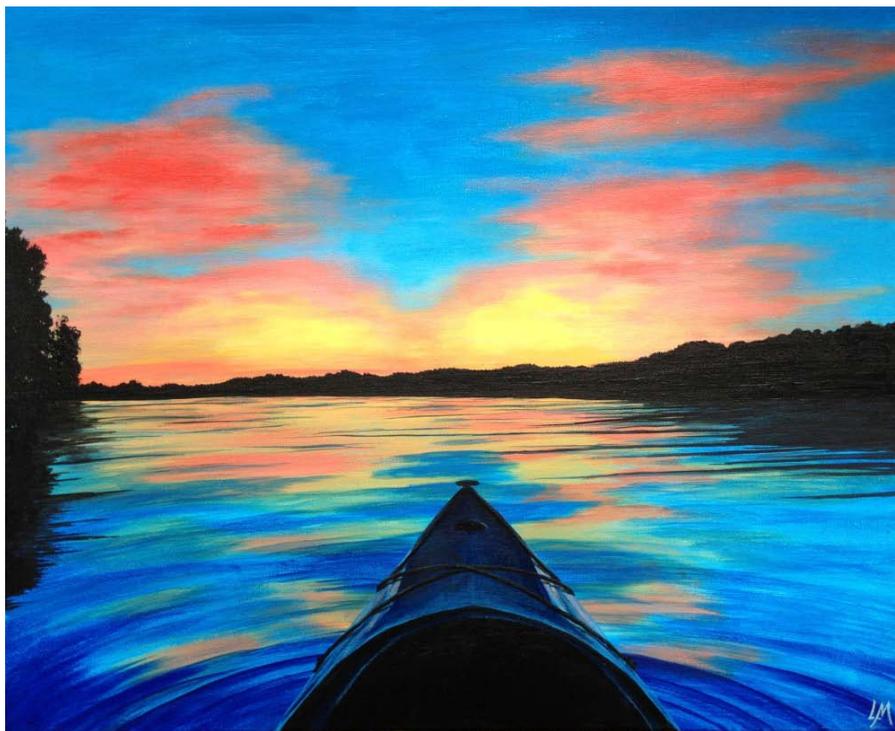


10 Arts Adventures To Explore This Summer

by Barbara MacRobie

Maybe our moods in summer are an echo from childhood, when the season really did bubble over with time to explore new things. Maybe, as recent studies suggest, our biology is hard-wired to feel happier when the weather is warmer and the days are longer. Whatever, summer in Missouri beckons with a spirit of adventure. We propose 10 arts activities to answer that call. Read on for specific events and resources or just for inspiration on how to bring even more arts fun into your life during the months that Lyra the Harp plays high in Missouri's sky.



Kayaking Home, by Lauren Murphy of Cedar Hill. Our thanks to Lauren for letting us use her painting to symbolize summer adventure. For more of Lauren's art, see her at the [Let Them Eat Art](#) festival July 11 in Maplewood, and her blog, [ALONE with a PAINTBRUSH](#).

1. Listen to music under the blue

"You feel the day start to cool down, the sun sets, a tugboat passes along the river and down the street a couple of trains go by, and you're sitting under a canopy of stars listening to good music," said Henry Sweets, executive director of the [Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum](#) in downtown Hannibal. Every summer the museum presents several weeks of free evening concerts on historic Hill Street between



The long shadows of summer sunset fall on the brick-paved street in front of the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum at the beginning of a *Music Under the Stars* concert. The tents on the right offer food and drink for sale by local merchants.

Samuel Clemens' childhood home and the house of "Becky Thatcher" right alongside the Mississippi.

Similar free concerts take place all summer throughout Missouri, at parks, town squares, historic houses, zoos, museums, botanical gardens, wineries and more. They're an ideal way, Henry said, either to enjoy familiar music or sample a new genre.

“You’re in a relaxed atmosphere, not feeling perhaps the etiquette and rules of an indoor concert,” he said. “We have people who can’t make it by the beginning of the show and so they just come down later. Some get tired and pick up and go home early. People are spread out in lawn chairs and on blankets. You can talk to each other without disturbing your neighbors. Each of our evenings we also have food and drinks available from local vendors.” And the riverside setting, he said, is magical. “You’re part of the whole downtown atmosphere,” he said. “That’s something that can only happen outdoors.”

