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Graham Nash, performed 9/26/17

ALL PHOTOS BY STEPHEN FRITZER UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.
Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to present to you our latest gratitude report, recapping all that we are thankful for during our ninth year of operation from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. That’s right, we’ve completed nine wonderful, enriching, and successful years as the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center!

And, as you receive this report, we are in the midst of our 10th season, and looking forward to celebrating in September 2019 with the very same band that started it all – Pure Prairie League. We opened on September 11, 2009, despite there being a recession and despite some doubting that the Kate would succeed. We are so thankful that the Kate has been embraced and supported by the residents of Old Saybrook, the local business community, arts patrons from throughout Connecticut and beyond, thousands of performers from around the world who have been on our stage, and the many non-profit partners who have brought their events and productions to our beautiful theater.

When we think back to the first thoughts of reclaiming this historic building as a home for the performing arts, we think of the dedication, hard work and vision of the town government, the Town Hall Building Restoration Committee and the Kate’s inaugural Board of Trustees. So, on the eve of our 10th anniversary, we dedicate this report to those committee members and our founding board members:

**Founding Board of Trustees:**
Sandra Chase, J.H. Torrance Downes, Dr. David Frankel, Edith Gengras, Pauline Kezer, Carol McFate, Ann Nyberg, Clayton Spencer, Elaine F. Staplins, Chuck Still, and Robert Welsh.

**Town Hall Restoration Building Committee:**

Ten is a very significant number, yet we are still a young organization. The board and staff take great responsibility as stewards of the Kate and work closely with First Selectman Carl Fortuna and the representatives and staff at Town Hall. We want to ensure that the Kate is here to be enjoyed by generations to come. Through the Endowment for the Kate, established in 2013, we are planning for a bright and prolonged future of long-term stability.

**You can help by making a gift in honor of our 10th anniversary!** Whether to the endowment or wherever it is needed most, you will be helping to present the highest quality performing arts events, sustain the legacy of Katharine Hepburn, continue to educate the next generation of artists and arts patrons, and care for this beautiful historic building.

More than one hundred years since this building became the home of a musical and dramatic club, this space has been revitalized by the spirit of America’s iconic actress and reinvigorated by the town that loved her so much. We’re proud that the Kate has become a catalyst for the arts to positively affect people’s lives, and all of you - our members, donors, friends, and patrons - have played the most critical role in this.

Sincerely,

Brett Elliott
Executive Director

Paul Tracey
President
The Golden Pond Legacy Society
How Early Retirement Prompted A Legacy Gift

The Board of Trustees is pleased to welcome Diane Hessinger as the newest member of The Golden Pond Legacy Society, a program that recognizes donors who have made a planned gift to honor their commitment to the Kate and its programming.

Diane has spent more than three decades as a scientist involved in pharmaceutical research, most recently as Senior Director of Clinical Operations for Pfizer. For ten of those years, she has also devoted countless hours to the Kate as a volunteer house manager, Oscar Night Party organizer, and Gala committee member. And now that early retirement has presented itself, she is evaluating her charitable giving and including the Kate as a benefactor in her plans. "It's a great feeling to help support the Kate," says Diane.

After seeing an article about the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in the local shoreline paper in 2009, Diane sought out opportunities to be involved. She always loved the arts and has fond memories of attending Broadway productions with her mother and on various school field trips as a child growing up in Pennsylvania.

These days, when not volunteering, Diane enjoys attending shows at the Kate or bringing her friend’s young children to performances of our Children’s Series. “Young people should support and get involved in the arts,” says Diane. “And I want to help ensure that the Kate is here for future generations.”

While Diane is reviewing options for a Charitable Annuity or Charitable Remainder Trust, there are several other options that someone can choose to remember the Kate in their will, including a gift of cash, stock or appreciated assets and property. The Kate may also be designated a beneficiary (in whole or in part) of a life insurance policy or individual retirement account (IRA).

