

WOMEN 2017 *in the* ARTS

REJENA CARRERAS | SUSANN COKAL | ANNIE COLPITTS | KRISTEN GREEN
ASHLEY HAWKINS | ANA INES KING | LAINE SATTERFIELD
JANET STARKE | STONER WINSLETT



WOMEN IN THE ARTS COCKTAIL RECEPTION & AWARDS

Wednesday, March 15, 5:30pm • Dogtown Dance Theatre | Tickets: \$45, available online at styleweekly.com/womeninthearts
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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2017 WOMEN IN THE ARTS HONOREES

REJENA CARRERAS | SUSANN COKAL | ANNIE COLPITTS
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WOMEN in the ARTS

In the popular imagination, an artist is someone whose focus is directed inward: the writer in the garret, the painter in the studio, the actress inhabiting a role. These nine Women in the Arts honorees all shine their lights outward. Through their efforts, they've made Richmond's art community more inclusive, more accessible and more exuberant.

Some do it through teaching. One of actress Laine Satterfield's favorite roles is as director of SPARC's New Voices for the Theater, a playwriting competition for high schoolers in which eight winners get to see their work performed. Novelist Susann Cokal, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, has used Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" video to help her students understand the Proustian concept of broken narrative. Ana Ines King and Stoner Winslett, artistic directors of the Latin Ballet of Virginia and the Richmond Ballet, respectively, make time to teach dancers even as they're busy leading their organizations.

Others do it by creating opportunities. Ashley Hawkins started Studio Two Three to give Richmond printmakers and photographers a place to work. Annie Colpitts co-founded TheatreLAB to be a home for new and provocative theater. And through decades of work on local boards, Rejena Carreras has helped once-tiny organizations like the Richmond Ballet and the Visual Arts Center grow into cultural powerhouses.

And others do it by starting conversations. In courageously telling the story of her hometown's battle over school segregation, author Kristen Green encouraged people to talk about a painful and important subject. Janet Starke is transforming the Richmond Performing Arts Alliance into a place that brings arts organizations together.

Style Weekly congratulates this year's Women in the Arts honorees. We can't wait to see what they do next.



When Ana Ines King is teaching dance to children, particularly those of Mexican or Latin-American descent, they often tell her they're not being treated well at school because they're from other countries.

King's heart goes out to them. "The people that matter, that count, are the ones that are going to embrace these kids and these families," she says. That's exactly what King and the Latin Ballet of Virginia strive to do.

King's own daughter felt the same way when she and King moved to Richmond from their native Colombia. "She was very, very unhappy, being here. She was feeling very, very lost," King says. The only thing that made her happy was dancing.

King was a professor in Virginia Commonwealth University's dance department when local Spanish teachers began asking her if she could teach their students the cultural and historical, as well as the physical, aspects of Latin dance. "I started doing it just for fun, but it became very, very popular," King says.

In 1997, King founded the Latin Ballet of Virginia to perform and teach multicultural dance programs for a wide audience. "A few months

after I started, I had 150 students," she says. Today, the nonprofit offers classes in flamenco, salsa and bachata, ballet and hip-hop.

The organization also runs a program in local schools called Be Proud of Yourself, which uses dance to teach language and literacy. Spanish-speaking students learn English through dance, and native English speakers learn Spanish. With drumming and dancing, children with special needs build confidence and focus through the Dance as Therapy program.

The Latin Ballet's professional corps, founded in 2000, performs the beloved Christmas ballet "The Legend of the Poinsettia" each year, as well as other works both traditional and contemporary. The latest is "NuYoRican," running March 16-19, which is based on the struggles and triumphs of Puerto Ricans who migrated to the United States after World War II.

In 2017, the Latin Ballet of Virginia marks its 20th year. "Of course, I'm not going to be here forever," King says. Her dream, she says, is to sit down and write the full history of the organization. And her great joy, she says, is seeing dancers who started with her at the age of 3 continuing their dance education. "They are the future of the Latin Ballet," she says.