Concerts all over the state

Free outdoor concerts abound in Missouri in the summer. The best resources to find them in Missouri are the Missouri Division of Tourism’s VisitMO.com and local things-to-do resources such as news media and Convention and Visitors Bureaus. Here are a few summer series we spotted.

- **Arcadia**, [Pickin’ on the Square](#), Iron County Courthouse Gazebo, by Arcadia Valley Mountain Music Festival | Fridays, May 16–October 17
- **Cape Girardeau**, [Tunes at Twilight](#), Common Pleas Courthouse Gazebo, by Old Town Cape | Fridays, May 16–June 20 and August 15–September 19
- **Columbia**, [Community Concerts](#), various outdoor locations, by Missouri Symphony Society | June 5, 12, 22, 29
- **Hannibal**, [Music Under the Stars](#), by Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum | Thursdays, June 5–July 31
- **Lee’s Summit**, [Music in the Park](#), Howard Station Park, by Downtown Lee’s Summit Main Street | Fridays, May 23–August 29
- **Sikeston**, [Music in the Park](#), Malone Park, by Historic Downtown Sikeston | Fridays, May 30–June 27
- **Springfield**, [Sounds on the Square](#), Park Central Square, by Gig Salad | Fridays, June 6–27
- **Warrensburg**, [Summer Concert Series](#), Johnson County Courthouse Lawn and Pine Street, by Warrensburg Main Street | every other Friday, June 13–August 22



This restored 1880 stagecoach from the Butterfield Overland Mail Trail between Missouri and California often makes a stop at the Old-Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival, thanks to owner and historical reenactor Rick Hamby of Caulfield. Pictured with the coach is festivalgoer Richard Pierce of Hillsboro. – photo by Phyllis Pierce

2. Travel in time

A folk arts festival like the [Old-Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival](#) in West Plains exists in two time streams: the present where the traditions it celebrates are still vibrant, and the past from which they sprang.

“Old-time in this context,” said Lisa Higgins, director of the Missouri Arts Council’s Missouri Folk Arts Program, “refers to a certain musical style that has long roots but is still dynamic, not fixed in time, not a reenactment. The other traditions at that festival are also still actively practiced.”

The West Plains Council on the Arts is the festival’s founder and mainspring. Board member Paula Speraneo told us, “Our primary focus has always been the music, but the other events—the Bob Holt Memorial Jig Dance Competition, the Fiddlers’ Frolic, the mule jump, square dances, folkways artisans, workshops, quilt show, and our What’s Cookin’ Stage—are tied so closely to our culture that all combined they make quite

the two-day adventure. This year’s additions of a ‘quilt turning’ demonstration, Old Time Kids Fest on the Square, and kennel club demonstrations just increase the audience’s options for activities.” The festival marks its 20th anniversary this June 20-21.

Summer's heritage festivals

You'll find all kinds of festivals around the state via MissouriFairsAndFestivals.com and our Division of Tourism's VisitMo.com. In addition to the Old-Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival, we've detected five more annual summer time-traveling treats that transport you into Missouri's past, from French colonial days through the Civil War to the early 20th century. There are also four annual events that take you back even further.

- **Kingston**, [A County, A Country, Divided: Caldwell County's Civil War Days Reenactment and Living History Festival](#) | June 6-8
- **Wentzville**, [16th Annual St. Louis Renaissance Faire](#) | June 7-8 (last of four weekends)
- **Elsinore**, [14th Annual Old Tyme Country Festival](#) | June 7
- **Nevada**, [Bushwhacker Days 50th Anniversary](#) | June 11-14
- **Sainte Genevieve**, [French Heritage Festival](#) | June 14
- **Hartville**, [White Hart Renaissance Faire](#) | June 14-15 & 21-22
- **West Plains**, [20th Annual Old-Time Music Ozark Heritage Festival](#) | June 20-21
- **Hannibal**, [National Tom Sawyer Days](#) | July 2-6
- **Bonner Springs (Kansas)**, [Kansas City Renaissance Festival](#) | weekends August 30–October 13
- **Kingdom City**, [Central Missouri Renaissance Festival](#) | September 13-14

3. Play in mud

"I really like the way pottery starts out as a lump and ends up as something decorative or functional," said Melynda Steward, treasurer of the [KC Clay Guild](#). Squishing her fingers through clay, she said, is deeply satisfying. "I have a desk job in the daytime, so it's fulfilling to be able to create something from scratch with my hands. And I like getting dirty, so it works out well!"



