

JASPEER



THE
ARTS
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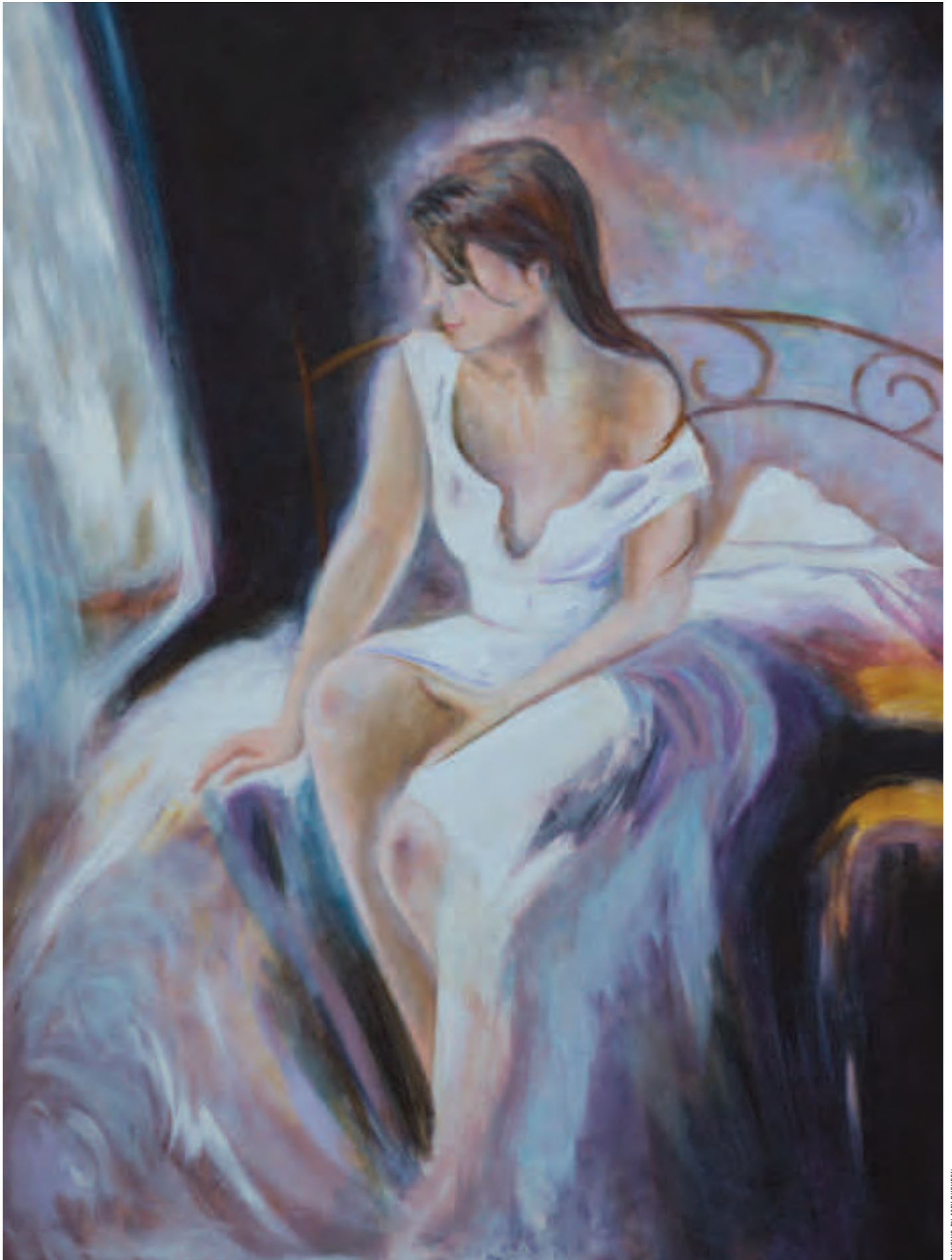
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YOUR
Main Street

YOUR
City

YOUR
Art

First Thursdays on Main
main street columbia.sc



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Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of *Jasper* as we begin our fourth year of providing you with the most in-depth and comprehensive coverage of Columbia's ever-expanding, always surprising arts community. This issue is jam-packed with articles on theatre, dance, music (12 Columbia-created record reviews plus a feature on Columbia opera), literature, visual arts, film, and even design, thanks to Rachel Haynie's piece on Columbia's multi-talented Tim McClendon.

You'll also find Lee Snelgrove's tutorial on One Columbia's new Cultural Passport campaign—a project in which *Jasper* is happy to participate. (We have our own wooden stamp and everything!)

As the magazine continues to grow, we've made a few changes, (and there are more on the way.) This issue we welcome our first ever contributing editor. Many of you may know Julia "Liz" Elliott from her work in Grey Egg, arguably one of the most eclectic bands to come out of Columbia. Liz is also the winner of a Pushcart Prize and the Rona Jaffe Writer's Award. Will Garland writes about her new short story collection, *The Wilds* (Tin House, 2014) in *Jasper Reads*. (Liz didn't actually work on this issue so, not to worry, there's no conflict of interest here.) Her next book, *The New and Improved Romie Futch* will be out in 2015, and she is also working on a novel about Hamadryas baboons which, if you know Liz, shouldn't surprise you at all. We look forward

to everyone getting to know Liz better as she periodically shares her work with us in *Jasper*.

As a couple, visual artist Kara Gunter and composer Tom Dempster represent the best in arts collaboration. Both have been actively writing for *Jasper* for a while now and really taking an interest in determining the content and direction of the magazine. It only made sense to ask Kara to take the role of assistant editor of visual arts and Tom that of assistant editor of music. We're particularly excited about the way that Tom's area of expertise, which is classical and new music, will complement that of Kyle Petersen, *Jasper's* founding music editor, whose encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary music is sometimes scary. We're also delighted to welcome Columbia writers Elizabeth "Betsy" Breen and Jonathan Butler to the staff.

Finally, we're going to do something in *Jasper* that we haven't done before – and we don't take it lightly. For many of us, in many ways, art is the core of our existence. Whether we are artists in our own right, patrons and lovers of the arts, or folks like me who had a mid-life revelation that the arts (and family) are the primary institutions that allow me to persevere in a world that hasn't evolved intellectually, culturally, or spiritually the way I was sure it would when I was a bright-eyed lass in the upstate putting up posters for SC gubernatorial candidate Pug Ravenel. For us, art is the energy-giving sun around which we plan our revolutions. The irony is that via the minimization of the arts by our government and the unenlightened

(too often the same folks) we have been conditioned to think of art as something unnecessary or frivolous. Something extra, like the icing on the great cake of life.

But those of us fortunate enough to have found open the window to the world of art know that art is more than the icing—it is life itself.

As we enter this election season, *Jasper* encourages you to keep in mind the role of the arts in your life and let it weigh heavily on the decisions you make when you pull that lever in November. To that end, we approached South Carolina's sitting governor and Democratic challenger and asked that they answer a series of questions on arts issues we thought would be of interest to our readers. Governor Haley did not respond to our request. Senator Sheheen responded enthusiastically and you can find his answers on page 48. While we are deeply disappointed with Sheheen's stance on marriage equality and a woman's right to make her own reproductive choices, we cannot argue with his profound and determined support of the arts in South Carolina. For this reason, *Jasper* endorses Senator Vincent Sheheen for governor of South Carolina and encourages our readers to give art the priority it deserves in our decision-making process and vote not just for Sheheen when we vote this November, but to vote for the core of who we are. Vote for art.

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 JAM ROOM MUSIC FESTIVAL

On Saturday, October 11th, the third annual Jam Room Music Festival will take place on Main Street, Columbia, a move that indicates that the organizers are serious about establishing themselves as a new tradition for the city's burgeoning arts scene

Since launching in 2012, JRMF has made the most of its modest budget by bringing a high-quality collection of local, regional, and national indie rock and alt-country talent to our city center for a free, all-day music festival which has won rave reviews for its well-curated lineup and community-centered focus that feels like a smart, hipper alternative to similar-minded events like the Rosewood Crawfish Festival or St. Pat's in 5 Points.

Building on the success of past headliners like The Hold Steady and Son Volt, this year the festival organizers tapped the endearing adrenaline and punk-fueled indie rockers Superchunk, a band that not only boasts some serious longevity, but also a sustained output of critically acclaimed recordings. Since releasing their self-titled debut in 1990, the band has put out ten full-lengths albums, each of which was critically well-received and absorbed by their cultish following. They've also been integral to the success of Merge Records, one of the most storied and successful indie labels in the country. And lest you think the band's best days are behind them, it should be noted that, since returning for a six year hiatus in 2010, they've released two LPs that have been counted among the band's best.

The rest of the lineup, while leaning a bit more heavily on regional over local talent for Jasper's pro-Columbia leanings, is quite stellar, boasting the legendary surf-rockabilly-country performers Southern Culture on



the Skids, the dance-oriented pop-rockers Leagues, and the widescreen indie pop of The Love Language on the top of the bill while undergirded by local favorites like Hopkins, South Carolina's excellent gospel group Rev. Mickens & the New Highway Travelers and E.T. Anderson, the newly-formed rock project from former Calculator and Octopus Jones guitarist Tyler Morris. Other notables on the bill include Brooklyn's raucous, occasionally sardonic alt-country act The Defibrulators and the gritty country-noir of former South Carolinian Adia Victoria, who is currently based in Nashville.

The festival kicks off at noon at the corner of Main and Hampton on October 11. For more information go to jamroommusicfestival.com. — KP

WORLD PREMIERES IN CHAPIN

Along with local premieres of hit shows direct from New York, and revivals of classic from years past, local theatres are increasingly committing to presenting new works by local authors. Trustus, Columbia Children's Theatre, High Voltage Theatre, On Stage Productions, WOW Productions, New Life Productions, La Tropa, and the NiA Company are among the many groups which have sponsored original productions in recent years, and this fall, the Chapin Theatre Company hosts not one but two world premieres of original plays.

Running for one more weekend, through Saturday September 20, at the Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College (7300 College Street in Irmo) is *Last Stop Chapin*, written by area playwright Todd Kemmerling. Directed by Jocelyn Sanders (who helmed last summer's hit *Mama Won't Fly*, as well as productions at Workshop The-

atre including *Crimes of the Heart* and *The Color Purple*), the play's cast features familiar favorites as well as newcomers, including Merritt Vann, Cathy Carter Scott, George Dinsmore, Tyler Kemmerling, Jared Kemmerling, Eliza Schneider, Logan Baldwin, Travis Wood, Jim DeFelice, and Shelby Beasley. Author Kemmerling was inspired by the rumble of freight trains and the plaintive sound of the horns as they roared through downtown Chapin, a familiar sound to anyone who has ever attended or worked on a show in the theatre group's former home on Columbia Avenue. While his younger son was in rehearsals for *Cheaper by the Dozen*, Kemmerling began to visualize the people who might populate a story of hopes, dreams and family secrets, as a young man wrestles with conflicting priorities of family expectations, a potential career in music, and a future with the girl he loves. By the summer of 2012, he had a basic structure; a staged reading was held in the spring of 2013, and the show had its official world premiere on September 5.

One new idea often leads to another, and an informal brainstorming session last year, according to longtime Chapin actor, director, and board member Glenn Farr, "evolved organically" into *'Tis the Season*, a collection of holiday-themed vignettes. Initially Farr, Kemmerling, Lou Clyde, and Tiffany Dinsmore were on board as writers, with "each willing to develop unique stories that cover the holidays, from Halloween through Thanksgiving and Christmas to New Year's Eve and Day," explains Farr. "Later, Scott Means joined the group with a clever segment of his own. The play was developed specifically to be performed at the Firehouse Theatre at the American Legion Post in Chapin, where it will premiere in November."

Audiences will quickly identify with hectic happenings in “five households in a cul-de-sac in Anywhere, USA, as residents young and old share joys and tribulations, both comic and poignant, that are part of the holidays for almost everyone,” Farr says. Familiar topics include the plight of a teenager relegated to the children’s table, a young couple’s ambitious plans to prepare Christmas dinner for both sides of the family, and what neglected wives may do to their husbands’ food while the men are ignoring them in favor of the big game on TV. “Tying all these stories together is the neighborhood letter carrier, a kindly man with a certain magical quality who knows a little bit about everyone. By play’s end, you’ll realize you’ve known a little something about him all along,” says Farr.

“*Tis the Season* will be directed by Jamie Carr Harrington, who directed Neil Simon’s *Rumors* for Chapin two years ago, as well as well-received productions of *Grease*, *Shrek The Musical* and *Miss Saigon* at Town Theatre.” I have always enjoyed working with Chapin,” Harrington says, “but what makes this show different, is that it is not only a new piece, but it is written by local artists from the Chapin community and surrounding areas.” She feels that “it has a lot of heart, humor, and several very poignant scenes that make this show relatable to everyone. I look forward to working with these talented people and bringing this story to life.” *Tis the Season* opens Friday, October 31 at the Firehouse Theatre at the American Legion Post (102 Lexington Avenue in Chapin) and runs through November 9. For more information, visit www.chapintheatre.org, or call (803) 240-8544. — AK

SHAMELESSLY HOT

We know Mark Plessinger as the owner of Frame of Mind, the upscale eyeglasses boutique on Main Street, and as one of the founders of First Thursdays on Main, a monthly gallery crawl that has helped spur Main Street out of its slumber, injecting excitement and enthusiasm back into the Columbia arts scene.

Plessinger’s new endeavor aims to bring a bit of carnival grit, burlesque naughtiness and bawdy humor to the



staid folk of Columbia. Aptly named, *Shamelessly Hot* (a play on Columbia’s Famosly Hot slogan), Plessinger says the series of variety shows will run into the spring, and bring in “...the best burlesque, sideshow, vaudeville, and Americana from around the US—and the world—to Columbia.”

Inspiration for *Shamelessly Hot* came out of Plessinger’s involvement with Natalie Brown’s *Alternacrique*, “I was exposed to a lot of different forms of alternative performance... I loved being a part of the performance scene in Columbia, and had some ideas of my own that I wanted to add to the local scene.” His goal is to enhance the local performance scene without stealing any of its thunder.

The first performance in July was a success, selling well over the modest goal Plessinger set of 100 tickets, and featured *Freaksheaux to Geaux*, and *Ford Theatre Reunion*. The second show, *Shamelessly Hot, Vol. 2: Things that go bump in the night*, is scheduled for October 11th and 12th at the Columbia Music Festival Association. Performers include dancers, contortionists, jugglers and musicians. Quickly becoming a Columbia regular, Seattle carnival barker, Armitage Shanks, will be performing along with Portland’s Russell Bruner; New Orleans’ Mistress Kali and Sam Aquatic; Raleigh’s Pearl Van Dammit, Meka La Crème, and Porcelain; and Forty Fingers and a Missing Tooth out of Asheville.

The October show should be a great way to usher in your Halloween. We’ll have to stay tuned for the sideshow shenanigans Plessinger and his team has in store for us in the future. This is just the “tip of the iceberg,” he says, and promises there will be more performers and more variety to come.

For more information about the series, search for the *Shamelessly Hot* fan page on Facebook. — KG



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A PRETTY FINE FELLOW

Pat Wall on Aaron Graves and His Two Benefit Compilations



PHOTO BY THOMAS HAMMOND

I CAN'T VALIDATE SOME OF THE CLAIMS Bombadil makes about Aaron Graves on "Pretty Fine Fellow," the track that closes *Tidings from Our Light Purple Gam*, the compilation Fork & Spoon Records released to benefit Graves and his family during his fight against a brain tumor. For instance, I've never seen him cut his grass for his elderly neighbor. Nor do I know that he's really conceded a game of checkers to his baby niece. And I'm pretty sure he doesn't have a lightsaber, though he might just be keeping that one a secret from me.

I can, though, attest to the song's main thesis: Aaron Graves is a pretty fine fellow.

I've been playing music with Aaron Graves, in some capacity, for the better part of about a decade, mostly in Jordan Blackmon's on-again-off-again band Pussy Wizard (nee Brave Horatius). A few years back, I kind of strong-armed my way into his band, Those Lavender Whales, around the time it released *Tomahawk of Praise*. In return, he sort of strong-armed his way into one of mine, let's go, coyote!

I've known Graves for much longer than that. We grew up on the same side of town, played music with some of the same people in a very small circle of teenaged musicians interested in playing music that wasn't made by Dave Matthews. I knew him first as a drummer, and a great one, for No Way Jose, an aerobic and energetic instrumental band. A few years later, in his parent's house in Northeast Columbia, he'd play me the first Those Lavender Whales songs, in his casual, self-effacing, hey-check-out-this-thing-that-I've-been-working-on kind of way. Even his first songs, featuring and only burned

for a handful of friends, display the themes prevalent in his music today: love, kindness, the confusion of growing up while trying to be a good person. And friendship. Always friendship.

