

# JASPER



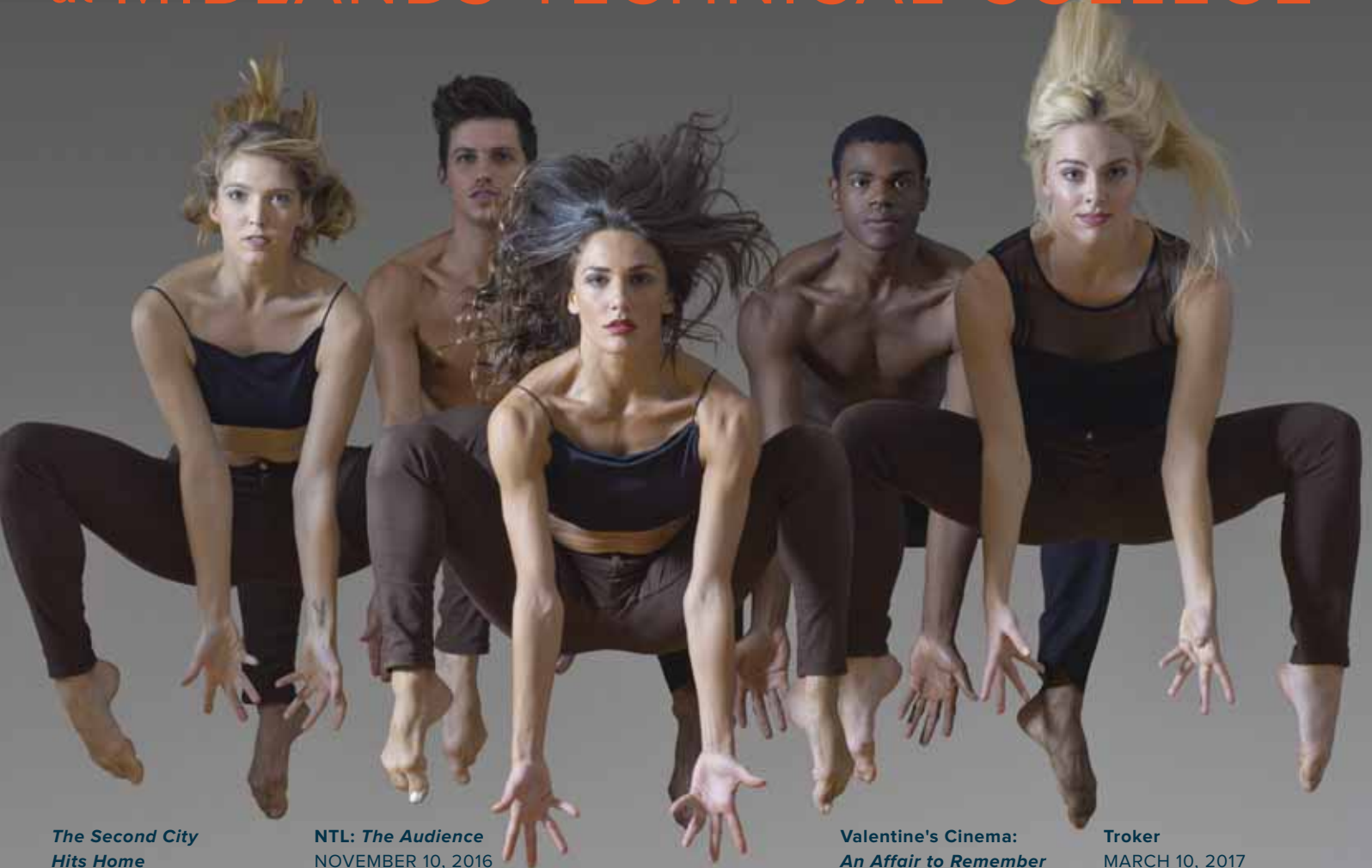
08

NICOLE  
KALLENBERG  
HEERE

2016 | 2017 Season

# HARBISON THEATRE

at MIDLANDS TECHNICAL COLLEGE



*The Second City*  
**Hits Home**  
SEPTEMBER 23, 2016

**Lucky Chops**  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

**Gayle Tzemach Lemmon**  
OCTOBER 11, 2016

**Romantic Refrains**  
OCTOBER 16, 2016

**NTL: Jane Eyre**  
OCTOBER 18, 2016

**NTL: The Audience**  
NOVEMBER 10, 2016

**Parsons Dance Company**  
NOVEMBER 18, 2016

**The Texas Tenors: Deep**  
*in the Heart of Christmas*  
DECEMBER 1, 2016

**Holiday Pops**  
DECEMBER 11, 2016

**Wiesenthal**  
JANUARY 20/21, 2017

**NTL: Les Liaisons**  
*Dangereuses (Dangerous*  
*Liaisons)*  
JANUARY 24, 2017

**Judy Carmichael**  
FEBRUARY 4, 2017

**Tabitha Epperson: Home**  
FEBRUARY 7, 2017

**Valentine's Cinema:**  
*An Affair to Remember*  
FEBRUARY 11, 2017

**Ladysmith Black**  
**Mambazo**  
FEBRUARY 26, 2017

**International Cat**  
**Video Festival**  
MARCH 3, 2017

**NTL: Medea**  
MARCH 7, 2017

**Troker**  
MARCH 10, 2017

**Joel Sartore:**  
*Building the Photo Ark*  
MARCH 14, 2017

**What's Going On**  
MARCH 24, 2017

**Daring Escapades**  
APRIL 2, 2017

© Lois Greenfield



Cleaning Supplies by Nicole Kallenberg Heere

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CENTERFOLD / JOE BYRNE



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NICOLE KALLENBERG HEERE

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STAN BROWN

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## Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of *Jasper Magazine*. As you'll notice, this is the fall 2016 issue of the magazine, and the next time you see us will be in spring of 2017. We've been busy this summer building the Jasper Project, our new non-profit, arts-engineering organization under which *Jasper Magazine* is now published. Part of our transition from being a for-profit publication to being part of a larger, project-oriented arts organization is the change from coming to you five times per year to being published twice each year, but in a larger format – 96 pages! And, of course our literary journal, *Fall Lines – a literary convergence*, will continue to be published every summer as part of the Jasper Project.

