

2009 was a big year for the Art Center. It turned 70. To acknowledge this accomplishment, a fund-raising campaign was launched with a goal of raising \$70,000 for the 70 years of operation. Thanks to the efforts of our President of the Board of Trustees, **Ruth Hemming**, for writing the letters and matching the monies collected. Thanks to all those who sent money whether it was \$5 or \$5000. In addition, we hosted *"The Work O' the Weavers"* in June and filled the theatre. *The Ventura Improv Company* entertained in July with an evening of laughter. In September we introduced our first annual *"Awesome Artists Garage & Book Sale"* followed a week later by **Roslyn Kind** in concert. We capped it all off in November with a big Birthday/Anniversary Bash featuring the music of *Jimmy Calire and Studebaker*. We look forward to the next 70 years!!!!!!!

Our branches continued to be lively last year with a variety of activities:

Our **Dance Branch**, led by *Karin Dron*, held four Contra Dances. Contra Dancing has enjoyed a long tradition of offering dance for people of all ages with live music and all steps taught and called. The New Year started out with dancing to the music of Bonfire with steps called by Susan Michaels. March 14, Southern Comfort and John Rogers, May 9, Chopped Liver with Jonathon Southard, November 28, Celtic Spring and Jonathon Southard, rounded out again by New Year's Eve with Bonfire and Susan Michaels.

The **Music Branch**, with *Judy Vander* at the helm, presented four Chamber Music Concerts. The finely -restored 1924 Steinway piano played beautifully. Starting off Andrew Radford and pianist Natasha Kisenko played "Music for the Bassoon and Piano by the Undead." They were followed in March with the music of the Ventura Piano Quintet joined by oboist Bruce Walker. Natasha Kisenko returned in September with Hatem Nadim to perform music entirely for four hands. Robert Krupnick played Goldberg Variations by J.S. Bach in its entirety in October.

The **Literary Branch's** monthly events, scheduled by *Liz Grumette*, were interesting and timely. January saw several readings of great political speeches with Catherine Dain reading a speech from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the 19th century leader of women's suffrage movement. February the branch and the Ojai Valley Poets Association presented a free evening of poetry reading. March, Zoe and Doc Murdock writers discussed the process of writing a novel and getting it published. April saw a tribute to Joan Raymund and Rivertalk. May, Barbara Wagner of the Laubach Literacy Program spoke about tutoring adults to read and write. June, the Ojai Shakespeare Salon presented Lisa Wolpe, renowned actress, director and teacher. July, poets from Moorpark College, Razor Babes, September, poet Deborah Sperberg read from her three books of poetry and shared the how and why of writing. October, Frank Malle read from Edgar Allen Poe's macabre short stories, The Tell-Tale Heart, The Raven and The Black Cat. November, screenwriter Michael Janover discussed his craft. Something for everyone!!!!

The **Art Branch** featured twelve exciting exhibits: January - Kirk Lowry & Iris Williams, February - Honoring Our Mentors, the works of the students of Bert Collins & Jannene Behl, March - The All Male Review with Tom Hardcastle, Kirk Lowry, Kent Butler, Roger Conrad, Edmund Arredondo, Rick Carreon, John Talevich, Tiger Huang, Jim Joseph, Norm Kirk, Leo Braun, Mel Greenblatt, Richard Franklin, Richard Rackus, Zack Zastrow. April - The Figure As Art, May - The Santa Barbara Printmakers, June - The Annual Photography Exhibit, "Visions of Change", July & August - Hot Summers Day, Hot Summer Nights, September - Bonnie Caruk Riege, October - The Ojai Studio Tour Artists, November -The Ojai Group, Kristy Vantease, Barbara Wiles, Patty Van Dyke, Diane Hanley & Mary-Gail King, December - Innocent Merriment - the magic of wreaths. The showcases displayed the works of Lupe Vasquez, Barbara Evans, Patty Smith, Sandy Wolk, Edward Miller, Glenn Morgan, Dennis Willey, Nancy Wynands, Susan Seabury and various artists with renderings of "Village People".

The **Theatre Branch** presented a stellar season of plays. The year started with *Private Lives* (directed by Frank Malle), followed by *Noises Off* (directed by Gai Jones), *Peter Pan* (directed by Gai Jones), *A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum* (directed by Tracey Williams), *Broadway Bound* (directed by Steve Grumette), *The Glass Menagerie* (directed by Tom Eubanks). We are truly the best small theater in the County.

The **Photography Branch**, with *Roger Conrad* leading, in addition to the annual exhibit in June, "Visions of Change", hosted Foto Vino and held several workshops.

Looking Forward.....2010.

Theatre..... Shirley Valentine, the sensational play by Willy Russell, will be the first offering of our theatre's 2010 season. This engaging one-woman show, starring Jenna Scanlon and directed by Frank James Malle, has been delighting audiences since it first appeared on stage in 1989. It's the story of an English housewife trapped in a loveless marriage totally disillusioned with her drab hum-drum existence. That is until she decides to accept her friend's invitation to join her for a two week vacation in Greece. This charming, delightful play opens January 29th and plays through Feb. 27. Performances are Fri. & Sat. at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Call 640-8797 or log on to www.ojaiAct.org.

Backstage Study and Play Reading of Locally Performed Plays sponsored by the Theatre Branch Education Committee and taught by Gai Jones will be held Thursday Jan. 21, Feb. 4, 18,25, March 4 & 18, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. in the Raymund Room. Participants of all ages read aloud and discuss plays performed in Ventura County during January-March 2010. Email gai.jones@sbcglobal.net.

Internationally acclaimed director, actor and acting coach, *Lisa Wolpe* will conduct a 6 week Shakespeare scene study class, January 23 to February 27, Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. First timers to advanced welcome. Call Susan 649-1590 for more info or to sign up.

The **Theatre Branch** invites everyone to welcome in the New Year with a Season Preview on Sunday, January 17 at 7 p.m. Short scenes from each of the 2010 season of plays will be offered. Certificates for the 4th Annual Memorable Moments Awards will be presented, followed by a party with free food and drinks. There will also be a raffle of 2 free season tickets and season tickets will be on sale. Come, party, enjoy and get your season tickets!!!!

AUDITIONS FOR INHERIT THE WIND, DIRECTED BY TAYLOR KASCH, WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY JAN.16, 10 A.M. TO 2 P.M., SUNDAY JAN. 17, 12 - 4 P.M., MON. JAN. 18, 7-9 P.M. CALL 640-9659 FOR MORE INFO. PERFORMANCES ARE SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 19 TO APRIL 17.

Art... The January Gallery exhibit will feature the amazing work of *Frances Spencer*. Frances has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and won awards for her watercolors, printmaking and oil paintings. Dates for exhibit are Jan. 10 to Feb. 4. Reception is Sunday Jan. 10, 1-3 p.m.

Literary.....On Monday January 11 at 7 p.m., the Literary Branch will present author Laurence Shames. A professional writer since 1976, he has published nearly 20 books, 100's of magazine articles and essays, and has sold a number of drafts for screenplays. He has ghostwritten three New York Times bestsellers and been nominated for an Edgar award. He will talk about his writing process and answer questions. Suggested donation - \$5.