"I'm so proud of my friends," sings Graves, and sounding like it, on "I'm So Proud (of My Friends)," the first track on *Light Purple Gam*. "I want to support them / I hope they support me, too." If the personnel on *Light Purple Gam* is any indication, Graves certainly has some friends in — in indie-rock circles, anyway — some esteemed places. Of Montreal shows up, putting a weird spin on The Kinks' "Did You See His Name?." Speedy Ortiz's Sadie Dupuis contributes a solo demo, "Zone," marked by her trademark snaking riffs and whip-smart lyrics. But the Fork & Spoon bands featured here turn in efforts that match those of their more notable counterparts. Mike Collins Jr.'s "Come On Out" is a wonderfully warbling love tune set to stomping roots-country, and songs by Kid Trails, Say Brother and Toro Y Moi are equally strong. Only Bombadil's "Pretty Fine Fellow," written specifically for the compilation, addresses Graves directly, but its earnestness and genuine affection are winning, delivered by the trio's shining three-part harmonies and quirky ornamentations.

There's another compilation floating out there, too; *Mostly I Just Want to See My Friends Grow* is the first of the two compilations to be released after Graves was diagnosed with an astrocytoma in March. It's less polished, and less star-studded: Most of the cuts were home-recorded by South

Carolina-based musicians; the biggest name is Manchester Orchestra's Andy Hull. Mostly, the compilation comprises cover versions of Those Lavender Whales songs, and most find their performers taking great liberties with the source material. Sometimes, the liberties work: The Post-Timey String Band's swampy version of "Treetreetree"; The Good Witch's stark, piano-led rendition of "Fight Song"; Pizza Burden's gloriously sloppy take on "My Hand Hurts." Some don't: Vaseline Dion and Barnwell slow down "A Loose Interpretation of What Augustine of Hippo May Have Once Said" and "Shake Your Palm-Palm Branches" to molasses-slow crawls that strip both songs of their kineticism; PAZZL's extended outro on "The Night Before Kite Day" is too drawn out. But even when the covers aren't at their best — or, in the case of avant-metal trio Sein Zum Tode's take on "A Brilliant Cover," when they are at their weirdest — Graves' songwriting stands tall, allowing the re-imagined versions to still overshadow the original cuts.

(In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that I appear on both compilations, playing guitar on Those Lavender Whales' "I'm So Proud (of My Friends)," and covering Whales' "Stop Throwing Things at Me, You Big Jerk!" as let's go, coyote!. I played my version of that song pretty straight. My guiding motto: What would Aaron do?)

It's tough to write about two benefit compilations for, not to mention your own personal history with, a dude so connected, so seemingly endlessly beloved by his local music scene — and beyond — without getting the feeling you're delivering a eulogy. (Graves, it should be noted, is very much alive, and in August returned home from a six-week radiation treatment at Duke University.) But both, certainly, are celebrations as much as they are fundraisers, commemorating a friend in a severe time of need. As compilations, both stand firmly on their own merits (and *Grow* reaffirms Graves as a clever, affecting songwriter), but their messages are louder: As much as he wants to support them, Graves' friends, clearly, want to hold him up, too, and that encouragement spreads far and wide. And the incredible outpouring of love and friendship — on both compilations — reinforces, to me, that I'm pretty lucky to know and play music with Aaron Graves.

There's little else to say, I guess. He's a pretty fine fellow.

Patrick Wall is emeritus music editor of Free Times. He now lives in Charlotte, where sometimes people pay him to write things.

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September

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9/20 The Dixie Cups
9/21 Jerry Sims & Kristi Hood
9/28 The Impressions

October

10/2 Branson on the Road
10/4 Oktoberfest, *Downtown Nby*
10/9 The Hoppers, *Gospel*
10/10 *An Evening with John Oates*
10/11 Johnny Rivers
10/14 Don Williams
10/18 Justin Hayward
10/19 MarchFourth Marching Band
10/22 Habana Sax
10/23 The Four Freshmen
10/28 Congressman James Clyburn
10/30 *Ann Landers:*
Lady with all the Answers
10/31 Randy Elmore

November

11/2 NOH Guild Oyster Roast
11/5 Creedence Clearwater Revival,
Tribute
11/7 Peabo Bryson
11/8 Gene Watson
11/9 The SteelDrivers
11/10 Mary Chapin Carpenter
11/12 Edwin McCain
11/13 Swingin' Medallions
11/14 Survivor
11/16 Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder
11/19 Jekyll and Hyde
11/21 Main Street Lights
11/22 Cowboy Movies *w/ the Saddle Pals*
11/23 Glenn Miller Orchestra

December

12/2 Jingle all the Way
12/4 Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver
12/5 Palmetto Mastersingers
12/6 Clint Black
12/7 Christmas With The King
12/9 Home for the Holidays
12/10 Viennese Christmas
12/11-12 The Nutcracker CBT
12/13 B. J. Thomas
12/14 Crystal Gayle - Christmas Show
12/15 The Messiah -
Trinity Ep. Cathedral
12/19 Emile Pandolfi, *Pianist*
12/20 208th Army Band
12/21 Wynonna and The Big Noise-
A Simpler Christmas
12/31 New Years Celebration -
A Roaring 20s Soirée

January

1/4 Dailey and Vincent
1/11 Travis Tritt
1/16 Bill Haley's Comets
1/23 60s Soul *w/ Clay Brown*
1/25 Artie Shaw Orchestra
1/28 Richard Smith
1/30 BUDDY -
The Buddy Holly Story

February

2/2 Arlo Guthrie
2/6 The Stylistics
2/7 Carmen - *Opera*
2/9 Hamlisch
"One Singular Sensation"
2/12 Wanda Neese, *Pianist*
2/14 Ronan Tynan, Irish Tenor
2/15 Atlanta Pops
2/20 The Time Jumpers
2/21 The Bellamy Brothers
2/22 The Lettermen
2/24 Women of Ireland
2/28 James Gregory, *Comedy*

March

3/6 The Gibson Brothers
3/7 The Hit Men
3/9 Giselle, *Russian Nat. Ballet*
3/10 Swan Lake, *Moscow City Ballet*
3/13 Irish Fling - *Downtown Nby*
3/14 Cowboy Movies *w/ the Saddle Pals*
3/15 7 Brides for 7 Brothers
3/16 Rhythm of the Dance
3/20 Joe Diffie
3/21 Karen Mills, *Comedy*
3/22 Elisabeth von Trapp
Church Basement Ladies,
The Last (Potluck) Supper
3/24 Shanghai Acrobats
3/27 The Oak Ridge Boys
3/28 The Heart Behind the Music-
Kim Carnes, John Ford Coley

April

4/9-11 "Shakespeare Festival",
4/15 The Official Blues Brothers
Revue
4/16 The Lennon Sisters
4/18 Pork in the Park
4/18 Lorrie Morgan
4/19 Thom Bresh
4/20 Opera Scenes *Nby Col.*
4/23 The Hot Sardines - *Jazz*
4/24 Jimmy Webb and Karla Bonoff
4/25 Tommy Mara and The Crests
4/26 Abbey Simon, *Pianist*

May

5/7 Atlanta Rhythm Section
5/8 SC Storytelling Network
5/17 Doug and Bunny Williams
5/23 Rick Alviti

June

6/19-209 To 5 - NCP
6/20 A Taste of Newberry,
Downtown Nby



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The Jasper Guild is a group of supporting artists and arts lovers who appreciate not only the vital Columbia, SC arts scene, but the magazine devoted to promoting it. Members of the Jasper Guild recognize the labor-of-love that is Jasper and work to do their parts to ensure that Jasper continues to publish a 100% LOCAL & artist-produced magazine. You're invited to join us in our mission to make Columbia, SC the Southeast arts capitol by becoming a member of the Jasper Guild. And the next time you open a copy of Jasper you'll be able to say,

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Local Record

REVIEWS



BARNWELL

THE FIRST GHOST

Tyler Gordon's arrangements are nothing like your typical church hymns or contemporary worship pieces, but their inspiration stems from the same spiritual root. Gordon's debut disc *The First Ghost* arrives as a hollowed out folk-rock with an alt-rock undercurrent. The collection was released under the stage name Barnwell (named after the downtown street) and features constant shifts between resolved and unresolved musical moments, creating a subtly unsettling resonance throughout the record.

The net effect is like a slowly unwinding tumultuous relationship largely full of pain and heartache, but also sprinkled with pangs of love and joy. The title track was inspired by a C.S. Lewis classic, *The Great Divorce*, and written from the viewpoint of a spirit stuck between heaven and hell. In sound, it shifts, like much of the album, from ho-hum folk into an expanse of fuzzy guitar work, echoing the ephemeral imbalance of the subject matter. The disc then escalates from a vague desire for faith to an intense prayer begging for conviction and trust. Each song leaves you raw and wrapped in this battle against the self.

Gordon got some help to flesh out these tunes in the form of drummer Seth Ely and multi-instrumentalist Ben Cantrell. Cantrell, in particular, has a big influence over the framework of several songs, contributing the evocative post-punk guitar line on the angsty "Cap Too" among other key moments. On the follow-up track "The Passenger," all three players are featured as the song transitions from soothing guitar strums that caress and entice before dilating into a convulsive climax of angry percussion and fraught guitars. "Clarity," however, stays fairly stable in volume and intensity with steadily melancholy, yet hopeful, strums. The result sounds something like a love song turned unwilling breakup ballad. "Weaker" closes with a winding, fractured return to faith. — KALYN OYER



TIGER HUDSON

BURN EP

A painful flicker of bad memories and feelings is ignited by indie electronic/R&B duo Tiger Hudson, a group that pairs autobiographical tales of woe with numbing trance music. While vocalist Thi Q. Lam heats things up with his passionate lyrics and aching vocals, synth whizz Mason Youngblood cools it all down with his icily layered production style.

The duo arrived in the scene back in spring with the debut of Columbia-based Scenario Records, which Hudson

co-founded with One Two Skidoo rapper Rupert Hudson. The project of Tiger Hudson stems from further back than the label, however, and the tales on *Burn* mine a host of earlier experiences. "Corrupted," the opening song, leaves Youngblood delivering a series of synthesizer wails that escalate in intensity as Lam works through his emotional response to losing his dream internship in Seattle. The track suffers and rages alongside the follow-up track "Burning Bridges," a song which works the intimate metaphor of its title and gains courage as it builds from a soft remembrance delivered by Lam to a fiery condemnation by guest rapper H3RO, with Lam's eerie falsetto echoes over the intoxicating melody throughout. The EP's third tune "Indiana" is a sweet ode to Lam's niece, whom he won't get to see grow up as he embarks to Nashville before her birth, and it's easily the most effecting of the bunch. — KALYN OYER



DADDY LION

PERPETUAL CALENDAR

Once the solo project of local singer/songwriter Jeremy Joseph, Daddy Lion has blossomed into a full-throttled rock band with the addition of bassist Randal Franklin, drummer Bart Ballington, and Chris Johnson on synthesizers. While the new players provide a welcoming sense of urgency and tension to this three-song EP, much of its defining aspects still come from Joseph himself. Balancing precariously between the jangle pop of 80s college rock acts like R.E.M. and the more tuneful latter-day punk of Hüsker Dü, there's

an occasionally-winsome tentativeness to the lo-fi, home-recorded songcraft here, with arrangements hinging on vaguely post-punk guitars and airy synths that matched with elliptical lyrics that are far more allusive than revelatory. Thankfully, when Joseph slides into his wordless falsetto and lets the band play, his natural gift for evocative melodies takes over and the band's truth strengths become apparent. — KP



GRITZ

BURN BLUE

The progressive hip-hop/R&B act consisting of Reggie Saxton and Miles Franco, Gritz has never been particularly interested in drawing in the lines of conventional rap music, as *Burn Blue* makes clear. This quick five-song EP features almost as much singing as rapping even as the sinewy staccato beats produced by Franco seem to insist that this material belongs to MCs, although Franco isn't afraid to add some swirling synths and EDM edge into his outré style. When they are showing off their flows, though, both partners prove to be adept rhyme spitters, particularly on "Make Em Understand" and "Retigo," where spacious beats allow for some room to showcase their dexterity. For all of the technical skill on display, though, the songs themselves tend to feel a bit perfunctory. That being said, there's an immediate appeal to the soulful electro-R&B of the title cut and the memorable hook of "Retigo" that just can't be denied, and it's hard to beat the consistency of this immensely talented duo. — KP



SHALLOW PALACE

THE GHOST THAT WAS

The long-awaited sophomore LP from these sprawling, eclectic alt-rockers, *The Ghost That Was* sees the group continuing to embrace their love for a broad swath of rock and roll, peppering these songs with Brit-rock grandeur, squalling blues-grunge spillage, and prog-rock flights of fancy. Across the length of the album, it's hard not to admire the skill required to create such wide-ranging and restless arrangements, particularly given how tight and concise the end results often end up being. While the mishmash of styles can occasionally be unsettling, there's a lovely sense of passion and perspiration that comes from songs that try this hard and are this exacting.

Of course some tunes and elements stand out more than others—the forceful lyricism of "Dynamite Blues Revisited," the jocular and jangly "Not Me," the peppy piano-led groove of "One of Us," and the gritty blues romp "No Lip," the last of which is delivered by drummer Michael Spawn (who, full disclosure, contributes to *Jasper*), are all eminently engaging and provide some relief from the group's tendency to toe the line between emotive and overwrought. All in all, a fine effort of powerful, highly engaging alternative rock that belies easy comparisons or classifications. — KP



CASIO MIO

DYING IN JAPAN

If you've ever seen him play live, it likely became clear the instant he hit the stage that Pedro Lopezdevictoria (LDV) is one hell of a frontman. He's a dashing, exuberant performer who borrows the ostentatious juke and jive of classic soul and jazz singers even as he injects the frenetic energy of modern-day indie folk-rockers into his own, singular sound. At times his vocals reach for an almost Louis Armstrong-level of playfulness, while other times he pulls from the garage-rock spunk of King Khan & the Shrines. Either way, it's hard to fault his uncanny ability to keep a listener's attention.

For this EP, LDV leads his loose-limbered and more-than-willing rhythm section of drummer Lee Garrett (Dead Surf) and bassist Moses Andrews III through four rollicking and rambling original tunes that riff on calypso and surf-rock, slowing only for his fifth and final number, a dirge-like moment of plaintiveness entitled "Sickening Sprawl." While it's tough to fault a collection of rough-hewn songs that have this kind of energy and appeal, it does seem that the first couple of tunes—"O' Hungry Ghost" and "Lousy"—slightly overstay their welcome, something that becomes clear by the increasing immediacy of the EP's latter half.

And while LDV might still have some room to grow as a songwriter, he and his band are clearly going to be difficult to take your eyes off of. — KP



SALVO

no more funerals

In an exciting cross-pollination of experimental noise and emo-rap comes the new project of Cecil Decker, a multimedia artist who can also be seen running sound for venues around town. Decker clearly falls in the lineage of adventurous dual producer/MCs like El-P, although his relentlessly self-aware and self-reflective songs and unusual production choices make him distinct from even those types of musicians. There are, for sure, definitive beats here and an awareness of traditional hip-hop, but Decker doesn't punch them up in the mix in the norm, but instead allows him to simmer along with the other elements of his rough, but not overly aggressive, sonic collages.

While Chris Johnson and Moses Andrews III both receive extensive music credits as full-flung members of salvo, the designed-for-headphones approach and Decker's lyrical emphasis on internal monologue makes it difficult but to imagine as anything more than a painfully honest, yet smart, take on self-awareness that inverses the typical relationship of the MC with their audience. — KP



ADAM CORBETT

A & B ARE SO FAR APART

As the bassist and occasional vocalist for local favorites the Restoration, Adam Corbett has provided frontman Daniel Machado with a necessary foil on both stage and record, sort of the John Cale to Machado's Lou Reed, often sidelined but clearly indispensable and brimming with talent. But just in case there were any doubts, we've got *A & B Are So Far Apart*, Corbett's five-song debut as a solo artist and a testament to his abilities as a songwriter and multi-instrumentalist.

The EP opens with "I Do," a relentlessly upbeat declaration of affection and commitment bolstered by an organ line that conjures the youthful purity of the ice cream man's siren. Things mellow out a bit with "Strange Things," a lackadaisical slice of dream-pop bordering on the psychedelic. Featuring vocal effects alternating between cartoonish auto-tune and almost unintelligible fuzz, "Outside" is the EP's oddball centerpiece; it's *A & B's* robotic pulse. "Glow Worm" is an urgent, jagged little pill of a song that exudes the low-key paranoia of early Modest Mouse both in its tense tonal structure and its lyrics ("The cage is for your protection/ And all your fingers look like worms to him.") Corbett returns to his earlier winsomeness with the closer "Anywhere." Not unlike "I Do," "Anywhere" is unambiguous in its message of love for Corbett's special lady (he concedes, "I'm in heaven with her anywhere/ And I just could not care who knows.") The song's instrumentation is equally humble in its lack of unnecessary bells and whistles, built around vague hints of acoustic blues and just a finger's pinch of ivory keys.

