

jasper

THE WORD ON COLUMBIA ARTS

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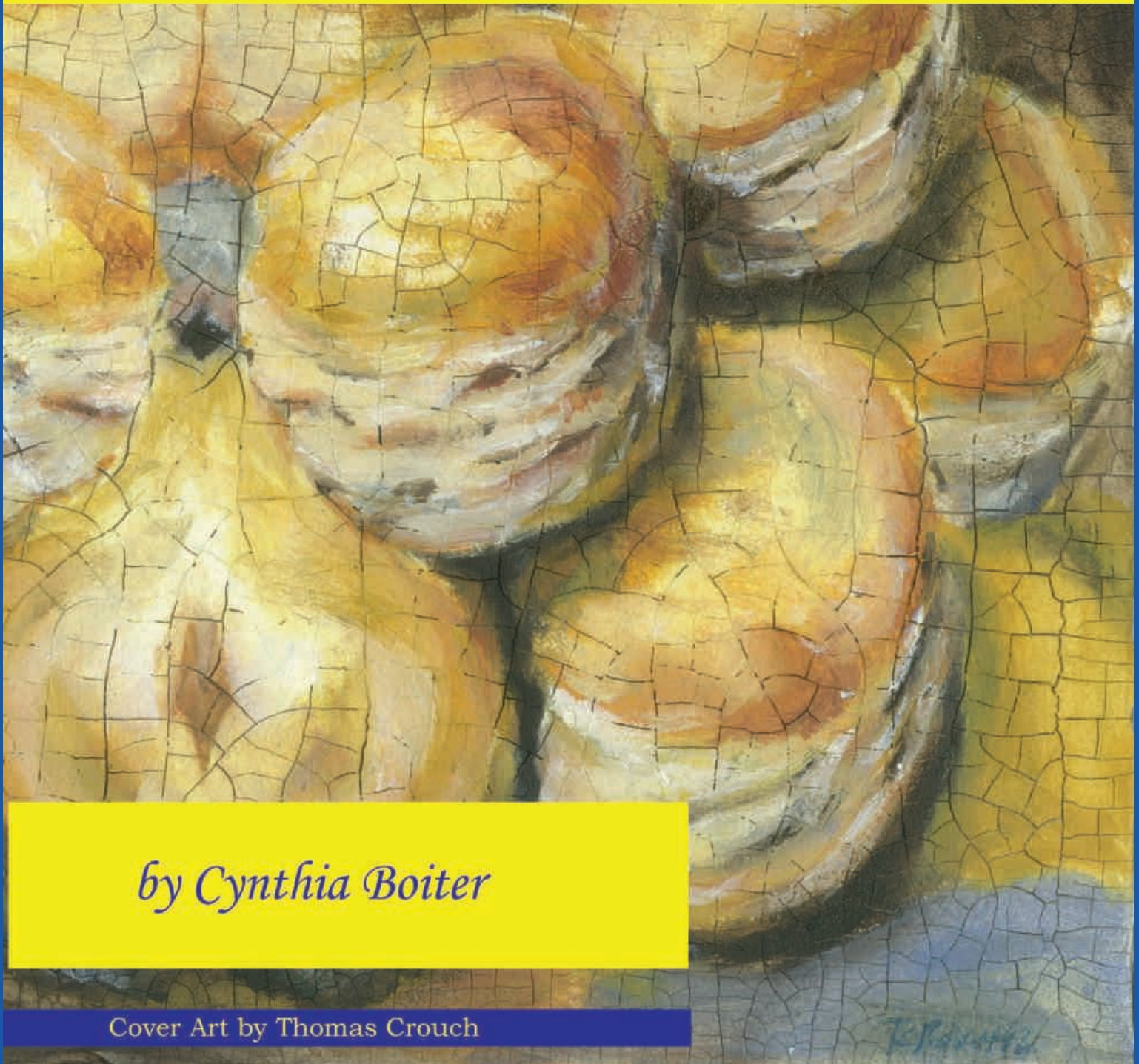
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A MESSAGE FROM JASPER

Dear Friends,

Spring is always a busy time, particularly for the arts in Columbia. There's Indie Grits, Open Studios, Artista Vista, Color the Arts, and Runaway Runway. The South Carolina Arts Commission, the Contemporaries of the Columbia Museum of Art, and the Museum of Art itself all have their annual galas. Various exhibitions are opening and closing, the local theatres all have runs of plays, many that they've been saving especially for this time of the year. It's exciting.

But this year, while Bob and I were frantically dashing back and forth from one thrilling event to another, several questions kept presenting themselves. To start with, *why did we have to frantically dash back and forth in order to properly support and celebrate the various artists and their organizations? What is so great about sixteen days in April that all but one of the above annual events have to take place then?* I'll be the first person to argue that in a strong arts community one will often have to make choices about which performance or concert to attend, but when it comes to annual events, I don't think picking and choosing should be necessary – particularly when the mission of these events is to, once a year, unite and celebrate the arts community. Scheduling annual events on top of one another dilutes the impact of the events and pits them against one another in an unnecessary competition for attendees.

The overlapping of events begs the question – *who benefits from this practice?* It certainly isn't the patrons who have to make the difficult choices of what events to attend and which artists to support. (I still feel guilty for not visiting artists who worked so hard to prepare for Open Studios – but like many people, I had committed myself to Indie Grits by purchasing a film pass.) And it certainly isn't the artists, some of whom found themselves alone in their studios because their patrons were elsewhere at other events.

And speaking of the artists, a second question presented itself as we dashed from one gala to the next – *where were they?* Now that answer is easy. With ticket prices ranging to \$150 and above it's no surprise that many artists could not afford to attend the events being held to celebrate the very life-enhancing, culture-creating work that they do. Most artists, even those who are older and established, live on modest incomes. Three

hundred bucks for a night out with a date, not to mention the fancy clothes the night would require, is out of the question for most people – especially artists. So while patrons were out on the town *ooing* and *ahhing* over the artists' work, the artists themselves were either at home in the studio or, at best, at the Whig drinking a PBR.

Of course, photographic artists were visible, as were various designers and creative types whose contributions are essential to pulling off successful arts events. Unfortunately, rather than being the guests of honor, as by all rights they could be, they were on the clock, working the event for little to no money and a thank-you-very-much. Certainly, voluntary services are critical to putting on events. And when everyone volunteers and no one but the non-profit organization takes home cash that's one thing. But if *any one* individual or business – especially a for-profit business – makes money off the volunteer services of artists, then these artists should be taking something home as well, lest the arts community undergo an epidemic of "volunteer fatigue," as one photographer told me he fears may happen soon. *Isn't that fair?*

So as we plan our events for next year let's keep these questions in mind and answer them honestly. *If we can't honor our artists, treat them fairly, and include them in the celebrations of their work, then what's the point?* A business or patron-driven arts scene serves to distance the artists from their art. An artist-driven arts scene serves to unite the community so it can grow healthy and strong.

Take care,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jasper'.

Jasper // as in Johns, the abstract expressionist, neo-Dadaist artist
as in Sergeant, the Revolutionary War hero
as in Mineral, the spotted or speckled stone
as in Magazine, the Word on Columbia Arts

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The Story Outside the Story – Chesley and Peterkin

Among all the books and all the authors at the 2012 South Carolina Book Festival in Columbia in May, there's going to be one very special book. The South Carolina Humanities Council has produced a beautiful, limited edition chapbook of Julia Peterkin's short story, "Ashes," with etchings by Stephen Chesley, a South Carolina painter known for his dark Southern landscapes.

This is the first time the book festival has produced its own chapbook and book festival director Paula Watkins says she is very excited to include the visual arts in the festival in this way. The idea for the project came from Skip Webb, a member of the book festival's advisory committee and the owner of Gumshoe Books, who suggested the combination of Peterkin and Chesley.

Chesley says he was delighted to be part of this "symbiotic" fusion of arts and literature – "it's high cotton to me." He says he started by thinking about the tradition of 1930s illustrators, such as Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth. "The approach I had, initially, was to illustrate the story." But he noted that the hallmark of his own work is a kind of obscured narrative, and printmaker Boyd Saunders suggested he think about "the narrative outside the story."

While some of the images illustrate critical moments in the story – a fireplace, someone pointing, a sheriff beside his car – Chesley developed a number of other images, non-narrative but related to the texture and culture of the story. Pat Callahan, who designed the chapbook, says that Chesley's images "step beyond the narrative and into the world of the story," wandering down "dirt roads and memories."

Chesley's etchings feel haunted, befitting a story about a South resistant to change. In the story, the plantation owner is gone but one of his tenants, an old black woman named Hannah, lives on in a small cabin. When a *po-buckra* (Gullah for a poor white, or white trash) tries to evict her and take over the small plot where she lives, building a house nearby, she prays for a sign from heaven. That sign comes, she decides, in the ashes from her own pipe that trickle down her upraised arms, and a sky at sunrise "red like fire." The story feels simultaneously surprising and predictable, as the beneficent white sheriff (a substitute patriarch for the lost gentry of the plantation) restores order of sorts.

A Southern writer known for her depictions of black folk culture – especially for her rich and accurate representations of Gullah language and culture, Peterkin was the only South Carolina writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction (for her novel *Scarlet Sister Mary* in 1929). "Ashes" first appeared in Peterkin's 1924 collection of short stories, *Green Thursday*, which was republished by the University of Georgia Press in 1998.

The chapbook is available in two limited edition versions. One hundred and fifty signed and numbered copies will be available for \$150, each including one black and white etching by Chesley. For \$500 you can get one of 15 signed and lettered copies, each with 5-7 of Chesley's etchings. // EM

Graphic Novels – The Accidental Candidate

David Axe and Corey Hutchins have a lot in common. The both attended the University of South Carolina – Axe earned an MFA in English in 2004 after attending Furman University for undergrad, and Hutchins got a master's degree in literature in 2006 after attending the State University of New York at Morrisville. Both have written for local publications including the *Free Times* and the *City Paper*, as well as for larger markets like the Center for Public Integrity. Both have made homes in Columbia. Perhaps most importantly though, both have developed a particularly critical eye for state and local politics, and it is this shared perspective that brought them together to document, in literary form, one of the most significant stories of political freakiness in South Carolina history. And keep in mind, South Carolina has had more than its share of political freakiness.

Having covered state politics since 2008 when he began writing for the *Free Times*, Hutchins had his ear to the ground when, on June 8, 2010, an unknown and unemployed Alvin Greene became the first African American to be nominated to the U.S. Senate by a major political party in South Carolina. Hutchins immediately jumped on the story and followed it through the revelation of Greene's felony obscenity charges; Greene's reaction to those who questioned not only his qualifications to run for office, but his mental competency; until his ultimate loss of the race to Senator Jim DeMint. An



From *The Accidental Candidate*, a graphic novel by Corey Hutchins and David Axe

introvert who had been bullied throughout his life, called “Turtle” because of his shyness, yet completed a political science degree from USC in four years’ time, and was honorably, though involuntarily, discharged from the U.S. Army, Greene was more than just a candidate – he was a political enigma.

And for Hutchins, Alvin Greene and his story was a dream come true.

“South Carolina has this history of weird political figures that we shove in the country’s face like a giant cream pie,” says Hutchins, who also blogs for the *Huffington Post* and was named the 2011 S.C. Press Association Journalist of the Year. The narrative of Alvin Greene, he insists, is one of the most fascinating stories in modern American politics, “embodying what everyone wants and expects politics to be, complete with issues of money, religion, race, and sex.” Having written more on Greene than anyone else in the country, it made sense that Hutchins should compile his special insights into literary form.

Enter David Axe.

David Axe is a freelance journalist who, though based in Columbia, writes about the culture of war for an impressive list of publications, the likes of *Wired.com*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The Washington Post*, often from such dodgy places as Chad, Somalia, East Timor, and Iraq. Having just returned from Afghanistan when the Greene story seemed to be petering out, Axe approached his friend Hutchins about collaborating on a book which would tell the complete Greene story. Already having five books under his belt, and with a particular penchant for the graphic novel, Axe suggested they go the same route for the Greene narrative. Hutchins was immediately on board: *The Accidental Candidate* was born.

But the graphic novel art form was new to Hutchins. “David walked me through the process and told me to picture in my mind what I wanted it to look

like,” Hutchins explains. The actual creation of the manuscript takes a number of steps starting with Hutchins conveying the story line to Axe, who then writes the story in graphic novel form. The two pass pages back and forth until, eventually, they send them on to artist Blue Delliquanti, a cartoonist in Atlanta. Columbia’s Dre Lopez designed the book’s cover.

“I’m excited about the book because the country as a whole has a sense of how bizarre South Carolina politics are, but reading this story in non-fiction comic book form will really bring that home,” Axe says, noting the advantages of DIY and self-publishing, particularly when an issue is as topical as is the Alvin Greene story. While the print form of the book will be out this summer – in time for both the general election and Preach Jacob’s Cola Con festival in October – the chapters have been serialized online at accidentalcandidate.com.

To say that a non-fiction story is being presented as a graphic novel may seem like a non-sequitur, yet it is anything but. According to Axe, “There is a building trend of non-fiction graphic novels gaining acceptance coming on the heels of comics gaining acceptance. You have more latitude with drawings and more opportunities for humor.” But Axe also notes that the story of Alvin Greene may be comical, but it’s not without its sad moments as well. “We don’t need to be funny when we’re writing; the story is funny enough.” // CB



Artist Christian Thee, host of Dark Cabaret

Photo by Forrest Clonts

Dark Cabaret

On an evening in late March, Christian Thee is hosting a dinner party in his dining room but outside his comfort zone: two poets and a writer are at his table, and the conversation tends toward the literary. No talk about art. No questions about trompe l'oeil, which has been his medium for more years than he will admit (fifty is a rough, though ungenerous guess, as Thee somehow looks to be barely older than that). No sleight of hand, other than the verbal kind — another anomaly: for all his credits as an artist (the walls of the Keenan Chapel at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral floors anyone who steps within that Columbia landmark, even those who already admire Thee's work), Thee is an accomplished magician. Before the last spoonful of dessert is gone, he is ushering his guests down a narrow hallway into a small magic parlor, where the evening really begins.

What even some of Thee's friends don't know is that as a teenager Thee performed in a magic act with Cynthia Gilliam, president of advertising and public-relations firm Semaphore Inc. He still does a number of magic shows every year, most of them for guests visiting his Forest Lake home. Now he is both broadening his audience and helping to start a tradition: once a month, Thee and two fellow magicians host the Dark Cabaret, an invitation-only evening that could become one of Columbia's most coveted invites.

To call the Dark Cabaret a magic show understates the precision with which Thee orchestrates the evening and

the eeriness of its effect. Following a half hour of wine, dessert, and conversation in the sunroom overlooking Carey Lake, Thee begins with a few tricks from the magician's repertoire: a little mind reading, a few where-did-it-go and where-did-it-come-from routines. Then Joey Vasquez leads the guests down a dim hallway into Thee's even dimmer magic theatre. The tenor of the tricks changes as well, into something that borders on disquieting. By the time everyone takes a seat in Thee's studio-turned-theatre-for-the-night for Joseph Daniels' performance, there is a sense of wanting to look over your shoulder, to check out the shadows in the corners.

"I've been tinkering with this show for a long time," says Daniels, who came up with the show's concept. "When I was in college my mentor was a hypnotist and mentalist. Mentalists tend toward a form of magic that takes psychological cues. I do have a legitimate family history of hauntings, an actual paranormal past, if you will. I thought it would be a natural way to tell a story, to blend traditional magic with storytelling with psychologically-based performance."

