

Meridian Council for the Arts • July 09

ARTSY•FACTS

THIS SATURDAY!

Don't miss the Greg Cartmell Show at the Meridian Museum of Art, 6 to 8 p.m., Saturday, August 1. Come early (6:45 p.m.) for Artist Talk.

MCA - Join Today!

P.O. Box 1405
Meridian, MS 39302

From the president...

We are entering an exciting time for the arts in Meridian and East Mississippi!

Just witness the upcoming seasons for Meridian Little Theatre, the Meridian Symphony Orchestra and the MSU Riley Center. Add in the exhibits at the Meridian Museum of Art, the grand investment by our area educators in art for students, plus the myriad singing and performing groups in our area and you've got the perfect stage for Meridian as the cultural center of the East Mississippi/West Alabama area.

That's where we, the Meridian Council for the Arts, come in. We are ramping up our efforts to bring you the latest and greatest on what is happening in our area. Our website is being revised,

"Jimmy's career exemplifies brilliant on-stage artistic leadership and savvy off-stage business judgment."

—State Rep. Greg Snowden

Meridian's

"Mr. Theatre"

Jimmy Pigford Lives the Arts

Rarely does a theatre artist commit a lifetime of service to one venue. This, however, is the case with Jimmy Pigford, who has been the director of Meridian Little Theatre for 45 years. His artistry has been praised by audiences, fellow directors and actors alike.

Mississippi Magazine polls as "Best Live Theatre" in Mississippi, thanks in a large measure to Jimmy's talent and dedication. A committed teacher as well as a gifted artist, Jimmy has led the effort to take the wonders of theatrical arts to the children as well by organizing the MLT Youth Division in 1969 and MLT Summer Youth Workshop in 1996, he prompted the theatre to give free tickets to all under privileged children to attend the annual Youth Production and ten

and, as you can see, this newsletter is now more convenient. And don't forget our fabulous Threefoot Arts Festival — totally remarkable and revitalized — the first weekend in April.

And, finally, we will be offering you more ways to join us and more benefits for your membership! Get with the ARTS in Meridian with the Meridian Council for the Arts!

—Debbie Martin

IT'S A MURDER MYSTERY!!

And "The Butler Did It, Singing"

Or did he? Find out at the Meridian Museum of Art's Dinner Theatre, set for August 25-29. For tickets, call 601.693.1501 or go to www.meridianmuseum.org.

MSU Riley Center Announces 09-10 Season

The MSU Riley Center has announced a spectacular lineup for the 2009-10 Season, including a fabulous opening concert Thursday, September 3, featuring blues legend B.B. King.

At 83, The King of the Blues still wears his crown well, singing and playing with relentless passion. To see him play in the intimate atmosphere of this restored Mississippi landmark will be memorable.

Other headliners include Nanci Griffith, India Arie, The Four Freshman, Lyle Lovett, Los Lobos and Keb' Mo'.

Theatre goers will enjoy a presentation of Charlotte's Web for the kids and the intense drama of

scholarships for the workshop.

James Adair "Jimmy" Pigford's education began in Meridian and upon graduating from the University of Mississippi in 1956, he left for Hollywood to begin a notable stage and screen career. Jimmy appeared in 3 television shows, including "*The Millionaire*," "*Burns and Allen*," "*Father Knows Best*," "*West Point Story*," and "*Men of Annapolis*" to name a few. Jimmy's movie roles include performances in "*The Rebel*" with James MacArthur, "*Tea and Sympathy*" with Deborah Kerr and "*Shake, Rattle and Rock*." An early highlight of Jimmy's career was his selection in 1958 to represent Mississippi and the United States at the World's Fair in Brussels, Belgium. Jimmy's prestigious duties included serving as Mississippi's Ambassador to the Fair and as Host for the American Theatre Pavilion.

Jimmy's first involvement with the Meridian Little Theatre came in the 1960-61 season, when he served on the theatre's casting committee. For the next few years Jimmy worked tirelessly and unselfishly in the trenches as a theatre volunteer, serving first on the Board of Directors, then as Vice-President and ultimately, in 1965-66 as MLT President.

November 1, 1965 is a red-letter day in the history of the Meridian Little Theatre, for it was on that evening that the musical "*Bye Bye Birdie*" opened to an eager and appreciative audience and Jimmy Pigford made his MLT directorial debut.

Jimmy's artistic vision has always been accompanied by his understanding the need to advance MLT's long-term financial health. This effort came to fruition with his formation of the First Nighter Patrons membership in 1965 and the MLT Ladies' Guild in 1968. One of his biggest challenges came with the devastating fire that completely destroyed the 52nd Street Playhouse on December 16, 1972. Jimmy insisted that MLT not miss a single production, holding performances in various host auditoriums until a new playhouse was constructed. This was accomplished for the 1976-77 Season with a

To Kill A Mockingbird for true theatre lovers.

You can sign up for the entire season or pick and choose. The Viewer's Choice Package allows you to select five or more shows and create your own package. The Family Series is also available with three performances, including Charlotte's Web and Junie B. Jones and the Little Mermaid.

The Meridian Council for the Arts invites you to take part in the MSU Riley Center season! Tickets are available for purchase at the MSU Riley Center box office at 2200 Fifth Street, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. To view the entire season, please go to www.msurileycenter.com. For more information, call 601.696.2200.

**Venture to the "South Pacific"
MLT Season Kicks Off
with Some Enchanted Evening**

Meridian Little Theatre brings Tony Winning **South Pacific** to the stage as the opener for its 2009-10 Season October 1-7.

Three other plays round out the year: The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (Dec. 3-9); The Dixie Swing Club (Feb. 25-March 3, 2010); and The Producers (May 6-13, 2010).

This gala season offers something for everyone — and MLT always welcomes our area thespians to try-out for a part! To get a season ticket, contact MLT at 601.482.6371 or visit www.meridianlittletheatre.com.

State of the Arts 400 seat facility, which bears the distinctive imprint of Director Jimmy Pigford.

Jimmy has served as President of the Mississippi Community Theatre Association and as Chairman of the 1968-69 Mississippi State Theatre Convention (held in Meridian).

In 1970 Jimmy was named to the Governor's Advisory Panel for the Performing Arts in Mississippi. He was the very first person to be honored with a three-year director's grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission (in 1970-71).

In 1994, the Meridian Council for the Arts bestowed upon Jimmy its prestigious "Excellence in Arts" award.

Jimmy's most recent recognition was from the Daughters of the American Revolution in 2008 when they bestowed on him their Community Involvement Award. The accomplishments of Jimmy Pigford's 44 years of outstanding service to his community and to the arts are most worthy of recognition and celebration. It is with pride and confidence that he is respectfully nominated as a recipient of a 2010 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

"Jimmy is the heart and soul of MLT. He began work four decades ago with a small community theatre having no more than 400 members. Today, MLT is one of the largest community theatres in the South, with nearly 1,900 members. I give Jimmy credit for this. It is his legacy."

—Norma Veach

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Don't miss the great happenings in the Arts in Meridian!

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