Clocking in at around fifteen minutes, *A & B* is long enough to adequately herald Adam Corbett's arrival as a solo artist

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worth a damn and short enough to whet a listener's appetite; it leaves one wanting just a few more minutes of the pillowy pop cubby holes he digs with apparent ease and obvious care. Anyone familiar with the Restoration knows that he proved himself as a songwriter long before this EP came along, but he drills home his credentials without belaboring the point. Corbett is an adroit songsmith, and while he may not be a room-silencing singer, he knows his strengths and sticks to them. His vocal gifts don't lie in range or intensity; instead, they play to a song's mood like a couple of well-chosen chords or a keyboard run that crouches patiently beneath the melodic surface. His voice isn't the dominant instrument, but it's an instrument nonetheless and he utilizes it with temperance and grace. Even in *A & B's* seemingly careless moments, like when "Outside" gets so pinched and static you feel you've lost your place, there's still the sense that the madness has meaning that the skin might crawl but it won't ever crawl away. I'm willing to bet that these five songs represent barely a sample of Corbett's solo material, and it's just a matter of time before he fills in the alphabetical gaps only hinted at herein.

— MICHAEL SPAWN



WILLIAM STARR BUSBEE

COLLEGE ROCK II

College Rock II is a journey into the warped minds and dreams of William Starr Busbee and Evan Simmons and it couldn't be more of a mesmerizing adventure. Formerly part of the anti-folk band The Choir Quit, Busbee explores new territory on his debut album under this title, lifting the lo-fi veil to let his voice be heard. Busbee's distinctive vocals show a power previously hidden, cartoonish at times, he displays a new confidence apparently saved for his most creative material to date. As Busbee yells "Come on!" in the

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Springsteen-esque title track we can't help but think of the guttural growl of Future Islands frontman Sam Herring, especially his now-famous Letterman performance that brought in thousands of new fans and simultaneously scared some people away. But isn't that what taking chances in music often does? At other times Busbee's glam-pop shares the best qualities of New Pornographers contributor Dan Bejar and his band Destroyer with witty lyrics, a mix of programmed and live drums, and overdriven lead guitar lines that fill in the cracks.

It seems important here to emphasize the profound impact that Simmons, who Busbee refers to as the "dean of college rock," made on these sessions. In 2012 a nine song live album titled *Next to the Boat* made its way to Bandcamp, featuring many of the songs on *College Rock II*, although with a raw, stripped down performance. The progression those songs made from those earlier takes to now makes them hardly recognizable, save for the straight-forward rendition of "Clio" here. Simmons - who also plays in local acts Magnetic Flowers, People Person, and Happiness Bomb - molds these acoustic songs in every which way, forging everything from hyper electro rockers to the slow-grooving romance of the album's first single "Forever." Not every song is groundbreaking, but when the songs are great they're really on point. *College Rock II* constantly reveals flashes of brilliance masked between campy tones and styles. It's these artful tongue-in-cheek moments throughout the album that make it such an enjoyable listen.

Even though shows have been sparse, there is hype for the William Starr Busbee album as he's garnered somewhat of a cult following over the years. With support from Brooklyn based tape label Orchid Tapes and Columbia's own Fork and Spoon it seems like

William Starr Busbee will finally get the recognition he deserves. — DAVID STRINGER



DEAR BLANCA

POBRECITO

"Everyone wants a voice in this town/I want you to know that I hear you" offers Dear Blanca frontman Dylan Dickerson with his signature grizzled vibrato in the opening track of the band's new album *Pobrecito*. The track titled "Boulders" is an offering to a local musician, one that seems to have wasted their talent, turning into a ghost in their own hometown. Dickerson's taken a different path since moving to Columbia, SC to attend the University of South Carolina five years ago. Initially performing as a one man band, playing drums, harmonica, guitar and singing at shows, he recruited long-time friend and drummer Marc Coty for the band's debut record *Talker*. That album put Dear Blanca on the map as one of the state's finest indie rock bands, but one without a steady live lineup.



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The additions of percussionist and vocalist Dayne Lee and bassist Cameron Powell solidified a lineup that would bring out the best in Dickerson's songs on *Pobrecito*.

The word "pobrecito" is a Spanish slang term meaning "poor little thing," an expression Dickerson heard many times growing up from his grandmother Blanca, the namesake of the band. This album picks up where the first album left off, tightening the songs and reigning in some of the expansiveness with sure-eyed maturation. Written with the full band, the album flows naturally, with kinetic bass lines that wind themselves around guitar parts and through drum fills and splashing cymbals. Most songs stay in the mid-tempo range, changing pace within the songs often to make for an active listen. "On the Dime" is one of the album's quick burners, paying homage to classic country with lyrics like "darlin' you were always on my mind" followed by the twang of a steel guitar played by Those Lavender Whales guitarist Patrick Wall. Female vocals follow as Dayne Lee sings her response to Dickerson's call. It's a dynamic that works, and one that plays so well live that Dickerson kept the scratch vocal take where he hollers "come on Dayne, sing it for me!" leading her into the chorus.

With *Talker* Dear Blanca went to Charlotte to record with well-respected music scene veteran Bo White who transformed the songs by adding horn arrangements and playing bass on the album. This time around, White came to Columbia to record the album in bass player Cameron Powell's living room. His contributions to this album are fewer, but equally as important as he added keyboard parts that warble comfortably in the white spaces of four tracks on the album. Bo White's done a masterful job producing Dear Blanca, gently helping them find their sound on each album as the young band lets the gears fall in place. After releasing a solid debut, the group has proven their ability with this stronger and more-cohesive sophomore release. — DAVID STRINGER



JMICHAEL PEEPLES

ENIGMA

Smooth jazz just got a little bumpier. Jmichael Peeples's most recent offering, *Enigma*, is a ten-track, 46-minute tapestry featuring Peeples wielding the guitar confidently and easily. Peeples easily moves through his original compositions, songs which quietly touch on various styles without being either restless or complacent. With threads of Ramsey Lewis, MMW, and Herbie Hancock proliferating this album, and even a tiny hint of some Soul Rebels Brass Band on "Dear Robert Newton," Peeples's influences are clear, though this doesn't prevent him from mixing things up and perhaps engaging in some (safe) musical experimentation.

The songs "Dear Robert Newton" and "Soul Baptism," back to back on the album, offer up some straight-up funk licks with a peppering of sax and trombone spiciness. Peeples plays with a gentle, almost-muted distortion, reminiscent of Al Dimeola with a little bit Wes Montgomery's soul, and, while I found myself thirsting for a little more tonal variety in his sound, Peeples carries it well throughout the album, making it work on the Latin-inspired "Melodia Suave," a tune rooted as much in Cuba as it is in Main Street Columbia. The eponymous cut "Enigma" is a more ambient affair, winking at Return to Forever or Spyro Gyra as it unfolds.

The album is a bit inscrutable considering its pacing – after some strong contrasting materials in the front half of the album, it tends to lag as it draws past the fifth track. Each individual piece has its merit, but in combination, time tends to stretch out a bit. A succession of a lot of similar textures, progressions, and timbres take away from each tune's individuality. There is also the usage of voices in ways that may seem to some listeners as out of place, particularly on the track "Cup of Coffee." Other times, the voices are welcome. Perhaps the most surprising vocal

turn on the album is "Wonderful You Are" – at first blush, a highly-polished R&B track, though on deeper inspection demonstrates a wonderful synthesis Peeples gets really right: shifting time signatures, a Latin pulse, a neo-soul feel, and some grooving percussion all complement and blend with each other quite nicely.

Likely the best cut on the album is the last – "Late for My Gig" – which will make more seasoned listeners happy. The most rhythmically engaging tune on the record – and the most Scofield-ish – Peeples lets his guard down and engages with some dissonance and his wah-wah pedal to great effect. The beat is clever, the sense of dialogue and interplay joyful and playful, and the textures the most transparent. Unfortunately, the tune simply doesn't last long enough, fading out just after the three minute mark. Peeples puts some points of excitement into an album that ostensibly begins as a lower-key and lighter, down-tempo affair, though the biggest enigma may be why Peeples didn't want to get too funky or too aggressive—the bigger, bolder funk and soul is where Peeples shines and are the moments where this enigmatic album are the least mysterious. — TD



TIMSHEL

SHOULDERING THE RUBBLE

Timshel waited four years before releasing its full-length debut *Shouldering the Rubble* last April, and while that may have frustrated the band's local fan base, it was ultimately a smart decision. Too many independent debuts are produced hastily, often simply to fill space on the merch table and, as a result, serve only as inadvertent documents of the period in which a young band is finding itself, discovering its strengths and weaknesses, mistaking itself for its heroes, floundering amid the hazy purgatory that exists between how the band views itself and how its audience is actually consuming the

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work. By allowing itself a long and prudent gestation, Timshel avoided this pitfall altogether. *Shouldering the Rubble* reveals five confident musicians with a shared focus, doing exactly what their album's title suggests – they have sifted through four years' worth of writing, thrown out the trash, scrapped the misfires, and constructed an LP that represents only their best. And at its best, Timshel is a powerhouse band that doesn't take itself lightly and expects the same of you.

Thanks to classic rock radio, it's easy to forget how much of Led Zeppelin's catalog consists of emotive, sparsely-instrumented folk tunes--not ballads exactly, but quiet little breathers tucked away among the monstrous blues-rock for which the band is best known. Timshel, likewise, is a rock band from A to Z, but its gift for songcraft is never more apparent than on the album's lighter, more sober moments ("Honey Man," "Lonely Light," "How Wrong.") And it isn't that these songs pack less of a punch than their sturdier, harder-rocking counterparts. Much the opposite, really. With Timshel, the power is in the vocals, and singer/guitarist Alderman Douglas has a voice that melds the range and

emotional reservoir of Robert Plant with the warble and chameleon-ish adaptability of Axl Rose, bringing the same commitment, authenticity, and power to every track, be it a sugar-coated rocker ("On My Own"), a full-tilt blues number ("Favor"), or a plaintive lament ("Beneath the Willow"), each one a testament to the fact that, when guided by a formidable voice, a good song is just that, regardless of genre.

But as effective as Douglas's throat might be, it isn't the band's only asset. Drummer Daniel Wilson, while no John Bonham (but who is, really?), understands a fundamental principle that seems to be lost on more than a handful of modern rock drummers: It isn't enough to be good, to intuit the most effective moment in which to place your hottest fill. Great drummers have the wisdom and humility to know when *not* to play; and Wilson, technically gifted as he may be, has both in spades. Like any responsible member of an ensemble, he allows his absence to illuminate the skills of his fellows. It's no coincidence that lead guitarist Michael Schaming's best moments occur in those vacant aural alleyways where Wilson is holding back

the most. Their mutual respect is evident throughout the record, because for every one of Wilson's expert beats or showy rolls, Schaming is waiting in the wings to unleash a solo or riff upon strings that might well have been soaked in Carolina honey and Kentucky bourbon, whose hedonism can not only be heard but felt in the purest, basest, and best way possible.

Without fear of hyperbole, it's fair to say that Timshel is sitting on the closest equivalent to a Led Zeppelin record Columbia has ever produced.

But flawlessness isn't any fun, and *Shouldering the Rubble's* biggest and most obvious problem is its length. Even for quality records, it's easy to overstay one's welcome and a one-hour running time is a lot to ask of a listener, especially for a debut. But this is a minor quibble. Timshel has made a really good record, something it can be proud of. While the album may not justify its own length, it more than makes up for the amount of time Timshel fans spent waiting for it, and if it takes another four years for album no. 2 to appear, so be it. No one said it would be short work to shoulder the rubble.

— MICHAEL SPAWN



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TOMMY FAIRCLOTH

AND THE RETURN OF CRINOLINE HEAD

IN FEBRUARY OF 2013 Columbia, SC independent filmmaker Tommy Faircloth received a call from a friend in Baltimore. The friend was calling to ask if he could send a VHS copy of Faircloth's 1998 horror film *Generation Ax* for Faircloth to autograph. It was a strange request 14 years after the release of the film. It had also been 14 years since Faircloth had made a feature film. Faircloth asked the friend where he found the VHS copy of the film. "On EBay" the friend responded. "How much did you pay?" Faircloth asked. "125 dollars" his friend answered. Faircloth was shocked. Faircloth searched online for VHS copies of his film and saw they were fetching between 85 and 200 dollars. "I was out of the loop with the whole VHS collectors thing," Faircloth says, "I thought, 'this can't be right.'"

Faircloth began making short films in high school and continued with his interest in filmmaking at the University of South Carolina's Media Arts program as well as trying his hand at acting and modeling. In 1995, during summer break, he signed up for an independent study and decided to produce a feature film. "I had access to all of the school's (film) equipment. All I had to pay for was the film and processing," Faircloth says. The result was *Crinoline Head*, a John Waters meets Friday the 13th horror film/dark comedy/parody that follows a group of college kids as they travel to a lake house for a week of partying. The indie film starred local actors and students from the University of South Carolina's Theater Department. The film was heavy with Faircloth's early influences, such as Waters, and his own unique sense of humor. After *Crinoline Head* was completed, Faircloth signed a distribution deal for the film and moved forward with plans to produce his second feature film *Generation Ax*.

As he was producing *Generation Ax*, Fair-

cloth continued to promote *Crinoline Head*. Frustration grew as he struggled to work with the distributor. "He just didn't do anything with it. He was new, I was stupid," Faircloth recalls. Once he began production on *Generation Ax* Faircloth's contract with his distributor had expired and he decided to promote *Crinoline Head* himself. His first step was to place ads in the national horror fanzine *Fangoria*. It was a down and dirty do-it-yourself promotional campaign, with Faircloth absorbing all the costs.

His poor experience with a distributor was a helpful lesson. As *Generation Ax* was nearing completion, the growing popularity of *Crinoline Head* caused Faircloth to be contacted by more reputable distributors. These European distributors paid Faircloth advances for the rights to distribute *Generation Ax* overseas. These monetary advances offset the cost of the film. Having recouped the cost of producing *Ax* Faircloth decided to handle the distribution of the film in the United States himself. The promotion of the film gained a huge boost when prominent B-Movie reviewer Joe Bob Briggs gave the film four stars, calling it "HEATHERS meets SCREAM meets THE TEXAS CHEERLEADER MOM meets BONNIE AND CLYDE." Faircloth planned on moving forward with production on his third feature film. "I was exhausted. You have to be a filmmaker and a distributor. It was a ton of money. It takes years," Faircloth says. Ultimately, he stopped production and decided to take a break from filmmaking.

At the time, Faircloth was a member of The American Coaster Enthusiasts, a national organization comprised of roller coaster and theme park fans. At times, members of the group would be notified that a video crew would be shooting at a theme park near them and if members would be interested in being part of the production. After participating and viewing a few of these theme park docu-

mentaries Faircloth decided that he could produce better work of the parks and their rides himself. He began contacting different theme parks. Many agreed to let him videotape and produced a video that featured multiple parks and their attractions. The project took off. "They (the fans) went psycho about it. I began making more money selling roller coaster videos than I did from my films," Faircloth states. He began making and selling one to two of these compilations a year. After producing eight roller coaster compilations he shifted his attention to another interest. "I'm a huge freak about abandoned places. I absolutely love Heritage USA. I would sneak into that place at all hours and document the abandoned area," Faircloth says. He edited that footage together with footage of Heritage USA at the height of its popularity and completed his first abandoned places documentary. "I actually got to meet Tammy Faye Baker before she died. She signed a copy of that film for me," he recalls. He continued producing more abandoned theme park work on places such as Joy Land in Wichita, Kansas and Ghost Town U.S.A.

As years passed, Faircloth's friend, and eventual producing partner Robert Zobel, kept encouraging him to start making movies again. "I would tell him that he had no idea how much work went into making a film," Faircloth says. But in 2012, he decided to bite the bullet and purchase a DSLR camera and produce a short film. "I had no idea about DSLR's. When we were in school, we were very anti-video," he says. He bought the camera and editing software and began teaching himself how to use it, then wrote and produced a short horror film titled *The Cabin*, solely to test the new technology.

Next up, Actor Jason Vail reached out to Faircloth to say he would be interested in working with him. "I knew his work. I offered him the role without auditioning him,"



PHOTO BY FORREST CLOVINS

“I remember thinking during filming,
“The tampon scene might be
too much.””

Faircloth says. He also brought friend Robert Zobel into the production mix. “[For *The Cabin*] it was me and Robert and the two actors. That was it.” The film was produced in 2013 at Faircloth and Zobel’s cabin in Gatlinburg. Once completed, *The Cabin* received high praise at horror festivals around the country, most notably winning Best Short at the San Antonio Horrific Film Festival.

Faircloth’s next plan was to produce the film he had delayed thirteen years before. “Richard Abbot, who starred in the original *Crinoline Head* suggested I make *Crinoline Head 2*. There are some hardcore fans for that film so it made more sense.” This time, he set out to make a more traditional horror film, but still keep his sense of humor intact. “It’s hard for me to be completely serious. I remember thinking during filming ‘The tampon scene might be too much.’”