Have you already included the Kate in your estate plans? We would love to know so that we can acknowledge your gift and welcome you into The Golden Pond Legacy Society. Please contact Robin Andreoli, Director of Development & Community Relations at 860-510-0473 x213.

Glenn Close Visits The Kate
2017 Spirit of Katharine Hepburn Award Recipient

On August 26, 2017, the Kate presented its second Spirit of Katharine Hepburn Award to acclaimed actress, Glenn Close at our annual Gala. This award is bestowed upon an individual who embodies the spirit, independence, and character of the legendary actress.

Close has been nominated for seven Academy Awards, and has won three Tonys, three Emmys, a Golden Globe and a Screen Actors’ Guild Award. Her decision to join the acting profession in part stems from viewing one of the most famous and first ever television interviews with Katharine Hepburn, conducted by Dick Cavett, the inaugural Spirit of Katharine Hepburn Award recipient.

“It mesmerized me. I loved everything about her. I loved how she dressed. I loved that it was spontaneous. I loved what she said. I loved what she stood for,” Close recalled. “I loved that we both had doctors for fathers and that we were from Connecticut. At the end of it, something kind of — a penny dropped, and I said to myself: if that’s what you respect and that’s what you want to be, then do it!”

Accompanied by her niece, Seonaid Campbell at the Gala, Ms. Close graciously spoke with and took photos with attendees. Following the evening’s festivities, she took a tour of the borough of Fenwick and enjoyed time at Saybrook Point Inn, Marina & Spa.

“I grew up in the fields and woods of Connecticut, in Greenwich, and I’d never been to Old Saybrook or to Fenwick, so I am thrilled to be here on this incredibly beautiful day,” Close said.

What an amazing night it was with Ms. Close!
The Endowment for the Kate

Ensuring the Kate is Here for Generations to Come

The Endowment for the Kate was established in 2013 to support the long-term sustainability of the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center. The gift that inspired the endowment was received from the estate of Marjorie Jolidon, a lifelong music teacher, organist, and president of several musical organizations. By the time the Kate opened, Marjorie was homebound and limited to classic movies on television. Still, she was interested in what went on here, learning of the cultural performances taking place at the Kate from friends and caretakers, and wanted to contribute to its future. The generous gift from Marjorie and many others who have since donated to the endowment are helping to ensure that generations to come will grow up with the Kate as an integral part of their community. These funds are board-restricted and invested in order to realize growth year over year. The goal is to build the fund over time so that it will generate a percentage of interest each year for the Kate to support its mission.

Sound & Vision

Enhancing the Kate Experience

Have you noticed the difference? Thanks to the support of many generous donations to the Sound & Vision Campaign, we’ve made several significant upgrades to the Kate experience. Donors helped us to meet a matching challenge and complete Phase 1 of the project. Please see the list recognizing those who supported this campaign in our donor listing pages.

Phase 1 included the installation of a surround sound system, the completion of which we celebrated with the launch of our “Movie Mondays” series last summer. This family-friendly program of classic blockbuster films shown each Monday was enjoyed by hundreds of adults and children and returns this summer.

Now, we are onto Phase 2 and this will include upgrades to our sound booth, something that has not been updated since we opened in 2009. Several elements will be replaced with new technology and we hope to reconfigure the booth to make it more efficient for our fabulous technicians. With nearly 20% of our programs hosted by other area non-profits, these improvements will greatly enhance our community partner productions, as well as the Kate’s own programs.

The Kate recently received a grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County/RiverView Cemetery Fund to help support Phase 2 and the project will be underway soon. Stay tuned as we move forward with these exciting improvements!
My Kate Story
By Judy Samelson, Honorary Member of the Board

When I first heard about the prospect of a Katharine Hepburn theatre in the place she loved, I attended an early fundraiser. At that event I was welcomed with open arms and warm hospitality, and it has been my great pleasure to come to know and befriend members of the original capital campaign and building committees - and to have been asked to serve as one of the original honorary board members, as well as to write the Katharine Hepburn timeline for the capital campaign brochure, to contribute to and serve on The Kate’s museum committee and, early on, to write some short pieces for the blog.