Throwing pottery on a wheel at the KC Clay Guild

A nonprofit ceramics arts studio, the KC Clay Guild offers classes year-round in wheel throwing and hand building, as well as workshops with well-known artists and other opportunities to learn about ceramics. The classes start at beginner level. That is also the case at [Springfield Pottery](#), a gallery, community clay center, and the working studio of founders Nathan and Jennifer Falter in downtown Springfield. "Our students are amazing," said Jennifer. "Most have walked in the door with no experience but a lot of enthusiasm."

Getting messy

To dive into the artistic and therapeutic pleasures of mud, Melynda advises that you look for a pottery studio that like the KC Clay Guild offers "fun nights." "These are a good way to give it a try," she said. Talk with local potters at your community's festivals, art fairs, and art walks. Pennsylvania potter Beth Peterson at [About.com](#) recommends these additional search methods to find classes and workshops.

- **Art supply stores** – "Some offer classes in pottery or ceramics."
- **Area art centers** – "Don't be afraid to ask if they have pottery classes or are planning to do so in the future. Your interest could be the spark that leads to such classes being offered."
- **Art museums** – "Classes are often part of their outreach programs."
- **Colleges** – "Check with your local community colleges as well as larger colleges and universities."
- **Pottery and ceramics magazines** – "Look in the classified ads as well as the ads on each page."



By the Way, Meet Vera Stark, playing at the Unicorn Theatre in Kansas City on the solstice and 22 other days this June.
Left, Dianne Yvette; right, Katie Karel – photo by Cynthia Levin

4. Celebrate the solstice with magical theatrics

So it's probably not practical for most of us to celebrate the summer solstice in the traditional manner of building bonfires on hilltops and jumping through them. Substitute a different magic: live theatre.

"Of course every day is the perfect time for live entertainment," said Cynthia Levin, producing artistic director of Kansas City's Unicorn Theatre, "but in summer, people are more willing to get out and go. We venture outside after the winter. The sun is out later. We're more daring! What a fantastic time to try something new." And if the weather is hot, "then you want to be inside for a couple of hours!"

This June 4-29, Unicorn Theatre, whose motto is "bold new plays," is performing *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, about a black actress who goes to Hollywood in the 1930s to make it big. "It's a fascinating look at changing racial stereotypes, but the great thing is that it's also a comedy," said Cynthia. "It's social commentary that's poignant yet also silly and fun. I always look for plays like that for the summer. People are feeling good and they want to stay feeling good. But they also love to have something to think about."

Solstice shows

This year with the summer solstice hitting on a Saturday with Midsummer's Eve the Friday night before, there is an unusual concentration of theatrical productions on those days. What follows is what just might be every single professional and community play, musical, opera, and circus being performed in Missouri on June 20 and 21. All shows take place on both dates except *Little Shop of Horrors* at the Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, which opens on the 21st. Many of these companies and other troupes throughout the state also perform in July and August. Because there is no one resource that lists all the theatrics in Missouri, your best bets are again the Division of Tourism's VisitMO.com and the things-to-do resources in your town and the ones you're thinking of visiting.

- Arrow Rock, [Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre](#), *Little Shop of Horrors* | June 21-29
- Carthage, [Stone's Throw Dinner Theatre](#), *Jump, I'll Catch You* | June 20-29
- Columbia, [Columbia Entertainment Company](#), *Spamalot* | June 12-29
- Jefferson City, [Capital City Players](#), *Les Misérables* | June 12-22
- Jefferson City, [Stained Glass Theatre of Mid-Missouri](#), *Anne of Green Gables* | June 5-21
- Joplin, [MO Shakes Missouri Shakespeare Festival](#) (Missouri Southern State University), *Twelfth Night* | June 19-29
- Kansas City, [The Coterie](#), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* | June 17–August 3
- Kansas City, [Heart of America Shakespeare Festival](#), *A Winter's Tale* | June 17–July 6
- Kansas City, [Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre](#), *The King and I* | June 5-22
- Kansas City, [Theatre for Young America](#), *Cinderella* | June 10-28
- Kansas City, [Unicorn Theatre](#), *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* | June 4-29
- Macon, [Maples Repertory Theatre](#), *Forever Plaid* | June 18–July 12
- Poplar Bluff, [The Stage Company](#), *The Rainmaker* | June 13-22
- Rolla, [Ozark Actors Theatre](#), *The Comedy of Errors* | June 19-29



The Granny Chicks—sisters Janie Blanchard (left) and Bella Coleman—are joined by Bob Novak (all of Neosho) at the Webb City Farmers Market. “Janie and Bella are the core performers but always bring along one or two other talented musicians,” said Eileen. “We never know just who that will be but they always bring us some great music.”