But it is Faircloth’s campy, over the top gross-out, and death scenes that have drawn his films the most attention. For the film to stand out Faircloth knew he had to have a recognizable face in the cast. For this, Faircloth contacted B-movie scream queen Debbie Rochan. Rochan has starred in hundreds of B-movies over the past twenty years and is a B-movie icon. “I met Debbie on my friend Jeff Miller’s film *Head Cheerleader*, *Dead Cheerleader* years ago. We kept in touch,” Faircloth says. Faircloth worried that it was the kind of role that Rochan didn’t play. After reading the script Rochan responded that it was *exactly* her kind of role. The film was shot over nine days in the spring of 2014 primarily in Columbia and Charleston. Faircloth and Zobel even decided to expand the crew for this production, adding one person as a set production assistant. All other di-

recting and camera duties fell on Faircloth and Zobel recorded production audio. Both men produced the film together. *Dorchester’s Revenge: The Return of Crinoline Head* premiered in Charleston in August of 2014.

Faircloth has no intention of stopping. Major advancements in technology have made production and promotion an easier task for him. “Now you can finish your film and screen it online. It’s available to the world instantly,” he says. At long last, his next film is slated to be the supernatural feature that he planned 14 years ago. For someone who has a history of production that stretches to the 16mm film days of the mid 1990s—gaining many scars from lessons learned along the way—Faircloth has used these road scars to his advantage to become the perfect definition of the modern do-it-yourself independent filmmaker. — WADE SELLERS

ONE COLUMBIA LAUNCHES CULTURAL PASSPORT



HOW MANY STAMPS DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR PASSPORT? I'm guessing if you're like me, it's not as many as you'd like. But, starting now, you won't need to go as far to get the same thrill that comes with earning a stamp that represents new experiences.

One Columbia for Arts and History is launching its Cultural Passport program starting *now*. This Passport is intended to generate new audiences for artistic and cultural activities in Columbia, SC and to encourage residents to attend events in many different artistic genres.

Based on the principle that passports provide access to new experiences, One Columbia has developed cultural passports for Columbians to utilize when attending events and venues in our city. Both as tangible books and a corresponding mobile app available for iPhone, passport holders collect stamps by attending events and visiting venues (galleries, museums, etc.).

There are over 80 venues and organizations throughout Columbia that will have unique stamps to provide to passport holders. — LEE SNELGROVE



HOW TO

SURELY YOUR FIRST QUESTION MUST BE, “HOW DO I GET MY HANDS ON ONE OF THOSE SWEET PASSPORTS?”

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1

Get a book or download the iPhone application.

Where do I get this book, you ask? We'll be passing them out at a few events including Soda City Market through the month of September and the Rosewood Arts Festival on September 20. You can also stop by the One Columbia office at 1219 Taylor Street weekdays between 2 -5 pm. And you can download the app by visiting onecolumbiasc.com/page/app.

2

Next, find an event you want to go to by visiting onecolumbiasc.com or using the handy list of events in the Cultural Passport app.

3

Then, go to the event and visit the box office or information table. They'll stamp your passport with the stamp for the host organization in the appropriate genre. Or, find the poster with the Cultural Passport icon on it and use the handy app to check in all by yourself.

Be sure to enjoy the event and have a good time.

4

Collect stamps in multiple categories to earn rewards for your “travels.” Reward levels start at five stamps across at least two categories and go up incrementally from there. Top level rewards include t-shirts and passes to artistic events. And, there will be a VIP event for those go-getters who collect the most.

CAREER

TRANSITIONS

ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 22ND as the curtain went down on the final show of the Columbia City Ballet's season closer *Alice in Wonderland*, the company came together, showering principle dancer Katie Smoak with admiration and support. Tears and smiles were in equal abundance as Smoak, who grew up in the studio and on the stage with CCB, left the Koger Center for the last time. Now comes the hard part for Smoak: answering the question, "what happens next?" At age 32, Smoak joins a long line of ballet dancers who face a significant and often difficult transition to life after dance. Though she acknowledges that she would probably have been able to dance for years longer, she chose to stop while she was ahead and still had the time and energy to embark on a new adventure. Smoak, who says her successful career here "was almost a shock," intends to lend the perseverance that became a signature for the dancer during her career, to the next chapter. Unsure of her future, but excited to explore her options, Smoak is one of a growing number of professional dancers who have been able to both sustain a career in professional dance and a college education, a feat that at one time was not considered a practicality or even a possibility.

Like many in her cohort, Columbia's first ballerina Mariclare Miranda didn't go to college, but she had it all planned out. When Miranda left Ann Brodie's ballet company and founded the Columbia Conservatory of Dance with William Starrett in 1988, she was laying the groundwork for the rest of her working life. Miranda began dancing at a professional level while still in high school and knew she wouldn't have a college degree to assist in her eventual career transition, so she made her own safety net. After making the agonizing decision to retire from her position as the Prima Ballerina of the Columbia City Ballet at the age of 42, Miranda, who had balanced being co-owner and general manager of the ballet school and the face of the



KYRA STRASBERG AT YOGA MASALA - PHOTO BY FORREST CLONTS

Columbia City Ballet for the entirety of her career, knew exactly what she would do. This assurance allowed Columbia's star to enjoy her career and focus on her passion, rather than worry about what came next, and she says she's grateful for that.

Having forged her career from iron will and determination, Miranda has plenty of insight to share with the students in the school, and now has even more time to focus on delivering those messages. Nothing came easy for Miranda, but she says the challenges she faced as a dancer have strengthened her character in other areas of her life. Though she has no regrets, she says she has learned through teaching and wishes she had known "then" what she does now. Having trained and inspired many of the young dancers in the city today, her favorite and most stressful time is now sitting on the side of the stage during her students' recitals. Clapping and cheering from a distance, she loves finally getting to be a "spectator." Miranda says, "I want people to feel like they can grow up here and have a career." Many would say she has demonstrated that a thousand times over.

A former student of Miranda's, Christie Richardson retired from her professional ballet career at the young age of 23 and refers to it as "another lifetime." Unlike some, Richardson knew right away in which direction she wanted to take her next step. She funneled the skills she had learned through dance into her love for interior design and made a place for herself with a local design firm while working on her college education. After two years, Richardson transferred to

Winthrop University where she graduated with a degree in Interior Design. Currently a senior designer with CJMW Architecture, Richardson branched out two years ago to start The Southern Gourmet, a baking company offering custom sweets and treats. Between these two endeavors she feels her artistic soul is being fed.

Richardson credits the drive, perseverance and discipline she developed as a dancer, as well as the extraordinary amount of confidence demanded in that field with the successes she has had in her design career. So while her so-called first life didn't directly factor into the path she chose, Richardson feels the two are irrefutably intertwined. Richardson is now the mother of two and acknowledges that her interest in having a family was a major factor in her decision to move on from ballet. Like many dancers, Richardson viewed the two to be mutually exclusive.

Kyra Strasberg found herself in a similar situation. Strasberg retired from a long career with the Boston Ballet at age 35, as long as ten years before her Russian coaches thought she should. Retiring at peak health and at the top of her game, however, Strasberg was able to plan for what came next. A Principle Dancer in the prestigious company, the Columbia native felt she had fulfilled her aspirations in her dance career and decided it was time to see what "life between four and eleven" looked like. Now the mother of two girls, she saw family in her future and wanted to be "present" in a way her time-consuming devotion to dance would never have allowed. Strasberg had the foresight to make plans for

her transition to life after dance. A certification in Pilates led to managing and ultimately revamping the Pilates program at Sports Club LA Boston.

After the birth of her first daughter in 2004, Strasberg began teaching from home. Though her high intensity career left no time for a college degree, Strasberg learned invaluable lessons about the human body and the synchronicity of physical and psychological health that would assist her path in life. Now the owner and operator of Columbia Yoga studio, Yoga Masala, Strasberg recalls that practicing yoga during her dance career gave her a sense of safety in being herself. For a dancer who is used to playing a role, it can be hard to find that comfort. Strasberg says she realized the “value of yoga” for every day in the way it can “remove labels” and give practitioners and students “permission to be themselves.” She says her career as a dancer informs her yoga practice by reminding her that a physical journey can lead to mental and emotional discoveries.

Former soloist with the New York City Ballet, Stacey Calvert also felt torn between dancing and being a mom. She felt jealous of

her nanny who got to spend time with her daughter while she was working. It was impossible to devote the amount of energy and time she needed to her dancing and to her daughter, so at 38 she chose her daughter and for a while she was happy. Without a formal education and no idea what to do next, Calvert had a hard time getting excited about anything the way she was excited about dance. “Dancing is easy,” she says. Despite the physical and emotional hardships, you always know what you’re doing and what should happen next. There is a natural progression to a class and to a piece of choreography that can be hard to find in life.

Eventually finding herself back in Columbia, South Carolina, Calvert accepted an invitation from Susan Anderson to teach at the University of South Carolina Summer Dance Conservatory. She felt like herself again and she was happy. The new mom never thought she would teach but says now on the topic, “It hunted me down.” Life began to progress naturally and Calvert became a staple in the university’s dance program. She was instrumental in creating a unique curriculum that is simultaneously performance and aca-

demic based by staging Balanchine choreography, taking a hands-on approach to dance education, and constantly evolving concepts and teaching techniques. Calvert herself is continually evolving and doesn’t see an end point in the near future.

Professional dancers wear the battle wounds of their work on more than their feet. Once a dancer, always a dancer, and like an addiction you can’t shake it. For a career that is often necessarily short, being a ballet dancer doesn’t clearly lend a hand in the transition to life after. The skills and character traits gained in the process balance themselves against the monopoly of time and energy that challenges traditional understandings of family life, motherhood, and education. As dancers gain a better understanding of their bodies and how to care for them, careers are lasting longer and opportunities for education are becoming more abundant. While the art form evolves, and the world of dance changes with it, today’s dancer can rest assured that finding her way in the natural progression, though still difficult, is becoming easier all the time.

— BONNIE BOTTER-JOLLEY

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I Only Left for
Tea
Poems

by
Al Black





CURTAIN UP

W/ AUGUST KRICKEL

After several years of almost every show in town seeming to run simultaneously, local theatres have managed to stagger their opening dates this fall. There's some cutting-edge comedy and drama straight from New York, as well as some classic Broadway favorites. There's even a little bit of country and a little bit of rock-and-roll.

Curtain Up!

Christopher Durang's quirky comedies have always proven a good fit for **Trustus Theatre**; his latest work, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, won the Tony for Best Play in 2013, and falls somewhere between spoof of and homage to the works of Chekhov, retold with a baby boomer twist. Jim O'Connor directs Dewey-Scott Wiley, Ellen Rodillo-Fowler, Vicky Saye Henderson, Glenn Rawls, and Stephanie Walden in this comic tale of sibling conflict and mid-life malaise, running September 12 - 27 on the Thigpen Main Stage. O'Connor then directs Sharr White's *The Other Place* in the Richard and Debbie Cohn Side Door Theatre at Trustus. Erica Tobolski, Brian Bender, and Jennifer Moody Sanchez take us on a dizzying journey inside the mind of a brilliant scientist who may or may not have developed a new drug for treating dementia, or may be in its early stages herself. Run dates are October 17 - November 1; for information, call 803-254-9732, or visit www.trustus.org.

Workshop Theatre is alive and well, flourishing and performing at the 701 Whaley Market Place (i.e. the one-story structure adjacent to the main event hall, facing Whaley Street.) Their 48th season kicks off with a musical tribute to the songs of influential jazz/swing artist and composer Louis Jordan. Lou Warth Boesch directs Charlie Goodrich as a listless slacker inspired by the voices from his radio who emerge as *Five Guys Named Moe*, and embodied by Chadwick Pressley, Byron Dixon, Bobby Rogers, Shaquile Hester, and Joseph Ali-Cassim. Joy Alexander choreographs, with music direction by Roland Haynes, Jr., but there are only six performances, over the extended weekend of September 18 - 21. Daniel Gainey then directs a modern classic, A. R. Gurney's *The Dining Room*, running November 6 - 9. Six actors play multiple roles in different time periods as Gurney explores the foibles and social mores of upper-middle class WASPs in a comedy of 20th century manners and societal change. For information, call 803-799-4876, or visit www.workshop-theatre.com.

Town Theatre revives one of the greats, *Oklahoma!*, the Rodgers and Hammerstein smash which revolutionized conventional Broadway musical story-telling with its lyrics (which are fully integrated into the plot) recurring motifs (which connect individual songs) and incorporation of a 15-minute "dream ballet" sequence into the story of love among small-town cowboys and farm girls. Frank Thompson directs, with chore-

ography by Christy Shealy Mills and musical direction by Daniel Gainey. Bryan Meyers is featured as Curly - soitanly! No, wrong Curly - this is the role which landed Hugh Jackman an Olivier Award nomination, and the one who gets to open the show with "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'." Haley Sprinkle, appealing as teenagers in *Grease*, *The Little Mermaid Jr.*, and *Biloxi Blues*, graduates to full leading lady status as the innocent Laurey, with Sirena Dib as Ado Annie, the girl who just "cain't say no" to suitors Will (Parker Byun) and Ali Hakim (Rob Sprinkle.) The show runs September 19 - October 11. Then Shannon Willis Scruggs directs and choreographs *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, based on the popular Bing Crosby film. Run dates are November 14 - December 7; for information, call 803-799-2510, or visit www.towntheatre.com.

Columbia Children's Theatre opens their 10th season with *How I Became a Pirate*, a musical adaptation of the popular children's book by Melinda Long and David Shannon. Join young Jeremy Jacob for a treasure-seeking adventure with Captain Braid Beard and his scurvy crew; Jerry Stevenson directs Lee O. Smith, Julian DeLeon, Anthony Harvey, Ashlyn Combs, Brandi Smith, Andy Nyland, and Paul Lindley II (who doubles as musical director.) The Jolly Roger flies for two weekends, September 19 - 28; for information, call 803-691-4548, or visit www.columbiachildrenstheatre.com.

On Stage Productions presents *Legends of Country Music*, incorporating everything from Broadway to the Grand Ole Opry. The ensemble cast includes Robert Bullock, Linda Brochin, Gary Pozsik, Tanya Douglas, and Rachel Rizzuti. Robert Harrelson directs and choreographs, with musical direction by John Norris, and the show runs September 19- 28 at the On Stage Performance Center in West Columbia (680 Cherokee Lane, near I-26 and only a few minutes from downtown Columbia.) For information, call 803-351-6751, or visit www.onstagesc.com.

Grease is the word, the time, the place and the motion, and the immensely popular musical ode to teen love in the 50's was a hit for eight years in New York. Running September 26 - October 12 at the **Village Square Theatre**, this Lexington Arts Association production is directed by Becky Croft, with musical direction by Stephanie Nelson and choreography by Melissa Han-

na. Maddie Hammond plays good girl Sandy, who longs to tame bad boy Danny (Tyler Inabinette.) The stage version spotlights their friends too, with Lydia Kemmerlin (Marty) and Chance Morgan (Doody) getting to sing hits like "Freddy My Love" and "Those Magic Changes." Also in the cast are Ashley Manley as Rizzo, Stephen Fisher as Kenickie, and Lydia Carter as beauty school dropout Frenchy. Then Debi Young directs *Cheaper by the Dozen*, running November 7 - 16. This beloved classic follows the twelve Gilbreth children as their engineer father and psychologist mother practice theories of labor efficiency on their family, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the eldest teenage daughter. For information, call 803-359-1436, or visit www.villagesquaretheatre.com.

King Lear is both a challenging role and play, recounting parallel stories of fathers who wrongly turn on their children. Shakespeare's tragedy touches on madness, lust, pride, greed, and family dysfunction in ancient Britain, centuries before the Kardashians came along. Linda Khoury directs Chris Cook in the title role, and **The South Carolina Shakespeare Company** will bring it all

to life under the stars in Finlay Park, running October 1 - 11. For information, call 803-787-BARD (2273), or visit www.shakespeare.org.

Theatre Rowe's Southeastern Theatrical Arts Bandits (S.T.A.B.) present *Going Once, Going Twice...Murder!* by local author Allen Johnson, an audience-participation whodunit about murder at an auction "where the price of life is always up for bid." The show runs through September 21 in at the Old Mill in Lexington (711 East Main St., Lower Level, Suite O), then moves to 7120 Firelane Road (off Two Notch Road in Richland County, behind Jasmine Buffet) for four more nights: September 25 - 26, and October 2 - 3. Then get ready for a *Haunting at the Old Mill*, Johnson's non-murder, family-friendly mystery/comedy, running October 10 - November 1, followed by the return of George Kaupp as Lenny in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Running November 8 - 23, this stark drama follows two down-on-their-luck migrant farm workers in Depression-era California, and was a surprisingly touching change of pace for Theatre Rowe last year when it was first produced. For information, call 803-200-2012, or visit

www.scdinnertheatre.com.