Why did I want to become involved? Well, to quote Rodgers and Hart: if they asked me, I could write a book. So since you’ve asked for a Kate story, here goes:

My life-long love affair with Katharine Hepburn began when I was 13 years old, sitting in a theatre for the initial release of a movie called Guess Who's Coming To Dinner. Up till then I had no idea who she was. I thought I was going to see the latest Sidney Poitier movie. But when I left the theatre, all I could think was: WHO is that woman? From the second she burst through the door of the Drayton’s well-appointed San Francisco home, I was blinded by the power of her star wattage. Whatever she was selling, I was buying. The following year my cousin took me to see The Lion in Winter for my 14th birthday. That sealed the deal.

Fade In. I am now 23 years old and well on my way to amassing a large collection of Hepburn movie and stage memorabilia — and have managed to see all of her movies. Kids weaned on DVDs and YouTube will find it hard to believe that in the late sixties and seventies you couldn’t just press a button or click on a link. You had to search for screenings in revival houses and museums. Fortunately for this Kate fan, New York had plenty of those. And then there was her stage work. I was not quite old enough to have seen her ventures into Shakespeare at Stratford, but I did see her in Coco, A Matter of Gravity and West Side Waltz.

But I digress. At 23, I had a friend who was traveling with the company of A Matter of Gravity as it toured the country after its Broadway run. I wrote a short note to Miss H and sent it to my friend, who said she’d show her the letter, which reached her when the company got to Dallas. I’d seen the play quite a few times on Broadway, the letter said, and I had tickets to see a matinee and evening performance when it returned back east to Baltimore. Could I come backstage to meet her? To this day I’m not sure where I got the nerve to ask, but I did. And not long after, to my great surprise and delight, I received a typed reply: Fine. Come Back. And then in her handwriting: PS After the evening performance.

And I did. Between the matinee and evening performance, I had dinner with my friend and Corrine Bishop, who was Miss H’s dresser. Corrine gave me the key to her hotel room so I wouldn’t have to walk the streets before the evening show. After the curtain calls, I was escorted onstage to the backstage area and asked to queue up behind a small group of people who had obviously been granted an audience as well. As I stood at the back of the line, I nervously twisted a copy of her note inviting me back until it was practically an unrecognizable bit of pulp. Nervous? Why? Because as I stood in line, the distinctive voice of this woman I’d idolized since I was a kid could be clearly heard right around the corner. One by one, couple by couple, the people in front of me were taken around the back to meet her and chat for a moment or two. But as I reached the front of the line with no one left behind me – still nervously twisting that note – I noticed that more and more people had left the backstage area, and it became clear to me that I could well be forgotten and the woman would leave before I had a chance to meet her. At just the moment when my heart sank, I peeked around the corner and what I saw at the end of the hall was Katharine Hepburn standing in front of her open dressing room door — where she’d been greeting people — bag over her shoulder ready to leave.

Fade Out.
But directly behind her was Corrine Bishop, who when she saw me motioned for me to come ahead, and I said a little silent prayer of thanks when she did.

At dinner Corrine had given me a few pointers about what to do when the moment came: Make sure you say your name when you first meet her because she likes to know to whom she’s speaking. But before I had the chance to speak, I was being introduced to Miss H by her dresser (!) telling her that I’d received her note inviting me back!

We shook hands and with the last vestiges of the note still nervously twisting between my fingers, I started to say, “Miss Hepburn, I was so surprised….” when she laughed and chimed in, “at my good manners?” Well, that broke the ice. A little.

We talked a bit about the play, which she liked a great deal, as opposed to what she called the “twaddle” in other popular plays of the moment. (This was the first time I’d ever heard the word “twaddle.” It’s a good word.) I asked her if her ankle was feeling better. She’d injured it — this was not the injury she suffered in that frightening accident on the causeway in the early eighties, but another ankle injury. She’d sprained it or something and for a while played in a wheelchair. And then she liked the character in the wheelchair so much that she continued performing in it as a prop on the tour. She pooh-poohed the injury and said she was fine and allowed me to walk with her and Corrine to her waiting car.