We're getting used to the changes and feel certain you'll be comfortable with them soon, too.

Part of the excitement of putting together the Jasper Project has been realizing the potential an organization like this has. Throughout the years, Jasper has produced and sponsored a number of programs and projects in addition to publishing the magazine. There's Wet Ink – a spoken word poetry group led by Kendal Turner, ARTS101—a lecture series led by local professional artists, and Jasper's Nightstand—a community-led book club, for a few examples. Last year we put together a multidisciplinary arts commemoration of the burning of Columbia

called *Art from the Ashes*, which resulted in an extended exhibition and the publication of a book of poetry and prose. And this year, with the help of a Connecting Communities Grant from the Central Carolina Community Foundation, we've created a multidisciplinary commemoration of the first year anniversary of the 1000 year flood that struck Columbia last October, called *Marked by the Water*, which you can read about starting on page 70 of this issue.

We're looking forward to facilitating the creation of many more project-oriented arts endeavors, too. Some will be on-going, like the 2nd Act Film Festival (page 78) which is under the direction of film editor Wade Sellers and back for its third year, and others will be one-offs, like *Marked by the Water*, led by Ed Madden, Mary Gilkerson, and myself.

Within the next few months you should be hearing about two new projects coming from the Jasper Project. Jasper's Players is a project-oriented theatre arts experience, the first one led by principal Larry Hembree (who is also the president of the board of directors of the Jasper Project), in which local theatre patrons have the opportunity to produce a new play and give a group of talented young theatre artists a shot at learning first-hand about how all the moving pieces in a theatre production come together.

We'll also be introducing the Virgin Art Show which will allow us to offer an emerging visual artist, selected by a jury of Colum-

bia's most insightful visual arts experts, their first ever solo show. Stay tuned to social media and the Jasper Project website ([JasperProject.org](http://JasperProject.org)) for details announcing the application process for all these opportunities.