USC's **Theatre South Carolina** takes a serious turn with *Ajax in Iraq*, an exploration by playwright Ellen McLaughlin of the plight of women soldiers in the modern military, contrasted with the mythological tale of Ajax, the protagonist of an ancient tragedy by Sophocles. Peter Duffy directs this production featuring all undergrads, which runs October 3 - 11 in Longstreet Theatre. David Britt, who has given us superbly realized revivals of plays from Neil Simon's Eugene trilogy at Workshop, then directs *Good Boys and True*. Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's script delves into scandal, sex, privilege and entitlement at a posh prep school, and runs October 9-12 in the Lab Theatre at 1400 Wheat Street. Then Steven Pearson directs Thornton Wilder's acclaimed, Pulitzer-winning *Our Town*, a panoramic exploration of the circle of life in small town New Hampshire, which pioneered the use of pantomimed props and minimalist sets within realistic drama. The production runs November 14 - 22 in Longstreet; for information, call 803-777-2551, or visit www.artsandsciences.sc.edu/thea/mainstage-season.

Pops Series:
Beloved Broadway
October 4, 2014 // 7:30

The Texas Tenors
October 26, 2014 // 3:30

The Mountaintop
November 8, 2014 // 7:30

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LIVE!
Jodi Cobb
November 18, 2014 // 7:30

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JAMES BUSBY

FIGURE

B Y C H R I S R O B I N S O N
P H O T O S B Y F O R R E S T C L O N T S









everyone should take the opportunity to see the work of James Busby, 2012 winner of the South Carolina Young Artist of the Year at the 701 Center for Contemporary Art. His new work, *Figure 8*, will be on exhibit there through October 12th, and he will be the artist in residence through September 27th. The artist in residence program at 701 CCA is ambitious in that it provides time, space, accommodation, and general support for an artist to concentrate on a developing body of work. It should be noted that Busby, who lives and works in Chapin, typically shows much of his work outside of South Carolina. That said, it is always good to see a local artist develop a New York gallery and national art market reputation, and the recognition and sales that accompany it. There are few who can say they make their living creating art, but Busby is accomplishing this and more

Busby, who received his MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2003, creates large fields of what at first may appear to be simple surfaces, but which actually require extensive time and skill in building up repeated layers of polished and cut graphite and oil, providing an illusion of uniform consistency, depth, and inconsistent exceptions played against the flat surface of the visual field. His new work seems to pay more attention to composition, color variation, and physical shape. These subtle, complex, painted surfaces are time consuming to create and Busby works diligently to construct a sleek, intellectually compelling, minimalist surface and theme, all the while requiring his viewers' willingness to enter into the depth and passion of his artist's vision.

Vision like Busby's has broad precedent including such luminaries as the abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann, minimalist painters Mark Rothko and Frank Stella, the sensual surfaces of Morris Louis and Paul Jenkins, the visually simple-yet-complex paintings of Ad Reinhardt, and the subtle white surfaces of Robert Ryman, and many more. The late Marcia Tucker, who was chief curator of the Whitney Museum of American Art (1969 - 1977) and founding director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art (1977 - 1999), promoted the minimalist Brice Marden, to whom Busby pays homage, as he does to the geometric string and wire sculptures of Fred Sandback.





Minimalism, which, in many ways, found its home in three-dimensional and installation art, on one hand requires classic artistic skill, labor, sensitivity, and insight, but at the same time it also reveres the sleek, mechanical, highly refined aspects of the mechanics of the industrial age and the intellectual refinement and technological clarity of the information age. It is often seen and described in painting as post-painterly abstraction.

Busby is dedicated to his work and isn't influenced by whether the viewer understands or even likes his paintings. He is driven by a strong artistic passion. The foundation of this body of work developed from his early alienation in graduate school and was powered by his mother's fight with cancer and ultimate death.

It might be suggested that Busby's work reflects something of the Process Art movement in which the importance of art is reflected in the process of creation rather than the end product. In Process Art artists may explicitly exhibit the investment of time, for example, by seeing how many nails they can pound into a piece of wood, or by binding together a form of logs using only heavily wrapped twine, along with other more sophisticated and time-oriented processes. But this dichotomy is hard to rectify in Busby's work, (and may contribute to the popular notion of the Artist as incomprehensible individual.) Why would one invest so much skill and time layering and sanding graphite, for example, only to generate a refinement of surface readily apparent in nature, COR-TEN steel, or carbon fiber? Some

would say for a visual subtlety that can only be achieved this way. Others might say why bother with what may be visually lost on the vast majority of the viewing public? Painters have reproduced the landscape and natural world for millennia. Even mechanical structures bear beautiful aspects of inconsistency.

It might also be suggested that Busby would be better off in California where minimalist artists such as Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, Ronald Davis, and others translate California light, surfboard design, and reverence for customized hot rod paint jobs into a finish fetish with visual codes – reducing art to its apparent essence, subtle ephemerality and light; another informed and cool version of the phenomenology of nature. California has had the advantage of being removed from New York, with little formal history and little obligation—no history, no burden—giving artists license to explore unconventional realms. Artistic passion is a powerful and sometimes confusing driver.

So where does that leave James Busby? Should he settle for the potential last vestiges of the dichotomy of careful craft played against the impersonal look of a minimal argument? The broader art world continues to struggle with who and what it is and how to succeed with some meaning in such a pluralistic environment. This leaves Busby in both an interesting and tough position - though one that may be part of an honorable backlash and change. How does one seek to make carefully constructed, hard fought, spare but potentially beautiful and/or compelling surfaces, and have them survive in such a tough and frenetic market? He is certainly succeeding and his art presents us with tough questions. If he is courageous and resilient enough to stick with it he may discover new and interesting possibilities. That is the chore and the risk of the visual artist—one could aspire to little more.

But for those of us in Columbia, it is a great opportunity to see a local artist who is trying to make heartfelt and meaningful art right here that even those big city power brokers to the north feel may have a spark of high promise.

Take the time to look closely at these paintings. It will be well worth your effort.





MEASURING UP

THE DESIGN OF TIM MCLENDON

MEASURE FOR MEASURE, Tim McLendon is a creative buzz saw. Rarely do you find right brain and left brain honoring non-compete clauses with each other, but for this multi-talented Columbian, the highly-creative side of his mind is well served by the side that reminds him to measure twice, cut once. The balance had led to one word-of-mouth recommendation after the other, so demand for his involvement has escalated in recent years.

His undertakings have been projects as simple as updating, freshening a tired space and as comprehensive as ground-up projects. His now-distinctive imprint is discernable on an eclectic array of completed tasks throughout the city although, to date, heavily weighted in The Vista and along Main Street.

To say he has an eye for design would acknowledge only half the equation; he also has an ear for design—and that comes from his music side, the form in which creativity first surfaced in a young Pee Dee boy. Music and math often are thought to complement, even strengthen each other, and design relies heavily on math. Measuring space, architectural elements, fabric and floor covering are essential to placements and economical cuts, and this Scottish lad is prudent, in such practices. He didn't call it first; civilization has known for ions that mathematics is "the basis of sound" and sound itself, in its musical aspects, exhibits a remarkable array of numerical properties, simply because nature itself is so amazingly mathematical.

Choosing stone, wood, metal, glass, and other natural materials add texture and warmth to McLendon's projects and plays to his incisive senses. Bamboo at M. Vista and other M cafes, exposed brick at Cola's, brass and leather in The Reserve, soon to open on Main Street, all characterize McLendon's bent for inviting nature into his design concepts.



Incorporating nature may be the single repeat. He abhors the idea of being tagged as having a "signature look," as much as nature abhors a vacuum, so no two design projects are alike—whether commercial or residential. "Getting to know who I'm working with and discovering what their goals are is primary," McLendon says. He's found, over years of being entrusted with corporate identity and individual or family spaces, that people want change, but not in large doses. "I like to take an element from their life, their personal culture, and be inspired by that, develop design around that."

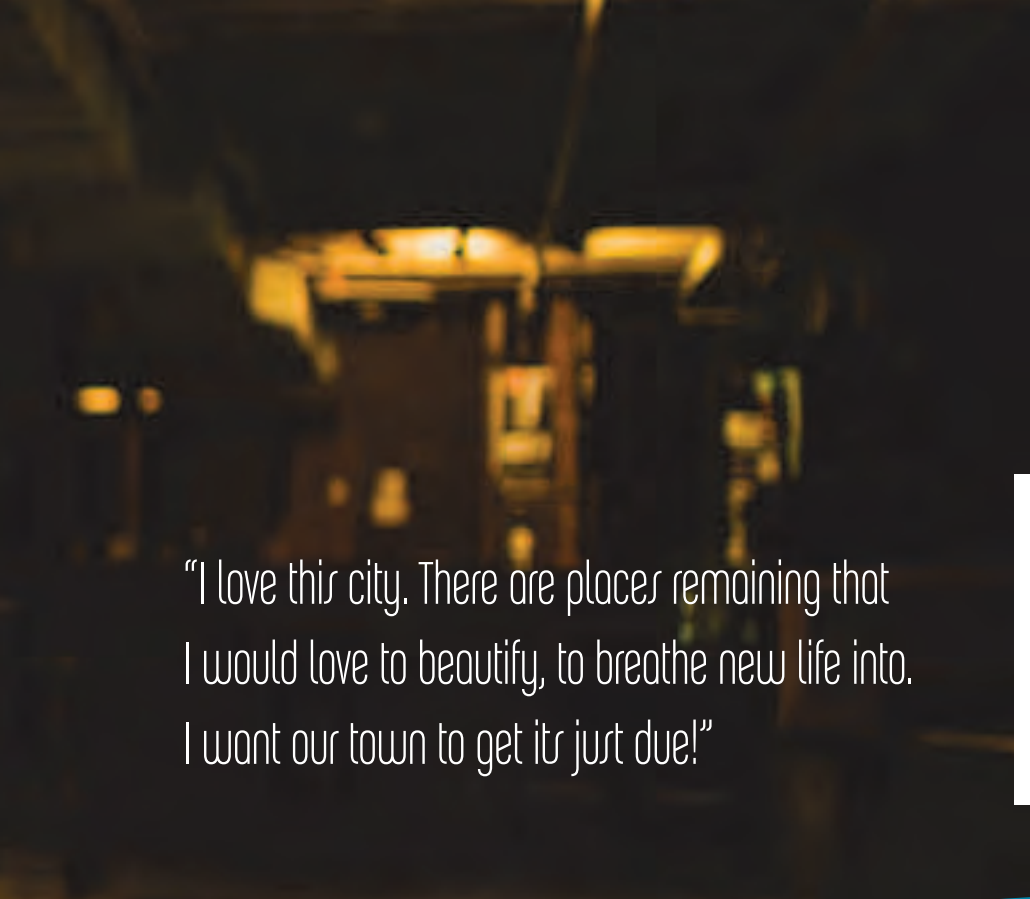
That his ear for music has segued into an astute eye for design has this Bishopville native projecting now in four-part harmony: commercial and interior design along with performance and composition, although music is now more often for winding down at the end of a busy day of design work - his mainstay.

Winding down often takes place at his Elmwood Park home, which also happens to be his living, organic calling card. Since further reclaiming an already-restored former neighborhood grocery store in 1999, he has consistently improved the livability of the historic turn-of-the-century structure, mak-

ing it feel more spacious, in part by developing its outdoor spaces. Among his first design clients were individuals anxious to make their own residences "read" larger, more efficient, as does his. In quick succession he was asked to consult, and then take on larger design projects, including commercial projects. Repeat business now fills his plate; projects include the expansion of Cola's private dining room.

In true Scottish fashion, he has wasted not a single experience from any job, and draws judiciously upon previous encounters and events—including his extensive travels—to inform the one on which he is giving his full focus at that time. The ability to stay so focused within the fast-paced business of design is one of the gentle strengths he wields. Having so many inspiration sources, logged away in his sensory memory bank, is another. His ability and willingness to hear all of what a client is conveying, envisioning, and then his careful articulation of the client's vision to those working with him on the execution of designs, explains in large measure why TimMcLendonDesigns.com is being asked to help beautify Columbia. In projects small and large.

— RACHEL HAYNIE



"I love this city. There are places remaining that I would love to beautify, to breathe new life into. I want our town to get it just due!"

PHOTO BY FORREST CLONTS

MARV'S BAR

LIKE A BARN RAISING – ONLY WITHOUT THE N.

For its lively new bar and cabaret space, Trustus Theater raises a perpetual toast to arts leader and patron Marvin Chernoff.

Inspiration for Marv's Bar struck as Trustee Theater minds were contemplating an upfit project to repurpose the existing bar and concessions area. Executive Director Larry Hembree said, "We have been feeling the need for a "later" night space, somewhere theater patrons could stick around after a play, even be joined by others out for the evening, people who enjoy the arts and appreciate live music by soloists or combos, or even small theatre performances by local and regional talent. We thought how much the city's venerable theatre and arts patron Marvin Chernoff would enjoy the kind of atmosphere we were envisioning. This concept became Marv's Bar without a second thought."

Chernoff was floored when he learned he had inspired an intimate art space. "I was called into a Wednesday afternoon meeting at which Larry described the concept of redesigning the lounge area into a piano bar. He then surprised me by telling me the decision was made to name the bar after me. That's the first I'd heard of it. I was blown away!"

Chernoff could see immediately the potential of having such a space. "What a treat it will be to have a place for people who enjoy the performing arts to be able to mingle and to hear the performances of the many we have in the Columbia area with true talent. I envision arts supporters and people who just appreciate live performance being together in this space - enjoying the entertainment as well as each other's company."

When the space reopens in its new configuration, Marv's will be a stage for performances by local singers, musicians, and actors, many of whom will come from local theatres, universities, and churches. Every night Marv's is open, there will be a keyboardist.

Hembree foresees that Marv's will be The Place for audience members to come after taking in cultural offerings throughout the city. "Marv's will advance The Vista's goal of being the city's Go To arts and culture district. It also will attract guests from Vista hotels as well as Vista restaurant patrons."

Already at work on the transformation are Tim McLendon, design; Jim McGrew, bar fabricator; Cohn Construction, contractors; and Studio 2LR, architects.

In addition to its primary functions, Marv's can be used as a performance space for small-cast theatrical productions (one and two person shows, for instance.) The space also will be available to rent for small parties and meetings. And there's still time to be a permanent fixture at Marv's (no, not at the bar!) Sponsorships of numerous elements within the space are available. Check with Hembree to learn more.

How Chernoff inspired the concept development of the piano and cabaret bar is easy to discern.

A tenacious man behind many of the area's arts and nonprofit initiatives, Chernoff already has a permanent place in Trustus Theater. "When you walk into the theater, there's a plaque on the wall that designates the volunteer of the year. It's called the Marvin Chernoff Award, and there's a good reason for that," Hembree said. "Over the years, he has co-signed leases and credit lines, done pro-bono work and given much of his time, money and anything else he may have had, enabling Trustus to grow and succeed."

Chernoff said: "I'm flattered beyond imagination, and delighted I leave a legacy that includes this testament to the arts community." — RH

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

ELLEN DOUGLAS SCHLAEFER AND USC OPERA

BY TOM DEMPSTER / PHOTO BY JONATHAN SHARPE



ELLEN DOUGLAS SCHLAEFER PLAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE in the Opera Studies program at the University of South Carolina without even opening her mouth.

A Columbia native and director of the USC Opera Studies program, Schlaefer he has helped push the program into the national spotlight, winning the National Opera Association Production Competition for USC Opera's staging of *Postcard from Morocco* and producing new and modern operatic works—like Ned Rorem's adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*—alongside operatic warhorses. With primarily undergraduate students, Schlaefer has overseen the staging of dozens of works, ranging from Bernstein's

Candide to Mozart's *The Magic Flute* to one-act works, children's opera, and musical theater pieces. Schlaefer, an ardent supporter of opera in schools, has brought USC Opera to unlikely corners in elementary, middle, and high schools across the state.

With nearly thirty years of experiences before arriving at USC eleven years ago, Schlaefer has practically seen it all as a longtime *mise-en-scène* lyric theater professional. Before returning home to her native South Carolina, Schlaefer worked as stage manager, artistic director, and director for numerous opera and theater companies, serving at the vaunted Santa Fe Opera for thirteen years and the Washington opera for

eight. She has directed masterworks of opera – *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*, *Norma*, *Salome*, *Tosca* – and has directed familiar musical theater and dramatic theater across the country, with venues ranging from Trustus Theater to the Houston Grand Opera, and dozens of posts in between.

With a no-nonsense demeanor that gives way to an easy and husky laugh, a whimsical yet self-deprecating humor, and a firm conviction of how to best serve both her students and the art, Schlaefer minces no words in a conversation I recently had with her. Neither does she have any reservations about USC Opera or her pride in the program.

What would be your most memorable productions so far at USC?

When I started at USC, I had a game plan so that every student – music students or students from the general population – would have a chance to see *something* over their four years – a standard operatic piece, musical theater, an operetta, and so on, and for the most part, I think all of those have been very successful. There are certain pieces that are dear to my heart just because of the nature of the piece, and sometimes dear to my heart because I know where we started and where we ended up. The *Marriage of Figaro* that we did in the marching band hall was a success in many ways. We had great singers; we converted a space that the marching band rehearses in into a theater. I'm fond of the *Postcard from Morocco* we did because the music was so challenging. I love the *Candide* we did last year. I loved everything we did last year.

What productions stand out the most to you from your pre-USC life?

