



Words & Music: A Literary Feast in New Orleans!

THE HISTORY

WORDS & MUSIC: Described by leading authors as "*a great convocation...one of the best...writers' conferences anywhere.*"

A fabulous five days of enlightenment and entertainment, fine food, music.

Words & Music 1997

The Society created Words & Music in honor of the 100th birthday of its namesake, Nobel Laureate William Faulkner. Chaired by Sandra Freeman, the first annual Words & Music opened on Faulkner's 100th birthday, September 25, with an evening of words from the works of Mr. Faulkner, read by a glittering array of celebrities, such as Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

Readings were interspersed with classical music, with an introduction by S. Frederick Starr, biographer of the famous 19th century composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk of New Orleans. This event included a gala supper party following the concert at The Monteleone. 100 writers, editors and agents of national repute participated as faculty in the festival's first writers' conference, Perfect Words,'97.

The grants from First Commerce Corporation and LEH offset some of the costs for the faculty of the writers' conference, which included such literary stars as Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Olen Butler, who also taught a master class during the festival for 450 high school students of creative writing and their teachers, sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Louis St. Martin of Houma. Tulane University's grant of \$25,000 was used to create 50 scholarship positions for deserving writers to participate in the writers' conference and its writing workshops. The Society matched the scholarship positions two to one, for a total of 150 positions.

In addition to the scholarship positions, some 350 people paid to participate in various activities of the writers' conference. An outstanding event of Words & Music,'97 was the Jazz Age Dance, featuring performances by Odetta, Hollywood composer and singer Judith Owen, and Michael White and his original Liberty Jazz Band. Chaired by Jeanne Nathan and Lolis Eric Elie, this event was underwritten in part by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Literature & Lunch, underwritten by R. Preston Wailes, featured entertaining talks on Faulkner in Hollywood by Ron Shelton, who produces, writes and directs major films, such as Tin Cup; and soap operas as a mirror of contemporary culture by Shelby Foote.

The concluding event of the festival was the Society's annual salute to great writers, Happy Birthday, Mr. Faulkner!, which combines a theatrical program with the award of the Society's gold medals to winners of its national literary competition and a black tie block party in Pirate's Alley, Mr. Faulkner's neighborhood when he lived in New Orleans. The program of staged readings starred actors Odetta, Delta Burke and Gerald McRaney, Harry Shearer, Tony Crane, Maryam d'Abo and Myriam Cyr. That year, Words & Music was chaired by Anne Simms Pincus, a direct descendent of the South's most important writer of the 19th century, William Gilmore Simms.

Words & Music 1998

The underlying theme of Words & Music, '98 was New Orleans, Mon Amour, taken from the title of an essay by the late Walker Percy, the brilliant novelist who was born in Birmingham and grew up in the Mississippi Delta but elected to spend most of his adult career living and working in Louisiana. The evening events saluted this great writer and philosopher. The '98 conference theme was also the title of our first evening event at St. Louis Cathedral, which began with tributes to Mr. Percy.

The musical centerpiece of '98 was the preview of a stunning new opera, Ash Wednesday, set in New Orleans during Mardi Gras and featuring all of the luscious musical sounds of New Orleans: jazz, gospel singing, the blues and more. New Orleans, Mon Amour is now a permanent discussion theme of Words & Music, in memory of Mr. Percy, who has had such a significant influence on many contemporary literary fiction writers, and as a permanent salute to our city, The final luncheon session was New Orleans, Mon Amour: The Big Easy As Capital of The South.

Words & Music 1999

The overall theme in 1999 was Literary Landscapes, with special emphasis on place as inspiration for writers. 2001's overall theme was the 20th Century Unlimited, zeroing in on the forces impacting the century and its incredible creative outpouring and the quirks of 20th Century Americans, including their tendency to reinvent themselves, a topic addressed by film writer/director Ron Shelton in a dazzling performance at Happy Birthday, Mr. Faulkner!