6. Mix art and locavoraciousness

A nearby farmers market may well be the place to find not only locally produced fruits, vegetables, meats, honey, jam, baked goods, herbs, and flowers, but also homegrown art.

For instance, local musicians play at the [Webb City Farmers Market](#) in southwestern Missouri every Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday from mid-April through September. “Live music is one of the things that defines our market and makes it different from any other experience in the region,” said said manager Eileen Nichols.

“It’s the only place you can go to hear excellent family-friendly local and regional performers for free three times a week,” Eileen said. “Just the other day I was doing some errand in the parking area as a young family approached, and I heard the man in the group say, ‘Live music!!!’” Even the website’s homepage plays a song, created for the market by the Green Earth Band of nearby Joplin.

Eileen credits the profusion of performances to local musicians—“all of whom play for us for far less than they ought to!”—and “the ongoing support of the vendors themselves, the Missouri Arts Council, and generous foundations that have pitched in,” she said. And by partnering for special events with other nonprofits including Heartland Opera Theatre and the American Legion, she said, the Webb City Farmers Market has an even further impact on the entire community.

Fresh food and fun

Farmers markets are burgeoning. As of the 2013 National Farmers Market Week (the first week of August), the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Farmers Market Directory listed 8,144 of them—245 in Missouri. There’s bound to be one near you, and these three resources will help you find it. Although none of the resources specifies whether a market includes the arts, each site leads to contact information including websites, emails, and phone numbers.

- [USDA’s National Farmers Market Directory](#) – Build a custom search with parameters including zip codes and products.
- [National Farmers’ Market Directory](#) – Find markets listed by states, within which they are listed by counties.
- [Missouri Farmers’ Market Directory](#) by AgriMissouri, Missouri Department of Agriculture – Search by region or county.

7. Walk the streets for art

Sculptures, fountains, historic buildings, murals, mosaics, even paintings around storm drains—public art is an integral part of many Missouri streetscapes. “As you’re walking through a lively neighborhood and you encounter a piece of art, it gives you a sense of community and place,” said Murielle Gauthier, director of the [Arts Council of Southeast Missouri](#).

This past April, the Council added to Cape Girardeau’s existing collection of public art by opening a year-long temporary outdoor art exhibition downtown, with seven sculptures by artists from Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa installed along Broadway. “Public art tells stories about the community—who is living there, why, and



how,” said Murielle. “Our movers and shakers have come together to embrace this exhibit: the Council, Old Town Cape, the City, the Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce, Cape Girardeau Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Southeast Missouri State University.” Plans are for new sculptures to replace the original seven next April.

“Art helps you to be in the moment,” said Murielle, “to engage with your surroundings in a very real way, to really see them and not just walk past them.”

LEFT: *Victoria* by Chris Wubbena of Jackson in Cape Girardeau’s Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit. Though Chris is the exhibit’s founder, “he is so humble, he had never mentioned even the potential of submitting one of his own pieces for consideration,” said Murielle. “But the Public Art Committee decided it would be so much fun to include him.” Chris told KRCU-FM that he modeled *Victoria* “after the Nike of Samothrace, or Winged Victory. But my piece isn’t carved out of marble, it’s fabricated out of steel. It’s dark and so it’s a different kind of idea of victory... an attempt to be realistic about what victory might mean.”

Feet-friendly tours of public art

How about a summertime scavenger hunt for outdoor art in your neighborhood? Some Missouri communities make it easy for people to find their public art. These cities have online guides and sometimes printed versions, with maps, photos, and detailed information.