It's parlor magic with a whole lot of Southern Gothic thrown in.

Vasquez introduced Daniels to Thee, who found the idea intriguing. "Christian is the consummate host," says Vasquez. "It allows him to shine in one of the things he's great at — bringing people together and cultivating a bond."

Thee talks about Daniels as someone "who envisions magic as a part of theatre, which I do, too."

Though Thee describes the Dark Cabaret as a "collaboration," the three men have very different styles. Thee excels at what Vasquez describes as the "parlor magic of the golden era." Vasquez specializes in inches-from-your-face close-up magic. Daniels? He likes to twist reality.

Daniels calls his style "intimate illusion" inspired by the parlor entertainment of the 1890s. Of the three, he is the one whose magic interweaves narrative. "I have witnessed things over the course of my life that I don't understand, and that's the feeling we try to create," Daniels says. "Some of the stories were contributed by friends. But most of the stories were adopted from my family lore and are stories that we thought could be presented visually."

What they have is stories about things that go bump in the night, things that turn up where they shouldn't, people who turn up where they shouldn't. "Think of Dark Cabaret as a haunted house for adults — something more literate, more grown-up," Daniels says.

"It's a form of theatre that we enjoy creating," Thee adds. "It deals with the supernatural and unseen." Which is what makes this particular cabaret a dark one.

Would you want to spend a night alone in a deserted house with these men? Probably not. But if you're interested in getting on the Dark Cabaret guest list, there is a Facebook page. // *Susan Levi Wallach*

The South Carolina Shakespeare Company



THE SOUTH CAROLINA
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The SC Shakespeare Company presents *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged* - aka *The Compleat Wrks of Wllm Shkspr (Abridged)* - at Saluda Shoals Park, Thursday, May 24th through Saturday, May 26th. Bobby Bloom (fondly remembered as a particularly lethal and assertive Benvolio in Scott Blanks' production of *Romeo and Juliet* in Finlay Park in 2009) directs this parody, written by Adam Long, Jess Winfield, and Daniel Singer, members of The Reduced Shakespeare Company. Producer Linda Khoury says that "we wanted to diversify what we offer this year," and describes this play as "wildly creative and hilariously funny.... Never read *Titus Andronicus*? No problem; it's presented here as a cooking show. Can't keep your Shakespearean histories straight? Visualize them as a football game. Wondering what exactly is the deal with that guy Othello? Hear his story as a rap song. This work brings a hip, edgy feel to the Bard's plays, while remaining surprisingly true to the stories." At press time there was the possibility of the production also running in Finlay Park the week beforehand, i.e. the week of May 16th. For more information and up-to-the-minute details, visit <http://www.shakespeare.org/>, or call 803-787-2273 (BARD.) // AK

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The Next Door Drummers

The Next Door Drummers are a group of musicians based in Columbia that have been playing together for about five years. Its members include Lee Ann Kornegay, Debbie Holmes, Michael Cantey, Clint Wills, Davin Lail and Dick Moons. The group sprung from the passion they shared for listening to and playing traditional West African music, specifically the drum music of Guinea. "None of us are childhood friends," says Moons, "it's the music that's brought us together."

The instruments most prevalent in traditional West African culture are the Djembe, which can be traced back to around 500 AD, and the Talking Drum. Both instruments are surprisingly easy for novices to play, but to learn the actual traditional music of West Africa, mastering the Djembe is a serious accomplishment that no one in the group takes lightly.

"All of us have been taught by drummers who come from West Africa," he continues, "There was this pocket of incredible artists from the West coast of Africa here in Columbia. As those of us who became the NDD got to know each other we realized that we all knew and had taken lessons from and played with them.

The core group came about through Fode Camara, a master drummer who taught all of the group's original members. Other master drummers with whom members of the group trained include Amara Camara and Abou Sylla. The group would meet socially after lessons and eventually began playing the music they were learning together. When Fode Camara left Columbia, the group was without a teacher, but their passion for the music and their camaraderie was such that they decided to keep getting together and playing, "Purely for our own pleasure," says Moons.

The proverbial "garage door," which most beginning bands practice behind, opened for them purely by chance. "About five years ago, Debbie, who is Director of The Harmony School [a non-profit private school in Columbia] said, 'Hey. We should play for Harmony's annual oyster roast/fundraiser,'" Moons remembers. "The rest of us said, 'You mean, like, *perform*?' He laughs. "We looked at the five or six traditional songs we knew, figured we could play for about half an hour, and we just said, 'Okay.' After that, the gigs just started happening."

Their name came, last minute, from one of Columbia's leading musical lights. Moons explains, "Danielle Howle was helping to coordinate the acts for The Olympia Festival. She's good friends with Lee Ann; she liked what we were doing, so she invited us to play. About a week before the festival, Lee Ann said, 'You know, we have to have a name for the group for the Olympia Festival program.'" After mulling over options which included "The Drum Skulls" among others, the group was still undecided. Howle suggested "The Next Door Drummers." The group liked the way it sounded, and they have gone by the name since.

The group may have been formed somewhat by happenstance, but the responsibility they carry in performing music from an entirely different culture than their own and which is, in some cases, thousands of years old, is one they all take seriously. "In addition to the training we've all done here," Moons says, "Lee Ann and Davin, individually, have travelled to West Africa to study the music and immerse themselves in the culture." Their commitment to the vast history surrounding the music they play has many motives.



Photo by Thomas Hammond

West African drumming is not merely performed as entertainment in its culture of origin. It has been used over centuries to commemorate ceremonial occasions and the changing of seasons, to encourage physical and emotional recovery, to convey messages over great expanses of land,

even to conduct divine communications. Also, amazingly, the music The Next Door Drummers play has been handed down in the oral tradition: whereas most European classical music, for example, comes down through history to contemporary performers via transcriptions of the original sheet music, the pieces The NDD are taught by masters like Fode Camara have to be learned by ear!

Wouldn't it follow, then, that the cultural, spiritual and technical responsibility that The Next Door Drummers have to the music that they are playing must weigh heavily on them as humans and performers? Not so, says Moons. "We feel like we do a pretty good job of it," he states. "Of course, put us next to a West African ensemble and you'll hear similarities, but, those folks, they *are* their instruments..." That sort of reverence – for the music, its culture, and the people who make it – is among the many reasons that The Next Door Drummers are an extraordinary asset to the Columbia music scene. // Alex Smith

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Temple Ligon on Jasper Johns's Flags



outh Carolina's Jasper Johns of Allendale, arguably the 20th century's most important American artist, turns 82 on May 15th. Born in Augusta, GA, Johns lived with his grandparents at their home in Allendale until his mother brought him into her home in Columbia for his fourth grade, where he attended at A. C. Moore Elementary School. It was about this time that Johns visited his father in Savannah, where the two walked past the bronze statue of Sergeant William Jasper and Johns's father explained to his son that his name came from the Revolutionary War hero who died holding the Patriots' flag. After the fourth grade, Johns was sent to live with his aunt Gladys Johns Shealy on a labor intensive farm on the western shore of Lake Murray at a place called The Corner. For his last year of high school, he moved in with his mother in Sumter, and graduated from Edmunds High School in 1947 as their valedictorian.

After three semesters at USC in Columbia, Johns dropped out to study at Parsons School of Design in New York, but he left Parsons to pursue painting and part-time pick-up work on his own. Johns was drafted into the army in 1951, and trained as a machine gunner, but he spent his time in the army as a graphic artist and even some time as a fine artist. He spent the first half of his army stint at Fort Jackson; his second, in Japan.

As a soldier, Johns was trained in flag etiquette, and he and his classmates in elementary school had recited the Pledge of Allegiance before the flag every morning. While he was in the army from 1951 until 1953, American television news was dominated by Senator Joe McCarthy and his House Un-American Activities Committee claiming communists were under almost every bed. In late 1954 Johns dreamed about the American flag – television was in black and white, and shrinks were saying dreams were, too, inspiring Johns to paint the American flag in black and white; actually, in white, with brush strokes delineating the stars and stripes, resulting in *White Flag* (1955) which hangs in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On 54th Street in the Museum of Modern Art hangs another of Johns's flags, *Flag*, also from 1955, but this one is fully rendered in red, white, and blue. *White Flag* was started first, but the argument to "give the mind something it already knows" pushed Johns to the red, white, and blue. By taking an icon, especially the American flag, Johns could by-pass the decisions on subject matter and design and get to the question, "Is it a flag, or a painting of a flag?" *White Flag* is a painting, but *Flag* at MoMA could be a flag, a flat canvas flag stretched on a frame, but is a flag all the same.

Johns has never commented on this, and there are very few art historians and critics with enough military background to suggest it, but as a flag, *Flag* is assembled to honor correct flag etiquette. The white stars on a blue field are painted on an isolated frame. A second frame holds the red and white stripes above the alignment, with the bottom of the stars on a blue field. The third frame is canvas stretched for the red-and-white stripes all across the lower half of the flag. On the wall at MoMA, *Flag* is hung horizontally with the white stars on a blue field at the upper left. But if the flag is turned to a vertical orientation against the wall, the white stars on a blue field must locate on the upper left. A real flag is turned around for the reverse to face out and the obverse to face in, which accommodates correct flag etiquette as the flag is hung vertically. Johns's *Flag* is assembled in three frames, so for a vertical display, the frames can be reassembled. They never are, but they can be.

Bionote: Columbia writer Temple Ligon holds two arts degrees, lectures monthly for the Wren Institute for Urban Research, and may be Jasper Johns's biggest fan.

As seen on CBS Sunday Morning



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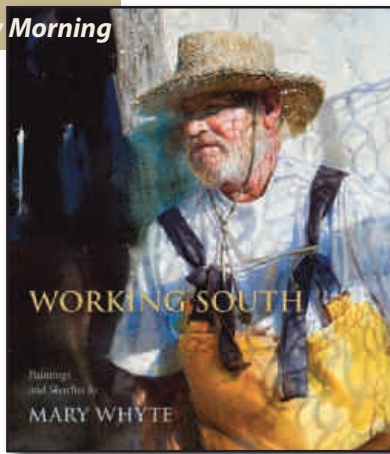
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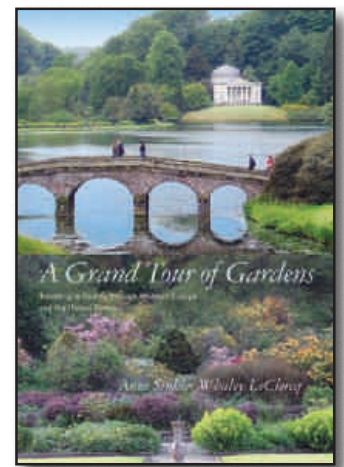
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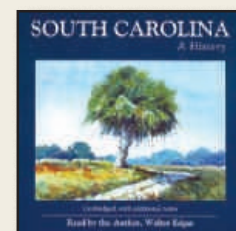
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Avery Delores Bateman

Story and Photos by Bonnie Boiter-Jolley

From the moment Avery Delores Bateman stepped on stage during a high school production of *Bye Bye Birdie*, she was hooked. “I had to perform,” she quips. No stranger to performance, Bateman was often given small roles as a child in church plays authored by her mother, Rosalind Russell. “I was the child who had the epiphany,” she reminisces. Bateman, New York City bound this summer for the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, has come a long way from delivering insightful one-liners.

The daughter of a musician and a visual artist, one might say Bateman was born with art in her veins. While Robert Bateman introduced his daughter to the world of music, covering everything from the Beatles and Stevie Wonder, to Mozart, it was Bateman’s mother whose influence truly resonates. An artist whose talent went unrealized as a child, Russell was sure to offer her daughter the support and guidance she deserved.

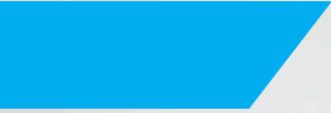
Born in Charleston two days before Christmas, 22 year old Bateman is just over five feet four inches and just under 100 pounds. A bright-eyed, stylish woman with an infectious smile, one would never expect her rich, lyric soprano to come billowing out of her petite frame. Dedicated to the idea of being classically trained, Bateman studied ballet with Robert Ivy in Charleston for several years before moving to Columbia in the fifth grade. Five more years of dance training and vocal aerobics in her school choir led Bateman to seek out a collegiate experience where she could pursue her passion of musical theatre. At Coker College, Bateman was a Vocal Performance and Theatre double major with a minor in art history, and credits vocal coach Karen Harmon with pushing her to read music and improve her technique.

Bateman, usually cast as a comic, male, or evil role, says she prefers to portray complex characters with many layers. A favorite memory and “dream come true” for Bateman, was to play the role of Martha in Trustus Theatre’s production of *Spring Awakening* last winter. Admittedly obsessed with *The Wizard of Oz*, the role of the Witch in *Into the Woods*, is another favorite for Bateman. Both roles required her to reach beyond what Bateman felt was her own experience. Looking to the future, she has her sights set on her dream role of Elphaba in *Wicked*, another famous musical theatre witch.



Bateman divulges that she models herself after Bernadette Peters, who she says is not only a “beautiful artist,” but also “the most grounded.” This summer, Bateman continues her adventure in New York City where she hopes to make a career in musical theatre after her graduation from AMDA. “You have to be a dreamer,” she says. If Avery Bateman’s dreams come true, the bright lights of Broadway aren’t too far off.

Jasper is watching you, Avery. No pressure.



you have to be a
dreamer

Lyon Hill

By August Krickel

V

isual artist. Graphic illustrator. Award-winning indie film maker. Puppeteer. Children's entertainer. Avant-garde event organizer. Suburban husband and dad. Dark (and vaguely disturbing) visionary. Lyon Hill wears any number of hats, and is one of a growing number of

local artists who are able not only to follow and develop their own creative vision, but to make a living doing so here in the Midlands, and attract national attention and acclaim along the way.

A home-grown talent, Hill was born in Columbia, and lived in various locales "on the outskirts of the city," eventually settling in Swansea, where he finished high school. With his father a painter and art supplies always at hand, art seemed a natural career choice and his family was supportive. "I never really considered anything else, to be honest." One of his mentors in school was his art teacher, Kiki Ganz. "Her friendship was as valuable as any instruction she gave me, and we still stay in touch."

After a year at SCAD (the Savannah College of Art and Design) Hill transferred to USC, then did an exchange year at the University of New Mexico. "College had its ups and downs," Hill admits. "My year in New Mexico had a big impact on my art. I think being absolutely alone and in a beautiful new place brought about a change in my work. I can look at (most of) my work from this point on and not cringe."

While looking for a summer job in the late '90s, Hill found his way to the Columbia Marionette Theatre (CMT) and soon realized that he had also found a career. "CMT was in a transition at the time, and they needed artists. I began just puppeteering, but soon was painting backdrops and supplying voices to the characters. As a kid, I liked to entertain my younger sisters with puppets and stuffed animals. I had voices and personalities for a number of them. I had forgotten about this until working at CMT, and the joy of it all came flooding back." In 2000, CMT founder Allie Scollon retired, her son John took over as Executive Director, and Hill began getting involved in the actual puppet making. "It really clicked, and people seemed to respond to my puppets." Now the group's Artistic Director, Hill performs in all the main stage shows, and is usually on the road with traveling shows

several times a week. CMT does over 500 performances annually across the state, and beyond; last year included a tour of Slovenia. "We perform at schools, festivals, libraries, churches, and, of course, in our theatre down at Riverfront Park." They average two new shows each year; Hill makes the puppets, with help and input from John Scollon and his wife Karri (who also creates all the costumes.)

