

GETTING FINANCIALLY FIT
for the New Year

MY KENTUCKY:
Missy Jenkins

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FAUBUSH

FEBRUARY 2010

Kentucky Monthly

The Inspiration Issue

Contagious Hope

Words of wisdom from fellow
Kentuckians

Kentucky Muses

Inspired escapes across the state

College Guide

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Traveling *with the* Muses

By **Fiona Young-Brown**
Illustration by **Annette Cable**

Beethoven's muse has remained a mystery through the years, a secret love known only as his "Immortal Beloved." John Lennon was inspired to write some of his classics after meeting Yoko Ono. Other artists have found an inspirational muse in their surroundings. Who isn't familiar with Georgia O'Keeffe's desert Southwest paintings or the black-and-white photographic mastery of Ansel Adams?

Don't think you have to travel beyond the Bluegrass State to find inspiration, though. Whether he ever visited Federal Hill in reality, Stephen Foster was certainly inspired by Kentucky, as our own state song proves. In fact, the Commonwealth is bursting at the seams with places and people ready to feed your inner muse. So feel free to explore and see what sparks your creativity.



agination Makes Us Infinite.

...GAININGS VO
Kentucky Keep on Shinning

John Musick

...blue moon of
BILL MONROE
MUSIC



I'D Like to Thank the Academy
TRAGEDY

...Kentucky, which I esteemed a Second Paradise...
DANIEL BOONE
HISTORY

MY LADY
Stephen Foster

weep No more
blue moon of
BILL MONROE
MUSIC

Choral
Poetry
Dance
Dance is just Discovery, discovery, discovery.
MARTHA GRAHAM



"Whenever I go to Cumberland Gap I always feel an overwhelming sense of history. Walking that trail, one can't help but think of all the stories that still live there, wafting behind the thousands and thousands of people who made their way west through the Gap. I always think of how hard they worked and how hard they dreamed, all of them, looking for a better life. I think their struggles, and their stories, left an imprint on those mountains, and you can feel it there still."

—Silas House

Clio, the muse of history, certainly succeeded in inspiring generations of Americans with Cumberland Gap. Where better to start our own search for inspiration? Brave, adventurous men and women followed in the footsteps of Native Americans from 1750 on. They crossed the rough mountains that border eastern Kentucky, and as a result, the area became a gateway to the first westward expansion that built a nation. Crossing it today is significantly easier, but a visit to Cumberland Gap National Park still inspires writers such as Kentucky Poet Laureate **Gurney Norman** and award-winning author **Silas House**, who calls it "a power place." Staring out from the peaks across miles of terrain, you can share the same sense of wonder that **Daniel Boone** must have felt. Get a sense of the early pioneer lifestyle with a visit to the isolated Hensley Settlement near Middlesboro. Later, you can relax from your day of hiking at the Farm House Inn on Parker's Lake.

If you seek a source of inspiration that's closer to the stage than to the great outdoors, you're in luck, too.

Many visitors to Kentucky are surprised to learn of the wide variety of musical styles, dramas and dance performances we have here. For a taste of the traditional, head down to Renfro Valley, where regular performances showcase the best of bluegrass, country music and Southern gospel. Danville provides a long weekend of oompah-pah every summer with The Great American Brass Band Festival, showcasing brass bands not just from across the country but from around the world, with some coming from as far afield as Italy. Enjoy a performance, attend a workshop, and feel as if you've stepped back in time to the days of ice cream socials and Sunday afternoon on the promenade. Let's not forget Eastern Kentucky University's two-day Opera Workshop in April. You can settle down and enjoy an evening of fine vocal talent, watching performances by some of Kentucky's up-and-coming opera singers. You might one day see them on stage in Lexington, Louisville, or even at the New York Metropolitan Opera.

There also is some wonderful theater outside of the major cities, espe-

cially if you seek out a few of the many summer stock productions. Some of Kentucky's playhouses have served as training grounds for many celebrities. **Lee Majors** and **John Travolta** both made their stage debuts at Pioneer Playhouse in Danville, which recently celebrated its 60th summer season. Last summer the theater hosted *Police Academy* alumnus **Leslie Easterbrook**. Franklin native **Annie Potts**, star of *Ghostbusters* and *Designing Women*, continues to be an active supporter of the Kentucky Repertory Theatre in Horse Cave. An honorary member of the board of directors, she occasionally performs there. In the eastern part of the state, NYPD *Blue*'s **Sharon Lawrence**, Broadway's **James Barbour**, and *Trading Spaces* host **Paige Davis** have all trod the boards at the Jenny Wiley Theatre in Prestonsburg.

For high-quality dance performances, look no further than the Louisville Ballet or the Lexington-based Kentucky Ballet Theatre. Some readers may remember that the world-renowned **Mikhail Baryshnikov** danced with the Louisville Ballet during the 1978-1980 seasons, and it is the only regional



Pioneer Playhouse

company that can claim such an honor. Louisville Ballet's 2010 season will feature perennial favorite *Swan Lake*. Just a few weeks later, head to Lexington to watch the Kentucky Ballet Theatre's production of *Coppélia*. As it happens, April is a busy month in the Kentucky dance calendar. Not only can you see *Swan Lake* and *Coppélia*, you can also head back to Danville to see the farewell tour of *Riverdance* at the Norton Center for the Arts. If those performances have left your toes tapping, give in to Terpsichore, the muse of dance, and find a local dance class in your area. Be it ballet, tap, jazz, swing or historical dance, you can find a class for it somewhere in the Commonwealth.