One of them was a production of *La Bohème* I directed at the now-defunct Connecticut Opera. It was one of my first “on-my-own” professional gigs. I really liked the *Carmen* we did a few years ago in Vermont with Canadian mezzo-soprano Julie Nesrallah. I really enjoyed a production I did with the Santa Fe Opera tour back in the 1990s, Mollicone's *The Face on the Barroom Floor*. I've been doing this a long time. When you do what I do, there's always something magical attached to every production.

You've helped transform the USC opera program into one that tries to produce well-rounded students and adaptable entrepreneurs and professionals, not just strong singers. How has your background played into this?

Everybody understands that we have limited resources and limited personnel. I remind the students that at some point they will have to put on a Christmas pageant. If you go into elementary education or a church job or you have a college teaching job, you're going to have to learn something about production to put on those shows. The second year I was here, a young woman had called me – she had gotten her doctorate in voice my first year, so I didn't really know her – she called me up in tears. “I've got to

put on *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, how do I do that?” So, I talked her through it. I like to think that we are not just a bunch of singers. We're theater people. We have to be skilled at lots of things.

There has been an emergence in the performing arts in general over the past decade about better self-care and wellness. But then, you have very young people – college students – at your charge. How do you balance this?

Well, we try to make them take care of themselves. A music student has the most unforgiving schedule of almost anybody. They're expected to practice a certain number of hours each day. They're expected to perform in all of their ensembles and go to tons of classes. We stress care. And kids these days are so much more in tune to that. We have a great Alexander Technique teacher here, but it's also finding ways to relax, having a good yoga instructor, just taking the time. You know, these singers – all they've got are those two little muscles in their throat, and, you know, they're in college after all. They come in on Monday and they can't sing, and I ask them: did you go to the game? Yeah ... You know, students have got to find a way to sometimes temper their college experience. Eventually, they get it.

There have been issues beyond the Met – the New York City Opera folding, the San Diego Opera having severe difficulties, the closure of Opera Boston, and issues of labor with the Hartford Wagner Festival which has endured criticism due to their use of “canned” music. But in the past decade, we've had a resurgence of opera – young composer workshops for operas, new companies springing up, and a Pulitzer-winning opera in Kevin Puts's 2012 work *Silent Night* (the first opera to win a Pulitzer since 1962). How do you help students navigate this world of apparent contradiction and risk?

To me, it's not a risk or contradiction. To me, it's an incredibly exciting time because the model has changed. It's up to the students to figure out how to reinvent this business. I point to a company in Boston called Guerilla Opera that is really setting things on its ear. There are lots of new things and other companies trying new things – the model

those people's teachers had no longer exists. You can't get a degree, hightail to Europe, and get a festival gig. I mean, you can, but the chances of that are miniscule. We do try to talk about the business of opera and how expensive it is to try to pursue this rarified art form. But, it's not dead. I hope that they learn to budget – not only their time, obviously, but their money – and to think of things that they aren't normally going to think about – like dry cleaning bills for recital gowns and haircuts. You've got to factor that in. Printed music, lessons, and accompanists – it's inordinately expensive. But then there's that moment when they get out there and connect with just one or two people and that magic happens.

We have cases with other ensembles – the Minnesota Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony, for example – that had a top-down structure run by dyed-in-the-wool businesspeople who felt efficiency could be improved by rehearsing less and performing more and still somehow turn out a great product. How important is it to have somebody with a music background at the top of these institutions and in these oversight boards?

It's somewhere in the middle. Part of the issue that I've been reading about at the Met right now is that the management is accusing the stagehands of earning too much money – and the stagehands are saying, ‘well, management scheduled all this overtime.’ And then there are other opera professionals who think and state that the emphasis has gone from the voice and the music and has shifted to the visual. So, we're in an interesting state of flux where two generations ago there was ample patronage that would cover shortfalls, and you could really focus on the music. Not anymore.

So it's become sort of a culture of appeasement and business-first attitudes.

I keep going back to my boss at the Santa Fe Opera, John Crosby. He was a musician, an entrepreneur, and a visionary. He was also *terrifying*. He was *Mister Crosby*. I worked for him for fourteen years and he was *always* Mister Crosby. I got called into his office one day to talk finances, which was terrifying – a stage manager or assistant director simply did *not* get called into Mr. Crosby's office. He was sitting at his desk, and balancing



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his checkbook, his own personal checkbook with a pencil, at the same time he was conducting a multimillion-dollar fundraiser for a new space. He always knew where every penny went. It was a multimillion-dollar venture even back then, so I don't think one has to have one or the other – business *or* music background – it's just... I wonder whether we've discouraged or sacrificed the artistic side of things for the business when we should have been finding ways for them to complement each other. There's so much emphasis on getting butts in seats. But are those butts coming back? A good *business* and good *shows* bring those people back. I tell my students – it's show business. *Show. Business.* [Emphasis hers] A student and a professional both have to be responsible. There's the danger that the art gets lost in all of this. That's what I worry about: in the world of opera, we've become so fixated on the visual that we lose the artistry in the voice. I don't think it has to be one or the other.

Here at USC, we have primarily undergrads, some master's students, but most of these students want to go on, and tend to go on, to teaching careers. I just want them to keep their eyes open for what's going to happen ten years from now: things are going to change. Their voice, their path, their possibilities. If someone comes in and they want to study classical music, great! But if a student is a music theater person, they still must have good technique. Your foundation has to be correct. That's part of my teaching. It takes time.

Is there any particular experience or role a young student of lyric theater should have?

I think the idea of having an *experience* is more important than having a *role*. Any stage experience is better than none. Every voice is different; every student wants that leading role – whether the student is ready for it, that's another question. The more time they have on the stage and in the rehearsal room leading to the stage is the best thing we can wish for them. Everything contributes to their abilities to tell stories with music. Everything. I was born here and back then there was only the Columbia Lyric Theater. They did wonderful productions with the faculty from Columbia College and some from USC. They were memorable – they performed at the old Dreher High School with an organ and a piano, and they were some of the most musical and magical experiences I've ever had in my long, long life working in opera.



There are a lot K-12 schools and colleges out there where students don't get those opportunities and there may be people out there who really love the stage and the theater and the experience but may not have the background in music. What do you say to them?

I'm not a musician. I'm truly a theater person. I'm the only faculty member at the USC School of Music who's not a musician, and I'm one of a handful of the staff there who's not a musician. But I'm a tenured professor, so they must have seen something in me. [Laughter] But, my path has been very different. It has been one where I would do anything just to be around the stage – anything, because I learn from every single experience. Listen, I've driven trucks across this country, I've stayed up and made props all night long or instead of coming home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, just anything to be close to it. That's what they have to do. You know, everybody wants to be a star.

That's the culture we live in. Students come to us wanting that. I tell them I can't make you a star but I can sure as hell set you on a strong path and give you some things to get you a toehold. I'm proud of what we do. I know where we start, and where we end up is magical.

The USC Opera program will present Engelbert Humperdinck's Hansel und Gretel on November 7 and 8, 2014, at 7:30 PM and November 9 at 3:00 PM in Drayton Hall at USC. Hansel und Gretel will be sung in German. On February 20, 21, and 22, 2015, USC Opera will present Mozart's masterwork Così fan tutte, and a pair of one-act operas on April 11 and 12, 2015. For more details and information on USC Opera's season, contact the USC School of Music at 803-777-4280, or find the School of Music on the Internet at www.sc.edu.

GETTING OVER OUR PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT OPERA



HERE'S THE THING about opera—I don't think I'm supposed to like it.

Or rather, I feel like I've been told, somewhat subliminally, that I wasn't supposed to like it. Even among the older art forms with a reputation for stuffiness and pretension, opera stands out as a style of performance that seems preposterously loaded down with silliness, stuffiness, and pretension. I mean, the Marx Brothers were having their yucks about it in 1935, you know?

Even if you're a fan of musical theater (I'm a bit ambivalent), opera can be tough to swallow. There's little-to-no dialogue, the lyrics (whether translated or not) are kind of ridiculous, and every song seems impossibly overwrought and dramatic. Add to that a repertoire that feels rooted deeply in the past, and you have a recipe for easy dismissal, even by the fairly adventurous patron I aspire to be.

Even when opera has been presented in a positive light by popular culture, it's always

been with the caveat that most of us aren't supposed to "get it." I'm thinking of the mesmerizing scene in Philadelphia where Tom Hanks paraphrases "La Mamma Morta" to the befuddled Denzel Washington, or when Richard Gere takes the coarse Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* to *La Traviata* as some sort of litmus test of refined sensitivity. Both seem to suggest that opera patrons thrive on an ill-defined cloud of inscrutability that surrounds the art form, giving aficionados access to the nuances but leaving the rest of us guessing. They are just "hard." Don't worry if you don't understand.

That being said, I've always liked the idea of opera, the intensity of feeling and emotion that seems to come from that kind of singing. And I'm not alone in such thoughts. While operas themselves aren't well-celebrated, the quality of "operatic" singing is handed down as praise to our best vocalists time and time again. This paradox has always troubled me a bit, at least enough to not give up completely on the idea of one day actively "liking" opera.

As it turns out, just a few months ago I had the ideal chance to break my passivity. My partner and I had plotted out a tour of the northern half of Italy that included the quaint town of Lucca which, as it turns out, is the birthplace of Giacomo Puccini, the composer of some of the most-performed and celebrated operas in history. Lucca, in an effort to pay homage to their place in history (despite Puccini's bad-boy reputation among the town's gentry when he was alive), have organized the world's only permanent, year-round music festival. That means that every night of the year, somewhere in Lucca, is a performance dedicated to the composer.

So we went. It was my first full opera concert and, although not a full performance of a particular opera, it pretty much hooked. The concert took place in the relatively austere Church of San Giovanni, where the composer was actually baptized, and not the swankier confines of the city's duomo, and featured just two singers, a tenor, Nicola Mugnaini, and a baritone, Romano Martinuzzi, with just a pianist, Diego Fiorini) accompanying them. They played two sets, each time alternating

performances and giving the piano player a solo piece before closing with a duet. While Puccini compositions dominated both sets, works by Verdi, Wagner, and Mozart were also included.

And it was magnificent.

Now here's the part where I try to translate it for you. And I can't, not really. Part of the power came from the physical presence, and assuredness, of the performers. There was something primal, and cosmically deep, about the way they sang, with their whole bodies. We like to think of our big rock singers like Robert Plant or Aretha Franklin singing that way, but these singers were capturing all of the might of the entirety of Led Zeppelin with the sonic heft of their voices. At the same time, there's a singularity to an opera singer, the sense of being just one person, yet containing (to paraphrase a poet) multitudes.

What's more, these singers were *storytellers*. The language barrier wasn't really a barrier at all, not to these singers. They knew that the real unfolding, the real twists and turns of the story were caught up in the musicality of the performance itself, not just the notes but the timbre and tone of their voice, their intensity and wordless communication. Sure, they were kind of actors too, and made a gesture here or a grimaced expression there, but these were second to the immense power of the vocal performance itself.

I left the performance feeling many things, but the thing I was struck most by was that, for all its ornamentation and affectations, perhaps what has allowed opera to endure and survive above all was something quite simple, almost primal. I left thinking, or perhaps believing is a better word, that the art from deeply assumes an absolute faith in the human voice as the grandest and most capable instrument of communication, a faith in the possibilities of that instrument to reach for something close to a universal power of song, transcending languages and cultures, time and space.

Song. — KYLE PETERSEN

OPERA IN OUR PAST AND OPERA IN OUR FUTURE



COLUMBIA BEGAN IN 1786 when the South Carolina legislature voted on both the name and the location of their new capital city. Columbia's city hall as a separate building, however, didn't come along until 1818 at the northwest corner of Richardson (Main) and Washington Streets. It was the first of four city halls, the last one still standing as a replacement function for the former federal courthouse on the southwest corner of Laurel and Main.

And kudos to Mayor Benjamin and his council for our city hall's glorious interior refurbishment, returning the building to some of the showy stuff of its origins.

The first city hall, which burned with everything else in February 1865, had a clock tower hovering over the Main Street sidewalk, where the town crier would yell "All's well" on the half-hour, or he might call out, "Fire at the corner of Park and Gervais!"

The second city hall on the same site included an opera house, and the whole compound burned to the ground in 1899.

Columbia's third city hall, probably the

most impressive of them all, was designed by Charlotte architect Frank P. Milburn, who also designed the dome for the state house. His design for Columbia's city hall called for the same flecked brick as he specified for his Union Station down the street.

City offices took the ground floor at city hall, while the rest of the building was dedicated to the opera house. With seating for about 2,000, the opera house was later called the Columbia Theatre and then the Carolina Theatre as it came to be used as a movie house. It began, though, as strictly live stage performances with far more minstrel shows and vaudeville gigs than grand operas. And as movies came around—especially after 1927 when the first talkie hit town, Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*—Columbia's opera house was also Columbia's largest movie house.

Showing movies up to demolition in 1939, the Carolina Theatre probably did pretty well that last year as a participating part of Hollywood's Golden Era, showing such films as *Stagecoach*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Good-bye Mr. Chips*, *Gunga Din*, *Hound of*

the Baskervilles, and other blockbusters in the same year. Still, with absence of adequate air-conditioning, the movie house and city hall sweltered and suffered to the point the city saw the wisdom and the wealth in giving up its city hall site for the Wade Hampton Hotel, a \$1 million project that held together until the hotel had to make way in the late 1980s for the AT&T building, which became Affinity, which became SouthTrust, which became Capitol Place, and is now called BB&T.

With twin towers facing Main Street at the corner with Gervais, city hall had its clock tower, too, with four clock faces at the same diameter of six feet.

Remember: Columbia had an opera house, first at the corner of Washington and Main for the last third of the 19th Century and then at the corner of Gervais and Main for the first third of the 20th Century. With no funds for such things, still, it would be nice to imagine an opera house, a real opera house – not another one of those multipurpose performing arts halls - in Columbia for most of the 21st Century. — JOHN TEMPLE LIGON

PALMETTO OPERA BRINGS EVEN MORE OPERA TO COLUMBIA AUDIENCES

The Palmetto Opera enters its fifth season both proud of its past and eager to continue expanding the opera scene in Columbia. Kathy Newman, chair, says, “The Palmetto Opera’s main goals are to establish an audience for opera and to bring grand opera to the capital of South Carolina for the first time in over twenty years.” Over the past four seasons, Palmetto Opera has partnered with international company Teatro Lirico d’Europa to present *Madama Butterfly*, *La Traviata*, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, and one concert, *A Tribute to Pavarotti*.

After *Madama Butterfly* sold out University of South Carolina’s Drayton Hall, they decided to move to the Koger Center the following year. Newman was apprehensive as the first performance at the larger venue took place on a cold, rainy night in March, but the move was a success and allowed their audience to more than double in size. The success of the move was very encouraging as they realized that there truly is an audience for opera in Columbia. Newman suspects that this audience is comprised of both Columbia natives who have been longing for opera and newcomers who have lived other places and expect opera to be a part of their cultural lives. This past season they graduated to two performances, offering both *Carmen* and a concert, *A Tribute to Pavarotti*.

The strategy over the past few seasons has been to go slow, learn from professionals, and establish an audience. The move to the Koger Center and the introduction of a second performance are

significant highlights of their past, but Palmetto Opera is looking forward to an even more promising future—a future which features more opera in Columbia.

In order to make this opera-filled future a reality and continue establishing their audience, Palmetto Opera puts on small, accessible performances once a month. These intimate performances, known as Opera Thursdays, take place at Villa Tronco for just fifty to sixty guests. The performances last about an hour and a half and consist of a combination of popular classics and famous arias. The goal is to educate and entertain novices who may have never heard any opera before while still entertaining seasoned opera supporters at the same time. Opera Thursdays have proven to be wildly successful, selling out each month. Newman says, “The people involved in Palmetto Opera believe in opera and want it to be one of the cultural options in South Carolina.” While they are still building, it’s clear that they are already achieving this goal.

Palmetto Opera is again offering two performances this season, both a concert and a full opera. The concert, *Great Moments in Italian Opera*, is scheduled for Saturday, January 24th at Harbison Theatre. Then, Puccini’s *La Boheme* will take place on Saturday, February 28th at the Koger Center. In addition to their two main performances, Opera Thursdays will occur monthly at Villa Tronco. Reservations are required for Opera Thursdays and can be made at 803-256-7677. — ABBY DAVIS



PHOTO BY DAVID WEST

DIANA AMOS

OUR SOURCE FOR EUROPEAN OPERA



"... we should never be ashamed that we are not at the level of places in Europe, because that will never happen. But we have something entirely unique here—a mixture of local bands, artists and classical singers all in one place." – Diana Amos

DIANA AMOS KNEW EARLY ON in her life that singing was her calling. "I knew voice was my thing," said the Assistant Professor of Voice and Musical Theater at Columbia College. As a soprano opera singer, Amos has experienced much more than spreading her passion of performing around campus.

Hailing from a family full of musical influence, including her mother, a pianist, her father, a classical guitarist, and an aunt well-known for opera in Europe, Amos decided to receive her Bachelors of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, but then take the leap overseas to a place known for its talents and appreciation of opera- Germany.