But don't think he has abandoned traditional drawing. "I've been displaying and participating in art ventures in Columbia for about ten years now," Hill says. "The Art Garage, under Rachel Gibson, is where I first really got some exposure. I gravitate to places that are more informal and have an edge to them. I only display if I have new work, and sometimes other projects (like my films) prevent me from working on anything else for long periods of time."

Hill's work isn't exactly grim, but perhaps it's Grimm, as in the dark fairy tales. There's no doubt that the puppet maker's knowledge of how muscles and joints and tendons fit together to create realistic movement is reflected in the lean, sinewy torsos and limbs that are depicted, often with surreal overtones from fantasy and mythology. One immediately sees similarity with creepy cartoonists like Charles Addams and Edward Gorey, as well as the angular musculature of graphic artists from the Silver Age of comics like Joe Kubert, Neal Adams, Frank Frazetta, and Jim Aparo. Hill concedes that he "always loved comics. Some of my earliest drawings are of Superman. During high school, I started collecting them. Over the years, my tastes have moved beyond superheroes, into more experimental and creator driven comics. The medium has matured quite a bit in the last twenty years, and I am always looking for new and challenging comics. Fantasy movies were also a big influence growing up: *Labyrinth*, *Willy Wonka*, and *Edward Scissorhands* to name a few." While Tim Burton is certainly an acknowledged influence on Hill, there's also a touch of William Blake here, a bit of Goya there, along with the starkness of Andrew Wyeth.

The transition into live performance originally wasn't the most natural thing for Hill. "Coming from a visual art background, I had to come to terms with the fact that a good performance is ephemeral: it happens, it affects people, and it is gone. Videotaping it (to try to preserve



edge to them

i tend to gravitate towards places with an

Photo by Forrest Clonts



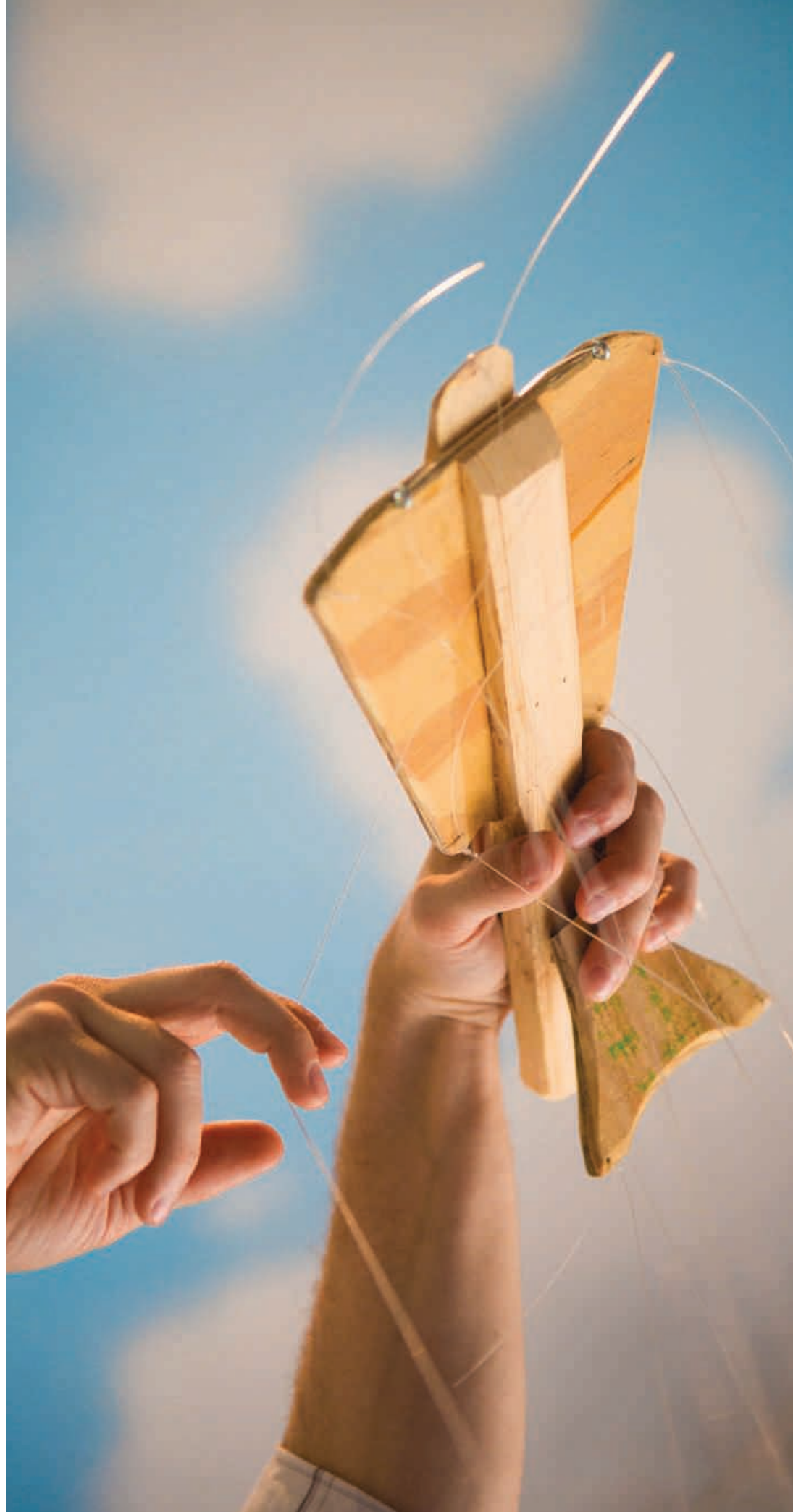
Page Left and Page Right: Photos by Forrest Clonts

it) won't do it justice either. I have since learned that this quality is what is so special about live performance, and why it can't be replaced. Making puppets specifically for film has proven to be a great bridge between the two: in creation, it is similar to my process for painting, but it involves performance as well." In his short films, Hill blurs the lines between two-dimensional and three-dimensional animation; rather than a series of still images that create the illusion of movement, much of Hill's work involves the actual live manipulation of 2-D drawings and cut-outs, caught on film. "My film work grew organically from working with shadow puppets," he explains. Heather Henson (the youngest daughter of Jim Henson) was instrumental in encouraging me to develop this new angle. She saw a video I did for fun to celebrate my engagement with Jenny Mae, and picked it up for her film series, *Handmade Puppet Dreams*. My next film, *Incubus*, was again for fun, just practicing, and she picked it up, too. She produced my third venture, *Junk Palace*, and CMT helped provide time and resources. It, too, is in the fourth installment of the *HMPD* series.

Junk Palace recounts the "true story of the infamous hoarders in New York, the Collyer brothers. It is a tragic story, and I have tried to paint a sympathetic portrait. Jenny came across the story while researching something else. I did a few sketches right then and there and found that it stuck with me over time. The more I read, the more interested I became. It was made entirely with paper puppets, which seemed appropriate for hoarders who collected newspapers, books, and boxes." For the film version, Hill was assisted by a number of friends, including Robert Padley as lead puppeteer, Steve Daniels on camera, and David Drazin for the score. The film has played around the country at film festivals, "most notably the Newport Beach Film Fest, Full Frame Doc Fest, and our own Indie Grits, where it won the Audience Choice Award" in 2011, as well as the Southern Lens Independent Vision Award. "As part of *HMPD*, it has screened all across the country and beyond, including Poland and the Czech Republic. Heather has also sent me to Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Central Arkansas to screen and do presentations about the film."

Hill's next film project is called *Supine*, based on a dream that his wife experienced. "It's been brewing for quite a while now, and receiving a grant from the SC Film Commission and Trident Technical College was the boost it needed to finally see light. This film has a different technique, where my drawings are scanned in to become virtual puppets that are animated in various computer programs. I am working closely with an animator in LA, Jeffrey Shroyer. It is a real learning experience, and I like the results so far. Since it is not a puppet film (my first), it will have to travel in different circles, but I chose this technique because it is a better fit for the subject matter.

Hill explains that "both short films began life as live performances made for puppet slams. I treated these as practice for the films, a chance to work out the story, the visuals, and gauge audience reaction. They are very different in execution from the finished product, and have had a life of their own. *Junk Palace Live* had a run of performances, and I took it as far as Orlando." A puppet slam is like a poetry slam, just with puppets, and often performed by experimental artists in non-traditional venues like nightclubs or art spaces. Just a few weeks ago, Hill and colleague Kimi Maeda organized, hosted, and performed in Columbia's first *Spork in Hand* Puppet Slam, as part of the 2012 Indie Grits Festival. "Kimi



and I are hoping the Puppet Slam will be a success, and we are planting the seeds to make it a recurring event. We know so many talented people who are involved in puppetry, both here in town and beyond, and we want to give them a platform to experiment and push the boundaries of puppetry."

Up next for Hill is a collaboration between CMT and Trustus Theatre to present *Avenue Q*, which opens Friday, June 15th. With music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and book by Jeff Whitty, *Avenue Q* won three Tony Awards, running on Broadway for over six years before moving to off-Broadway, where the show is alive and well and still running today. *Avenue Q* uses *Sesame Street* or Muppet-style puppets, which interact with, are given voice by, and are manipulated by live actors, to create a satire of modern society, especially the coming of age of Gen X and the Millennials. Hill is designing the puppets with Karri Scollon taking on construction duties. While the publisher rents out replicas of the Broadway puppets, Director Chad Henderson notes, "Where's the fun in that? Many cities don't have a puppet theatre like we do, and they certainly don't have someone like Lyon. So working with him is allowing us to put a stamp on the Trustus production."

Hill agrees. "I think it's great that Trustus wants a unique look for this show. The design is a real challenge for me. You could describe the show as *Sesame Street* for adults, so I want to preserve a reference to the Muppet look of simple shapes and fabric construction, but to put a unique spin on it. Within the puppet cast, there is a race of monsters, and these are especially fun to design." Henderson is excited: "I find a kindred spirit in Lyon as an artist - he's never one to stay inside a box. So we're having fun discussing all of the possibilities for the characters in this show. We know we're sticking to the Henson-esque hand puppet that's been associated with *Avenue Q* since the beginning, but these will be Lyon's take on these characters. Did I mention there's puppet nudity in this show? Well there is - so yep, we're having fun."

With this much acclaim, and with his projects now getting exposure worldwide, one wonders if Hill might ever be lured away by Hollywood or New York. Hill is quite content where he is, however, with so many

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opportunities available right at home. His wife's success with her line of dolls, Jenny Mae Creations, and their son Oliver, now three, make Columbia all the more attractive. "Having a child has been the best practice for my puppetry skills. We have several puppets at home that Oliver loves to interact with. It's a real challenge when you don't have a script. Oliver leads them everywhere, and I do my best to keep up with him." Hill has an almost infinite number of prospects on the horizon, but says that "I try to follow the direction that my inspiration takes me, be it comics, painting, puppets, or film (or some amalgamation thereof) and my home town is a great proving ground for these ventures. Columbia has always been kind to me, and our family is here to stay. ♪

Home Recording in the Digital Era

By Kyle Petersen



a

s I talked with Jam Room studio owner and recording engineer Jay Matheson for this issue's music feature, one of the things that became apparent over and over again is

how much the world of recording has changed over the years. For Jay, someone who was never too fond of the introduction of computers and digital recording to begin with, the exponential explosion of home recordings has led to a generation of musicians not living up to their fullest potential, making do with sub-par recordings that lack the clarity and depth that professional equipment affords.

While I definitely agree with Jay that many bands would benefit from more time in real studios and recording with top-of-the-line equipment, there is another side of the story to tell. That story is about the amazing records that your next door neighbor is making in their own home. After all, Columbia's most famous contemporary musical export, *Toro y Moi*, was born in the bedroom, and much of our underground music scene has been built on these informal recordings that, while technically imperfect, are perfect vehicles for the diffusive spreading of music that characterizes such scenes.

And in fact, although likely much to Jay's chagrin, two of my favorite local records released this year stem from such bedroom recordings – Those Lavender Whales' *Tomahawk of Praise* and Marshall Brown's *High Noons*. The former is the debut LP from one of the Fork & Spoon record collective leaders Aaron Graves, and it's largely a quirky indie folk-pop record that wears its creation on its sleeve. Painstakingly assembled almost entirely by the songwriter/multi-instrumentalist, the songs pile on instruments and stray from traditional structures at the drop of a hat and are clearly a product of hours of tinkering and layering that would take far-too-large of a recording budget to do in a conventional studio.

The latter record by Brown is an extension of his prior recordings, which re-invent a whole host of classic and psychedelic rock influences into an eerie lo-fi reverie. Awash in reverb laden keyboards and guitars, Brown's multi-tracked vocals swoop and swarm with the acrobatics of Jeff Buckley and the warmth of Donovan, creating a fairly incredible sound for a home recording.

To be fair, both of these musicians are using serious home recording equipment – this is a far cry from setting up a few microphones in a room and letting Garage Band handle the rest. But even that approach clearly has some benefits. Last issue's featured musician Danielle Howle, for example, has a new recording with her backing band Firework show which she proudly announces was recorded over the course of a couple of days on the Apple recording software.

Of course, I don't want to get too carried away in championing these recordings. Ultimately, it is hard to beat what professional recording studios offer, and the experience of seasoned engineers and producers can often be invaluable. The vast majority of your favorite records, after all, were likely made in a studio somewhere. Just keep in mind that, on the flip side, some of Columbia's best and brightest are also

tearing it up just down the street.

Jay Matheson & the Jam Room

By Kyle Petersen

The situation in which you first see Jay Matheson will invariably color how you think about him. Maybe the first time you met him was long ago when he was that thin, quiet, bespectacled punk rocker mixing the sound at a local show. Or maybe you saw him play bass in Bachelors of Art, one of the great Columbia bands of the late 1980s, which mixed metal, progressive rock, and pop hooks in a way that still seems surprising. Maybe you saw him wearing a cowboy hat and backing up one of the most rambunctious country-rockers in the Southeast, Hick'ry Hawkins. Perhaps you even saw him dressed up like a member of Sergeant Pepper's band as part of the queer-metal outfit Confederate Fagg, blasting through an imperfect-but-brilliant rendition of the guitar solo at the end of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird."

Context is everything.

For most local, regional, and national musicians, though, the image of Matheson that sticks in their minds is that of the tireless recording studio owner/engineer/producer hunched behind the mixing board. Over the course of 25 years of running the Jam Room Studios, Matheson has made literally thousands of recordings for a variety of local, regional, and national acts, at (often) the cheapest rates in town. The story of Columbia's underground music scene, in so many ways, runs through the doors of Jay Matheson's recording studio.

Sitting down with Matheson on an average Friday morning, the veteran recording engineer is feeling a bit weathered. He's come in early to listen and work on his recording session from the day before and is both excited by his work and feeling a little chagrined about what happens with the fruits of his efforts after he's done. "We need to crack the whip on some of these local dudes," he laments. "It's all a matter of self-image. I'm way more concerned about how this sounds than they are!"