So far, we've hiked, danced and explored our musical souls. Now it's time for a brief comic interlude to laugh our cares away. The Funny Bone in Newport, the Comedy Zone in Paducah, the Comedy Caravan in Louisville and Comedy Off Broadway in Lexington all offer the chance to be entertained by established comedy stars and showbiz newcomers. You may even feel inspired to try your hand at telling a joke or two at a local open-mic night.

After seeing stars on stage, it's time to head back outdoors for a touch of nighttime sky watching for inspiration. With so much light pollution these days, it's easy to forget how magnificent a star-filled sky is. Luckily, it's fairly easy to get far enough from civi-

lization to enjoy the constellations. Head to one of Kentucky's eight planetariums so you can impress others with your knowledge of the stars; we suggest the Golden Pond Planetarium and Observatory at the Land Between the Lakes. Look for the special nights that combine stargazing with a laser show and music. Then head to a rural bed and breakfast for a night of relaxation. At Fox Ridge B&B in Madisonville, you can rent a reconstructed 19th-century log cabin where you can imagine the pioneer lifestyle, albeit in a more comfortable fashion. The Seven Creeks B&B in Benton offers 200 acres of rolling hills, seven creeks (hence the name) and three porches. Pick your spot, take a blanket and a bottle of wine or flask of hot cocoa, and the stars await.

By now, you've experienced some of the best that Kentucky has to offer: music, dance, comedy, and the very splendor of nature. But the muses Erato and Calliope inspire poetry and literature, which means it is time to take pen to paper and let your own creative juices flow. Check out something new at your local library or explore your independent bookstore. According to musician and author Stephen Nachmanovitch, "The most potent muse of all is our own inner child." Take time to rediscover your inner child, or encourage the creative development of a child in your family with a trip to The Blue Marble, a children's bookstore in Fort Thomas.



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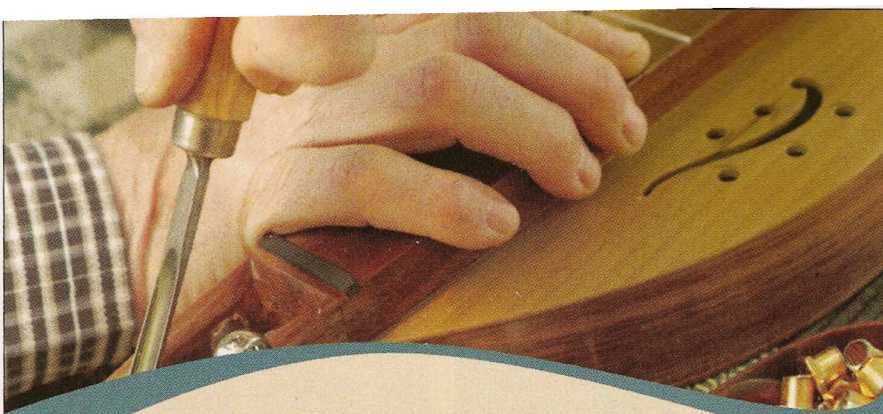
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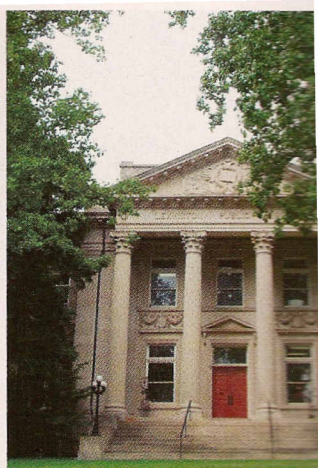
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Carnegie Center

Reread some childhood favorites and find a new favorite from among a plethora of Kentucky writers.

If you're feeling even more inspired, try a writer's retreat. In 2010, the Writers Retreat Workshop, founded by Gary Provost in 1987, is coming to Berea, Kentucky. Writers will come from across the country to enjoy a week of workshops, share ideas and work every waking minute to feed their creative juices. If that sounds a bit too intimidating, organize a retreat somewhere like Snug Hollow near Berea. Whether solo or with friends, you can enjoy the peace and quiet, write, paint, and do as much as your mood strikes. Lastly, look for classes or workshops close to home. The Carnegie Center in Lexington offers some wonderful day workshops or ongoing classes on a wide range of writing, from grants to private editing, fiction to travel, all at very reasonable prices. Don't forget to submit your endeavors to *Kentucky Monthly's* annual literary issue.

These ideas are just the tip of the iceberg, but hopefully they have inspired you to seek out a little creative spirit within our state. Don't forget to heed the advice of Bartholomew advised and "spend every day listening to what you are trying to tell you." Perhaps, like Thomas Walker and his contemporaries many decades ago, you, too, will be inspired by the muses of the Cumberland Gap and beyond, and uncover the artist within.

—FIONA YOUNG

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