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ALL ABOARD FOR SAMA'S "ORIENT EXPRESS" GARDEN PARTY

Ligonier – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Ligonier Valley is on track for another Garden Party. This spring, the Museum invites the public to board the “Orient Express” for its 17th annual fundraiser. Guests will be treated to the sights, sounds and tastes along the Orient Express from Paris to Istanbul without having to leave the Museum. Get your tickets ready for the Garden Party on Saturday, June 2.

Chair Patty Jones and the Garden Party Committee have planned an exciting evening that begins with a champagne reception in the gallery celebrating the Museum’s featured exhibition, *Ritual Abstractions: Australian Aboriginal Art from the Collection of Anne M. MacDougall*. The vibrant abstract imagery in the nearly 40 paintings and artifacts on view depict sacred stories, the earth and cultural traditions that remain relevant today. Imbued with complex layers of meaning, the paintings offer a glimpse into ancient traditions that shape the past, present and future.

Guests will then exit the Museum directly into a passenger car. A personal conductor will be on-hand to take tickets and direct guests under the tent for cocktails and hors d’oeuvres. Games of chance will be offered as guests enjoy period music by the Rick Purcell Band. Prepared by Vallozzi’s, the dinner menu will offer a variety of tastes from European countries along the Orient Express railway. A silent auction will offer artwork, gift baskets, event packages and much more. As an added treat, members of the Derry Railroad Association and other railroad enthusiasts will provide a variety of train memorabilia and artifacts for visitors to enjoy, including a model train display featuring a Pennsylvania Railroad steam locomotive and a modern Amtrak passenger train.

“This year, our Garden Party will board the Orient Express,” said Jones. “Ligonier has a rich history of trains, and I hope the community will enjoy the many presentations of model trains and train memorabilia on display. I am grateful to the Derry Railroad Association and all of those who are helping to create this memorable display.”

The Garden Party also includes a ribbon cutting for the Museum’s new Donald M. Robinson Sculpture Park. The park features five abstract steel sculptures and three benches created by Josefa Filkosky, as well as Joseph Mannino’s terra cotta work, *An Eye for Ai Yi Yi Yi Yi*, an authentic medieval gargoyle, and other sculptures already in place on the Museum lawn.

The live auction will offer a variety of items, including a 1934 brass Pennsylvania Railroad train bell #45. Mounted in a black iron support, the bell weighs 200 pounds and is signed by GG Zeak, a well-known PRR bell refurbisher. Train enthusiasts also may be intrigued by the rustic charm and intricate detailing of a Conquest hand-crafted, weathered and worn metal train clock designed and crafted by The Barrel Shack. Other items in the live auction include oil paintings by John Buxton and Rita Haldeman, a Masters flag autographed by Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus, and a *Star Wars: A New Hope* limited edition photo signed by Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill.

“Imagine traveling by way of the majestic Orient Express, observing the beautiful and exotic landscapes from Paris to Istanbul,” said SAMA-Ligonier Valley Coordinator Kristin Miller. “That is what we look to accomplish at this year’s Garden Party. We have a wonderful evening planned that will provide our guests with a fantastic array of entertainment, auction items, games and more.”

The Garden Party is sponsored by Somerset Trust. Garden Party patrons include the Silberman Family Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation and Patrick R. Wallace – Covington Investment Advisors, Inc.

The Garden Party will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. on June 2. Tickets are \$125 per person and reservations are required by May 25. Sponsorship and advertising opportunities are available. For tickets or additional information, please call the Museum at (724) 238-6015 or visit www.sama-art.org.

Since its opening in 1976, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art has been devoted to its mission of collecting, preserving and exhibiting 19th- and 20th-century American art to the rural communities of southwestern and central Pennsylvania. Since that time, the Museum’s permanent collection has grown to number more than 4,500 works of art. With sites located in Altoona, Bedford, Johnstown, Ligonier and Loretto, SAMA reaches tens of thousands every year with its world-class exhibitions and award-winning education programs. The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Ligonier Valley is open to the public free of charge.