- Cape Girardeau, [Public Art of Cape Girardeau](#), by the Arts Council of Southeast Missouri
- Cape Girardeau, [2014 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit](#)
- Chillicothe, [Walking Tour](#) of murals including a printable map, by Main Street Chillicothe
- Clayton, [Public Art](#), by City of Clayton
- Columbia, [Public Art Guide](#), with printed copies available, by City of Columbia Office of Cultural Affairs
- Cuba, [Cuba, MO Art](#), guide to “Route 66 Mural City,” by Viva Cuba, Inc.
- Kansas City, [Sculptures](#) and [Fountains](#), by the City of Fountains Foundation
- Kansas City, [Public Art Navigator](#), 15-stop audio cell phone tour, by the Metropolitan Public Art Consortium
- Louisiana, [The Murals of Louisiana](#), by GreatRiverRoad.com
- St. Joseph, [Public Art](#) including the city’s first temporary Sculpture Walk, by the Allied Arts Council
- St. Louis, Grand Center District, [Public Art](#), by Grand Center Inc.
- St. Louis, [Public Art in the St. Louis Region](#), by the Regional Arts Commission
- Springfield, [Public Art Brochure](#), by the Springfield Regional Arts Council

8. Tap up a storm

Though ballerinas are hardcore athletes, they maintain an illusion of ethereal weightlessness, so they are not supposed to make noise even when they land on the hard tips of their toe shoes. But tap dancers “turn noise into music,” said Robert Reed, the Missouri tap master who founded and directs the [St. Louis Tap Festival](#), now in its 23rd year of weeklong of workshops and performances in late July or early August.

Also unlike with ballet and other concert dance forms, Robert said, “you can learn and perform tap at any age. I’ve taught a lot of older people who always wanted to tap but thought they couldn’t. People think they’ll hurt themselves, but you can dance naturally without stomping on the floor. The sounds of your tap come from the weight of your body. You turn walking into tapping, without jamming on your knees or hips.”



Another reason tap is for everyone, Robert said, is that each dancer develops his or her own personal style. “You learn techniques and a lot of styles and then you start finding your sweet spot. You dance who you are. You dance your own life,” he said.

“The whole world goes in rhythm. You walk in rhythm, you breathe in rhythm. Tap is like breathing. The music is coming literally out of your body—your feet are the instruments. And when you make rhythm, you feel good inside.”

LEFT: Maud Arnold from Washington, D.C. is one of the visiting artists featured at the 2014 St. Louis Tap Festival. She is teaching during the week of workshops and performing at the culminating Saturday concert, *All That Tap XXIII*.

Trying tap

▪ **Doing:** Internet search engines are your friends for finding tap in your community. Fortunately, tap is superb exercise as well as art, combining balance, cardio, and weight-bearing. So classes are frequently offered at community centers and YMCAs as well as at dance studios. If you get hooked and want to advance, Robert advises checking out the resources of the [International Tap Association](#), the worldwide service organization for tap dancers.

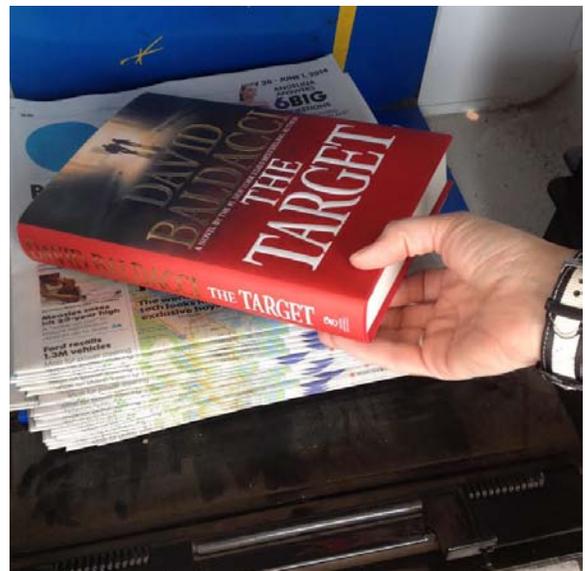
▪ **Watching:** You can often get a taste of tap at art walks and community festivals where performances are given by local dancers. For an entire meal, Missouri’s only native full-length performance is [All That Tap](#), the St. Louis Festival’s culminating event. This year the show takes place on August 2. Robert stressed that the show is packed with variety, with performers of many different ages and styles and diverse kinds of music—“because you can tap to anything.”

9. Commit a random act of literature

You can do a lot with a book you’re reading on your laptop or Kindle, but one thing you can’t do is leave the book inside a newspaper vending machine for the next person who buys a paper to take home to read.

Our photo of a random act of literature was staged for us at a street corner in Sedalia by a local bookstore, [Reader’s World](#). Manager Laura Burris is, not surprisingly, a big fan of physical books.