Gripes aside, though, the overwhelming sense you get from Matheson is a considerable amount of pride in what he has accomplished. When he started recording bands in the mid-1980s, he would show up at their practice space with his sound board from mixing live shows and a borrowed reel-to-reel four-track. Today, the Jam Room boasts a heady equipment list and both vintage analog and state-of-the-art digital recording tools, a combination which draws such people as Kyle

guitarist and sought-after metal producer Phillip Cope to make the Jam Room their home recording studio.

Of course, Matheson was a musician first, and has a laundry list of bands he has played in over the years, most notably the should-have-been-famous progressive rock band Bachelors of Art (also known as B.O.A.) in the late 80s and the queer-glam craziness of Confederate Fagg through much of the 2000s. Even before B.O.A., he made waves in what was "one of the earliest metal bands in Columbia," Tempest Fugit. In between those groups, Matheson did stints with Hick'ry Hawkins, Wild Root, The Headnecks, The Void, 6-9 Split, and countless others, primarily as a bass player. Today, he mostly plays in Capital City Playboys, a highly energetic rockabilly band, and Buck Stanley, a retro-country outfit, both of which are among the highlights of the city's music scene.

The way Matheson tells his story, though, his rock and roll life was rather unlikely. "I came from a Southern Baptist sort of background," he says. "My parents didn't like the whole idea of rock music, so I had to push everything under the radar." Growing up in the 1970s at a time when bands like Kiss and Jimi Hendrix were anathema to straight-laced families like his made for an interesting early exposure to music – one of his earliest memories of music was Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass LPs that his parents got from a record club.

Still, Matheson was hooked. "I would dance around playing an imaginary trumpet," he recalls. He eventually picked up the trumpet in middle school and high school, but his heart was quickly torn away by the "smokin' hot solos" of groups like Black Sabbath and Motorhead. Primarily a bass player, Matheson only picked up the guitar when Confederate Fagg formed out of a drunken late-night jam that "was horrendous – we just sounded terrible," he laughs. "I was sort of forced to learn [the guitar] that way."

Metal was always his first love, but Matheson remembers becoming disenchanted with it as the 80s progressed. "I got out of it because metal was going in a weird direction ... all of a sudden hair metal and all that was happening and I didn't really want to sign on to that," he explains. B.O.A. became his main musical project from around 1988 to 1992, and the group became one of the preeminent regional bands in the Southeast,



Photo by Thomas Hammond

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with prominent opening gigs for bands like Social Distortion and Concrete Blonde and a national distribution deal. "If I had known then what I know now," he says ruefully. "We had massive local and regional popularity, but it didn't turn into anything at all."

As for his interest in country and roots music, Matheson thinks it had something to do with his upbringing. "Growing up in the South, I didn't really like, say, old-timey country, but it was always on the radio. I just sort of passively listened to it and, in retrospect, it's kind of the soundtrack to a part of my life," he says. He's quick to point out as well that he "only likes rootsy, gritty traditional stuff. I've never been known for working with [any kind of] pop music or anything like that."

Even though B.O.A. had hoped to hit it big and its ending marked the end of a specific period of his life, Matheson has played a booming role in the music scene as a sound engineer. "I started out as a local freelance live sound engineer," Matheson says. "I did all the heavy bands and all the punk shows for a long time. Bands like Henry Rollins, Bad Brains, and Faith No More." Because he had the equipment and the expertise, all he had to do was get access to a four-track and he was good to go for recording. Starting with General Jack and the Grease Guns in 1986, (Matheson describes them as "a gothy, heroined-out New York Dolls"), Matheson gradually

moved from live sound to recording when he began working at ACS Sound & Lighting, which limited his ability to do live sound but gave him access to top-notch equipment and expertise.

By the early 1990s, the Jam Room had become his full-time endeavor.

"I was drifting towards something to be a little more full-time and stable," Matheson explains. The first few years he had a physical studio space, though he didn't even have a business license. "I was financing things with a \$1500 credit line from the over-drafting service on my checking account," he recalls. He started out with not much more than the equipment needed for live shows and bounced out from locations on North Main and Huger Street to his present location off Rosewood Drive, but gradually built up his equipment inventory to the enviable level it is today. Starting out in 1987 with his first 8-track, Matheson made his name recording ground-breaking records by local punk bands like Antischism, In/Humanity, and Bedlam Hour who built national reputations. "People were coming from all across the country to try and capture the sound [of Antischism]," he remembers, and the studio cemented its reputation as a great place for punk rock recordings, in addition to recording a wide variety of other local music.

The Jam Room also has a strong reputation for metal music owing not only to Matheson's experience with the genre, but also with the presence of Phillip Cope, who has brought metal bands from all over the world to the studio. Bands like Sierra, Kylesa, Baroness, and Black Tusk have all clocked time at the Rosewood studio.

Of course, the high quality of equipment means that diverse artists from all over the spectrum have ultimately recorded at the studio, from hip-hop and country to blues and Christian rock bands. Such big names as Band of Horses and Big Boi (of Outkast) have also recorded there as well, lending the studio a reputation as a group of professionals who can handle even the most demanding of clients.

As the years progressed and the music industry went through its various revolutions, the Jam Room attempted to keep pace. "We went full digital about 8 or 9 years ago [with Pro Tools]," Matheson says. "It was hard because I'm not really a computer nerd." The



ALL OF A SUDDEN HAIR METAL AND ALL OF THAT STARTED HAPPENING AND I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO SIGN ON TO THAT

Photo by Thomas Hammond

studio has suffered some from the advent of at-home digital recording, but the veteran engineer is quick to point out that the studio still offers the best sound.

"Homemade recordings are never really even gritty, they are just kind of flat," he explains. "The quality of their mic pre-amps and analog-to-digital conversion just flattens the sound. It gets compressed in a really unfriendly way." He compares it to photography, where high-quality cameras and files means less pixilation and more texture and detail.

The other issue he recognizes is that musicians often think the studio is too big a step. "People have all these different options to record [now], and I don't always get a chance to talk to people before they decide [to go a different way]," he says. "If we can talk about, and if [the band] can each get 50 bucks a piece together, we can do a few demos and it will sound a lot better than some of the stuff I've been hearing."

Still, Matheson's solid reputation across different communities means that the Jam Room stays busy. In a given few weeks, the studio's projects include mixing the audio of an upcoming Martha & the Vandellas DVD, a recording stint with Canadian metal band Sierra, odd-hour sessions for a semi-regular Jam Room compilation series (this one features two original songs from

Columbia bands The Fishing Journal and Sons of Young, along with the upstate-based Mason Jar Menagerie and Charlotte's Lamb Handler), and the initial sessions for a local collaborative folk group called The Hollerin' River Talkers, which is being spearheaded by Shallow Palace front man Greg Slattery and features Marshall Brown, Daniel Machado (The Restoration), Todd Mathis (American Gun), and Jake Garrett (Mason Jar Menagerie).

Sitting around the Jam Room on a Friday morning doesn't feel particularly glamorous, but there is also an undeniable sense of something in the air, as if the millions of notes and rhythms played in these few rooms over the years have soaked in the walls and become, in their own way, a part of music history. And while Matheson started this morning at a decidedly un-rock and roll hour and has given up dreams of stardom, it's hard not to look at him and redefine your notions of what a "rock and roll lifestyle" is. He lives and breathes a life filled constantly with new sounds, new projects, and new ideas.

And he makes it all sound better. How's that for rock and roll? ♪

Marina Lomazov

By Cynthia Boiter

Tall and elegant, her poise and demeanor reflecting the discipline of the Soviet culture into which she was born, Marina Lomazov takes the stage with all the finesse of the piano diva she is widely recognized to be. Described by reviewers as “a mesmerizing risk-taker” and “one of the most passionate and charismatic performers on the international concert scene today,” there are many other places on the planet that an artist of her pedigree and renown could call home. But for reasons she seems to understand better than anyone, it is Columbia, South Carolina where she works and plays, teaches and lives. And Columbia is all the better for it.

Born in Kiev, the daughter of professional engineers, Lomazov knew as a child that she would live her life as an artist – though her first love, ballet, didn’t work out. “I started in ballet when I was small,” she recalls, “but it wasn’t meant for me. I so wanted to wear a tutu, but I was totally unsuited.” It’s hard to imagine the woman Lomazov is today being anything other than graceful, though she recalls that as a child, “I had no graces. I was completely awkward.” When ballet proved unsuccessful her mother suggested she try music. “As soon as I started,” she says, “it took off.” Lomazov says that while she would not consider herself a musical prodigy that, as a child, she did “stand out” from the rest of her contemporaries. (That said, Lomazov was the youngest person ever to receive a First Prize for her performance in the All-Kiev Piano Competition.) “I loved performing,” she says. “I felt completely at home on the stage and I loved to practice.” But not everyone was enthusiastic about her career choice. “I was told there was no money in music; that I should pursue something else,” she remembers. “But every time I thought of doing something else, I’d feel nauseous.” Luckily, her parents had faith in her abilities and arrived at the difficult decision to leave Russia and move their 19-year-old daughter to America just before the fall of the Soviet Union. “I didn’t have much of a future in Kiev,” she recalls. “We went through a long immigration process that was very humiliating. When you leave Russia they take your passport away and strip

you of everything. Then you travel through stops with different agencies, the final stop being what is called a ‘Roman holiday’ in Rome where we waited on our visas for three months.”

When the family arrived in Manhattan – Lomazov’s brother, who is an engineer “with the soul of a poet,” Lomazov says, stayed behind in Moscow – they had little money, spoke little English, and applications to attend conservatories to study music were closed for the year. Undaunted, Lomazov went to both Julliard and Manhattan School of Music and begged her case. When asked to pay the \$150 application fee, she told them frankly that she didn’t have it. Rather than turn her away, she was given an audition at both schools. Julliard awarded her a full scholarship; Manhattan, a partial. Lomazov took out a small loan and attended Manhattan. At the end of her first semester, Lomazov’s parents moved to Rochester, NY where her father ultimately rose from his Manhattan doorman job to being president of a metallurgy plant in seven years. Lomazov followed her parents to Rochester, planning to attend “some other school of music there,” without realizing that “some other school” was Eastman School of Music, one of the best – if not the best – schools of advanced learning in music in the world.

“I loved Eastman,” Lomazov says. “When I graduated I asked my professor whether I could make a career in music. Luckily for me, he lied and said ‘yes!’ No one knows *for sure* that they can make it in music. It’s luck, hard work, circumstances, some talent – but mostly hard work,” says Lomazov, who returned to Julliard for her master’s degree, then came back to Eastman in 2000 for her Doctor of Musical Arts, or DMA.

It was also at Eastman where Lomazov met her future husband and music performance partner, Joseph Rackers, whom, along with Natalya Antonova from Eastman and Leonid Fundiler who first taught her piano in Ukraine, she also lists as a mentor. “You really are a combination of everyone who comes into your life,” she says. “My parents, my husband, almost any musician. I learn something every day through discourse.” Lomazov and Rackers married in 2005.

After leaving Eastman, Lomazov taught for two years at Oklahoma State University before coming to the University of South Carolina where, in 2012, she was awarded the Ira McKissick Koger Endowed Chair for the Fine Arts. Her career has been peppered with accolades and awards. Among her many accomplishments, including being awarded prizes in the Cleveland International Piano Competition, William Kapell International

Piano Competition, Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition, Lomazov has performed throughout North and South America, China, England, France, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Japan, and the US. She has performed with, to name only a few, the Boston Pops Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic, South Carolina Philharmonic, Charleston Symphony, Missouri Chamber Orchestra, Ohio Chamber Orchestra, Graz Hörschulorchester in Austria, the Bollington Festival Orchestra in England, and the Chernigoff Symphony Orchestra in Ukraine. She has recorded albums on Albany Records, Arizona University Recordings, Centaur Records, and Innova Recordings. But while the list of her accomplishments is exhaustive, to Lomazov, her greatest achievement has been the founding and direction of the Southeastern Piano Festival at the University of South Carolina, which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year with a Tenth Anniversary Piano Extravaganza.

In 2002, Lomazov was given the challenge by her dean to create a piano festival on the campus of USC. She enlisted the help of Rackers as they designed an event that would include “everything we loved about all the festivals we had visited” combined into one celebration. They put the first festival together in 2003 in just eight months’ time. Lomazov admits it was nerve-racking. “I was 32 and I realized suddenly that I was responsible for 20 underage kids for an entire week, and I wanted to crawl in a hole.” But to her delight, the festival proved to be a roaring success and she loved the sense of connection she found with the young attendees. Almost every student returned the following year.

Every year, the Southeastern Piano Festival offers advanced training for 20 of the best pre-college pianists, ages 13 to 18, in the country, exposing them to new and world-renowned concert pianists and educators, daily lessons with the USC piano faculty, master classes with guest artists, up to five hours of practice per day, daily concerts by award winning artists, and a competition opportunity that results in a cash award and the possibility of performing with the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra.

But for this year’s tenth anniversary celebration, there is more. The festival will open on June 10th with a Piano Extravaganza Concert. Lomazov and Rackers will join USC faculty member Charles Fugo, guest artist Phillip Bush, the Arthur Frazer International Competition Winners, and five grand pianos on the stage of the Koger Center in Columbia, alongside musical director Morihiko Nakahara and the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra. In Lomazov’s words, it will be a “once-in-a-lifetime” event.



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

The festival is privately supported but Lomazov points out that the university is “kind to us.” Her delight with the kindness of not only the university, but Columbia in general is contagious. “This is an amazing place to be,” she says, citing the community’s supportiveness, openness to change, and how it embraces people who want to make a difference in the city. “Classical music is going through a revitalization here in Columbia. I love bringing people together and seeing stuff happen. I love my work. I love that I can perform, and I love the festival,” she beams.

Though Lomazov has had many offers to teach at many other fine institutions, she remains here in Columbia and has no interest in leaving. “Columbia is an amazing place for an artist to live and work,” she says then pauses. “I almost don’t want you to write that. Maybe we should

keep it a secret.”





STEINWAY & SONS

Wearable Art / Statement Pieces

Photos and Story by Kristine Hartvigsen

Bohumila Augustinova is perhaps best known around local art circles as the talented designer who won the Columbia Design League's annual Runaway Runway recycled fashion show in 2009 with a wedding dress made of plastic shopping bags. But some of Augustinova's most dazzling creations are much smaller in scale. These days, her exquisite, upscale jewelry pieces are coveted by fashionistas all over town.

Augustinova's jewelry technique can be traced to a centuries-old Moravian craft called "ticking," whose origins actually were quite utilitarian. The artist says men in the mountain region of Slovakia, which borders Augustinova's native Czech Republic, once used ticking to reinforce clay pots and other clay cookware from cracking and breaking. It was a craft of necessity, as families of modest means could not afford to constantly replace broken clay pots and would line up to have their pots reinforced with the wire ticking.

"What I have seen in pictures, some of those designs were incredibly beautiful," Augustinova says, adding that she was introduced to the craft about 10 years ago on a whim while visiting her friend in the Czech Republic, who happened to be operating a summer camp for youngsters. The camp offered arts and crafts classes, and Augustinova joined in.

"They were teaching us how to use the craft as a decoration for Easter eggs," Augustinova explains. "They started showing us, and I picked it up. I immediately had so much fun doing it that it was an easy process to learn. It was second nature." When she returned to Columbia, she purchased wire-cutters, pliers, and related materials.

