

Jon Palmer Claridge is a pioneer of the “Arts Incubator” movement. As Program Director for Arlington (VA) Cultural Affairs, he was co-creator of the Arts Incubator model that received both the Ford Foundation/Harvard University *Innovations Award* and D.C.’s Helen Hayes Award. He was hailed as a “hero” by the national performing arts weekly, *BACK STAGE*, and featured on the front page of *The Washington Post* for his efforts. The model continues to be an international benchmark for grassroots arts support and has been profiled/replicated from Honolulu to Hiroshima, Perth to Johannesburg.

Mr. Claridge is also a veteran of both the U.S. Army (Europe) and the “Arts Wars” at the National Endowment for the Arts, where he served as program analyst linking peer panels with program staff to develop funding guidelines. Prior to that, he trained as a theatre artist with a B.F.A. in acting from the School of Theatre at Florida State University and an M.F.A. in directing from Catholic University’s Department of Drama and he spent over a decade as an actor-singer & stage director/designer, specializing in musical theatre. During that time, he acted, directed and designed scenery & lighting for over 100 plays, musicals, and operettas in theatres from Cape Cod to Tampa Bay, including several award winning productions ranging from William Inge’s *Picnic* to *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* to *The Threepenny Opera* with Lotte Lenya & *Amadeus* with Broadway leading man, Stephan Douglas (*Damn Yankees*).

Since 1990, when he made the transition from artist to producer, he has programmed or produced over 1500 events featuring artists in all disciplines and styles from around the world including: cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Broadway stars Melba Moore & Donna McKechnie, salsa king Ray Baretto, the Kronos Quartet, Graham muse Janet Eilber, jazz legends Ahmad Jamal & James Moody, Zimbabwe’s #1 recording star Oliver Mtukudzi, visionary slam poetry creator Marc Smith, wunderkind puppeteer Basil Twist and the late songbird, Eva Cassidy. In addition, he has facilitated cultural exchanges with France, Germany, Ireland and Mexico. In recent years, he directed the NEA National Heritage Fellowships Concert and, from 1997 to 2003, he was on-site producer for the annual Americans for the Arts Advocacy Day breakfast on Capital Hill featuring politically active celebrities including Peter Dinklage, Fran Drescher and Marlo Thomas.

Mr. Claridge’s international arts’ resume includes service on State Department/USIA and NEA international touring panels, lecturing for the Library of Congress *Open World* program to visiting arts professionals from across Russia, introducing “Culture & Democracy” to Argentina for the State Department in Buenos Aires, and presenting updates on the “Arts in America” for the Foreign Service Institute’s Cultural Diplomacy Training. He was one of only 100 delegates nationwide for the 1999 Winston-Salem Arts Convocation to envision the future of the local arts agency movement in the United States. He has also lectured on theatre at Johns Hopkins University, the University of South Carolina, The Hartke Theatre Conservatory and most recently on “The Arts, Urban Planning & Economic Development” at the University of Pennsylvania. He also contributed to the cultural component of the Washington-Baltimore 2012 Olympic bid.

Dubbed the “great enabler” by *Washington City Paper*, Mr. Claridge received the 1994 Horizon’s Theatre *BRAVO! Award* for his service to the arts in Washington, joining such luminaries as veteran actor Robert Prosky and Arena Stage founder, Zelda Fichandler. He has served as a multi-discipline panelist for many national, regional, state and local arts organizations, as well as a judge for the D.C metro area’s professional theatre honors--The Helen Hayes Awards--since

2002. Mr. Claridge is immediate past President of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC) as well as the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive. He currently chairs the Steering Committee for the AHCMC Strategic Planning Process. In addition, he has served on the Board of Directors of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, First Night Annapolis, The Writers' Center, and seven years as Vice-President of the League of Washington Theatres. His publications include articles in *American Theatre* magazine, *Americans for the Arts Monographs*, *Arts Washington*, and two cover stories for *Southern Theatre*.

In his free time, Mr. Claridge is a student of presidential politics who was featured as a "political junkie" on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* as well as a serious French chef-oenophile-boutique baker, specializing in wedding cakes. His kitchen, with unique 3-D tiles he designed and fabricated, was featured in two segments on *Home & Garden Television*. The odd couple of Redskins football and the musical theatre works of Stephen Sondheim complete the quartet of his obsessions. He is married to Andrea Snyder, director of *Dance/USA*, and is the dedicated father of two grown children.

Jon Palmer Claridge is a self-taught chef, who since 1978 (when he discovered Julia Child's *Mastering the Arts of French Cooking*) has honed his palate in the great food and wine capitals of the Western hemisphere in search of "peak experiences." He is a passionate food & wine educator, forever struggling to demystify the lore and rituals that too often surround the world of wine and haute cuisine.

Jon is proprietor of *Pure Elegance: Cakes & Confections without Compromise*, a small business focused on custom designed celebration cakes prepared for maximum flavor. In the early 1980's he regularly showcased his dessert creations on CBS affiliate WSPA-TV serving upstate South Carolina and western North Carolina.

Since 1995, Jon has been a regular at the *Wine Spectator's* NY Wine Experience (NYWE) where he participated in food and wine matching seminars with D'Artagnan founder, Ariane Daguin, cheese guru Max McCalman, and superstar chefs, Emeril Lagasse, Wolfgang Puck, Mario Batali, Charlie Trotter, and Daniel Boulud. In 2001, he became a member of the inaugural class of NYWE Wine Warriors. Regular tasting trips to the wine country in Napa and Sonoma, coupled with visits to Champagne, Chianti, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and the Niagara Peninsula--among others--have afforded him opportunities not only to talk with winemakers, but to try his hand at blending meritage cuvees and studying the effects of specific barrel aging based on the wood's forest of origin.

Jon's career in the arts has given him many opportunities to combine his work with his avocation. During a six year stint on the board of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, his six course dinners for eight (with matching wines) were a sought after item as part of the live auction fundraiser--regularly exceeding bids of \$2500. A fervent wine educator, he regularly leads wine tastings as team building exercises for not-for-profit arts organizations. For several years he produced *Read Between the Wines*—alternating poetry with flights of both white and red varietals in conducted tastings. Jon also introduced *Say the Word*, a series of creative happenings where Washington's superstar chefs were paired with Arlington writers. Recently, he finished curating the 2nd annual series of Arlington artist-designed chocolates in partnership with specialty chocolatier, *Artisan Confections*.

Jon has twice been featured on HGTV's *Kitchen Design* discussing the renovation of his home kitchen and demonstrating how he designed and fabricated 3-D food themed backsplash tiles. A devotee of the "molecular gastronomy" of Spanish chef/scientist Ferrán Adrià, he recently returned from a "foodie roadtrip" to Chicago's newly acclaimed Moto and Alinea restaurants, where a new generation of chefs is exploding long held beliefs about how to cook and present food.

Web Links:

Kitchen Design

www.hgtv.com/hgtv/dc_design_kitchen/article/0,,HGTV_3375_1388544,00.html

3-D Tiles

www.hgtv.com/hgtv/rm_kitchen_bath_backsplash/article/0,1797,HGTV_3743_1391060,00.html

Artist-Designed Chocolates

www.artisanconfections.com