



International Festivals & Events Association

Zeren Earls 2002 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee First Night International



Since 1992, Earls has served as the founding President of First Night International, the umbrella organization to all the First Night communities, which number 180 to date. With visionary leadership and passion for art and community, Earls has championed First Night's growth into an increasingly popular New Year's Eve Celebration both in the United States and abroad.

Earls was among the small group of civic-minded artists who created First Night in 1976, as the finale to Boston's bicentennial celebration and the beginning of a new tradition. Four years later, she left her career as Visual Arts and Drama Teacher at Belmont Day School to oversee First Night's development full-time. As the event's President and Artistic Director, her hard work, talent and dedication turned this once small Boston event into a nationally recognized, public celebration attracting over a million people.

During her fourteen-year leadership (1980-1994), First Night Boston received twenty awards, making it an inspirational model for other communities. In 1990, Earls received the Kevin Lynch Award from MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning for the imaginative use of the built environment. In its inaugural year, in 1993, she was distinguished by the Massachusetts Cultural Council's prestigious Commonwealth Award for organizational leadership. In 2001, she received the Terpsichore Award for Lifetime Achievement from Boston's Topf Center for Dance Education. Earls' life-long career in the arts began in 1960 upon graduating from Duke University, which she attended as a scholarship student from Turkey. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, with a special emphasis on the creative development of children and later received a Master's in Education from Antioch College.

Since then, art has been the driving force in her distinguished career as educator, producer, administrator and cultural/community leader.