After only a few months of learning the language and testing her skills, Amos landed her first job. "It was such a good job that I decided to stay there for 17 years," she says. Amos spent her time there singing in opera houses around in Germany including esteemed venues in Cologne, Hannover, Luxembourg, Dresden, and most memorably to the singer, the Berlin State Opera House where she played the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*.

Her time in Germany brought her clear amounts of success and gave her a portfolio of leading roles along with a performance diploma from Hochschule fuer Musik in Cologne, in just a short time. In 2010, she knew the time was right to make the move back

to Columbia, SC, to be closer to her family. "As much as I adored my time in Germany, I wanted to come back to the states to teach," she says.

In 2012, Amos landed a full-time teaching position at Columbia College. She has been using her time at the college to not only spread her knowledge and appreciation of music, but also promote the arts, especially opera, around her campus and her city. "I'm just over the moon to find a position here, in Columbia, where I wanted to settle," she says. "I just couldn't be happier to be here and just want more people to know about the Bachelor of Arts program here. It's just perfect."

She admits that Columbia does not present all the opportunities for opera that Germany does, but she still regularly sings around the city in staff recitals, with the USC opera department, and with the Palmetto Opera. She says she believes the art and music scene in Columbia is surely something unique and is not surprised at the recognition the capital has gotten over the past few years. "[Opera] will never be here what it is in Europe, but I have to admit, it's grown," Amos said. "I've had the pleasure of performing all over Germany and working with some amazing people, but I'm really proud of the opera scene in Columbia."

Amos thinks that aside from a constant need for financial assistance in the arts and

opera scene in Columbia, what groups like the Palmetto Opera and Opera at USC need most is support. "Opera is a wonderful art form—it combines drama with music and makes something incredibly powerful," she says. "We just need as much appreciation and support as we can get to keep it alive here. Go to local productions, get involved, just be a part of it—that's all it takes."

With as much experience as she's had over the last few decades, Amos shows no signs of stopping now. Her commitment to her job, staff, and students at Columbia College and her support of all opera outlets in the city has driven her to keep going and help others succeed as much as she has. "People should be envious of what we have here in Columbia," she says. "We have some incredible singers, right here at USC and Columbia College, and we should never be ashamed that we are not at the level of places in Europe, because that will never happen. But we have something entirely unique here—a mixture of local bands, artists and classical singers all in one place."

Amos is currently working on finishing her doctorate in music at USC, but isn't looking too far into the future at the moment. "I already have my dream job here," she says. "I've been so many places but I'm happy right where I am." — CAITLYN MCGUIRE

Vincent Sheheen — THE

ARTS CANDIDATE

It's no secret that the arts and state government have had a less than healthy relationship in South Carolina. With election season upon us Jasper suggests that along with our consideration of what the gubernatorial candidates claim they will or will not do about issues such as education, the economy, and health care, we also place a similar priority on the issue that is the life blood of the subjects of this magazine—the arts.

To that end Jasper invited the gubernatorial candidates to answer questions pertaining spe-

cifically to the arts in Columbia and South Carolina, in general. Questions for the candidates were solicited from and submitted by a number of leaders in the local arts community including Wim Roefs, Andy Smith, Lee Snelgrove, and Larry Hembree, as well as members of the Jasper editorial staff.

While the invitation to participate in this exercise was extended to both Senator Sheheen and Governor Haley, only Senator Sheheen agreed to take our questions. His answers and comments are presented on the right.



Q: Film production has a long, rich, history in South Carolina with classics such as *Forrest Gump* and *The Big Chill* being shot here. Film incentives are being cut in North Carolina, threatening hundreds of jobs, while Georgia is relishing its recent boom in production. Is there an opportunity to create more jobs in this creative and technical field in our state? What are your plans for increasing the potential for more films to be produced in South Carolina? What would an increase in film production mean to our state's economic, artistic and tourism base?

A: The film industry in South Carolina has been neglected and shuttled around from agency to agency and the outcome has been that South Carolina has been out-competed by other states and Canada. We have to see film production as entrepreneurial; filmmakers as small businesses. And we have to ask ourselves how do we create jobs in film, tourism, culinary arts, and other supporting areas. The film industry can be very profitable. It can generate high income. We have to change our economic development policies to invest in a robust film industry.

Q: There's much debate about the role of government in funding the arts, although ironically many artists and groups might be happy to be supported solely by their audiences and patrons. Do you feel that government has a role in encouraging support for the arts from the private sector, in facilitating that support, and/or in fostering the type of environment where that happens more often and more easily?

A: Governor Haley has vetoed funding the arts commission for the past three years and it wasn't until this election year that started to sing a different tune. People who support the arts should be appalled that the governor tried to make South Carolina the only state in the country to not have an arts commission or a similar office or agency. To me, that's just wrong. For over 2000 years civilized societies have supported the arts—the ancient Greeks and Romans and Egyptians. If we don't support the arts we breed ignorance. We have to celebrate successes in South Carolina's arts and arts heritage—for economic purposes as well as for our image. One way to create a strong image is to have an incredible arts commission and a state government that supports and celebrates it.

Q: Generally, both locally and statewide, the arts provide a big bang for the buck, meaning that a little money creates a lot of important activity both culturally and economically. Despite that, what little state support the arts have received traditionally has been cut severely in the past decade or so. What are your plans to increase funding for the arts in South Carolina?



A: This goes back to the arts commission in many ways. Funding was cut for the arts in South Carolina under the two previous governors and the arts have been on the defense for too long. I want to increase support for the commission and I want it to be central to our economic development and used it as a way of branding the state.

The arts commission should also have a strong presence in the public schools.

Q: Given the number of many talented and hardworking members of the LGBTQ community who are also involved in the arts, how will a Sheheen governorship improve tolerance for all of us?

A: Every person in South Carolina, regardless of their sexual orientation, should be treated with respect and dignity, and protected, especially in their places of employment. Right now, in South Carolina, there are no institutionalized workplace protections, but I will work to correct that.

Q: With so much focus on STEM education, public art education programs are too often relegated to a second tiered status. Many educators have expanded STEM to STEAM to insure that we're including arts training in the development of our future workforce. Why do you think it's essential for our students to receive a quality art education and

what would you do to insure student access to the arts in South Carolina?

A: The problem in South Carolina now is that everything is taught to a standardized testing protocol. I love the idea of STEAM—it allows us to broaden the role of creativity both for our students and our teachers. We talk about building wealth a lot, but we have to remember that people who are successful almost always have creative abilities.

Q: A book of essays about lesbian and gay South Carolinians was labelled “pornography” by many members of the South Carolina legislator. How would you encourage empathy and understanding when your colleagues in state leadership fail to exhibit these traits?

A: I was very proud to see votes for tolerance arise out of this issue. The legislature should not be censoring college material. It makes us look ignorant and it creates divisiveness. Everyone is not going to agree on every issue, but these are adults in college and we should treat them like it.

Q: Other than your wife Amy who is a visual artist, who are some of your favorite visual artists—both local and not?

A: Of course, Amy is my favorite visual artist, but I also like (American realist) George Caleb Bingham and one of my favorite paintings of his is called *The County Election*. I guess I'm more traditional in my art preferences but Amy is different; she's more passionate. I also have a wonderful print of the Wateree River that Blue Sky painted that I love. It just says South Carolina to me.

Q: What is the most recent book you've read?

A: I'm usually reading several at the same time. I'm reading a collection of Leo Tolstoy's short stories right now, and I just finished a book about Hiroshima. My all-time favorite book is *All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren, and my favorite book growing up was *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

Q: Favorite Film?

A: *The Shawshank Redemption*. (But I've probably seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark* a dozen times.)

Q: It's desert island classics time—what albums or CDs would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island?

A: I grew up as a metal head, but I also grew



up listening to the blues. But I've thought about this and I guess I'd have to go with Ozzie Osborne and *The Blizzard of Oz*, Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Gimme Back My Bullets*, Eric Clapton has a compilation album that I really like ... I think it's called *Layla and Other Love Songs*, and then I love Pink Floyd. A lot of people would say that *The Wall* is their best album, but I'd go with *Dark Side of the Moon*. And finally, I'd want something classical, something to make me think, like Beethoven's Fifth. That said, I love Willie Nelson, too.

Q: Is there an artist trapped inside the politician? What are your hidden talents?

A: I like to write. I've written a novel and it's just sitting in my desk drawer. And I like to write poetry. I can also play the guitar very badly.

Q: Is there anything I didn't ask or anything you'd like to add?

A: Well, yes. I grew up in the arts and I think that's why they're still so important to me. My dad played the piano and my sister and I would gather around the piano and sing along with my dad. My mom and dad helped start the fine arts center in Camden and, growing up, we would hang out there. I was an actor in high school and middle school. I even played Jem in *To Kill a Mockingbird*! My point is that the arts have always been a part of my life, and they are a part of the life that Amy and I have built for our family. Art is important to us. A lot of the successes I've enjoyed in my life I can trace directly back to the influence of one art form or another. It comes from having a family that valued and encouraged the arts in us and that provided us with experiences in art. I want this for all the families in South Carolina and, as governor, I would work toward making this a reality.



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PROFILE

JUDY BOLTON JARRETT AND “PASSAGES”



PHOTO BY ROB SPRANKLE

A 1963 GRADUATE of Presbyterian College, Judy Bolton Jarrett considers herself a “lifelong student of art” though her formal training as a visual artist did not begin until she took her first watercolor class from Erica Hoyt in 1973. Jarrett went on to study with the late Robert Mills, Virginia Fouche Bolton, Jeanne Dobie, Christopher Schink, and Frank Webb, among others. Jarrett began showing her work in the 1970s but became more serious about the business of art in 1980. With a new gallery show opening in Columbia’s historic Vista this fall, Jarrett is reflective these days on the passage of time as well as the changes and consistencies in her art, but still recognizes the importance of being a continual student. “In my professional development, I have learned from so many along the way,” she says, “not only about painting but also about marketing and exhibiting and what to do and what not to do. It’s an ongoing tutorial.”

About her work over the years, Jarrett says, “My first and only love for many years was watercolor, and I certainly remain a staunch lover of that medium; it’s challenging and unpredictable in some ways and a fine workout in design and execution. A few years ago I had the challenge of painting with acrylics using the texture of heavy oils. A New York gallery owner showing my work asked if I could do that, and I said, “Sure!” So I set about learning all I could about acrylics and adding mediums to give the impasto sense of oils. Painting on canvases and other surfaces was challenging and fun, so I continued to develop my style, changing from heavier acrylics to fluid, to which I added different weights of mediums, depending on the desired result.”

Jarrett’s upcoming exhibit, “Passages,” at City Art on Lincoln Street opens October 23rd. “Wendy Wells recently saw some of my mixed media pieces, especially those involving discarded parts of clocks and other time pieces, and asked me to do this exhibit,” Jarrett says. The title encompasses a use of the passages of time, which also focus on themes of positive change. Each painting has its own message for the viewer and is a reminder of some of the daily paths we walk.” —CB

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PROFILE

AL BLACK

WHEN AL BLACK SHAKES SOMEONE'S HAND, he grips it like a stern football coach. But then, a few moments later, he might be talking in a soft voice about the genius of Leonard Cohen and the sweet sadness of "Bird on a Wire." It's this combination of ferocity and vulnerability that begins to hint at Black's many past lives, which include coach, musician, chess player, poetry reading organizer and now, author. His book of poetry *I Only Left for Tea* (Muddy Ford Press, 2014) came out at the end of the August. Summing up his history, Black says with a wry chuckle: "I'm just an old hippie."

But "old hippie" does little to reveal just how busy Black stays. Since 2008, when he moved to Columbia from Indiana, Black has played a major role in fusing different elements of Columbia's art, music, and poetry scenes together.

When his wife, Carol, took a job at Newberry College six years ago, Black found himself in a new state, unanchored from all the expectations he'd carried in the Midwest—a natural opportunity to trade his old story in for a new one. "We all live myths. When I was in Indiana, I was an athlete. A coach. I wasn't [known as] the guy who wrote poetry," Black says.

But Black *does* write poetry. He has since he was 9. And not just a poem every now and then: he fills notebook after notebook, sometimes writing seven poems

in one day. Except, his whole life, he'd never shared them with anyone, not even with his wife. They were private portals, a place to channel the observations and emotions he felt he needed to shield from the world. In Columbia, though, he started—for the first time—to seek out poets and creative spirits to nurture and in turn, they helped nurture him. From this, the Mind Gravy community was born.

Mind Gravy, in its current iteration, meets every Wednesday from 8-10 pm in Drip in Five Points. A blend of music and poetry, it provides a space for new and experienced poets to share work without the usual confines of a stereotypical poetry reading.

"[Al] welcomes everyone—gay, straight, bi, trans, black, white, young, old, professional, newbies—to Mind Gravy, and I think it's this 'outside of the lines' coloring that makes contemporary poetry so dynamic and fresh" says poet Cassie Premo-Steele.

Black's experience as a soccer coach is evident in the way he talks about the poets who arrive at Mind Gravy. "A good coach is all about empowering. He tries to push his players but never break them. At Mind Gravy, I'm always trying to empower the poet and that bleeds down into the crowd. It's a very supportive atmosphere," Black says with pride.



PHOTO BY FORREST CLONTS

Black spent the first few months of Mind Gravy listening to others read, when—with the encouragement of the other poets—he decided it was finally time to read his own work. The first poem he ever read to an audience, "Wild Raspberry Stains," is included in *I Only Left for Tea*.

Ed Madden, who edited *Tea*, describes Black's voice as one of incredible conversational intimacy.

"Al engages with his audience in a way that is characteristic of spoken word," Madden says. But, he adds, "[h]e doesn't depend on the kinds of repetition

and invocation that are typically found in performance poetry."

In addition to Mind Gravy, Black organizes two other events, Bones of the Spirit and Songversation (both held at Sun Spirit Yoga in West Columbia).

When I asked Madden to sum up Black in one word, he didn't hesitate: "tireless." He explains: "after the book was done, he sent me a whole new batch of poems." In fact, the day after his interview for *Jasper* he sent a follow-up email: he'd already written another poem to share. He called it "The Interview."

— ELIZABETH BREEN

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LEAVING BOGOTÁ

Poem by Juan David Cruz

Leaving Bogotá
has never been easy.
A piece of paper
that has been stolen
by the summer wind
and flies upwards
and away
with no purpose whatsoever
would surely know how it feels like
to leave Bogotá.

The voice of my mother,
the voice of my father
dissolving in ethereal shadows
within the night
of my memories.
To live is to remember,
but forgetting is also living.

I am nothing,
outside Bogotá I am no one.
Like the sound of a string
that vibrates effortlessly
on an empty guitar,
in the old hands of a deaf man.

Leaving Bogotá is never easy,
leaving her is a painful
and heavy routine.
I know my lines already,
I go through the motions,
I am used to it,
but it still is
never easy.

When I leave Bogotá
I always leave myself behind.
I leave my friends and my brother
and the joy of my childhood,
my sister and my grandparents,
my love
and my grey bride.
Bogotá has always been
my cold silver bride.

Leaving Bogotá is never easy,
because every time I go away
I leave myself behind.
And so,
tonight I am someone else.

Leaving Bogotá
will never be easy.
It has never
been
easy.

Juan David Cruz was born in Bogotá, Colombia. He immigrated to the USA in 2010, in order to complete a PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina. Cruz's work has been published in *Escarabeo: Revista literaria*, an independent Colombian literary magazine. In 2011 he published a collection of short stories, *Dream a Little Dream of Me: cuentos siniestros*, and in 2012 he published the short novel *La noche del fin del mundo*.

TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE HEART

Poem by Elizabeth Breen

It is not long after you find out your mother is sick
that you take the stage at a karaoke bar downtown.

You sing the words off the monitor—determined not to miss
a note. And there, in the rum-dark bar, you begin to imagine

your voice a piercing siren of beauty. You are a conquistador
of song, ambassador to life and all music everywhere; you are

the Christopher Columbus of acoustic eighties power ballads,
which makes sense only to you. You are drunk.

Not long before this you were someone who flossed regularly,
filed your nails. Someone said you have a kind smile.

But the seasons have uncorked their own strange ideas,
the world as indifferent to you as this room of moon-gray faces—

disease now being kept at bay by a blue screen ,
the words, as always, dissolving right after they appear.

Elizabeth Breen is a recent graduate of the MFA program at the University of South Carolina.
Her poetry has appeared most recently in *Redivider*, *Jabberwock Review*, *Revolution House*, and *Raleigh Review*.

A Dystopian World that We Kind of Recognize

Julia Elliott's *The Wilds*



EXCERPT FROM THE SHORT STORY, "CAVEMAN DIET"

Clad in a deerskin loincloth, his ripped body gleaming with boar lard, Zugnord looms above us on a stone dais. We are flabby newbies, he tactfully suggests, snatched from the industrial teat of civilization, where we've grown battery-fed and soft, our blood percolating with poisons. We are half-dead, our brains zombified by office work and Internet surfing. We are discontent. But so was Zugnord, once. Projected behind him on a vast screen is his former self, Wilbur Sims, a paunchy, befuddled dumpling of a man in rumpled khakis. He squints at the camera like some subterranean rodent.

