

# Yaddo



fall news 2014

## Warm Welcome

Playwright and novelist Ayad Akhtar, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Disgraced* is on Broadway this fall, is the newest Member of The Corporation of Yaddo.

Akhtar's work explores identity and religion, particularly as it relates to the post-9/11 world. His writing is

often informed by his own life – born in New York City, following his parents' immigration to the United States from



Pakistan in the 1960s, and raised in Milwaukee, WI.

*American Dervish*, Akhtar's first novel, has been published in more than 20 languages and was a 2012 Best Book of the Year at *Kirkus Reviews*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Shelf Awareness*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. His latest play, *The Who & The What*, which he worked on at Yaddo, premiered at La Jolla Playhouse in California in February and opened at New York City's LCT3/ Lincoln Center Theater in June.

*Disgraced*, which portrays the downfall of a Muslim American lawyer, played to sold-out audiences in Chicago, London, and New York in 2012 and won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Currently, Akhtar's *The Invisible Hand* is at New York Theatre Workshop through January 4.



## Future Forward

Construction of five new live-work studios is at the core of an ambitious series of capital projects now taking shape at Yaddo.

We've spent the last few years gathering information about the condition of our existing facilities, successfully building our first purpose-built structure for choreographers and performance artists, and establishing thoughtful goals to increase capacity, artistic diversity, and operational efficiency. Now, we're ready to push forward, with twin goals of preserving our past and building our future.

This 21st-century iteration of Yaddo starts with a transformative move to build five live-work studios along the ridge that overlooks our recently restored ponds, allowing us to move artists away from the noise of the interstate highway that abuts our property. These spaces will be heated and available for year-round use, which will increase our capacity and broaden the range of

experiences available to guests. Filled with natural light, the studios will be built using tactile, warm materials that complement the natural setting of the buildings. They offer a spectrum of experiences, ranging from expansive spaces that overlook stately ponds to immersion within a woodland.



With the construction project shovel-ready, infrastructure work will begin shortly, and fundraising is well underway. We hope to have all five studios completed in 2015.

"This is a vital project and a necessity if we are to thrive for a second century. The art and artists that Yaddo hosts are in a

*(continues on page 3)*

# Window of Opportunity

A magnificent 19th-century stained glass window, one of the most dominant architectural features of the Yaddo Mansion, will get a much-needed facelift thanks to two recent gifts.

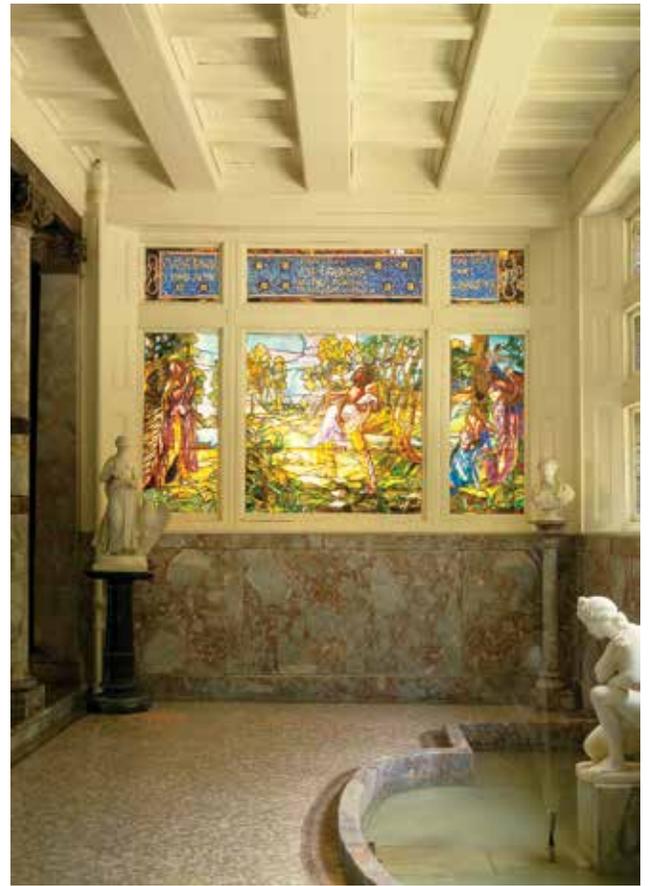
The Charles R. Wood Foundation has awarded a \$25,000 grant for the restoration project, and Yaddo Member Nancy Lampton has matched the foundation's generosity with a \$25,000 gift.

The combined \$50,000 will be used to repair the center panel of the window in the entrance foyer of the Yaddo Mansion. The intricately detailed window, installed at the time the house was constructed in 1893, is the first thing that greets visitors entering through the front door. The subject of the artwork is a story written by our founder Katrina Trask about a Native American legend associated with the Yaddo landscape.