“The smell of them, the feel in your hands—all your five senses are engaged,” she said. “Books are more organic, more alive. It’s also easier,” she added, “to pull the memory files out of your brain if you see the words printed rather than on a screen.” Surfing for books at a bookstore is much different than online, she said. At a bookstore, “You have no idea what you’re going to find. Even if you walk in knowing exactly what you want, you could come out with something completely different, something that could change your life.”



Were this a photo of an actual event instead of a staged scene, the next person buying a newspaper would get a pleasant surprise, a thriller tucked into the papers. – photo by Jill McCutchen, courtesy of Reader’s World, Sedalia

Become a book ninja

You don't need to register anywhere to leave a book for someone to find at your local coffee house or laundromat or bus shelter. But if you want to get fancier, the practice of strewing books around has been formalized on several levels.

- [World Book Night](#) – This annual event takes place on April 23, the International Day of the Book (chosen for Shakespeare's birthday). Volunteers choose from among dozens of titles. On the 23rd, they hand out 20 copies of their chosen book which have been specially printed for World Book Night. Events are coordinated by libraries or independent bookstores, such as Reader's World, the [Kirkwood Public Library](#), the [Moberly branch of Little Dixie Regional Libraries](#), and [The Book House](#) in Maplewood. About 25,000 volunteers all over the U.S. participated in World Book Night events this year.
- [Little Free Library](#) – "In its most basic form," says LittleFreeLibrary.org, "a Little Free Library is a box full of books where anyone may stop by and pick up a book (or two) and bring back another book to share." People build permanent birdhouse-sized structures, put the little buildings up in their neighborhoods, and fill them with books. The internet-coordinated movement boasts 49 Little Free Libraries in Missouri from Boonville to Battlefield.
- [BookCrossing](#) – This book drop operates on the same principle as leaving a book in a newspaper vending machine, but goes a couple of steps up. Book strewers sign up for free on the website. They create labels with an ID number to stick into books so that finders, if they want, can also visit the website and register that they found the book. Books might be tracked for years as they circumnavigate the globe. Or they might disappear once set free "into the wild." Nearly 8,000 Missourians have signed up on [bookcrossing.com](#).

10. Purr along with a cat film festival



The Walker Art Center's second annual Internet Cat Video Festival, held at the Minnesota State Fair – photo courtesy of the Walker Art Center

In summer 2012, the art museum of Minneapolis, the Walker Art Center, was inspired to create the world's first Internet Cat Video Festival.

What the Walker thought would be a nice little trial balloon turned into a monster hit. More than 10,000 people showed up on the museum lawn to watch its "curated collection of cat clips."

Now the festival is annual. And it is not only a shining light on the

Minneapolis arts scene but an international phenomenon. The museum is making its feline video collections (a new one is created every summer) available to forward-thinking organizations worldwide. This July 18 and 19 that includes the [Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis](#).

"As soon as we heard about it, we thought, that's a perfect fit," said Ida McCall, the Contemporary's PR/marketing manager. "Our museum is about the art of today. We're also vitally interested in being part of our community. Here are these homemade DIY creations that are a contemporary expression of culture. Bringing the Cat Video Festival here is a way to experiment with unique public programming and reach people who may not already know about us."

Partnering with local animal shelters, the museum will have cats available for adoption on site. "And we are encouraging people to come in costume," Ida said, "to express their inner cat lover or cat."

If you can't make it to St. Louis, or Portland, Oregon, or Athens, Greece, or any of the 26 locations presenting the Walker's festival concept this year, you can always host your own cat video extravaganza. Choose your favorite clips, create a reel, set up popcorn and libations, and invite friends over for an evening of high culture. Like the fest by the Contemporary, said Ida, "it's a way to take something you usually watch on your small computer screen by yourself and make it a social and a community experience."

Feline film fun

- [The Internet Cat Video Festival at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis](#), July 18-19, 2014
- [The Walker Art Center's Internet Cat Video Festival homepage](#)
- ["Is the Internet Cats?"](#) – The PBS Idea Channel scrutinizes the web's "mascot...spirit animal...Patronus!"
- ["Memes With Meaning: Why We Create and Share Cat Videos"](#) by Abigail Posner, Google's head of strategic planning

All photos and graphics are courtesy of the organizations featured unless otherwise indicated.

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Among the many resources are the latest information on our annual and monthly grants, our special programs including the Missouri Arts Awards and Poetry Out Loud, the Missouri Touring Performers roster, and job and artist opportunities throughout the state.