We gasp. For how could this clammy, balding creature have transformed into Zugnord? Zugnord with his glistening pecs and flowing Tarzan hair? Zugnord with his bold eagle eyes? Zugnord, who looks as though he could leap over a boulder and tackle a mastodon, gut it with a piece of expertly chiseled flint?

The Wilds by Julia Elliott / Printed with permission from Tin House Books, 2014

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason why, but for the past two or three years I have had this insatiable desire to read every short story collection that I could get my hands on. I have read and enjoyed dozens of short story collections; some from Nobel Prize winning authors and some from the latest indie darlings, but none of these collections have caused me to annoy my wife as much as Julia Elliott's debut collection, *The Wilds*.

Each night, while I wandered into Elliott's harrowing world of somewhat recognizable dystopias, I would lean over to my wife and poke her while I read passages aloud and tried to discuss the various intricacies that made each of the stories come to life. Whether it's through the sweat-soaked terror that two middle school girls relished in as their friend's Meemaw sucked down Tootsie Rolls while letting the Holy Spirit overtake her in the opening story, "The Rapture," or a disquieting tone of laughter that accompanies us as we read the title story and witness the awkwardness of obsessive young love in a girl's coming-of-age tale that is accented with ancient potions, bird skull crowns, and

a wolf man mask, each of Elliott's stories has the precision and control to give her readers both the joy of surprise and the comfort of an inevitability that can only be recognized in hindsight. And maybe that is part of the driving force behind this collection.

In each story, we enter a world that we, at least in part, recognize. In stories like "Feral," we read on as a young teacher tries to control her seventh-graders while they slug their way through Dickens in a classroom portable. We think back on all of the assorted levels of hell that we've experienced, and we then determine that we have a pretty strong grasp of the scene unfolding in front of us. We might even decide that we have been in that exact same portable. And that's when Elliott takes our newly found confidence and upends it with her own brand of the Southern Gothic, creating varying degrees of dystopian landscapes that pull us into the unfamiliar just long enough to allow for the surprise that comes when we settle in and then realize that it is not the alien place that we had hoped it would be.

Not every story in this collection is distinctly southern, and they don't all fit neatly under an umbrella of dystopia, but each of

Elliott's stories sits right beside the other ones and work to tell a larger narrative. As a collection the stories come together better than almost any other collection I've seen. There is not a weak story in this book. But as with all great collections, there are stand-outs. "LIMBS" is a short story that I could re-read year-after-year with the continual hope that Elise and Bob might teach me just a little more about life than I knew before I sat down. (And I doubt that they would ever disappoint me.) "Jaws" is every bit as strong, but I doubt if I would want to sit through it time-and-time again. It is unflinching as it drags you into a second person narrative that you often wish wasn't something that you could identify with. But that's the thing about Elliott's collection. Her stories give us those moments of discomfort, but they also leave us holding the book after we finish reading each of them. These are the types of stories that leave us sitting in our beds in that brief moment of silence, as we try to hold onto that unnamed feeling that we felt when we read the story's final lines, before nudging our loved ones and stumbling over our own words as we try to verbalize things that we have only begun to process. — WILL GARLAND

Jon Sealy's *The Whiskey Baron*

No Country for Drunk Millhands



“
... a very highly
recommended
release from the
always-reliable
independent press
Hub City.
”

STRIKING AND LEAN, debut novelist Jon Sealy's *The Whiskey Baron* (Hub City Press, 2014) presents a tale of black-market moonshine in an upstate South Carolina mill town, Bell, SC, not far outside of Spartanburg. It's a place where poor folks scratch out a living best they can, where a little corn liquor's just the ticket for winding down after a ten-hour shift at the looms. Too bad it's 1932 and alcohol is illegal in the United States.

Whether residents are working in the lint-choked mills or for the rum-running Larthan Tull, the county's chief bootlegger, danger lurks in the most mundane locations: the workplace, its clattering machinery poised to lop off a digit at the slightest mistake; clapboard houses, in the muddy streets of the company-owned mill village; or the town tavern, which owing to the law of the land has been turned into a house of crime and vice.

A weary Sheriff Chambers, pushing seventy, is called to the scene of a double murder outside the tavern. The story he's told by Tull's barkeep—an argument among drunks over a shady business deal—adds up. Mostly. Close to retirement and already conflicted over the corruption surrounding the illegal liquor trade, Chambers feels that there could be more to the account of the alleged perp, a wounded fugitive nicknamed 'Mary Jane' Hopewell, himself a rival to Larthan. Chambers, the nominal protagonist, is faced here with his principal quandary: Is it worth getting mixed up in a deadly turf war among organized criminals—criminals he and the corrupt federal agents in Columbia have allowed to thrive? He's not sure. He's tired of this crap. Who can blame him?

From this compelling opening we delve into the lives of those affected by the liquor trade: Mary Jane himself, wounded and on the run; his younger brother, the suitor of the bootlegger's daughter, about to begin his

long life in the mills while watching his sibling strike out in the liquor trade; Aunt Lou, a matronly Southern belle of a contraband-distributing Charlotte crime boss; and Larthan Tull, increasingly driven to violence by the ruthlessness of the trade he plies. That he'll kill to maintain.

These narrative threads converge in ways that aren't particularly surprising, but then, Sealy isn't interested in reinventing this sort of crime narrative, merely singing his version of the tune. Point of view shifts from character to character are clear and effective without ever straying too far from Sealy's assured narrative voice. If some of these people feel a little less 'real,' that's okay—the setting itself lives and breathes on its own. But forget the plot: this novel features a vital message about prohibition. Like the best literary novels, this one gives us a window through which we may view our current culture. Might 'Mary Jane' as a character name suggest a modern version of our ongoing war on illicit substances? Surely the novel's question—"Is the collateral damage worth the purported benefit of the regulation?"—suggests so.

Overall *The Whiskey Baron* represents a sturdy, Cormac McCarthyesque debut from Sealy, a Virginia-based, South Carolina-born author with an assured new voice. If this book doesn't read particularly *Southern*—these could be any ruthless gangsters and weary cops—Sealy's descriptions of the surroundings and travails of his characters never fails to make a satisfying, full impression in the mind.

Long story short: *The Whiskey Baron* arrives as a very highly recommended release from the always-reliable independent press Hub City. I can offer no higher compliment than my sincere anticipation of future impressive work from Mr. Sealy.

— JAMES D. MCCALLISTER

The Sisterhood of a Columbia Rock Band

Screaming Divas by Suzanne Kamata



ROCK AND ROLL has always been mostly about fantasy. That's not to discount how exciting and fascinating the music itself can be, but it's always been more about cultural meaning, about expressing anger and rebellion, love and lust, and all those other inef-fable feelings that come from simply being young and alive at the same time, than about banging out three chords and a chorus.

Unfortunately, it's also a fantasy which has belonged almost exclusively to boys. That's why things like Girls Rock Columbia, a local music and self-empowerment summer camp, are so important. It's also, it seems, the central impetus behind Suzanne Kamata's new book *Screaming Divas*.

A young adult novel, *Screaming Divas* follows the story of an unlikely punk rock quartet of young high school-age girls as they form an R&B-inspired punk band in Columbia, South Carolina, a town which Kamata

snuggles her story cozily in to.

The band and the four protagonists consists of the scarred beauty queen Cassie, the shy, unrequited Cassie-crushing Esther, the former violin prodigy Harumi, and the ring-leader, the irascible and law-troubled Trudy. Each chapter is narrated in the first-person by a different member, giving the reader full access to the emotions and motivations that inspire each to take up rock music and what continues to inspire them.

But while making music is the central thrust of the narrative, Kamata intuitively understands that moments of creation and performance only become important when placed in context with the variety of real-life concerns which plague these girls as they unsteadily embrace adulthood. She presents the formation of the band as a group of up-starts who derive as much pleasure in their identity as rockers—and the sisterhood being in a band provides—as they do in the act of creation. And, instead of rocketing to stardom, the Screaming Divas as a band have a more typical musical career—they have mild local acclaim for their frenetic Supremes covers and scattered originals, play a few out-of-town gigs, and record just one demo tape before the novel ends.

In fact, more of the story is given over to examining Esther's struggles to find a comfortable community for herself as a closeted lesbian, the conservative family pressures Harumi receives as a second-generation Japanese-American, and the dark familial dysfunction undergirding Cassie's beauty queen perfection. Along, of course, with the kinds of fraught friendships and romances that go with the territory.

And, perhaps most importantly for a book aimed at 13-17 year olds, *Screaming Divas* neither avoids provocative territory nor provides easy assurances. Kamata does an excellent job of wedding these dramatic

narrative arcs with what *could* feel like a laundry-list collection of after-school special chapters on sex and drugs had she not handled them with sensitivity and care. Part of this comes from a balanced prose voice which rarely veers into the melodramatic drivel that such material could easily embrace, but it also seems to stem from a desire to win her audience over with the right balance of innocence and grit required to win the "realism" tag.

The lone exception here comes when Kamata must contrive an ending, and it is there where the story spills over into melodrama and briefly seems to drop its aversion to after-school special sensationalism. While it is doubtful most readers will be terribly put off by what feels like a rather predictable ending, the turn towards familiar tropes strikes a disappointing note for a novel which seemed intent on striking a more nuanced course.

Despite this small quibble, the novel is still a valuable and worthwhile effort. By making a story ostensibly about rock and roll and turning it into a story about friendship and growing up, Kamata makes a move similar to that of the Girls Rock camp, which uses the auspices of making music to empower young girls in all facets of their lives. In fact, the novel's frank and judgment-free treatment of so many touchy subjects would likely make great fodder for future iterations of the camp here and across the country. It is, at its heart, an artistic expression of the argument underlying Girls Rock and the riot grrrl movement itself—not only do we need to fight for gender equality in rock and roll, but we also need to recognize how the current inequality on stage is linked to a host of issues in so many facets of women's daily lives. — KYLE PETERSEN

The Consequences of Choices in Mark Powell's *The Sheltering*



IN HIS INTRODUCTION to Mark Powell's *The Sheltering* (University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Pat Conroy writes that this is “a philosophical novel with a belief system that collapses in on itself because the membranes of our storm-tossed faith always seem so gossamer and imperiled.” Powell's characters find themselves in the midst of this collapse, shipwrecked on the shores of middle age, the successes of their early adulthoods having sunk, or trapped under the weight of their histories. When we meet the novel's first protagonist, Luther Redding, he's piloting a drone over Afghanistan, waiting for the signal to launch the missile that will reduce the man's life to a bright flash and a burned-out truck. He takes the job not out of passion or patriotic fervor, but out of need: a job to keep his family afloat after the end of his career as an airline pilot and the conflagration of his and his wife Pamela's fortune in the financial turmoil of the late 2000s. He is grasping for a rope in a stormy sea, and structures

of authority—the military, police—provide a sense of something firm and fixed when the ground beneath his family seems to have given way to a chasm.

Bobby Rosen is a former soldier, tethered to his recently-released-from-prison brother by a sense of guilt and a shared history of violence: his victim a child in Sadr City, his brother's a teenage boy killed in the boxing ring. Only Bobby seems troubled by the bloodshed. His brother Donny is sharp and sociopathic, dragging Bobby and others along in a net of guilt, obligation, and wishful thinking. Bobby is outraged when he discovers that Donny has led his ex and her ill child to live with him in a crack house, but Bobby is caught as well, unable to escape the role of unwitting, if unsurprised, accomplice.

Disappointed in the outcomes of their choices and unsure of themselves, these characters go through the motions of their lives as if paralyzed, and so Bobby, drowning in regret, has no answer to his brother's predatory single-mindedness, and Luther plunges into the comforts of booze and fast food with an appetite tinged with self-loathing. In addition to Luther and Bobby, we also get to know Pamela, Luther's wife, busy pursuing the highest form of enlightenment to be found at the gym and expensive yoga retreats, and the Reddings' two daughters: the beautiful and rebellious Katie, convinced that her father will spend his last days imprisoned for war crimes in the Hague, and the dumpy and resentful Lucy, clinging to a fundamentalist faith that assures her of moral superiority to her sister. With their parents focused exclusively on the figures of their bank accounts, both Redding girls assert their identities as an indictment of their parents' choices.

The Sheltering reads like an indictment of a generation, a confession that, as Luther Redding thinks, there are no competent adults under 65. But if it is an indictment, it is also

to some extent a confession, even an absolution. Powell spares no details in putting these post-2007 Americans under the microscope to expose their greed and pettiness, but he also has great sympathy for them, unfolding their conflicted motives and internal dialogues in prose that adopts the perspectives of the characters it follows: now plunging into the rum soaked regrets of Luther Redding, now the tortured conscience of Bobby Rosen, or Lucy Redding's evangelical rationalizations.

One of the novel's overarching concerns is with consequences, the way that things done on a whim or in service of a passing desire have effects that ripple through years, families, and communities. But the novel also portrays how alone each individual is in facing these consequences, and how inadequate the lines of communication are between brothers and sisters, parents and children. If the novel is in part an exploration of the dangers of lacking a convincing narrative or world view on which one could found an identity and chart a course of action, it is also a reminder of how harmful such conviction can be, and how much harm can be done in the confidence of one's own righteousness. While the novel changes characters and perspectives along the way, its adult characters share this melancholy backwards-looking, asking themselves how they arrived at their places and how they are to proceed. These are heavy questions, but Powell has rendered them compelling because his characters are recognizable: our neighbors and ourselves in the strange, uncertain landscape of America after the financial collapse and prolonged wars of the 2000s. For all of their faults and failings, these characters are rendered sympathetic and familiar in the light of Powell's prose, and this alone makes *The Sheltering* well worth reading. — JONATHAN BUTLER

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The Columbia Museum of Art: Still Collecting after All These Years

BY WILL SOUTH



Most of us carry the world around in the palm of our hand. In an instant, we can access spoken words and moving images from the sublime to the unspeakably ridiculous, alternating between the useful and the useless with equal facility. We can join global conversations, and post the minutiae of our own lives (careful, would-be job hunters). Privacy itself is now a debatable concept. In this (relatively) new era of instant everything, can something like a painting hanging off in a museum somewhere—an object that makes no sound and does not move—still be relevant to new and ever younger audiences?

You need not skip ahead to see that the (wholly biased) answer here will be “of course.” Real art objects not only remain relevant, they may be more important to us than ever. There are reasons both philosophical and practical for this, and, in no particular order, here are some of those reasons

The image on your hand-held device is both

a translation and a substitute. Every image on a screen is planographic (physically existing on one plane only, that of its screen) and therefore lacks textural depth and tactile complexity. That image is not, then, and never will be, the real thing. If people were always and everywhere satisfied with translations and substitutions, then paintings would, indeed, be in trouble.

Happily (for museums in general and my job security personally), people hunger for deeper experiences. The best evidence paintings (ok, and sculpture) are around to stay is the look on the faces of those who come to the museum and stare at a Botticelli or Monet or Moran. They engage in a way they do not with the tiny screen they constantly carry. What they see before them is infinitely subtle and sensuous: the presence of the human hand and heart that worked on the object, an object fully present in its non-digital materiality. They see, in short, the real thing. They need for the image to be silent so that they can concentrate on it; it must be unmoving for them to take in its detail. That moment in front of a great work of art is an irreplaceable experience in which people are moved emotionally and spiritually.

Once in the habit of looking at art in the flesh numerous possibilities arise. First is always the possibility of pleasure and stimulation, worthy ends in and of themselves. But, there is more. One discovers what others value and what entire societies have valued for centuries. A two-hundred-year-old portrait of George Washington reminds us that Americans have always recognized and honored leadership, courage and accomplishment; a two-thousand-year-old statue of a Boddhisatva is an elegant expression that reality extends beyond what we see.

Spend a few hours in a museum and silent, unmoving things may speak with more force than a phone.

A whisper, an artist once told me, is louder than a shout.

Happily (again), people need not give up their phones or pads or future google glasses in order to enjoy and learn from objects. We can have both. The practical benefit is simply this: the quality experiences derived from engaging with art give us additional inspiration, knowledge, pleasure and hope: art shows us the best that we can be. Art always adds to our life, it never subtracts. As the world gets increasingly complex, art confers a survival advantage. Even mathematically, then, art is relevant (an interesting way to think of it).

And, when looking at art, a viewer is never “just looking.” We are participating. We are thinking and feeling about a world full of ideas and options. What we take from art helps us navigate this world. It is thus both treasure and tool, it is a warehouse of things and yet it is no one thing. Through going to see art, we almost always come back to ourselves and our own desire to know both what is “out there” as well as what is in us.

So the Columbia Museum of Art will keep on collecting and caring for art, all the while using more and more technology to interpret and share it, believing that a great museum—one relevant, useful and beautiful—is at the center of a great community.

*Will South is the
Chief Curator of the
Columbia Museum of Art*



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