Age and sustained exposure to the elements have taken a toll on the window,

with severe buckling noticeable and raw edges of glass now freed from their lead. Experts called in to assess the damage determined that the center panel is at particular risk and in need of immediate rehabilitation. Venturella Studio of New York City has been hired to refurbish the window and started this month by carefully removing the window's center panel.

Repairs to the window, and to the Mansion itself, are top priorities, with Yaddo's leadership recognizing that preservation of our historic properties, especially the Mansion, are part of building for Yaddo's future.



# Partnering with Our Community

*Yaddo President Elaina Richardson gave the remarks, excerpted here, for the annual luncheon hosted by the Action Council of Saratoga Performing Arts Center in October.*



The urgency of this moment of change was brought home to me by arts strategist Adrian Ellis, a charismatic Welshman who worked on

Yaddo's strategic plan. He said, "In a time of dwindling resources and increased demand, there is no middle ground. Arts groups are either zombies, running to keep the lights on, or they are thrivers, those who've put everything on the table for re-examination."

On the spectrum of preservation to innovation, we all come down preferentially on one side; it's human nature, a personal response to "change" shaped by our past.

Let me tell you a little of my own story.

I grew up in Glasgow, Scotland. When I was five, I thought the city at twilight was Fairyland – such beauty in the twinkling of the streetlights on view from my bedroom on the 17th floor of a modern apartment building. This was the late 1960s; to the rest of the world, Glasgow was a slum. I was essentially flying solo in my assessment!

After more than a decade in opposition, the British Labor Party returned to power, determined to keep its promise of homes fit for working families. Throughout my childhood, Glasgow was in the grip of a construction boom, with whole swaths of Victorian tenements bulldozed, and Le Corbusier-inspired apartments rising instead, towers that gave the skyline an achingly pierced look.

These buildings quickly fell into disrepair in the damp, mold-ridden Scottish climate, and the dilapidated look of rain-soaked concrete became the defining image of my childhood. To counteract the grimness, my mother said, "Look up – open your eyes to the carvings,

the woodwork, the arches." Subsequently, I fell under the spell cast by post-industrial port cities – that of radical chic born to the bourgeoisie, but inherited by the dispossessed.

By the 21st century, Glasgow was once again in a building boom. This time, the city staked its future on arts and innovation, repurposing some of those phenomenal structures my mother so loved for a new generation: The city preserved its past by no longer drowning in it.

To fast forward, I went from Glasgow to Oxford, then spent time working in London and the Middle East, and arrived in the U.S. at the end of 1986. I was happily ensconced as editor in chief of *Elle* magazine, when the chance to be the fifth president of Yaddo came my way.

By the time I arrived in 2000, an explosion had occurred. There are now more than 480 residency programs in the U.S. alone. There has also been an explosion in artists' materials, due to the effects of technology and digitization, and the ongoing maturation of collaborative forms. Given all of this,

when my colleagues and I, prompted by our consulting strategists and architects, put our mission (time, space, good working conditions) under a critical magnifying glass, we did so with great awareness that the competitive environment and the art forms we support were both in flux.

We analyzed all 26 of our buildings, categorizing them on a continuum of healthy to sick, keeping in mind that most of these structures were meant for light summer inhabitation, not year-round circulation. We thought about Yaddo's relationship to our surrounding community – about how the landscape might better welcome visitors and yet protect the promise of retreat.

Now we are ready. The next decade will see Yaddo embark on an ambitious series of capital projects, all planned to preserve our past and build our future. And as we move forward on the right track, we know that this is the way to leave the zombies behind and join the thrivers.

## Future Forward

(continued from front cover)

constant state of renewal, and the facilities that support them should be, too," said Yaddo President Elaina Richardson. "These new studios are an exhilarating and highly visible way of communicating Yaddo's dedication to providing the highest quality environment for creative work."

## Making Progress

One of these new live-work studios will be funded by those who know us best, the artists who have spent time at Yaddo. We've currently raised more than \$100,000 toward this goal.

## Home Is Where the Art Is: News from Yaddo



### Tour de Force

Yaddo welcomed nearly 1,300 visitors for public tours this September. As our sixth such event, and the first in three years, the open house attracted guests from as far away as California. About 140 volunteer guides and docents contributed to our success, resulting in \$74,000 raised to support the artists' residency program and restoration of the Yaddo Gardens.

### For the Record

Public officials, friends, and members of the Yaddo Garden Association, gathered on July 26 for the dedication of a plaque honoring our status as a National Historic Landmark, a designation received last March and based primarily on our artists' contributions to American culture. Wildflowers will be planted around the plaque's pedestal, which is on the great lawn below the Yaddo Mansion, near the entrance to the Yaddo Gardens.

