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The MacDowell Colony Awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Clinton

An artists' colony which has nurtured the creativity of some of the United States' best-known writers, composers, painters, and sculptors has been honored with the country's highest award for the arts. President Clinton will present the MacDowell Colony with the National Medal of Arts at a White House lawn ceremony on September 29, 1997.

The community located in Peterborough, New Hampshire, has produced 48 Pulitzer Prize winners, many of whom completed their works in self-contained studios on MacDowell's 450-acre "small corner of paradise."

Leonard Bernstein composed his *Mass* there; Thornton Wilder worked on *Our Town* and *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*; and Dubose and Dorothy Heyward wrote *Porgy and Bess*. Other alumni include writers James Baldwin, Barbara Tuchman, and Alice Walker, as well as artists John White Alexander, Milton Avery, and Janet Fish.

The Colony is the country's oldest artists' community and each year provides idyllic working conditions for 200 creative artists from the U.S. and abroad. Since it was founded in 1907, more than 4,500 artists have worked there in an atmosphere of peace and stimulation.

The Medal is being accepted from President Clinton by the Colony's chairman, writer, and broadcaster Robert MacNeil. MacNeil, who has been chairman for four years, said, "It is thrilling to get this kind of recognition. Ours is the oldest community of its type in this country and as such formed the prototype for which others have followed. The Colony has been quietly and modestly going about its mission for many years yet the scale and quality of work created within it has been nothing short of remarkable."

This is only the fourth time in the award's 12-year history that an arts organization has been honored. Medals have usually gone to individuals who, like the Colony, are nominated by the public through the National Endowment for the Arts before being finally selected by the president. A total of 153 medals have been awarded in all.

The Colony is a non-profit organization and is supported mainly through contributions. It is tightly run. "If all such institutions worked as effectively in this country, it would be paradise indeed," said MacNeil.

The Colony sponsors a wide range of disciplines. Composers, writers, visual artists, architects, and filmmakers apply for residencies of up to eight weeks. Those selected are provided with a studio where they are guaranteed seclusion to focus on their work.

Accommodations and meals are provided, as is the opportunity to mix with artists of different disciplines. The Colony, which is a national historic landmark, was founded in 1907 by composer Edward MacDowell and his wife, Marian, on a farm they had purchased in Peterborough, New Hampshire. There are now 32 studios scattered through a landscape of woodland and meadow.