While operating as a non-profit doesn't make the operation of all these exciting arts projects any less expensive, (we do that by pinching pennies and cutting corners everywhere we can), it does make them tax-deductible. And it allows us to share the great feelings with our readers, sponsors, and guild members that come from validating a young artist's work, producing a life-affirming and community-growing arts project, publishing a magazine, and more. So, if you haven't yet, please consider joining or renewing your membership in the Jasper Guild (page 6). Your guild membership includes a copy of Jasper delivered to your mailbox or, if you want to pick up your own copy from one of our many distribution sights, let us know and you can deduct the full cost of your membership each year.

Thank you from all of us at Jasper—for your continued support, patronage, and sponsorship and, as always, for reading *Jasper Magazine*.

Take care,



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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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ISN'T IT TIME THAT YOU JOIN THE

# JASPER GUILD

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,

"I helped  
make this  
happen  
and here's  
my name  
to prove it!"

## *There's Good News for Jasper Guild Members!*

New Guild Memberships and Renewals are Now

### ***TAX-DEDUCTIBLE\****

Please consider becoming a part of the Jasper Team at one of the following levels:

#### ***APPRENTICE***

1 year delivery of Jasper to your home your name listed in  
Jasper Magazine for 1 year - \$50

#### ***JOURNEYMAN***

The above + your name in LARGE LETTERS - \$100

#### ***MASTER***

The above + free admission to the November 2016 JAY ceremony - \$250

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Practicing artists are invited to join the Jasper Guild and see  
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\*above the cost of a subscription (\$40) to the new (September 2016) perfect bound, archival Jasper Magazine – if you prefer to donate the full cost of membership by not receiving Jasper in your mailbox in September, March, and July, please indicate so upon joining, or contact [Annie@Jaspercolumbia.com](mailto:Annie@Jaspercolumbia.com)

# NICOLE KALLENBERG HEERE AND FEMINIST POP ART

BY CINDI BOITER





# N

icole Kallenberg Heere is the type of artist whose work one could easily chart in a pleasing upward angle on a basic line graph with X being age and Y being talent. Certainly, there would be a few stagnant lines where she stalled for brief periods waiting to unlock some metaphorical door, and there were even a few times when she became discouraged and didn't pick up a paintbrush for a bit. But for the most part, this exceptional visual artist has created a path for herself characterized by significant growth and ability which, given her level of proficiency, now bodes unusually well for her future. Heere is comfortably aware of her increasing capacity for creating art and her matter-of-fact perspective is as refreshingly clean and truthful as her work. The 35-year-old artist and feminist only recently began using her spouse's last name as part of her own, mostly because she enjoys the word play it provides for where she is in her journey as an artist – as in, “I am Heere!” This is what Heere looks like now.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BREE BURCHFIELD

Heere grew up in a small town east of San Antonio where she began lessons in painting at the age of 6 with a local artist named Miss Marx. A natural, Heere continued art classes throughout high school and considers herself part of the Bob Ross generation of artists, though she was aware of the point at which she moved into a more advanced level of development. "It was when I painted a realistic horse," she says. "It was a huge moment for me because I realized I was good and that I had moved beyond the Bob Ross style of painting."

The product of a highly supportive community and family, Heere was practicing hyper-realistic landscapes when she entered the University of Texas at San Antonio to major in studio art, though she took a break to attend Texas A & M to study color theory under the late Hispanic artist Bruno Andrade. At 21, Heere returned home to care for her younger brother and father, and her mother, who was dying of cancer.

"Even though I was the art star of my hometown I felt like all the other artists around me were leaving town to study in more exciting places, like New York and San Francisco," Heere says. "For me, there was just no way I could do that. It wasn't possible." While at the time it bothered Heere that she wasn't venturing out to the big cities that seemed to hold so much promise, today she has no regrets. "In hindsight I feel like I stick out in the crowd now as a working artist because I wasn't trained by the same people as everyone else."



Though Heere has shown her work from New York and Miami to the Netherlands and Poland, she says she “trained in the South and learned from artists from Mexico, so my color is a little different. I’m not so designy. My art is very Southern because I’ve never been in a position where that was diluted.”