Ana Ines KING

FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR OF THE LATIN
BALLET OF VIRGINIA

In 1572, a supernova appeared in the sky, shining brighter than the sun. "It was so revolutionary - so earth-shattering, to mix strata - because as long as they had recorded history, the skies had been the same," Susann Cokal says. "People felt that the world was being completely rewritten."

From the spark of this long-forgotten miracle sprang "The Kingdom of Little Wounds," Cokal's most recent novel. It's a dark and magical story for young adults, set in the 16th century, that's about a young Scandinavian seamstress working in a castle inhabited by a syphilis-ridden royal family.

"I'm really interested in how people saw themselves and made sense of the world at different moments," Cokal says. Since childhood, her roving curiosity and appetite for books have driven Cokal to write about little-known worlds - not only Renaissance Scandinavia but the 1880s American West and 14th-century France.

Most recently, the unfamiliar kingdom Cokal's exploring is her own brain. Five years ago, she suffered a serious concussion when a neighbor's dog knocked her to the ground and her head hit a concrete

step. The long-term effects, she explains, are similar to those of a stroke: She experiences daily migraines, insomnia and memory loss.

"I thought my life was basically over. I often feel that despair again now," she says. In essence, she became a different person - yet her relentlessly probing writer's mind helped her make sense of what was happening to her. She became fascinated

by narratives in which the past and present are jumbled. She wrote her way through the pain by working on a ghost story set in 1920s Richmond, in which migraines, hallucinations and broken narratives all play a role.

Cokal, an associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth University with doctorates in creative writing and comparative literature, teaches a graduate fiction workshop and an undergraduate course on the modern European novel. She enjoys challenging her graduate students to try experimental forms, such as telling a story in the form of catalog copy. "It opens up ways of looking at what a narrative is," she says. Cokal is also the editor of *Broad Street*, an interdisciplinary literary journal at the university.

Susann COKAL

AUTHOR, EDITOR
AND PROFESSOR



Anyone who doesn't think there's art to investigative journalism or nonfiction writing should have seen Kristen Green's dining room circa 2012.

"I had color coded notecards - every scene was color coded," she says. "They were on dining room table, but it got too long, so they went on the floor."

Green needed to see the big picture for "Something Must Be Done About Prince Edward County," her best-selling debut book of 2015 about the only community in the nation to close its schools for five years rather than desegregate.

The index cards helped her weave together the story of the Virginia town Green grew up in and her family's role in creating a white academy for their children, while black students' educations languished or parents sent their kids away for school.

But it wasn't just a chronological story, beginning with the 16-year-old who led a student strike of the black school and initiated a case that would become part of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

It was also a personal exploration of Green's idyllic childhood in Farmville and confronting the privilege of her past. Her first interview in 2007, with a dying administrator of the white academy, scared her away from the book idea for a year.

"I didn't realize he'd push back, that he would just assume I agreed with him," Green says. "I really had this urge to flee. I thought, 'what have I got myself into?'"

Graduate school and parenthood also pushed the project off, and Green tied some of her research and background into stories she wrote as a newspaper reporter.

"But it kept bubbling up, even when I tried to push it aside," she says.

Green moved to Richmond in 2010 to be closer to the story in her book, taking a job at *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*. And she spent the summer of 2013 in Farmville, her first time living there as an adult.

"For almost 20 years I'd been a journalist, suppressing any opinions. A lot of what I was doing was getting up very early in the morning and free writing about how I felt about what I was learning," Green says. "I was really finding a voice that was different from my journalistic voice."

The book's release was a relief. Resounding praise in national publications followed. Oprah's magazine recommended it. And the Library of Virginia gave the book its nonfiction prize for 2016.

Green is now a writer-in-residence at the University of Mary Washington, where every student is reading her book this year. She stays busy as a writer and mother of two daughters in Richmond.

