

Hill Country Arts Foundation

Performance on the Point

The audience settles into amphitheater seats on the “Point,” a finger of land formed where Johnson Creek and the Guadalupe River come together. Dusk dims Mother Nature’s “house lights” as the stage lights go up. During the lively show, a breeze blows across the emerald river, bathing the theatrical scene in cool night air.

That’s the dramatic finale to a busy summer day at the Hill Country Arts Foundation (HCAF) in Ingram. The late Edith McAshan and several other Houston artists created the foundation in the late 1950s as an “art colony” for the Hill Country.

Celebrating its 43rd season, the HCAF’s Theatre Department produces seven plays annually. A 707-seat riverside amphitheater, built in 1982, hosts three outdoor summer shows. Summer 2002 features *Meet Me in St. Louis* (June 6-29), *The Three Musketeers* (July 11-27), and *Brigadoon* (August 8-31). Live music shows take the stage on weekends between plays.

A 140-seat indoor theater, housed in an adapted 1940’s-era roller skating rink, hosts four fall and winter performances. The HCAF offers youth acting and dance classes year-round, with week-long workshops in the summer.

The HCAF’s Visual Arts Department brings eight to ten art shows annually to its 2,140-square-foot gallery. The annual “Counterpoint Show” (July 21-

August 17, 2002) features 60 artists (various media) in a nationally-juried event. Year-round, four art instruction studios and a ceramics studio host 40 to 50 non-professional and professional-level workshops, some led by nationally-known artists. Summer also brings art classes for at-risk and physically-challenged youth.

With nine full-time staff, the HCAF relies on 400 volunteers to help with everything from raising funds to acting on stage, from serving as gallery docents to maintaining the art library.

The rewards of volunteering can be greater than expected. Long-time supporter Andy Ritch of Kerrville (whose family helped fund the amphitheater) met his wife Sally when they both performed in a 1960s production of *Kiss Me Kate*. Sally played Maria in the 1970s in *The Sound of Music*, a role reprised by the Ritches' daughter Kathleen 20 years later.

The **Hill Country Arts Foundation** is at 507 Hwy. 39 in Ingram. For details on performances, gallery shows, and classes, call 800-459-HCAF or 367-5121; www.hcaf.com.

--Randy Mallory