



## Prologue

In the Prologue to our first festival in 1978 - titled Arts Reunion - we said, "No one has planned it, but possibly Tidewater is becoming a true regional center for the arts - a port in a different mold which encourages the development of theaters, concert halls, studios, fine arts centers, exhibition galleries and workshops. Perhaps, as in the Middle Ages and in the Free Republics of the Renaissance, the community, both its residents and artists, is accepting a very simple and universal idea: that every person is potentially an artist, subject to the inspiration of another artist at work, and, therefore, subject to the birth of creative effort."

Look around - the energy that inspired that perception has built the Virginia Stage Company, Harrison Opera House, and Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival, as well as scores of smaller organizations, centers, and writers groups. Substantial support for the arts comes from corporations, foundations, universities, government agencies, school systems, and (God-bless-them) individual donors. Our area has, in fact, built a strong support network for creative endeavors. Individual artists, working collectively or alone, now know that there are expanding opportunities and audiences for their works.

This year we celebrate our past associations - with the Associated Writing Programs, President's Lecture Series, community and university co-sponsors, directors of previous festivals, and individual performers. We also nurture an idea inherent in the first festival (and revisited again in the 15th) - that of the interrelationship of the arts. Creativity often takes from the old and makes it new, and the results of that transformation open even more possibilities for future renovations. So looking back, we see ahead. Today, our future is strengthened by partnerships with New Virginia Review Inc., Blackbird magazine, and Port Folio Weekly. With Verizon's generous contribution, we are able, for the first time, to provide support for the efforts of the literacy community in Hampton Roads.

Still, we know that the Festival is about the literary work and the audience. In that nexus, where dreams, failures, and aspirations meet, we hear and see what is deepest in others and ourselves. Each story, poem, play, and performance provides a fresh way for us to experience the world. Re-awakened, redefined - how could we not be struck that now is the time for us to make something new?

That moment of inspiration, rebellion, insight, when all walls are broken down and the flow of creative energy rushes through - like the initial Big Bang - is what we hope you encounter and engage.

**~ Philip Raisor, Director of the Festival**