Kristen GREEN

AUTHOR OF
"SOMETHING MUST BE
DONE ABOUT PRINCE
EDWARD COUNTY"

Stoner Winslett's closet is organized by ascending degrees of formality. On the left: black sweat suits. On the right: sequined evening gowns. "And everything in between, I say, 'These are my work clothes,'" Winslett says. Her work as artistic director of the Richmond Ballet takes her from the studio to the theater, from corporate meetings to black-tie events, and back again. "There's no normal day here," she says.

Winslett joined the ballet in 1980. Blessed with an active and passionate board, the ballet was putting on ever more elaborate performances and had opened its school five years earlier. But there was a problem: as talented dancers graduated, they left Richmond because there was no place for professional dancers to work.

"We decided that wasn't right," Winslett says. In 1984, the Richmond Ballet became Virginia's first professional ballet company. Under Winslett's leadership, it has grown into a cultural force that both launches the careers of local dancers and attracts international talent to Richmond. "It's been such a journey and such an adventure," Winslett says. "Most of all, it's been such a privilege" to see the ballet blossom.

The Richmond Ballet has also become a place where new ballets can be born, as the ballet commissions and performs original works. Just recently, a New York choreographer was here auditioning 16 dancers for a new piece that would require 12, Winslett says. "After the first hour, she said, 'I love them all. ... Can't I use all 16 people?'"

Winslett is a choreographer herself who is known for her piece "Windows," a sweeping work that nods to 200 years of ballet styles: French, Russian, modern and post-modern. In the fall, the Sacramento Ballet performed Winslett's "Echoing Past." She also teaches Richmond Ballet's professional dancers.

One of her great passions is Minds in Motion, a long-running program that brings a full year of choreography practice to fourth-graders in 22 Richmond schools, helping them learn discipline and concentration. "My dream is that one day, Minds in Motion would be in every Richmond elementary school," Winslett says, "and that every child in the Richmond community would have an opportunity to feel the joy of dance."

Stoner WINSLETT

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF
THE RICHMOND BALLET



"It is so strange to think that it has been five years," Annie Colpitts marvels. It seems like just yesterday that she and actor and director DeeJay Gray decided to launch an experimental theater company. They had a simple goal: "to produce some shows with people we like, and do work we think is important," Colpitts explains.

One of TheatreLAB's early performances, "Riding the Bull" – a love story and morality play about a brash cattle rancher and a sweet rodeo clown – was a surprise hit, drawing crowds and award nominations. And then, in 2013, Broad Street developer Matthew Bauserman invited Colpitts and Gray to check out the basement space of his building at Third and Broad streets.

"Instead of listening to our mothers, we decided to go down this creaky back staircase with someone we had never met," Colpitts jokes. They fell for the rough but atmospheric space, and that's when things took off. In short order, TheatreLAB became an official nonprofit, raised some money, renovated the basement and began putting on full seasons.

"We have not really slowed down since then," Colpitts says.

TheatreLAB has added more space and is installing a wheelchair lift, making the theater compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and enabling it to pursue more grants. Five years in, the little theater that could is chugging along at full speed.

People often assume Colpitts has an acting background, but she shudders at the thought. "The idea of getting up on stage and pretending to be someone else is horrifying to me," she confesses. But she always enjoyed working with creative people, and so obtained her degree in business and arts management from Sweet Briar College.

In addition to her work at TheatreLAB, Colpitts has not one but two day jobs, both of which connect with her creative talents. She handles marketing for SMBW, the architecture firm behind the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts expansion, and is the office manager at Sustainable Design Consulting.

Some of Colpitts' favorite shows are in TheatreLAB's Cellar Series: small and provocative plays that fill the space between bigger productions. The most recent is "My Name is Rachel Corrie," the true story of a young American crushed by an Israeli army bulldozer as she tried to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home in Gaza. Colpitts likes these shows, she says, because they've "still got that scrappy energy ... that we had way back when."

