



ARTS LIFE INAUGURAL BLUES

Mavis Staples is puzzled that President Obama failed to invite her to his January inauguration. "It's a slap in the face," says the Chicago-based singer, who had played for JFK, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. A veteran of the civil rights movement and a 2005 Lifetime Achievement Grammy recipient, Staples says she would have rallied the inauguration crowd with the iconic anthem of hope, "I'll Take You There." The solo artist will perform the song — first recorded in 1972 with her family, the Staple Singers — when she headlines the first ever Vermont Blues Festival at Mount Snow.

Founded by her father, the late guitarist "Pops" Staples, the Staple Singers began as a gospel group but were embraced by the early 1960s folk revival for their "freedom songs." Their star rose quickly, but tours through the Deep South could be tense. In 1965 a white Memphis gas station attendant called Mavis a derogatory name. "Pops clocked him," she recalls with a chuckle. A brawl ensued. Later, in neighboring Arkansas, the entertainers were stopped by "cops with shotguns and dogs," Mavis says. "I thought they would take us into the woods." Instead, at the local police station, their Memphis brouhaha was sorted out; an apologetic officer even acknowledged seeing them on the Johnny Carson show.

Certain churches once reviled "I'll Take You There," branding it "the devil's music," Mavis explains. "I told them, 'All music is God's music.'"

- **WHAT:** Vermont Blues Festival, also starring Shemekia Copeland, Elvin Bishop and Guy Davis, among others
- **WHEN:** Aug. 21–23
- **WHERE:** Mount Snow, West Dover
- **COST:** \$70 (three-day ticket) and less
- **INFORMATION:** (800) 498-0479 or www.mountsnow.com

— Susan Green



ARTS LIFE GLASS ACT

For more than a century his name has been in the lexicon to describe anything of superior quality, but during the Gilded Age, Louis Comfort Tiffany was something of a rebel with a cause: the decorative arts.

In the late 1800s, he declined to remain in his father's prosperous Manhattan jewelry business, instead developing an innovative process for the creation of stained glass. Europeans traditionally painted on clear glass; Tiffany helped invent an opalescence that revolutionized the craft.

This summer, many of his lamps, ceramics and glass vessels can be seen at the Shelburne Museum, founded in 1947 by Electra Havemeyer Webb. Tiffany had a direct connection to Webb, having designed her parents' three-story mansion on Fifth Avenue. As part of the exhibit, an entire suite of his original furniture from the Webbs' luxurious New York home will also be on display.

Tiffany (1848–1933) surely fit the definition of a Renaissance man, creating textiles, pottery and even books. "He really was a genius," says Lawrence Ribbecke, a Burlington architectural stained-glass craftsman who is frequently hired to repair authentic Tiffany windows throughout Vermont. "He understood light and color the way a painter would. He was a little bit of an artist and a little bit of a magician."

- **WHAT:** "Louis Comfort Tiffany: Nature by Design"
- **WHEN:** June 20–Oct. 25
- **WHERE:** Shelburne Museum
- **COST:** \$10–\$20; Vermont residents receive discounts
- **INFORMATION:** (802) 985-3346 or www.shelburnemuseum.org

— Susan Green



ARTS LIFE COUNTRY ROADS

In depicting Vermont, painter Luigi Lucioni gave credit to his muse. "For me, nature is the greatest artist that ever lived," he said in a July 1971 interview for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art.

Evidence of this inspiration can be found through August at the Middlebury College Museum of Art in "Pastoral Vermont: The Paintings and Etchings of Luigi Lucioni," an exhibit of landscapes, portraits and still lifes.

The European immigrant divided his time between a New York City apartment and, after 1930, a Manchester Depot house. The move north was suggested by Electra Havemeyer Webb, his principal benefactress and later founder of the Shelburne Museum.

"I fell madly in love with the state because it reminded me a little bit of northern Italy, where I was born," Lucioni (1900–1988) told the Smithsonian interviewer.

"Luigi lived here with his two sisters," explains Mark Reinfurt, owner of Manchester Village's Equinox Antiques. "I met him near the end of his life. He was very prolific, disciplined, quiet and charming."

Lucioni's work became a passion for Reinfurt, who has collected about 40 pieces. He recalls the Italian artist driving along country roads "in his old woody station wagon," looking for images worthy of capturing on canvas. No wonder *Life* magazine once dubbed him Vermont's "painter laureate."

- **WHAT:** "Pastoral Vermont: The Paintings and Etchings of Luigi Lucioni"
- **WHEN:** May–August
- **WHERE:** Middlebury College Museum of Art
- **COST:** Free
- **INFORMATION:** (802) 443-5007 or <http://museum.middlebury.edu>

— Susan Green