### Keynote Finesse

Yaddo raised \$75,000 to secure a matching grant from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., to endow *The David Del Tredici Residency for a Composer, Funded by The Aaron Copland Fund for Music*, named for two composers with long Yaddo associations. The \$150,000 in contributions will annually underwrite a new six- to eight-week residency. Leadership campaign gifts came from Jana L. Argersinger – in honor of her late husband, composer Charles Argersinger – The Edward T. Cone Foundation, Donald R. Crawshaw, David Del Tredici, Richard R. Howe and Frederick W. Wertheim, as well as many former resident composers.

**SPOT ON:** Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men* makes its New York debut this fall.

"In her feminist-minded works, in which characters sometimes talk more to the audience than they do to one another, Lee had built drama around racially driven self-hatred, the naked body, and patriarchy, among



other things. Now she wanted to write a different kind of play: a naturalistic work ...

on the subject of straight white men. In short, she wanted to create art about something that she did not entirely understand in a genre that she hadn't fully explored... Lee explained, 'I've found that the only way to make theatre that gets the audience thinking is when I feel uncomfortable making it.'

– from "Real Gone Girl," by Hilton Als, *The New Yorker*.

## Thriller Theater: #YaddoArtists in Action

The New York premiere of *Straight White Men* by Young Jean Lee at The Public, **Nov. 7 – Dec. 7**. Walter Mosley launches *Lift*, a suspenseful drama about two strangers trapped in an elevator, at 59e59, **through Nov. 30**. Ayad Akhtar's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Disgraced* at Lyceum Theatre, **through Feb. 22**. "Question Jar Show," with Mike Doughty, at City Winery New York, **Nov. 29**. World premiere of Trish Harnetiaux's *Welcome to the White Room* at Glass Mind Theatre in Baltimore, **through Dec. 14**. John Kelly, *Escape Artist Redux*, and 4-channel video installation, at Fisher Center at Bard College, **Nov. 20-23**.

"I can honestly say I feel better about poetry after your visit."

– from a Saratoga Springs High School student following a reading and presentation by poet Gardner McFall as part of the Yaddo in the Community series, generously supported by The Local Egg Foundation.



# Yaddo

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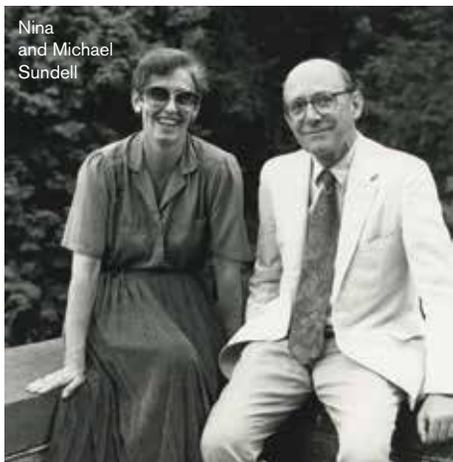
“I’m trying to write to the universal.  
The pathway to the universal is the particular.”

—Ayad Akhtar, *The New York Times*.

## In Memoriam

**N**ina Castelli Sundell, a cherished member of the Yaddo family, died August 3, 2014, after a long battle with cancer.

Nina’s passion for art and her nurturing support of artists was widely recognized, particularly while her husband, the late Michael G. Sundell, served as president of Yaddo from 1992 to 2000. She also served as an enthusiastic member of the planning committee for the Yaddo Centennial Celebration.



Nina and Michael Sundell

Born in Vienna, Nina spent her first years in Paris and then emigrated to New York City during World

War II. In 1968, with Marjorie Talalay, she co-founded The New Gallery, later renamed the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. She collaborated with Susan Sollins to establish Independent Curators Incorporated, which organized ambitious exhibitions and is now known as Independent Curators International. Later, she served as director

of the art gallery at Lehman College, CUNY, in the Bronx. She also wrote a novel, *The Dallek Touch*.

Nina understood an artist’s life and the difficulties of translating a vision into a finished work. She supported Yaddo’s mission after she and her husband retired, establishing an endowed residency: *The Sundell Residency for Special Assistants*, which annually

supports four artists, working in any medium, who serve as Special Assistants to the President.

### YADDO ALSO AFFECTIONATELY RECALLS

Sheila Klass, professor emerita of English at Borough of Manhattan Community College, where she taught for 47 years, and a writer who published 19 books, including the 2006 joint memoir *Every Mother is a Daughter*, written with her daughter Perri Klass, a fellow Yaddo artist.

## Keep in Touch

to get regional, national, and international news about Yaddo and our artists. ....

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