Annie COLPITTS

MANAGING DIRECTOR AND
CO-FOUNDER OF THEATRELAB

Virginia Commonwealth University's printmaking department is nationally renowned, but its graduates face an unpleasant truth: as soon as you leave the university, it's "impractical, if not impossible, to continue making prints," Ashley Hawkins explains. That's because the equipment required for screen printing, lithography, relief printing and etching can cost tens of thousands of dollars – and that's assuming you have somewhere to put it.

That just wasn't right, thought Hawkins, a VCU graduate. She believed Richmond should be a city where people could not only get a great art education, but then remain here and build successful art careers.

So she and three other women scraped their meager resources together to create a co-working collaborative space at Plant Zero. It was such a success that Hawkins decided to expand the effort. She went back to school to get a master's degree in public administration with a concentration in nonprofit management, with the express intention of founding an affordable, accessible and inclusive community art workspace.

In 2010, she did just that. Studio Two Three opened on West Main Street, in a space that featured printmaking equipment and private studios for rent. It rapidly outgrew its quarters and in 2015, moved to a 7,000-square-foot space in Scott's Addition. In the fall, it will expand into the building next door, nearly doubling in size and adding more studios, darkroom and classroom and exhibition space.

Sixty artists call it home; more than 500 people take classes there each year; and in 2016, some 1,600 schoolchildren visited on field trips. Half its budget comes from revenue earned through membership fees, classes and retail sales – check out the on-site shop for unique Richmond gifts – and the other half is donations.

The next phase is taking the show on the road. Studio Two Three has purchased a 14-foot vehicle, styled after an ice cream truck, that will serve as a mobile printmaking studio. Look for it later this spring at Richmond festivals, where people can try their hand at making custom banners with movable type. The S23 To-Go truck will also enable the studio to visit schools that can't afford field trips.

Between studio management and caring for her two children, 4-month-old daughter Zoe and toddler Max, Hawkins has little time to make her own prints. But that's all right, she says: "I do honestly see this organization as my life artwork."

Ashley HAWKINS

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STUDIO TWO THREE



Laine Satterfield likes risks. If she already knows how to do something, she won't do it. Last year, she was asked to direct "Airline Highway," a play about strippers and hustlers partying in a motel parking lot as they celebrate the life of a beloved burlesque performer. "I had no idea how to do it," Satterfield says, "so I said yes."

When she was cast in "In the Next Room (or the Vibrator Play)," Satterfield's character was a pianist. Satterfield couldn't play, but she felt that doing so was crucial to her character. "So I got with a friend, and I practiced the piano for three months. And I played live on stage."

Acting, to Satterfield, isn't putting on a mask. "It's almost like taking off a mask," she says, "and finding yourself in the character, in the story."

She has worked at New York's Public Theatre and Lincoln Center, as well as in Italian commedia dell'arte. In addition to acting and directing, Satterfield's also an educator. "I really, really love teaching," she says. "I feel like so many people have given me so many things, and it's a way to give back. And I'm always learning from them."

For Cadence Theatre, she leads Stage Write, a leadership and work-force development program for Richmond high school and middle school students. Young people write their own stories and perform them as they learn skills that will serve them well in adulthood, like presenting themselves with confidence in interviews. The goal, Satterfield says, is "to teach them that their voice is really important."

Other high schoolers get to feel like theater insiders by volunteering for Cadence through the 4th Wall Student Leadership Program. Young actors can sharpen their stage skills in Cadence's Train pre-professional program.

Satterfield has spent 10 years as program director of New Voices for the Theater, a statewide competition of the School for the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community for high-school playwrights. The writers of the eight best scripts get to come to Richmond for two weeks, work with a professional playwright, and see their work read on stage. "It's amazing," Satterfield says. "It's life-changing for them."

Laine SATTERFIELD

THEATER ARTIST AND DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AT CADENCE THEATRE COMPANY



If you think CenterStage is a building, Janet Starke wants to change your mind.

CenterStage was born eight years ago as a downtown performing arts center – and a controversial one at that, partially funded by a 1-percent increase in the meals tax. Today, CenterStage manages the Carpenter Theatre, the Dominion Arts Center, the Altria Theater, the Gottwald Playhouse and other venues.