"I started with more decorative pieces, such as ornaments. Then, somehow – completely by accident – it became jewelry," she says. "Someone would say, 'that would look great as a necklace.'" And the inspiration took root.

The happy accident has made Augustinova's jewelry a favorite among area women who value hand-crafted, one-of-a-kind statement pieces. It's all a bit of a mystery to Augustinova, who insists that her jewelry is much more of a



Page Left and Page Right: Works by Bohumila Augustinova

leisurely hobby than a true artistic vocation. Her larger wire works – including warrior-themed garments, masks, and even kites – have received accolades in the arts community.

The artist says that inspiration for her designs is pretty random. She does not plan or sketch out anything but follows the energy of the piece as she works with it until "something clicks. Everything is in my head."

Even though some renowned artists enlist and train apprentices to produce their work for a larger commercial market, Augustinova's jewelry probably never will be produced in quantity by anyone else.

"I am too much of a control freak," she says. "I tried that once. I was so unsatisfied with every detail. I can't do that to anybody."

For now, you can only find Augustinova's jewelry at the Museum Shop, and she occasionally will indulge those wishing to place custom orders. "I have never made two of the same thing," Augustinova says. "There may be similarities in style, but each piece is original."



a

n act of vandalism at her high school unexpectedly opened up a fascinating new world for Caroline Hatchell. "Someone broke into my high school and smashed every trophy case in the school. There was glass everywhere," Hatchell explains. "A friend of mine, whose family owned a jewelry

store, took the broken glass and made jewelry out of it," selling the jewelry to raise money to help replace the school's trophy cases.

"That was my first experience seeing someone take something and make a wearable piece of art with it," Hatchell says. "I thought it was super cool."

Hatchell had already long been intrigued with small things. An avid lover of nature, she would collect the tiniest wildflowers and spend hours creating diminutive flower arrangements. Collecting and assembling all sorts of small things in an artistic way held great interest for her. "My dad was a house-builder. He had this nail apron that he would dump into a bucket every day," Hatchell says. "One day, I emptied the entire bucket and sorted all the nails by size and



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Page Left: Work by Carolina Hatchell Page Right: Work by Shayna Simoneaux

type. Ever since then, I have had a fascination with anything small.”

After seeing the new possibilities that her high school friend had demonstrated by repurposing broken glass into art jewelry, Hatchell began to explore jewelry-making with all sorts of materials. She scoured the shelves of craft and thrift stores for interesting items, such as old buttons, toy parts, tiny tools, antique photos, ribbon, broken ceramic pieces, and beads, long before assemblage hobbies were popular and hobby stores stocked those kinds of materials for crafting. Ten to twenty years ago, finding unique items to use in altered art, mixed media, and studio jewelry was a sometimes-elusive treasure hunt that Hatchell relished. “I eventually taught myself how to weave beads together,” Hatchell says. “I started with a regular sewing needle and thread. What I found out later on is that I (unknowingly) had taught myself how to do a peyote stitch. You weave the beads back and forth one bead at a time. That is where my whole fascination with beads in general came from. It was really fun, so I kept on doing it.”

Those explorations eventually led Hatchell to open her own business, The Bead Café in Lexington, which she owned and operated for several years.

Always curious and hungry for new knowledge, Hatchell took classes and workshops whenever she was able, indulging interests in mixed metals and lampwork glass bead creation. All the different exposures have taken her jewelry to interesting places.

“I really like mixed media,” she says. “Making something out of unusual objects is kind of where my jewelry path has led me – making something out of what’s available, found objects, and mixed media into wearable art.”

Hatchell’s jewelry got noticed and sold well. Soon she found herself writing “how-to” articles in craft publications such as *Belle Armoire Jewelry* and *artitudezine.com*. Many of her pieces incorporate elements inspired by nature, including birds, feathers, wings, flowers, and plants.

Hatchell’s favorite pieces these days are made from vintage photos, skeleton keys, and etched metals. She constructs them using “cold connections,” which involve joining metal pieces without soldering. Instead, she prefers to drill tiny holes using metal rivets and wire to join pieces together. She says the metal adds dimension, and that the construction is really a form of layering the different materials.

Not surprisingly, Augustinova and Hatchell are friends and colleagues who have partnered in jewelry shows. Like Augustinova, Hatchell also has a connection with Runaway Runway. Hatchell’s dress crafted from pine straw, leaves, and flowers received rave reviews at last year’s event, though

it did not win. In the past, Hatchell has sold her jewelry at the Museum Shop and at Portfolio Art Gallery in Five Points. She occasionally teaches workshops in jewelry-making, most recently at Swift Water Beads in Columbia. For now, however, Hatchell is taking a jewelry hiatus so she may concentrate on earning an environmental science degree from the University of South Carolina. She still takes the occasional custom order. You can reach her at hatchellc@email.sc.edu.

Andy Warhol once said that good business is the best art. Local artist Shayna Simoneaux has taken that to heart, taking a familiar theme in her whimsical paintings and growing it into a brand icon for her local jewelry, gift, and stationery line, “Birdies.” Clearly, Warhol is a strong influence in Simoneaux’s work, which playfully embraces bright colors and a bit of geometric repetition with a catchy pop art twist that has generated a strong fan base.

Born and raised in London, Simoneaux came to the southern United States seven years ago to be closer to her mother, a Floridian who had settled in Columbia. It’s equal parts kismet, resourcefulness, and marketing flair that moved Simoneaux to expand her product line, which consisted at first only of original paintings, which she tried to sell during a weak economy.

“My jewelry was partly inspired in 2007, when I had a solo show of my Birdie paintings at (downtown eyewear boutique and artspace) Frame of Mind. That was the first time I showed my work to the public,” Simoneaux says. “People really seemed to like the Birdies, and my art, but I didn’t sell anything. People were saying they really wanted a ‘Birdie something’ but not a painting. I did sell a lot of note cards. People were telling me they wanted the art but couldn’t afford an original painting.” So Simoneaux began thinking of ways in which people could afford to bring home little bits of her art in different forms. It became an informal business plan.

Turning the art into jewelry came naturally. While in London, Simoneaux paid her way through college by working at Tiffany’s flagship store, as well as Garrard – The Crown Jewelers. She also worked in fashion public relations for a British agency. That experience, along with her



art background – she holds degrees in fine art and art history – suited her next steps.

“I love jewelry,” she says. “It is something I felt I knew a lot about, so I started making it. It started with necklaces that had only the original red Birdie. Then I started expanding into different Birdies.”

A longtime collector of vintage jewelry pieces, Simoneaux decided to incorporate vintage flair in her designs, which all are hand-made and sustainable because they are repurposed and crafted from old, antiquated, and discarded parts. Recent additions to her collection are fun Birdie rings made from old lockets.

“I got lucky for a long time because my grandmother and my mom had insane collections of costume jewelry from the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s. They had all these tangled, broken necklaces and earrings. They kept it all,” she explains. “I had a lot of fun pillaging through the jewelry they didn’t want anymore.”

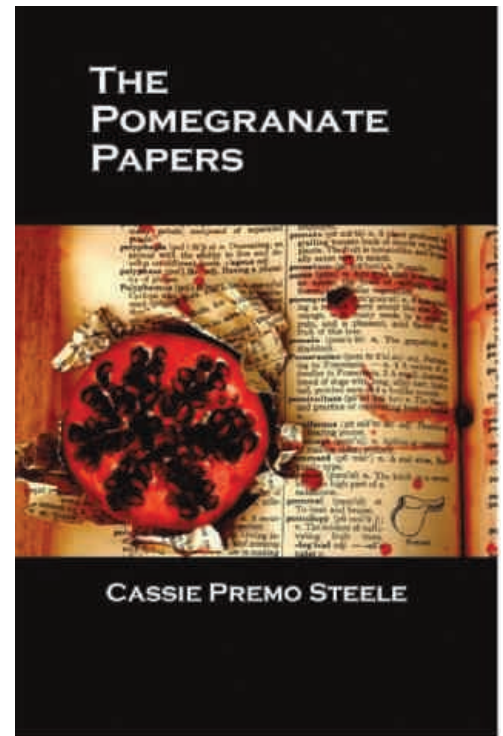
Simoneaux is also experimenting with newer pieces that incorporate miniature sundials inside which double images of “Birdies” revolve, and tiny compasses as well. She was delighted recently to be selected for inclusion in the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties’ “Color the Arts” show and soiree, where she debuted the new bangles and charm bracelet watches.

To date, Simoneaux’s Birdie product line includes necklaces (which were the first items she made), bracelets, earrings, rings, key chains, hair clips, headbands, purse mirrors, note cards, and more. She’s even developed items for men, because they like the Birdies, too. These include cufflinks and bottle-openers that double as key chains.

Around town, Simoneaux’s Birdie jewelry and accessories can be found at S&S Art Supply on Main Street downtown and at Unforgettable and KD’s Treehouse stores, both on Devine Street in Shandon. She also sells her wares at Crafty Feast events, at the Sustainable Midlands Annual Holiday Sale, and at the Jewish Cultural Festival hosted by the Tree of Life Synagogue. She has a website under development at www.luvbirdies.com

Simoneaux still paints, of course, and her paintings are available for sale. But for now, her jewelry seems to be getting the lion’s share of attention.

“I don’t really sell a lot of my paintings,” she says, “but they sell the jewelry for me.”



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A Man and His Chickens

By William Garland

Wind pours down the street while Ernest Lee frantically tries to pick up the fallen sheets of painted plywood strewn across the lot. The scene is almost comical. Lee has an unkempt look about him. There are flecks of white hair scattered throughout his two-day stubble that stand in stark contrast to the fifty-year-old man's black hair and dark amber skin. He is tall, but his playful mannerisms and soft-spoken voice prevent him from ever really looking as tall as he is. These characteristics are only amplified as he runs from one painting to the next. Strategically placing them all around the abandoned parking lot. Each time he picks one up and resets it, another one falls. I'd already offered to help once, but he insisted that he'd been dealing with this wind for eleven years and he knew just how to manage it. "You can set em up if want, but I'm gonna have to set up again once you finish." He'd just laughed as he lowered his frame to reposition a dancing, red chicken.

This was about the time that his painting of the Lorraine Motel got caught up in a gust. He says that this painting is the one that sets him apart from most folk or pop artists. There is a precision to this painting that none of his other ones possess. His pride in it is transparent. He tells me that he'd spent over 100 hours on this one, and that it is his best work. It does tower over the hundreds of other paintings of chickens and palmetto trees that had been hurriedly scrawled onto scraps of plywood in both size and precision. The painting of the Lorraine Motel is an incredible rendition of the scene where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. As if you expect Ralph Abernathy and Jessie Jackson to somehow appear beyond the edge of the frame, still grieving. And now it's been caught by a low gust of wind and its massive frame contorts under the pressure of being flung onto the unyielding shoulder of Harden Street.

Lee drops the dancing chicken and rushes over to the Lorraine. "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Don't do it now! Not today!"

The giant, metallic chicken that stands in front of his makeshift shack is the next victim of the wind. Its feet get swept up and its rusted and dented head rolls into a series of smaller crabs and chickens. Lee doesn't seem to notice. He stands there with his arms outstretched above his head as he clings to either side of the Lorraine

and examines his brush strokes for damage. There are none. He's escaped a disaster he can't afford to have. He looks over my way with his signature grin. "That'd been the end of it. Already gonna cost me \$3,300 to replace the van. Gotta make some money. Ain't made it yet." He tentatively sets the Lorraine down against a telephone pole, stops to look at it one more time, and goes back over to his chickens.

I first met Ernest Lee last May. He'd set his work up over in our neighborhood park during the annual tour of homes. My wife, Leah, and I had walked over to look at a few of his paintings. Before we had time to comment on the ones we liked, Lee had already struck up a conversation with us.

While we were getting ready to bend over and take a closer look at a stack of paintings, I heard, "Well, well, how'd you get so lucky to land you a pretty girl like that." This was quickly followed by, "How many Chicken Man paintings y'all need today?"

We joked around with him, saying we'd lived in Columbia too long not to have a Chicken Man painting. He agreed. We told him we weren't quite ready to make a decision, but we'd be back. He laughed, "Y'all know Chicken Man will take care of you, right? I'll take good care of y'all. Tell me how many y'all want, and I'll give you a deal. Just tell me which ones."

We told him we'd be back.

He responded, "I'm holdin' y'all to it, now."

We laughed as we walked away, never turning around to see his response.

Later that night, we were having a drink on our neighbor's patio when his late model, green Mercedes pulled up out front. The mid-eighties car was stacked full of painted plywood. Lee stepped out of the car and was immediately greeted by our neighbor, who'd jumped out of her chair and ran over to give the man a hug and welcome him to her home. Lee immediately recognized us, and with genuine a smile said, "Y'all 'bout decided on which Chicken Mans you need?"

We left the party with two.



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe



of chickens to college students and a younger generation of South Carolinians. They were paintings that didn't require much technical precision. But the art displayed around the chickens was of a different nature. There were buildings, landscapes, and portraits, and they all showed a dedication and a soulfulness that only came from someone who had poured themselves into them. And yet they sat. Countless patrons walked up and asked for their own unique version of a chicken or a palmetto tree. All of his other art went unnoticed.

I was intrigued. As a writer, I wanted to find out if this was what it took to be successful. To make a name for yourself. Did we have to abandon our dreams of becoming the next great folk artist or writer in order to achieve a sustainability that provided for our family? And if we did abandon that dream for a commercial or popular brand of ourselves, was that going to be enough? Or would we still risk sitting on a roadside wondering where the money for the next bill was going to come from? All of these questions were weighing on me in the months following my encounter with this cheerful man who had convinced me to buy two of his paintings. I took all of these questions with me when I asked him if I could sit with him for a day. He was receptive to the idea, as long as I considered adding another painting to my collection. I agreed.

He's a local icon, or at least a fixture. Friends who'd gone to the University of South Carolina or who were from Columbia had his work displayed in bathrooms and breakfast nooks. My barber had a particularly enthusiastic and brightly colored chicken that dated all the way back to '87. And when Leah and I were house hunting, almost every house we toured had at least one chicken staring back at us. His stuff seemed to be everywhere. They defied color logic and defined a room. I was interested in the Chicken Man, but I wasn't sold.

A few years went by and I saw more and more of his artwork. It began to grow on me. The unknown man behind the work had grabbed my imagination. I wanted to know who he was. I saw him more and more on the side of the road. First on Huger. Then on Harden. Sometimes there was a crowd. Other times he sat alone. But he always seemed happy.

Leah convinced me that we needed to buy at least one of his paintings and when we saw Lee in the neighborhood park, we'd decided that we were going to actually get one. I just wasn't sure where we could put it. We spent the rest of that day discussing where we could hang a chicken.

By the time we walked away from our neighbor's after party with two of his paintings under our arms, I wanted to know who this guy really was. The man was forever jovial. He was this presence in town that sat on the roadside and sold paintings

Lee was born in Edgefield, SC, and started painting when he was twelve. As a child, he painted pretty much anything that came to his mind. Despite several assumptions around Columbia about him being a self-taught folk artist, Lee studied at both the Gertrude Hebert Institute of Art in Alexandria, Virginia, and the Rose Hill Art Center in Aiken. Until he moved to Columbia eleven years ago, he lived and painted in North Augusta, where his painting was more of a side project and his days were spent working various jobs ranging from road construction to farming.