“Love it or hate it,” Heere says, “There is a vintage quality to Southern art that beckons back to the 1950s, and I wouldn’t be painting the art that I am if I were somewhere else.”

When she was a young professional artist, Heere wanted to be like Caravaggio, so she incorporated his approach and combined it with the color she learned from Andrade, whose influences trace back to his mentors who studied under Hans Hofman and Josef Albers. Heere says she, “Monet’d up the brushstroke” to create her own style and worked from that base because she mentally could not escape it. “I wanted to,” she says. “I wanted to branch out and show as an artist.”

When she graduated from college, which took six years due to the time required to care for her mother, Heere did not get the encouragement she needed to pursue a career in art, so she sold real estate rather than pursue her passion. “I worked at a preschool, a daycare center, a doctor’s office – all part-time in order to make ends meet,” she says.

But a road-trip to New Orleans changed the young artist’s life. “Art was everywhere,” she recalls, “and I felt truly happy being surrounded by such energy. I went home, but I couldn’t shake that feeling.” During a return trip a year later, Heere met with artists and





gallery owners and made contact with one particular artist who agreed that, if she could find a way to get to New Orleans to live, he would mentor her on the business of art.

“I went home, sold my car, and bought an old beater car that only broke down at stop lights, drove to New Orleans and became a street artist,” she says. “It was the most amazing experience of my life. The people of New Orleans are the most open-minded, accepting people I’ve ever come across,” she continues. “I only got voodoo thrown on me twice!”

Heere was taken under the wing of New Orleans artist Ronald Jones who offered her a level of acceptance among the other street artists of New Orleans. And while it took several weeks to make her first sale, she says she “learned what her clients look like and how to sell her art to them” in a short amount of time. She eventually found herself brave enough to hang nudes by the St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square.

Heere spent a year successfully selling art on the street in New Orleans—learning about herself, her work, and the business side of promoting oneself as an artist, before she married in 2012 and moved to Austin, where she was surprised to be invited to exhibit in her first ever RAW Art Exhibit.

A year later, Heere relocated to Columbia when her spouse, Bob Heere, became the program director for the Ph.D. program in Sport Management and Entertainment at USC. Unaware of the arts opportunities in Columbia, Heere opened a gallery in Charleston called the Kallenberg Gallery on the corner of Broad and Church Streets. Three months later the gallery burned down, forcing Heere to return to Columbia with her art.

Feeling that the universe was speaking to her, Heere set out to accomplish a complete overhaul of her art in search of renewal. “I knew something was missing, but I didn’t know what,” Heere says. “I wanted to move away from the traditional but I didn’t want to get lost in the crowd. I paid attention to everything that was happening in the art world, in Miami and LA, street art, graffiti art, everything, but I kept feeling that I would still get lost.”

“One day, after I had been listening to a lot of Lily Allen I thought to myself, I wish I could paint like Lily Allen sings,” the artist recalls. “How could I make that happen? That was my challenge!” British singer-songwriter Lily Allen is known for her progressive and feminist lyrics that graphically call out the patriarchy for subordinating women sexually, socially, politically, and economically.

Heere reports that she had a few flops—paintings that didn’t turn out the way she wanted—but she still felt inspired.

Then it happened.

The painting, *You Want Me to Do What?* depicts an African American woman in a traditional black and white maid’s uniform wearing wrist-length, yellow, rubber gloves over two hands with both middle fingers powerfully extended, unequivocally inviting the viewer to flip off, for lack of a better term. The model smiles happily. Heere was happy, too.

“That’s a Lily Allen song,” Heere nods. “That’s a Lily Allen *party!*”

“When my husband came home from work that day he said, ‘Oh my god, that’s it! That’s who you are!’” Heere says.

Though Heere knew she had moved into a new stage for her art she still felt shy about presenting the work and had to work to “cross that threshold.” Not all of the pieces worked. She was advised to lengthen her stroke because the shorter stroke could come off as









intimidating, like something someone would see in a museum. And she often had to ask herself, “What would Lily do?” when facing new subject matter. “I was terrified to show the new work.”

