dance Theatre, where he currently serves as Artistic Director. Dominic choreographed works for his own and other companies, and the Dominic Walsh Dance Theatre quickly became one of the country's leading dance companies. He was named a winner of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago's 2010 National Choreographic Competition, and he was the Audience Choice and Judge's Award winner in Ballet Austin's 2010 New American Talent Choreographic Competition.

Dominic is also an accomplished watercolorist whose paintings have been sold to benefit the Houston Ballet's Artists' Reserve Fund.

The Selection Committee, currently chaired by Vice President Susie Starrett, evaluates all nominations received by the November 1 deadline every other year and recommends finalists for board approval. The committee is made up of board members as well as representatives from the community with expertise and knowledge in the arts. To be considered, a candidate must be associated with the Fox Valley through birth, education, residence, or service. Each artist must have completed at least 20 years in their professional field and received national or international recognition.

The 7 new members of the Class of 2012 will join previous inductees in the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame, bringing the total number of inductees to 44. In 2010, the following artists were inducted: television pioneer J. Allison Binford, Jr.; radio and TV host Floyd Brown; pianist Huntley Brown; Edward C. Cook, painter of miniatures; Wallace E. Cunningham, architectural designer; arts patrons and benefactors Herbert and Martha Schingoethe; and landscape architect Susan Kay Weiler.

Those honored in 2008 included: composer Martin Brody; architect John Cordogan; cartoonist Dick Locher; soprano Anne McKnight; Mike Venezia, artist/author of children's books and videos; choreographer Kenneth Von Heidecke; and Ingrid Wendt, poet. Honored in 2006 were composer Daniel Brewbaker; sculptor Ray Kobald; musician/pedagogue Bill Robinson; musician/pedagogue Douglas Steensland; painter Mary Hackney Wicker; and media artist Paula Zahn.

The artists recognized in 2004 were composer/educator Jan Morris Bach; broadcast journalist John Drury; music conductor and educator Robert Hanson; film actor William S. Hart; author Marguerite Henry; photographer Stan Jorstad; television producers, writers, and performers Bruce and Claire Newton; and Trygve Rovelstad, sculptor, designer and painter.

The Charter Class from 2002 consisted of ballerina and choreographer Elisabeth Spalinger Boehm; painter Ruth Van Sickle Ford; opera singer Eric Halfvarson; author and artist Wendell Minor; instrumentalist Robert Olah; violinist Maud Powell; and symphony musician Grover Schiltz. Interestingly, three members of the Class of 2012 – Carolyn Hove, Delbert Peterson, and Dominic Walsh – were mentored by three of the charter inductees – Grover Schiltz, Ruth Van Sickle Ford, and Elisabeth Spalinger Boehm, respectively.

The banquet planned for April 19, 2012, to celebrate the accomplishments of this most recent group of inductees is open to the public. Area residents and arts fans interested in attending this event, which will be held at Piper's Banquets in Aurora, may call 630-492-0666 to request an invitation. Printed invitations will be mailed in March. Murna Hansemann, Vice President of Events for the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame, is coordinating banquet details.

During induction ceremonies, each inductee is presented with an inscribed medallion and a certificate noting their achievement. A personalized Arts Hall of Fame plaque is then added to the permanent exhibit of the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame at the Paramount Theatre in downtown Aurora.

The Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame was first organized in March of 2000 under the name Aurora Fine Arts Recognition Committee as an independent citizens group. Its central purpose then, as well as in the present, is to give public recognition to artists associated with the Fox Valley area.

The Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame is a registered not-for-profit, 501c.3. organization, and all

donations are utilized to help fund current and future projects. In the odd-numbered years, the Arts Hall of Fame offers its Founders Series, which features either a performance or an exhibit related to its purposes and/or its inductees.

More information and news about the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame is available at [www.foxvalleyarts.org](http://www.foxvalleyarts.org).

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