He tells me, "There weren't always the chickens." It wasn't until sometime in the mid-seventies that he stumbled upon the chicken idea. "I met this guy, who asked me why I never painted no chickens?" Laughing he said, "I'd told him I had me some bantam chickens, and he said I ought to paint em." Lee was convinced nobody would ever buy any chickens, but at the time he felt like he didn't have anything to

lose. He started painting chickens that looked like real chickens. Giving a lot of attention to their combs and the way their feathers spread across their wings, before moving onto their tail feathers and talons. They never really sold, so he adjusted them, made them "funky." He started to spatter drops of paint across rough sheets of tall, skinny plywood, and painted elongated, emaciated chickens that liked to dance. Natural colors no longer mattered. A chicken could end up being purple and green just as easily as red and white. Nature no longer mattered. And before Lee realized it, "Folks had started askin' around for the chicken man."

Lee tells me that he used to paint paintings similar to some of Jim Harrison's work. Harrison is an artist from Denmark, SC, who focuses on depicting realistic portrayals of rural scenes from the South. He was and still is Lee's favorite artist. But to understand that influence you have to look past the scrawled out chickens and palmetto trees and pay attention to his other work, which is often buried off to the sides and in the back of his painted shack. It is there that you can start to see the more realistic portrayals of southern landscape and culture. These are the ones that make Lee smile when you ask about them. Those, and the Lorraine.

Most days are slow. A few college students wander in and out, and buy one or two small paintings for fifteen or twenty dollars, but it's mostly slow. Lee tells me, "Usually I got to wait all day until the evening, when folks be gettin' off work. That's when the sales come. That's the thing about it. You got to sit all day before you can even think about makin' a sale."

On most cold days Lee sits by the space heater in his shack and listens to the news on his transistor radio. I look into this shack on wheels and try and imagine him set up amidst the hundreds of stacked paintings, painting supplies, and boxes of t-shirts. It's difficult to picture it. But Lee says he's content in his little shack.

I'd been eyeing a painting of a covered bridge for a while. The blues and greens mix together in a way that both ground the painting and make it surreal. The sky has a stillness to it. The clouds sit in a solitary haze and a power line dips in and out of view. But the rest of the painting has movement. The grass, the road, and the walls of the bridge all move with the brush strokes that created them, leaving me with this surreal experience of standing still while my eyes travel beneath this covered bridge at interstate speeds.

Lee, noticing my fascination. "I can get you a good deal on that covered bridge. I'll even throw in a couple of chickens."

"Let's talk again before I leave."

Lee laughs, and says again, "I'll get you a good deal. Chickens and all."

Still staring at the bridge, I inquire about how many of these types of painting he sells, Lee responds without hesitation, "Not many." He guesses that he's painted over 11,000 paintings and more than half of those were chickens. People want their piece of a local icon. It's trendy – but only when their guest can recognize it as one of the Chicken Man's paintings. They want what they know. And they know about the dancing chickens.

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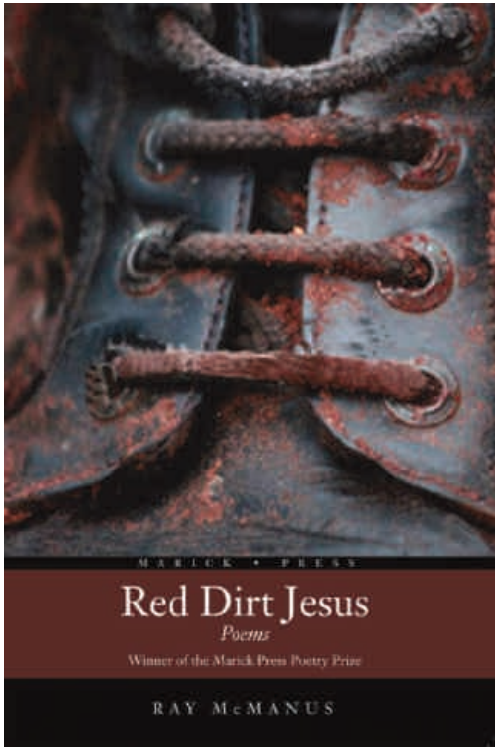
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A unique American voice enters poetry here, emerging from monkey grass and moon, from the ditch between father (or Father) and son (or Son). It is crisp, laconic, parodic, mysterious. It blesses the diesel and the mud-flap sinner. Maybe it is Tom Sawyer's dark sexy side.

Alicia Ostiker

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I ask him if he regrets painting so many chickens. With an emphatic shake of his head he responds, "People have come to know me as the Chicken Man. That's who I am here. Them chickens been good to me."

Before his van broke down in Baltimore, on his way up to Boston this past spring, Lee spent a lot of his time traveling to art shows around the country. Most artists can't survive without traveling. The local markets just aren't sustainable over any extended period of time. And without the constant revolving influx of college students and parents, Lee would be having an even more difficult time supporting himself and his family off of his craft. Traveling is just a part of it. Many extremely successful artists spend every weekend on the road, spending large amounts of money on gas, hotels, and festival entry fees with the hope of finding a new market that will buy their work. And even for the most established commercial artists, the shows are little more than a crashshoot.

Lee says that he's been to shows in Chicago, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Key West, and about every other city you can think of. "Some are good. Some ain't."

As I look around at the hundred of unsold paintings situated all around us it becomes clear to me why the traveling shows are so important. I ask Lee about my suspicions.

"Customers here tell me how to paint em. They want me match'em up to their wallpaper. I don't choose the colors. They do. That's fine. I charge a little extra. We're all happy." And yet he admits that he has a lot of money tied up in inventory. "I got more paintings than I could ever sell. But folks like to see their options. They like to know what I can do." But more often than not, these just sit and wait for him to go to a show. That's where Lee can sell what he's already painted. "Every now and then you get somebody that wants somethin' else, but most folks at shows, they buy what I got." That's also where Lee has the best chance of selling his non-commercial work. He's sold a good many portraits and landscapes at those shows. And at every show, he pulls out his painting of the Lorraine and sets it up front and center.

Late in the afternoon a car swings around and lunges into the parking lot, and a middle-aged woman and her teenaged daughter climb out and begin thumbing through the stacks of paintings. Lee nods his head at me, in a manner that seems to indicate that this might be the sale he'd been waiting on. Walking towards the mother and daughter, he removes his cap, and with a smile that I can hear, boasts, "How many Chicken Man paintings can I get you beautiful ladies today?"

They blush, saying they are going to look around for a while.

"Well I can get you some deals. I've got more over there. There are more in the trailer. You want a bunch of em. I'll get you some deals."

Listening to him talk, I notice how it never sounds forced or even that pressured. The words alone should sound high-pressured. But they don't. He smiles and flirts with these ladies and it is one of the most genuine encounters I've ever witnessed.

Wandering in and out of the stacks and the trailer, the two of them laugh as they pick up paintings of chickens and flamingos. They are flipping through one of the stacks inside the trailer when another car pulls up bearing a USC sticker and sorority letters. The girl that gets out and walks up to the table to start combing through the smallest paintings on the table before deciding on a crab. Lee tries to talk to her. Joke around a little, but she only asks, "Do you have this crab in an 8x10?"



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

Lee finds another crab on a square shaped sheet of plywood that's roughly the size of a floor tile. "This here is about as close as I've got to a 8x10."

The girl grabs it and examines it for a minute, before settling on the smaller crab that she'd first chosen. Twenty dollars and she's gone.

The mother and daughter continue their search before deciding on two chickens and a brightly colored flamingo. They chat with Lee for a few minutes. The daughter is celebrating some undisclosed achievement at middle school, and the mother wanted to do something special for her. Lee's smile is larger than usual, and I know that this sale will make his day. He needed this one.

The girl jumps into one of the chairs and watches as Lee pulls out a series of acrylics and brushes to add the legs and the finishing touches to her chickens. With a glop of gray paint on the table, Lee puts the legs and the beaks on the chickens before finishing with his signature. As soon as he is finished she grabs all three of them and rushes off to their car as her mother pays. Both of us wave as they leave the parking lot. This was a good sale. "I need me a few more of those," he laughs.

I laugh with him, but I couldn't help but notice that they never even looked at his other work. The paintings that he seemed to really care about. Here were two customers who were genuinely interested in his craft.

They asked questions. They took their time flipping through his work, but they never even noticed this other aspect of his collection.

Looking at the Lorraine Motel, I ask him again about whether or not he is upset about how nobody ever notices his other work. He looks at the motel and gently smiles. "The chickens have been good to me. I can't turn my back on the Chicken Man."

"But it has to get hard. Having all of these paintings and not being able to sell them. How do you do it?"

"I'm always hopin'. I'd like to get somebody to come buy it out. Buy everything. That'd be good. Gotta find an art lover for that." He looks over at me and points back to his trailer, "You 'bout ready to go back over there and think about that bridge I got."

I agree that it is about that time. He begins to pick up the smaller paintings and load them into his car, as I walk into the trailer. The covered bridge really is astonishing. Once again, the surreal movement of the brush strokes catches me. They move me in and out of the bridge. I'm still staring at the painting when Lee walks up behind me with an armful of paintings. "I'll cut you a deal. Throw in a chicken and one of my Chicken Man shirts."

Once again, I walk away with two paintings under my arm. ♪

Dale Lam

By Bonnie Boiter-Jolley

Dale Lam packs a lot of punch in her four feet and ten inch stance. Spending her life fighting to make a career for herself in the entertainment industry has instilled in her a passion and drive she hopes to pass on to her students. Owner and Artistic Director of Columbia City Jazz Dance School and Company, Lam finds herself in a position to use her guidance and instruction to do just that.

Born in Augusta, Georgia, Lam grew up in a very close, traditional, and musical, Asian family. Her mother encouraged her to join her brother and two sisters in their musical pursuits, urging her to delve into the cello, not the dance studio. Nonetheless, as an eleven year old, Lam took her first ballet class at Augusta Civic Center with Zanne Beaufort. Lam credits Beaufort with introducing her to the mantra she lives by today, "It isn't what you don't have, it's what you do with what you have." Lam's career illustrates the sentiment.

A talented but reluctant musician, Lam received a full scholarship to study cello at USC. Once enrolled, however, she came to the realization that she needed to make a choice, to decide where her passion lay and pursue it 100 percent. Lam transferred to the University of Georgia to study theatre and dance. While taking a master class during a visit to New York City, Lam was introduced to Robin Dunn, assistant to Frank Hatchett. "Modern came easy to me," she says, but standing just two inches shorter than five feet, ballet was a different matter. Hatchett, largely influenced by jazz and breakdance techniques, advised Lam to "throw the ballet out the window." Lam remembers she felt "released." Lam also attributes much of her development to Mia Michaels whom she met at a dance convention in the 1980s. She remembers being immediately intrigued by her unusual style of movement modeled after a combination of hard hitting jazz and something called "liquid dancing" that was popular in dance clubs at the time. This new, contemporary dance gave Lam what she felt was a home.

A skilled performer, challenged by her height and ethnicity, Lam learned to fight for what she wanted. "You

have to be pushy," she quips. "I did anything." Lam rattles off a grab bag of industry experiences including but not limited to dressing up as a clown to deliver balloon bouquets, delivering singing telegrams as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, appearing in a Hawaiian Punch commercial while wearing a grass skirt, and touring Europe with the Department of Defense. Ultimately, Lam decided to return to where she was the happiest, in Columbia, SC.

In Columbia, Lam began teaching jazz at William Starrett's Columbia Conservatory of Dance. The program began with eight ballet-based students, and was strongly influenced by musical theatre type movement. The Columbia City Jazz Company was formed in 1990 and five years later had grown to 34 dancers. Nationally acclaimed, CCJC has toured overseas on numerous occasions, performing in Plovdiv, Bulgaria as part of the European Cultural Month, and at the Tanzsommer Festival in Innsbruck, Austria in 1999. In 2000, the company toured Singapore performing thirty shows over the course of the winter. In 2006, the company traveled to China for five weeks as part of a cultural exchange program to prepare for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The dancers toured and performed in Jinan City, Qingdao City, Zibo City, Weifang City, Chongqing City, Guangzhou City, Shenzhen City, and Shanghai among others.

In 2002, CCJC received the honor of being named one of the "Top 50 Dance Companies in the USA" by *Dance Spirit Magazine*. The same year came with less happy news, however. The company was informed that there was no longer enough room for them at the Main and Taylor studios. Having outgrown their space, the dancers were without a home. Lam passionately recounts how her husband, Les Mizell, financed the move of the school and company to their current location at great personal sacrifice. Emphasizing the family aspect of the dancers, Lam is adamant that the company and the school have been "built from love." Though she has never given birth to a child, Lam has children all over the country. Her students are her family.

Lam's philosophy on teaching reflects the love she has for her students. Drawing much of her inspiration from choreographer Jason Parsons and teacher and choreographer Denise Wall, Lam emphasizes the process and notes that this can be different from dancer to



don't do anything

HALF WAY HALF WAY

dancer. As with learning to play a musical instrument, there are steps that must be taken. Lam cautions against allowing students to merely copy movement, and instead works with the “science of the body,” to learn the technique from within. Returning to her mantra, Lam encourages her students to understand how their “instrument” is put together so that they may do the most with what they have. “Each child has a strength that should be celebrated,” she insists. Her students can be sure she will push them to find it. In rehearsal, Lam is likely to spend fifteen to twenty minutes perfecting one transition, talking her student through the process and giving them exercises in order to feel the proper muscle engagement. “Now feel that, now hold that, now do that. Go.”

Before Dale Lam returned to South Carolina to begin teaching, she confesses she was selling radio and television advertisements, working at what was a \$150,000 a year job. Though she now earns just a fifth of that, she chose instead to have “a legacy.” Former CCJC dancers are working throughout the country. With jobs in the industry, they perform on cruise ships, in LA, NYC and in various companies. Alumni are now graduates of CalArts, attending London Contemporary School of Dance, and USC. She reflects that there are turns her life took that she might not have chosen, but insists she has no regrets. “Don’t do anything half way,” Lam says. “Make your life count, make it stand for something.” She certainly has. ♪

Curtain UP

with August Krickel



Time was when late spring and summer were the relatively dead seasons for the performing arts in Columbia. Not so these days, with at least 10 full-scale productions running on stages in the Midlands. We note with pleasure the continuing emergence of the next generation of Columbia performers, talented folks in their teens and early 20's who freely move from one venue to another, providing reliable support in ensembles, then shining in lead roles. Curtain Up!

- First up at **Town Theatre** is another full week of *Grease* it's the word, we hear, and runs through Sunday, May 20th. If you've lived under a rock for the last few decades, it's the ode to teen love and mischief that spawned an entire decade of 1950's retro nostalgia, garnering seven Tony nominations for creators Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, and running for eight years on Broadway. Catherine Hunsinger plays Sandy, the good girl who turns naughty to catch a boy's eye, and we can guarantee her fate will be brighter than that of her poignant character in the recent *Spring Awakening* at Trustus. Josh Kern appears opposite her as Danny, Hunter Bolton plays Kenickie, Leandra Gaston-Ellis is bad girl Rizzo, and other members of the T-Birds and Pink Ladies include Sirena Dib, Haley Sprankle, Charlie Goodrich (both seen in the recent *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at Town) and Patrick Dodds (based on his recent appearance in *Spring Awakening*, we know he can sport some rebelliously high hair!) Jamie Carr Harrington directs, Tracy Steele choreographs, and Christopher McCroskey serves as musical director. Then Shannon Willis Scruggs directs and choreographs a cast of biblical proportions - literally - in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, opening Friday, July 13th. Scott Vaughan plays the simple shepherd who rises to become a trusted adviser to Pharaoh (Frank

Thompson, who also plays Vince Fontaine in *Grease*.) Also in the cast are Will Moreau, musical director Lou Warth, alternating as the Narrator with Jenny Morse, Scott Stepp, plus Charlie Goodrich and Patrick Dodds from above. Call the box office at 803-799-2510 for ticket information.

