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Kean feted for arts support



Gov. Thomas H. Kean was presented with the Art Advocacy award last Monday at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. Kean received the award at the annual Spring Benefit for the George Street Playhouse.

Among those attending were blues singer Sarah Vaughan, Patti LaFonne and New Brunswick Mayor John A. Lynch. From the George Street Playhouse were Producing Director Gregory S. Hurst, General Manager Michael P. Genzaro and benefit co-chairs Jocelyn Schwartzman and Deborah Lynch. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. served as the master of ceremonies.

Kean was selected to receive the award for his strong and long-standing support of the arts in the Garden State.



Staff photos by Frank Jacobs II

Mistress of the Blues Sarah Vaughan was a crowd-pleaser at the spring benefit for the George Street Playhouse. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. was the master of ceremonies at the Spring Benefit. Playhouse Producing Director Gregory S. Hurst and Patti LaFonne celebrate with Gov. Kean as he's named the winner of the Art Advocacy award.

One of Princeton's gems may be viewed by public

By ANNE LEVIN
Staff Writer

PRINCETON BOROUGH — Somewhere around 1839, the double house by architect Charles Steadman at the corner of Mercer and Alexander streets sold for \$3,700, a handsome amount at the time.

These days, of course, just about any house in Princeton borough will fetch a sum adding at least two zeros to that figure. And the yellow clapboard structure, built by Steadman in 1830, is considered one of the area's exceptional gems.

The house on Mercer Street is one of five open to the public on this weekend's House and Garden Tour, sponsored by the Princeton Child Development Institute. Other features on the tour, which ends today, include a new structure in Russell Estates, a 30-year-old ranch renovated by William Short, an expanded Cape Cod, and an elaborate garden.

Robert and Shirin Devrim Trainer bought the house on Mercer Street 10 years ago. The couple had just purchased an apartment in New York City, where they had moved from Milwaukee. But when Mrs. Trainer, a Turkish-born actress and director, came to Princeton to appear in a play at McCarter Theatre, she was hooked.

"It was the trees," she says, leading a preview tour of the house. "The trees got me and I knew we had to move here. So we sold the apartment in New York and here we are."

The Steadman house has fireplaces in nearly every room, high ceilings, elaborate moldings and beveled windows. Its three floors are furnished with an eclectic combination of the Trainers' different styles. Robert Trainer's American antiques, Masai spears and buffalo shields from Kenya coexist happily with his wife's engravings from Ottoman Empire, ceramics by her cousin and paintings done by her mother, the artist Fatmeh Zaid.

"This house is our marriage," she says. "We come from different backgrounds but our tastes match."

The house has classic Doric columns and a rectangular form of window rather than the earlier elliptical windows of the Federal period. It

shows the influence of the Greek Revival period, which was emerging at the time the house was built.

Known as Princeton's first real-estate developer, Charles Steadman lived from 1790 to 1868. He bought up large blocks of land, dividing them and building houses that he then rented or sold, according to the book "Princeton Architecture," written in 1967. Steadman was most active from 1825 to 1845, creating more than 70 buildings in Princeton. Many of those structures have disappeared.

A self-taught builder and architect, Steadman based his designs for buildings on a combination of his own practical knowledge and the ideas he found in pattern books. He is not considered a great architect, but a competent and practical one whose work was pleasing to the eye in proportion and detail, according to "Princeton Architecture."

The Trainers' house is the only "double house" that Steadman created. Built in the style of a town house, it is actually two in one. Mrs. Trainer likes the way the small entry hall deceives visitors.

"Wait until you see what's inside," she says, sweeping aside the curtain that hangs in the doorway of the front room to reveal the series of elegant rooms beyond. A living room and sitting room lead to a dining room that was not part of the original design, and was added on later. Upstairs, the master bedroom is furnished in American antiques. It leads to a sitting room with a high ceiling and study.

Evidence of the couple's different backgrounds is everywhere. Trainer's Hepplewhite sideboard is in the dining room, which is hung with paintings by members of his wife's artistic family. His mother's formal couch is layered with pillows that Mrs. Trainer made from ornate Turkish towels, and his candlesticks share space with her cousin's ceramic pieces.

The couple's house has five bedrooms, but it looks small from the outside. "It's the way these rooms flow that make it so special," Mrs. Trainer says. "There is a lot of space here but you can't tell from outside."

The couple had bookcases put into the middle room. "They look like



Staff photo by Herman Laesker

Actress Shirin Devrim Trainer in her living room, next to the portrait of her painted by her mother.

they were always here, don't they?" Mrs. Trainer says. "That's because I had such a good carpenter."

A famous actress and director in Turkey ("I'm the Melina Mercouri of Turkey," she says), Mrs. Trainer has appeared in several productions at

McCarter Theatre, including "Tariffs" last fall. Soon, she will travel to Turkey to play Sarah Bernhardt in a production by the state theater.

Born to an old Ottoman family, she arrived in the United States at age 20 to attend Barnard College.

She was graduated, then went to Yale University School of Drama before returning to Turkey, where she pursued her career. She moved again to the United States in the 1960s.

"The big joke is that I went to Yale, my husband went to Harvard and we live in Princeton," she says.

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