Founders

The concept of a major literary festival originated with Ian Arnof, Chairman then of First Commerce Corporation, which has since been purchased by Bank One, Howard Gaines, then President of First National Bank of Commerce and now Vice President, Bank One, and Thomas C. Keller, attorney, Jones, Walker et al and Trustee, the Collins C. Diboll Private Foundation. The concept of Words & Music was created by Rosemary James, co-founder of the Faulkner Society, who also secured major funding for the festival.

Sponsoring Partners

Major funding came from First Commerce Corporation, Tulane University, and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities through the development efforts of Keller, Centennial Chairman, who also secured major funding from the Diboll Foundation. The Society is especially grateful to these individuals and their respective organizations and to Michael Sartisky, director of the LEH; Eamon Kelly, who was President of Tulane University at the time; Arthur Q. Davis, AIA, a community activist, and Sandra F. Freeman, Sponsor and Chairman of the Words & Music galas, for their assistance in launching the festival and for their ongoing support. The overall sponsor for Words & Music is The Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society, Inc., along with: Joseph DeSalvo and Faulkner House, Inc.; Jan Clifford and Barnes & Noble; Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin; the Eugenie & Joseph Jones Family Foundation, the Keller Family Foundation, Mr. & Mrs. Hartwig Moss, III; Dorothy Crosby, Lynn Crosby Gammill and the Crosby Arboretum; Quinn Peeper, David Bradshaw and Cosmo Buono; Mr. and Mrs. David Monteleone, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Pincus, and The Hotel Monteleone; Anne Rice; H. Paul St. Martin, Ginger & Michael St. Martin, Louis & Linda St. Martin, as a family and as individuals, well known Louisiana philanthropists; Bertie Deming Smith and Joe D. Smith, well-known Louisiana philanthropists; Upton Creative Printing Company and its then owner/CEO, William R. Bell, who is a founding member of the Faulkner Society; Mr. & Mrs. R. Preston Wailes, well known civic activists; Hansjoerg Maissen, Lee Sinclair and The Windsor Court Hotel; the Whitney National Bank, and the Mary Freeman Wisdom Foundation. Ms. Benjamin and The Diboll Foundation have provided major support for The William Faulkner Creative Writing Competition since the first year, while The Windsor Court has provided luxury accommodations for the winners. Mrs. Gammill and Mrs. Crosby, Hartwig Moss, Ms. Pincus, and Preston Wailes also are ongoing sponsors. The St. Martin Family has provided major support for the competition, educational projects, the writers' conference, and The Double Dealer, while Bertie Deming Smith has provided significant support for music elements of Words & Music, and the very generous Lupin Foundation has provided support for the scholarships for developing writers to attend the writers' conference and for music events and The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation has underwritten out-of-state marketing efforts. The Fettel Family Foundation has underwritten poetry events, while Phillip Jennings has provided support for The Double Dealer Redux and The Hotel Monteleone has been generous with venues and food and beverage support of the conference; Upton provided creative and printing support during the early years of the Faulkner Society's activities; and LEH underwrites honoraria for writers' conference faculty. Over the years, our major financial sponsors included these generous patrons: The Besthoff Family; Dr. and Mrs. Donald Bradburn, The Martin LaBorde Gallery, Martin LaBorde and Richard Steiner; Hanson Gallery; Mr. & Mrs. Thomas B. Lemann, Ira Middleberg and the law firm of Middleberg, Riddle & Gianna, Barbara and Biff Motley, Mrs. P. Roussel Norman, Anne Simms Pincus, Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. Siegel, Joel Weinstock, The Whitney Bank, and The Windsor Court Hotel. The Faulkner Society is proud to announce that it will once again produce Words & Music this year, opening November 2 with Perfect Words and running through November 6, 2006, concluding with Literature & Lunch. Chairman of the Executive Board for 2002 through 2003 was Jerry Tanner, Vice President, Whitney National Bank. Current chairman of the Faulkner Society is health industry executive Catherine P. Hill.