- Over at **Trustus Theatre**, *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*, runs through Saturday, May 26th. Directed by USC's Ellen Douglas Schaefer, this Tony-nominated comedy by Sarah Ruhl explores marital, societal, and sexual dysfunction at the close of the 19th century, and yes, the technological cure for women's "hysteria" is exactly what the title implies. Some of *Jasper's* favorite local performers are featured, including Steve Harley, Sumner Bender, Ellen Rodillo-Fowler, Stann Gwynn, and Elena Martinez-Vidal. Opening just a few weeks later, on Friday, June 15th, is the musical *Avenue Q* (see the feature on Lyon Hill on page 16 for details.) Featured in the cast are Kevin Bush, Katie Leitner (a vocal powerhouse in last fall's *Anything Goes* at Workshop), and Elizabeth Smith Baker (an adorable innocent *fraulein* in the recent *Spring Awakening*.) Chad Henderson directs, and Randy Moore is Musical Director; reservations can be made at 803-254-9732.

- **Workshop Theatre** meanwhile is throwing a *Wild Party*, the Andrew Lipka musical that also runs through Saturday, May 26th. Jocelyn Sanders directs Vicky Saye Henderson (both profiled in last issue's "Leading Ladies" feature) and Doug Gleason (last seen in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at Town) as flamboyant vaudevillians mismatched in love but equals in debauchery and machination. Music and passion may be in fashion as Hunter Boyle, Jason Stokes, and Samantha Elkins (the leads from the recent *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*) connive, carouse, and throw down with Sam McWhite (the Narrator in the recent *Passing Strange* at Trustus) and Giulia Dalbec-Matthews (the *femme fatale* in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*.) Caroline Weidner is Musical Director, and Barbara House Deimer choreographs. Call the box office at 803-799-4876 for tickets.

- **The SC Shakespeare Company** presents *The Compleat Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged*, in Saluda Shoals Park the following weekend; see page 9 for details.

▪ **The Lexington County Arts Association** is producing *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Beth Henley's darkly comic, Southern Gothic take on small town families, relationships, beauty, and tradition. Opening at the Village Square Theatre on Thursday, June 7th, the show is directed by Brandi Owensby. Featured in the cast are Lauren Holton, Gina Calvert, Rachael Goerss, Harrison Ayer, and Allyson Musmeci. Call the box office at 803-359-1436 for ticket information.

▪ **Columbia Children's Theatre** continues a summer tradition of plays in the classic *commedia dell'arte* tradition of improvised comedy, premiering *The Commedia Cinderella*, on Friday, June 15th. With lots of audience participation, the younger tykes are entertained with plenty of physical comedy, while enough sophisticated humor is sprinkled in to satisfy older children and adults. The show then alternates Thursday mornings at 10:30 with *The Commedia Pinocchio*, running through July 26th. (These

performances are primarily for summer camps, church groups, and daycares, but the general public is invited as well.) The cast includes Sam LaFrage, Paul Lindley II, Elizabeth Stepp Cauthen, Rozlyn Stanley, and Matthew Wright. LaFrage, now a company member of The American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, originated the role of Punchin in *The Commedia Pinocchio* in 2010, and this summer he will also lead an advanced acting workshop for older students (June 4-15), then will direct the YouTheatre production of *Willy Wonka Junior* later in the summer. Ticket information can be found at 803-691-4548.

▪ **The Chapin Theatre Company** (aka Chapin Community Theatre, and now presenting shows in the Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College) is producing the beloved *Little Princess*, adapted from the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Directed by Debra Leopard and running from Thursday, July 19th through the 29th, the play recounts the story of a plucky little girl who uses her creativity and optimism to inspire people of all ages. Call 803-240-8544 for information. ♪



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Eavesdropping – Writers Jamie Ridenhour and Amy Reeves Converse about Writing

Introduction by Ed Madden

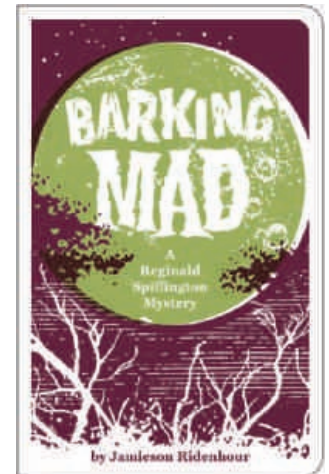
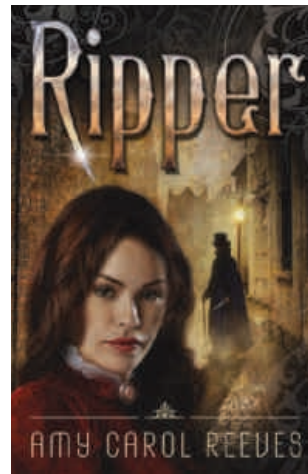
Imagine Downton Abbey. With werewolves.

And imagine Jack the Ripper as an after-school special. (Remember those?) And the main character, Abbie, is kinda like one of Patricia Arquette’s freaky psychic daughters from *Medium*—she has visions—but smarter and spunkier, played maybe by a slightly older Ariel Winter from *Modern Family* (the smart middle kid, Alex). There’s a love triangle, too, but Abbie is still more Hermione from *Harry Potter* than that twit Bella from *Twilight*. And then there’s that secret brotherhood....

Two graduates from the University of South Carolina have recently published novels that blend and bend the conventions of genre fiction—whodunits, young adult lit, fantasy fiction. Jamie Ridenhour’s *Barking Mad* (Typecast, 2011) is a werewolf murder mystery set in 1930s England, narrated by Reggie Spiffington, a clueless idler with a voice straight out of Jeeves and Wooster. Amy Reeves has just published *Ripper* (Flux/Llewellyn 2012), historical fiction with a paranormal twist for young adult readers.

Both graduated from USC with Ph.D. degrees in nineteenth-century British literature— Amy researching Romantic era children’s literature, Jamie focusing on Victorian and gothic fiction (he recently edited the Valancourt scholarly edition of the Victorian vampire novel *Carmilla*, a precursor to *Dracula*). Amy has published articles on children’s literature and *Wuthering Heights*, and Jamie on vampire fiction, Charles Dickens, and steam punk rapper Professor Elemental. Jamie has also written a couple of award-winning fairytale horror films: *Cornerboys* and *The House of the Yaga*. And both teach college English, Jamie for the past few years at University of Mary in North Dakota, Amy at Columbia College and now at USC in Columbia.

Jasper asked them to get together (in cyberspace) and talk about their work as novelists, and they agreed— talking about historical research, the demands of genre, dead bodies, self-publishing, and the need for jogging, jazz, and coffee.



AMY: In *Barking Mad*, Reggie has a very distinct voice—he is just such a solidly insouciant rogue throughout. His cavalier attitude continues even during the werewolf transformations. Not an easy thing to do, so how did you do it?

JAMIE: The true answer is that I spent twenty-some-odd years reading murder-mysteries, P.G. Wodehouse, and Charles Dickens. The “type,” the rich clueless idler, is a staple of those fictions, particularly Wodehouse. But after that initial inspiration (or theft—tomato/to-mah-to), Reggie’s voice just sort of developed on its own. As I got to know him better, it became clearer what he would say in a particular situation, how he would react. His voice was the most important factor in the book, shaping character, narrative, everything.

AMY: Reggie’s primary interests are women, fashion, and food. In future Reggie books is he going to remain the same, or branch out into other interests like say social justice?

JAMIE: There are two further stories mapped out, a novel and a short story. Reggie’s got potential to go deeper, but he has an overwhelming sense of inertia that’s hard to overcome. When he does move towards real thought, it’s because those around him push him there. Pelham or Mimsy have these ideas; they’d never occur to Reggie on his own.

AMY: How did you come up with the idea for your next project, a young adult novel, *Charley Cross and the London Dead*? What inspired you?

JAMIE: *Charley Cross* was inspired by a brief section, a couple of pages really, of Arthur Machen's 1895 novel *The Three Impostors*. In that book, a woman tells about seeing her brother being taken through the streets of London by a dead man—rotting flesh, empty eyes, etc.—and when she gives chase she loses them in the crowd. It's a creepy little vignette, but it's never followed up on because she's lying; it didn't happen. I was quite disappointed. So that's how *Charley Cross* started, with me trying to tell the end of that story. It's gotten a lot bigger than that, of course. And it incorporates elements of an earlier novel I had been stalled on for years. Talk to me about Victorian London. Clearly we're both enamored by it—what makes it a setting you want to work with?

AMY: I think the fascinating aspect of Victorian London is the mask of prudery that the culture wore—the sexual repression, rigid class etiquette—and yet prostitution was rampant, there was great interest in spiritualism and the occult, and also there was such a rich, bohemian artistic life that flourished in the Pre-Raphaelite movement. I was drawn to the period because it was such a rich and textured background to work with for my novel. What draws you to the Victorian period? Why did you decide to use it as the setting for your YA book?

JAMIE: Mainly it's training. Victorian London is the setting for many of the stories that were formative for me: *Dracula*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Holmes*, Charles Dickens. And like you say, there's infinite possibility for stories there, which is why it's traditionally been such a deep well for storytellers. But *Ripper* is grounded in real historical events—the Whitechapel murders of 1888. How much research do you do? Do you do all your research ahead of time, assembling facts before you begin writing, or does the research grow out of the story as you compose?

AMY: Researching the actual Ripper murders and aspects of the period was time-consuming but not very difficult. Because of my dissertation, I already knew what sources to go through to find specific information on nineteenth-century culture. Finding information on hospitals, on what physicians knew at the time, what a birth would have been like was much more difficult for



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me. This took a lot more digging. One very helpful book that I found was Harold Speert's book *Obstetrics and Gynecology*; the book had pictures of medical instruments from ancient times onward.

JAMIE: A lot of the frisson, for me, of writing historical fiction, is the tension between the historical moment and our own twenty-first-century sensibilities. For instance, your Abbie Sharp is a lot more independent and willing to push boundaries than a sixteen-year-old in 1888 would have been. Are you conscious of that tension while you're writing? Is it restricting at all?

AMY: True, Abbie Sharp is more independent and career-focused than the typical Victorian girl would be. But the fact remains that there were individual women in the Victorian era who lived more independently, who forged lives and careers on their own. One of my all-time favorite women of the period, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, fought her way through the patriarchal system to become one of the first female physicians and to start the first medical school for women in London. This was also the beginning of the suffragist movement and, of course, we cannot forget the feminists Amelia Bloomer and Dr. Anderson's sister Millicent Fawcett. Abbie Sharp, in my mind, is among these types, willing to push against the limits and boundaries set upon her. Furthermore, I used her unconventional Dublin life, the influence of her educated mother, to make her independence more believable. Do any historical periods other than the Victorian or Wodehouse eras tempt you as a setting?

JAMIE: My grandfather was a waist-gunner on a B-17, stationed in England during WWII, and I've played around with the idea of building something from that. I have a fictional 70s-era rock band that will eventually feature in a ghost novel, though right now they just exist as a long entry in a fictional Encyclopedia of Rock. I've written short fiction set in the 1930s Deep South, and in SC in the 1980s. I'll go anywhere. So, we're both working in fairly well-established genres in our novels. How

much do you worry about generic conventions? Readers expect certain elements and narrative moves—does that inform your writing on a practical level? Did you feel pressure, for instance, to have a love triangle?

AMY: I keep the market in mind when I am initially thinking of a story. For instance, when I began thinking about writing *Ripper*, I thought the subject would have a mass appeal. Jack the Ripper is an intriguing subject to almost anyone. That said, I knew the Pre-Raphaelite sub-plot would be harder to sell to teen readers, but I knew from the start that it had to be part of *my* Ripper story, which I wanted to go beyond a typical whodunit. My burden was to present it in a way that would be intriguing to young readers who weren't familiar with the lesser-known story. As to the love triangle, for me, it has its roots in *Jane Eyre* rather than an attempt to meet the expectations of readers.

JAMIE: On a similar note, what do you think about the proliferation of self-publishing? Barring vanity presses and the glut of bad writing, is self-publishing a valid avenue for talented and motivated writers?

AMY: I think that self-publishing is usually a bad idea. First, it is expensive. Furthermore, since getting *Ripper* published, I have realized all the teamwork involved in putting out a book. My editor gave me wonderful feedback and offered his views and perspectives on aspects of the book that I never would have considered. My copy editor also had a very sharp eye for minor grammatical errors and inconsistencies in the storyline. In spite of the hundreds of times I read the book myself, I really needed their input. Even the best of writers needs a professionally-trained editorial team, and this is not often possible with self-published works. *Barking Mad* came out with the independent press, Typecast. Do you recommend that unpublished writers pursue independent publishers?

JAMIE: I think it depends on what you want. Small presses don't have the promotional budget of HarperCollins or Random House, but they also won't drop you after six months if you haven't sold a quota. The best thing about working with Typecast is that they treat me like an important part of the organization. I can pick up the phone and call my editor any time and she'll answer. *Barking Mad* has been out for nine months, and Jen is still calling me with brainstorming for promotion, etc. They make beautiful books, and I'm on a roster with some pretty impressive writers, Matt Hart and Matthew Lippman among them. I'll be shopping *Charley Cross* to agents and bigger houses, largely because of its genre, but I'm very happy to be with Typecast.

AMY: What is your writing routine? Do you tend to be more productive in the mornings or at night? Do you have any drinks, snacks, or props that you must have at your writing desk?

JAMIE: I get up at 5 each morning and write for an hour or two, depending on when my son has to be at band. If I'm lucky I can work in time in the evening as well. Coffee is pretty crucial, as is music. Early morning sessions usually mean cool jazz—Dexter Gordon or Sonny Stitt. I have a cozy little office, with some tchochkes to keep me company. A nineteenth-century phrenology head watches most of what I do. What about you?

AMY: Typically, I like to go on a jog first thing in the morning with my dog Annie while listening to my iPod. I work out a lot of plot problems or get ideas while jogging. Then I go home and with the dogs at my feet and a large mug of coffee, I write. I tend to be very solitary in my writing, only giving initial drafts to one or two very good close writer friends and my agent. I do enjoy interacting with other authors and readers through Goodreads, SCBWI, blogging, and social media in an attempt to keep up to date on what is happening in the literary and publishing world. How important is blogging to your social media? Do you think a debut writer should blog or does it become a distraction?

JAMIE: Done right it can be a very effective tool. I have a blog—it's the "News" section of jamiesonridenhour.com—but I don't think I'm using it to its full potential. My wife, who is an educational reform advocate, is a great role model—her blog gets followed and retweeted all over the world. Mine just sort of sits there. I use Twitter (@jmriddenhour) and Facebook quite a bit, and recently added a Twitter account for Reginald Spiffington (@rspiffington), which is a lot of fun. I like connecting with readers and other writers in a real conversation.

