



## New ArtSpring festival explores 'freedom of expression'

**Thursday**

Posted at 2:01 AM

How broad is the theme of “freedom of expression”? Broad enough to cover the entire Cape, for 10 days.

By Keith Powers / Contributing Writer

How broad is the theme of “freedom of expression”? Broad enough to cover the entire Cape, for 10 days.

**ArtSpring Cape Cod**, the first Cape-wide grassroots festival of its kind, runs Thursday, April 27 through May 7, and is designed to show that “freedom of expression” comes in many forms. And it will bring together dozens of Cape Cod artists and art organizations to prove it.

Museums. Galleries. Co-ops. Individual artists. Theaters. Cape Symphony. Libraries and writer’s groups. Conservation spaces. Even liquor stores and hotels are embracing the festival.

The goal: “To have a wide scope of the arts and cultural events, a festival that was grass-roots-oriented, and free for any artist or organization to participate in,” David Kuehn says.

Kuehn, executive director of Cotuit Center for the Arts, is one of a dozen organizers. Much like the festival itself, even the organizers are a democratic, grass-roots ensemble, sitting together as an advisory board with no director -- “an equal collaboration of arts leaders,” Kuehn says.

“It began last year, with a conversation I had with Jung-Ho Pak,” he says, referring to the music director of the Cape Symphony. “He had on his bucket list to do this play by Tom Stoppard and André Previn, and that put a stake in the ground.”

The play in question, “Every Good Boy Deserves Favour,” will be presented jointly by the symphony and the Cotuit center during the festival. But that was only the beginning.

“That original collaboration kicked it off,” says David Kaplan, committee member and executive director of the Cape & Islands Theater Coalition. “But the general sense was to put a real focus on the diversity of artists and cultural organizations on the Cape.”

The festival “ gets people talking together, and thinking together,” he says. “The arts are one of the largest factors in people coming to the Cape in the first place. And the theme is not so much political, as advocating for the importance of the arts.”

A juried exhibition, also titled “Freedom of Expression,” opened last month at the Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis. The museum also will host multiple events during ArtSpring, including an April 29 screening of “Alone in Berlin,” a 2016 film starring Emma Thompson that directly addresses repression in 1940s Germany.

“I think it’s good to have that screening at the museum,” Kaplan says. “With the exhibition there, it will give people a full immersion in the theme.”

Some activities are not one event but many. “Unbound,” at the Cotuit center on May 5, simultaneously invites visual artists to a pop-up installation, hosts a community performance of Terry Riley’s “In C,” and stages a performance of “Résonance” by the Canadian dance collective The Sound She Makes.

Given the festival’s theme, some presentations might seem to be a given. A staged version of George Orwell’s “1984” at the Tilden Arts Center on the Cape Cod Community College campus in West Barnstable falls into that category. The production, which runs April 20 through 30, is a dramatic adaptation of the dystopian novel by Matthew Dunster.

The fourth Cape Cod Festival of Arab and Middle Eastern Cinema, running from May 4 through 8 at venues from Chatham to Provincetown, also dovetails nicely into the ArtSpring theme. The festival opens with a Lebanese comedy, “Halal Love (and Sex),” and also includes a Syrian documentary, a tribute to Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, and “Tickling Giants,” which profiles the Jon Stewart of Egypt, Bassem Youssef.

Staged poetry readings in East Dennis, jazz quartets in Brewster, an open house at Highfield Hall in Falmouth, a printmaking exhibition in Osterville, a poetry of aging symposium in Wellfleet -- more than four dozen presenters will contribute during the 10-day festival. A complete listing of events can be found at [www.artspringcapecod.org](http://www.artspringcapecod.org).

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“It’s like an Easter egg hunt for the arts,” says Jung-Ho Pak about ArtSpring. “We have great arts groups on the Cape, but we almost never talk to each other. When we first got together, we said, ‘We don’t have to get married; let’s just do a festival around one good idea.’”

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