

PRESS RELEASE

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2019 Vermont Arts Awards Recipients Announced

Montpelier – The Vermont Arts Council is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2019 Vermont Arts Awards. These prestigious annual awards recognize outstanding individual and organizational contributions to the arts. Awards honor educators, artists, performers, advocates, administrators, volunteers, and scholars. In 2019, Vermonters will be recognized for their contributions in five categories. All awardees will be honored at a reception and ceremony co-sponsored by Middlebury College on Wednesday, October 23, at the Mahaney Arts Center at Middlebury College.

Earlier today, Governor Phil Scott announced that François Clemmons of Middlebury would receive [The Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts](#), the highest honor presented to an artist by the state of Vermont. In selecting Clemmons for this award, Governor Scott said, "I am pleased to name François as the winner of this year's Excellence in the Arts award. His renowned musical talent and years of service to his community made him the perfect choice. Congratulations, François, and thank you for making Vermont proud."

In addition to the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Vermont Arts Council announced award recipients in four categories:

Douglas Anderson, Middlebury, will receive the [Arthur Williams Award for Meritorious Service to the Arts](#)

Castle Freeman, Newfane, will receive the [Walter Cerf Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts](#)

James Lockridge, Burlington, will receive the [Margaret L. \(Peggy\) Kannenstine Award for Arts Advocacy](#)

Joan Robinson, Burlington, will receive the [Ellen McCulloch-Lovell Award in Arts Education](#)

"Each of the exceptional individuals we are honoring this year enriches our lives with remarkable talent, commitment, and creative vision. As artists, cultural leaders, educators, and mentors, they remind us that art can be transformative, for us as individuals and for Vermont communities." said Vermont Arts Council Executive Director Karen Mittelman.

The Vermont Arts Awards celebration is co-sponsored by Middlebury College. The event will be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 23, at the Mahaney Arts Center on the Middlebury College campus.

Middlebury College President Laurie Patton noted that two of the 2109 awardees are from Middlebury. "Through song and theater, François and Doug have brought to the Middlebury community much more than the beauty of art and performance—though they've gifted us that over many years" said Patton. "They've also shown us how emotionally powerful shared experiences can be. We're so pleased they're receiving this recognition and look forward to hosting all Arts Awards honorees and guests on our campus in October."

The Vermont Arts Awards celebration is free and open to the public, but reservations are requested. An online reservation form is available on the Vermont Arts Council website.

More about the awardees follows:

François Clemmons, Middlebury

François is well known for his twenty-five-year career as officer Clemmons on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. He is also a Grammy Award-winning opera singer, founder of the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble, emeritus artist in residence at Middlebury College, composer, arranger, playwright, author, activist, and mentor. From 1997 until his retirement in 2013, François was the Alexander Twilight Artist in Residence and director of the Martin Luther King Spiritual Choir at Middlebury College. François received a bachelor of music degree from Oberlin College, a master of fine arts from Carnegie Mellon University, and an honorary doctor of arts degree from Middlebury College.

Castle Freeman, Newfane

Castle was born in Texas, then raised and educated in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. He came to southeastern Vermont with his wife, Alice, on a whim and is still here forty-seven years later. He is the author of seven novels, about eighty short stories, two story collections, and more than one hundred essays as well as historical articles, op-ed matter, journalism, nature writing, and other nonfiction. Most of his writing is related in one way or another to the life of our state and its people. Castle's most recently published novel is *The Devil in the Valley* (Overlook Press, NY, 2016).

Joan Robinson, Burlington

Joan has worked as a teacher, storyteller, actor, cartoonist, librarian, playwright, and—for more than twenty years—adjunct faculty in St. Michael's Graduate Education Program. As the first education director, then school programs director at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, she initiated the organization's year-round performing arts classes, created "Words Come Alive!" and helped found the Integrated Arts Academy (IAA). She later served as drama coach at IAA. Additional career highlights include creating Ilsley's Haunted Library, touring Vermont as Ms. Frizzle, and co-writing the play *Bigger Than All of Us*. Joan continues working happily as a Flynn teaching artist.

James Lockridge, Burlington

James has directed Big Heavy World, Vermont's Burlington-based, independent, volunteer-staffed music office, for more than twenty years, generating partnerships and channeling enthusiasm that supports Vermont-made music of every kind and stage of development. Big Heavy World offers a music archive, record label, community radio station, events, and more. Through his collaborative efforts, James has brought together the resources to form a creative hub that would not otherwise exist. He has championed inclusion and respect for diversity, and built an engine of support for regional music based on these values.

Douglas Anderson, Middlebury

Douglas began his career teaching theater and playwriting at the University of Illinois, Amherst College, and Middlebury College. He also served as a staff writer for the Children's Television Workshop (the makers of Sesame Street) and head writer for the CBS daytime drama, *The Guiding Light*. In 1997, he discovered the decaying original Middlebury Town Hall and committed himself to restoring and reviving the structure, which re-opened in 2008. For his work on the Town Hall Theater, he was named Middlebury's Citizen of the Year, received an award from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, and was presented with the McCardell Citizenship Award by Middlebury College. Douglas also created the Opera Company of Middlebury, now in its sixteenth season.

The Vermont Arts Council envisions a state where all people have access to the arts and creativity in their lives, education, and communities. Engagement with the arts transforms individuals, connects us more deeply to each other, energizes the economy, and sustains the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live. Since 1965, the Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. www.vermontartscouncil.org.