For more about Jamie Ridenhour (and to watch his remarkable little films), he is online at: www.jamiesonridenhour.com. You can order *Barking Mad* at Typecast Publishing (<http://www.typecastpublishing.com/barkingmad/>). You can find out more about Amy Reeves and her books at her website: amycarolreeves.com.

Review: *A Book of Exquisite Disasters* by Charlene Spearen

(University of South Carolina Press, 2012)

By Carol Peters

Charlene Spearen prefaces her new poetry collection with an epigraph from Israeli poet Agi Mishol: "you, with a womb in your brain." Spearen's work counters Mishol's sarcasm with powerful, often devastating narrative poems that expose the devaluation of women and honor women's defiance of alleged constraints. The poet's respect for women and their right to live lives of their own choosing illuminate this compelling first book. The poems, as poet Kwame Dawes writes in the preface, are "wonderful studies in how language, arresting experience, can produce these artifacts of great and lasting beauty."

The first section of the book is a moving sequence of poems about a brother's dying and death. Spearen dedicates the first poem, "Magic inside a Hell-Box," to C.J.M., an "M" we take for Monahan, maiden name of the poet and last name of her brother. As throughout, lyricism complements narrative:

Morning. The early light centers
and fills the air like the smell
of new clothes on Easter Sunday.

The simile invokes a child's sensory immediacy before the poem rushes on the morbid present:

pallid veins that pulse against your
yellow skin. You shield your eyes
from the shame of a shrinking body . . .

The sister admits, "Now you are dying," the fact she and her brother attempt to deny, unlike the dog:

this animal seems to know the cold, blue
landscape will empty, become a place
where you will never go again

The poet reveals a searing and unsentimental story that is not the family story – "Your wife, hidden / in a vapor cloud" – to its comic funeral end:

you would have
crowded: *Get out of here; find your own piece
of roadkill.* Six soldiers, like a team
of rowers, guards of grief wearing
khaki and brass, moved in unison.
They stood faceless as a pack of penguins.

Spearen is unwaveringly honest. In "Last Confession," one of the book's two poems written from a male point of view, the brother brusquely mocks the Catholic faith that the poet, trained by family and church, takes more seriously. "Mother of God" relates a vision experienced after her own mother's death:

Never had I seen such
radiance fill alcove, aisle, pew. . . .
I began to feel heaven's omniscient

voice . . .
all that was His will

The book's final poem, "Judgment Day," confesses the author's ongoing respect for her Catholic training, "I am still so fearful of the heaven or hell / moment," but counters that impediment with her desire "for another chance," which arrives as the opportunity to do good, care for another:

follow the assigned path, it is veiled
in a holy state and ceases to wonder about
words like *blame* and *direction*.

This obedience to religious authority, male authority, is what most of the women in Spearen's book defy, sometimes in what most people would regard as bizarre and disastrous ways, e.g., a mother who drowns her three small children in the bath, a pregnant wife who commits harakiri, a woman who survives decades of marriage to the husband she was sold to by chanting, "*I will outlive him! I will. I will.*"

The narrative strength of Spearen's book lies in the recurring theme of women who take back their lives after being devalued by parenting, by sexual abuse, by religion, by lovers and husbands, by the self-disparagement that blooms from such ubiquitous treatment. One recovery poem, "Eruptions from Natural Causes" begins in dormancy and ends in eruption:

Sonnet in Celebration Of

By Charlene Spearen

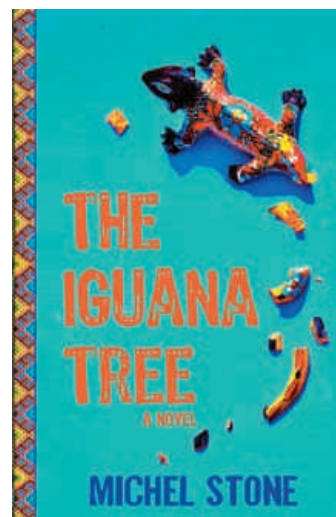
This is for stunning Sonya and all the other women
with high attitude and victory dripping and bulging
from their fuchsia scar-slashed breasts. For stunning
Sonya who sits rooted among the day's sing-singing,
and proclaims the here-to-there street click-clacking
as church humming—each passerby a silly acronym.

For Sonya, whose husband the poet has a new book
(another hundred thousand words); yet this afternoon,
she cleaned his page under a ceiling ready to bloom
with her very own against-all-odds words. The moon
has seen her arch, has heard her croon like a picayune
insane moment, watched her underscore cancer's hook.

Stand back and you will find on her torso no tragic flaw.

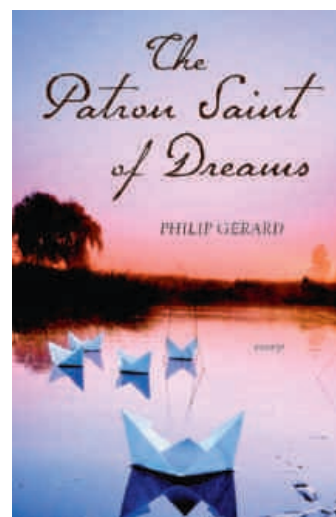
Yes, stunning Sonya sees it all as the luck of the draw.

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**inexact change/I have a little more/because
I stole it from a dresser**

By Zach Mueller

staring into the jars of brine green and
pink with eggs inside a red one packed
with pickled pig feet that float around
the tank like farm barnacles slide *Un*
-canny X-men '95 issue 4 up the plastic
counter a pen of pigs wallowing around
the mud one wild eyed fat one with stub
feet I leave a nickel and some pennies or
I ask the woman who smokes a short behind
the counter what happened to the rest of him

Zach Mueller of Columbia is a recent graduate from USC's MFA program for poetry. He writes poetry and fiction and is currently working on a novel about a Lebanese painter who adopts an American girl from Wilmington while on a quest to find a former model.

Divorce Song

By Lisa Hammond

Dread pulls up
his black sedan
smoking

he's come back
to get her sisters

he takes them all
as wives

they can't resist
his invisibility cloak
his horn of plenty

but they were
already invisible
and what could
they know
of plenty?

she did her
once upon a time

finished out
her carsick
back seat
eternity

she polishes
her myth again
and again

watching
her sisters
weep

*it's not a pyre
the ride stops
short of Hades*

they can't
hear her

they must burn
first before
they learn

the car
never moves

the doors
aren't locked

Dread can't
even drive

Lisa Hammond teaches English at the University of South Carolina Lancaster. She is the author of a chapbook, Moving House (Texas Review Press) and has published poems in Southern Poetry Review, Calyx, The South Carolina Review, Literary Mama, and storySouth, among others. She and her husband spend way too much time in the car.

Can Art Make A Difference?

By Chris Robinson



Columbia has a lot to be proud of. When I arrived here many years ago, there were few good restaurants and little to do, but promise

of much more. One of Columbia's greatest assets then was being reasonably close to the beach and history of the low country, or the mountains and progress of the upstate. The city has made good on its promises with a thriving Vista and re-emerging downtown, and the arts have played a significant role with successful venues and a great social environment. Now we stand at a critical juncture. Can we move from that great social environment, where art serves simply as a backdrop for drinks and good conversation, to a place that really looks at, cares about, evaluates, embraces, and understands good art?

Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain has transformed a dying industrial town to an international destination, thriving community, and exemplified the arts' ability to transform. It did so with cohesive, visionary commitment on the part of local and national government, foundations, the private sector, and the contemporary collections of the Guggenheim. Does Columbia have the interest, desire, willingness, and courage to raise the bar and reap similar benefits? There is no coalescing force organizing many desperate and unrelated activities, each simply struggling in a tough economy to keep themselves or their own organization above water, leaving little opportunity for discussion of meaning or quality.

The bigger question may be what the real role of the arts is and how willing are we to embrace and risk the ride of its force? "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like," or "I love that painting, but it doesn't match my décor," usually win out when it is time for tough decisions, and there are many concrete models of both success and failure. Should struggling arts venues be run by curators versed in quality or a business person capable of meeting the bottom line, avid supporters or qualified arts professionals, and what are the implications, assets, and liabilities of each?

We have a growing infrastructure of good museums, alternative spaces, and galleries, creative and successful local artists, and a university department ripe with internationally active artists and scholars – credited with recognition only when 500 or more miles from home, and preferably overseas. Universities are experiencing similar issues with pressure for funding and growth, related increases in tuition, competition from entrepreneurial and for-profit colleges, and cumbersome traditional infrastructures unwilling or unable to change. While most of the broader art world concentrates on the idea, content, and simply making good art in whatever form it may take, art departments still focus on the traditional structure of separate and distinct mediums, not necessarily educating thinking artists, but rather training skilled technicians, or free spirited bohemians.

It costs about \$1.5 million, on average, to set up a new scientist with lab space and technological infrastructure, but there is no studio space for the arts faculty. Our graduate studios, a recent asset, are in an old Quonset hut storage facility with chain link interior walls, dusty concrete floors, and no air conditioning.

Everybody professes to understand the need and value of the arts and it would be foolish to publically say otherwise, but how many really embrace their goodness. The ones that worry me the most are those goodhearted that figure general intelligence and personal interest qualifies and empowers them to understand and influence the future of the arts. They often can and do. Many viewers still see contemporary innovation and shock and intrigue in non-objective paintings or racy and controversial objective imagery that has been around for quite some time, but often have little or no idea, or quickly dismiss, what is going on in the art world at large.

Photo by Forrest Clonts

My own work is in art and technology, a controversial yet persistent stepchild of the visual arts. Now in its third generation, after continued interest and forays throughout history including the landmark 1967 Art and Technology Program at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which paired major artists with high tech corporations, it embraces the continuing notion that good art should have some relationship to its often complex culture. Now an ever-increasing list of artists and support organizations are exploring both the role and meaning of science and technology and taking an increasingly active role in that development. How dare artists work cooperatively or sell out to concrete versus intuitive thinking? And worse yet, sacrifice independence to work collaboratively with others? See ART+COM (<http://www.artcom.de/en/home/>) or United Visual Artists (<http://www.uva.co.uk/>) for some palatable examples. With sweeping technological development, can we afford to leave science solely to scientists? Dada alerted us to the folly of war and new technological advancements cross ground and pose questions that make fiction and fantasy pale.

Many positively feel an affinity for and ability in the arts, usually because of a family member or friends who are active in the discipline. While anyone can declare themselves an artist, how would we react if the same were said about science, law, or medicine? The pluralism of Robert Young saying, "I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV," while giving medical advice has gotten badly out of hand.

Robert Irwin poses that we can't possibly be in a post-Modern world, as we have not yet fleshed out Modernism. The great sweep of Modernism offered some of the most distinctive innovations in the history of art and believed that art could and should be bold, recuperative, and prepared to save the world. I know some of the questions, but only the collective community can provide the answers that will serve us over the long term. The world often seems in dire need and Columbia could really benefit from the real power of art, but I have never believed in the National Endowment for the Arts slogan, 'A great nation deserves great art,' rather that you have to work for it every day. ♪

Chris Robinson is a visual artist who is interested in the role and meaning of science and technology in contemporary culture and is a senior and co-principal investigator on US National Science Foundation funded multi-disciplinary research teams investigating the societal implications and role of images in nanoscience/technology. Robinson teaches 3D and digital imaging in the Department of Art and is a member of the nanoCenter at the USC.

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DAY JOBS

HERE'S TO ALL
24
HOURS
IN AN
ARTIST'S
DAY

If Berlioz or Nijinsky were alive today and living in Columbia, South Carolina, would either of these artistic geniuses be able to buy their bread and beer based on the sale or performance of their art alone? Wishful thinking, but sadly – probably not. Like most painters and poets, musicians, sculptors, dancers, actors, and other individuals who make art their lives, a modern-day Michelangelo would likely have to wash dishes to buy his marble; Oscar Wilde might sell shoes during the day then write plays about his customers come dark.

Day jobs. It's rare to find the artist who doesn't have one.

The reality is that most South Carolina artists make multiple contributions to their communities in addition to their arts. They work, vote, pay taxes, raise families, and grumble about the government like the rest of us mere mortals.....



STAN GWYNN // Actor

DAY JOB // President, Palmetto Paper Products, Inc.

▶ In this regular feature, Day Jobs, Jasper Magazine – The Word on Columbia Arts salutes our local artists and the myriad ways they work to sustain our community at the same time that they create our culture.

Photo by Forrest Clonts

All for one, One Columbia for all

By Michael Miller



No matter how you slice it, April was an extraordinary month for the arts in Columbia. Close to 300 events took place, from exhibit openings in local galleries to recital and concerts at USC. From authors reading their work to more than 30 theater productions.

Indie Grits, the uber-chic arts and

film festival, presented 40 interdisciplinary events during an 11-day run. The 701 Center for Contemporary Art sponsored a self-guided tour of 69 artists' studios. Then there was the River Rocks music festival, concerts at the fountain in Five Points, cool gigs at Conundrum, New Brookland Tavern, the UU, and the 5 Points Pub. The Urban Tour had great art, music, and a cool MP3 improv experiment. Mayor Benjamin took folks on a bicycle tour of Columbia's downtown historic sites, and Artista Vista hosted its always-popular gallery crawl.

I'm dizzy from all the stuff that's been happening, and I haven't even put a dent in recalling the packed schedule. One of the most satisfying aspects of the April arts calendar to me was the unveiling of One Columbia for Arts and History, a city-sanctioned support group for the arts community. I'm on the board of One Columbia, and I've watched and participated for the past year as we've begun to tackle the tricky issue of arts advocacy in Columbia.

One Columbia for Arts and History evolved from Mayor Benjamin's 2010 transition team for the arts and historic preservation. Our report to the mayor outlined a fractured arts community in need of a unified voice. That, in essence, is One Columbia's goal.

Our mission is advise, amplify, and advocate for all artists and arts groups in Columbia. We want to promote and elevate the arts in our town. We want

to amplify and enhance the efforts of established arts and history organizations. And we want to foster creativity and demonstrate the value of the arts to the economic interests of the city. (You can read our full mission statement at our website, www.onecolumbiasc.com)

We are a nonprofit corporation with bylaws, officers, and a budget. We are funded by a combination of private and public dollars, and contrary to local conspiracy theory, One Columbia DOES NOT compete with other arts groups for Hospitality Tax money. We do not stage our own events, and we do not act as an "arts czar" who tells art groups or gallery owners what they can or cannot do.

Look, here's the thing. Almost every other major city in the country has an officially sanctioned office of cultural affairs within its city government. Most operate with a sizable staff and equally sizable budget. Large cities have cultural affairs divisions with huge staffs and multi-million dollar budgets.

Columbia has never had such an operation. So in my view, this is an historical step forward. My hometown is finally recognizing that a vibrant arts scene is essential for making the city prosper and grow.

We're all volunteers on the board of One Columbia for Arts and History. We are doing this because we are passionate about promoting the arts and preserving our city's history. We are doing this because we are proud of the expanding arts scene and we're determined to keep it moving forward. We've held forums with members from arts groups in a variety of disciplines, such as dance, theater, music, visual arts, and African-American culture. We will be holding more forums, and we invite participation.

By now, no one should be questioning the legitimacy of Columbia's arts scene. It's confident, growing stronger, and here to stay. We can stop comparing ourselves to Charleston or Greenville and start savoring everything we have to offer.

One Columbia is doing its part to spread the news about our arts community and we'd like to hear from you. Email us at info@onecolumbiasc.com. Check out our website, and if you're an artist or arts organization, submit your information to our database. We're all in this together. ♪

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