Forty-two years later I can’t say that I recall everything else that was said at that meeting. What has stayed with me all these years later was how kind and generous she was after a two-performance day to stand and chit-chat with a nervous kid. But mostly what is deeply burned in my memory is not only how she sounded but the vision of her, as I walked down that hall to meet her. She wore brown slacks, a black turtleneck and that brown Burberry coat lining, hair haphazardly pinned up, reddish with wisps of gray. And the startling bluest of blue eyes. Stunning at 70.

In the 52 years that have passed since I first watched Christina Drayton burst through that door, I have read and tried to learn as much as I could about Katharine Hepburn. First, about her unequaled acting career: from Little Women to Alice Adams to The Philadelphia Story to Summertime to Long Day’s Journey Into Night. Her intelligence, striking beauty, wit and touching ability to tap into vulnerabilities that lay just beneath the surface of a character’s raging self-confidence makes her endlessly fascinating to watch.

Then by years of collecting her artwork and most revealing of all, letters written by her and by others about her. My admiration grew exponentially when I was fortunate enough to meet and talk to people who knew her. With each conversation, they made her live and confirmed what I’d somehow, instinctively known at 13. I was thrilled to have been asked to contribute to Rebel Chic, the 2012 book about her professional and personal sense of style. In my Introduction I quoted her friend and The Lion in Winter co-star Peter O’Toole: “Yes, the glorious Kate. She’s one of the great jewels of the United States. When your country, which is a young country, does define itself completely—and it will in time—you’ll honor people like Kate. That’s the American spirit.”

I couldn’t have said it better myself.

I’ve visited her wonderful theatre in the heart of Old Saybrook many times, with its friendly atmosphere, great sight lines, terrific sound system and performers. Like her namesake, may she go on and on...Happy Birthday to The Kate.

“Yes, the glorious Kate. She’s one of the great jewels of the United States. When your country, which is a young country, does define itself completely—and it will in time—you’ll honor people like Kate. That’s the American spirit.”

Peter O’Toole

In honor of our 10th year, we’ve been asking patrons and friends to share their Kate Story. Since our very first days, many people have told us about chance encounters with Katharine Hepburn or have relayed a favorite memory of being at the Kate. We encourage you to share YOUR Kate story!

From a brief narrative to a long tale, personal or shared, sentimental or amusing - we want to hear from you.

Email us at Development@theKate.org or feel free to share on our Facebook page!
2017-2018 members & friends

The Kate just wouldn’t be the same without our Members. It’s your support that brings life to the arts in our community. For that we share a sincere thank you.

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It’s a great feeling to help support the Kate”

Diane Hessinger
newest member of
The Golden Pond
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Income: $2,047,170

- 61% Kate Program Revenue
- 33% Contributions & Special Events
- 4% Community Partner Programs
- >1% Investment Income
- 1% Other

Expense: $1,893,534

- 67% Artist & Production Costs
- 20% Administrative & Occupancy
- 5% Marketing
- 7% Fundraising
- <1% Legal & Professional

2017-2018
BY THE NUMBERS

- 40,000+ Patrons
- 267 Shows & Events
- 1,300+ Children & Youth participating in and appreciating the arts!
- Our Audience
  - 12% Old Saybrook
  - 30% Shoreline Towns
  - 45% Connecticut
  - 7% Outside of CT

• Visitors to the Kate represented 39 states throughout the country!
• 180 Tickets donated to other non-profits
• 15 Community Partnerships
• 1,500+ Museum visitors
• 180 Volunteers
• 3rd season of CT Public’s The Kate TV filmed in front of a live audience!

financials: july 1, 2017 - june 30, 2018

Eastern CT Ballet's Spooktacular performed 10/21/17

The High Kings, performed 3/8/2018
A heartfelt thank you to each and every one of our volunteers!

2017-2018 gratitude report