But “we’ve come to be much more than a building, and that physical space and place,” Starke says. Hence the organization’s new name, the Richmond Performing Arts Alliance, which better reflects its mission to support the city’s theater, music, dance and other performances.

“I had always felt, growing up here, that our city deserved a performing arts center,” Starke says. A Chesterfield County native, she pursued a career in arts management that led her to the Orpheum Theatre in Memphis, Tennessee, the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, and eventually back to Richmond. In 2009, she became CenterStage’s director of education, providing arts education to children all over the region. She began by going straight to the source: Starke asked local school systems to share their challenges, and told them she would find a way for CenterStage to help.

Janet STARKE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE RICHMOND PERFORMING
ARTS ALLIANCE

When schools said they struggled with early childhood literacy, Starke sent teaching artists into pre-K classes to teach vocabulary and reading comprehension through music, movement and theater. When schools said they needed professional venues for student performers, Starke opened the doors to them. Just recently, the Richmond Public Schools’ All-City Honors Jazz Band came in to play with saxophonist James “Saxsmo” Gates.

Starke is a singer herself who performed with the Richmond Symphony Chorus for many years. “I’m more of an ensemble person,” she says, not a soloist. But an ensemble person was exactly what CenterStage needed in a leader: Starke was named executive director of the organization in 2015.

One of her favorite moments at CenterStage was the Sit-In/Stand Out event that commemorated the 50th anniversary of the 1960 Thalhimer’s lunch counter sit-in. Several of the original Virginia 34 – the Virginia Union University students who were arrested for their peaceful protest – came to speak to students from local middle schools, as did BET co-founder Sheila Johnson. That evening, singer John Legend performed and spoke about the sit-in from the stage. “It was just a really powerful moment,” Starke says, “of realizing what we created this place to be.”

Growing up in the blue-collar town of Portsmouth, Rejena Carreras never got much exposure to the arts. Then, as a young student at Virginia Commonwealth University, she saw “Marat/Sade” at the Virginia Museum Theater.

“It was the first professional live theater I had ever seen. I was just blown away,” Carreras says. It wasn’t an easy play to watch; “Marat/Sade” is a chaotic assassination story performed by the inmates of an insane asylum in 1808. Carreras thought it was wonderful. Theater, she says, “became one of my real loves and real passions.”

Carreras majored in art education, as well as painting and printmaking, and later received her master of fine arts degree in art education. She became an art teacher and designed all the advertising for her husband Bill Carreras’s young business, Carreras Jewelers. In time, she also learned the art of designing custom jewelry pieces. “It all changes, it all evolves,” she says of her style, but the one constant is listening carefully to each client’s desires.

Carreras also dedicated her creative energies to serving Richmond’s fledgling art community. “Every organization was very, very tiny at the

time,” she says.

At 23, Carreras joined the board of the Hand Workshop, then a scattered collection of art classes and now the arts-education powerhouse called the Visual Arts Center. She helped raise the money to buy the building where the center resides today.

She later joined the board of the Richmond Ballet, which was trying to grow beyond its roots as an amateur dance group. She remembers sitting in longtime supporter Kitty Claiborne’s living room and fretting: “How was Richmond going to support it?” The next year, the ballet went professional.

Carreras also served on the boards of TheatreVirginia, including a stint as president, the Firehouse Theatre, Virginians for the Arts, and the School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community. Her advice for anyone considering board work: Bring your talents, then “jump in with both feet and give it your heart and your soul.”

The reward for decades of service is seeing so many once-tiny organizations grow into vibrant cultural institutions, she says: “It is so wonderful how things have changed, and how they have grown, and how Richmond has wrapped [its] arms around the arts.”

Rejena CARRERAS

PRESIDENT OF CARRERAS JEWELERS,
ARTS PHILANTHROPIST



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WOMEN
in the
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honor this year's forward thinking leaders and to
support their creativity, initiative and drive.*

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