When she finally did it was via Instagram

By then Heere was well into creating feminist paintings reappropriating iconic images in order to convey progressive messages. *Dirty Laundry*, for example, is a self-portrait in which the attractive artist poses provocatively between a basket of laundry and a can of gasoline as she casually drops a lit match into the dirty clothes. *Mommy’s favorite hobby* shows a perfectly coiffed 1950s housewife tending to a lush marijuana plant, and *I Don’t Care That My Husband Works Late With the Secretary* depicts a happy housewife whisking batter and a bottle marked POISON on the kitchen counter. In all these images, and more, the models are confident in their decisions—decisions that have surely radicalized them.

Heere had toyed with this level of irreverence and politics before in a series of Barbie paintings which depicted the iconic doll in transgressive personages and careers. For example, *Bourbon Street Barbie* has her blouse permanently raised to display perfectly nippleless breasts while she wears Mardi Gras beads and drinks a mysterious and surely alcoholic green liquid from a yard glass. *Mecca Barbie* is dressed in full Burqa—only her heavily made-up eyes are visible—and sports a Gucci bag and a leopard on a red satin leash.

Heere didn’t stop with Barbie dolls and 1950s-era housewives.

“I had been making the housewives for about eight months and I wanted to turn masculinity on its head, so I tried to imagine the best example of hypermasculinity and came up with Batman. I thought about it for a while and then, one day while I was vacuuming the house it came to me,” she says. “I’m going to make Batman vacuum!” From there, Heere created Spiderman folding laundry, Iron Man ironing, a pink Darth Vader, and a whole cadre of Storm Troopers in various yoga poses.

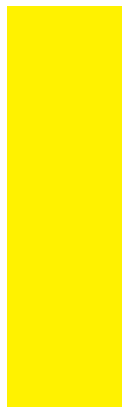
“I want boys to know they can vacuum their rooms and fold their own clothes,” Heere says. “It’s not a girl’s job—it’s a human’s job.”

Heere takes her feminism as seriously as she does her art. “I want to reach women with my art,” she says. “I want them to connect to it. Women shouldn’t feel like they’re expected to do everything and do it with a smile on their faces. We can get past this and I want to help do it. This is my calling as a Southern woman.”

The artist wears her feminism well and in a manner that is easily relatable. Her consciousness wasn’t raised until she was 23-years-old and engaged to a man who got a co-worker pregnant. “I didn’t have much of a network so I had to cut it with the boys—boys who didn’t want to let the girls in.” The artist drew on the strength she believes has been passed to her from the strong women in her family who went before her. “My mother was strong and my dad loved her for it. My husband loves me for my strength. I spent summers with my grandmother who was a single mom of seven. I know what kind of strength women have.”

The strength, humor, and political savvy depicted in the paintings Heere is creating at this place in her journey is palpable. Her work is the embodiment of a talented, intelligent woman who is serious about not being taken too seriously, but still getting her point across in bold print.

It will be interesting to see where Heere goes from here.





**2ND ACT**

**FILM FESTIVAL**

**A ONE OF A KIND  
FILMMAKING PROJECT**

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14<sup>TH</sup> 7PM  
TAPPS ARTS CENTER**

PRESENTED BY



**Final Draft**  
A Cast & Crew Entertainment Company



The  
**Whig**



Jasper *Artists of the Year*

2016

AWARDS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FORREST CLONTS

# A

really good year.

Every artist has one now and again. A period of time when the universe smiles upon you, life just seems to click, and you have the energy to get done all the jobs you need to do. It's a brilliant feeling. And we like spreading that brilliance around. That's why we asked our readers to nominate the artists in their lives who have had one of those really good years. Then, our panel of experts took a look at the list of nominees and winnowed it down to the top three artists in each discipline who seemed to have the very best years of all.

In the following pages you'll read about these 12\* artists and have the opportunity to register your vote for which artist in each field should be named 2016 Jasper Artist of the Year.

Winners will be announced at the 2016 Jasper Artist of the Year Gala on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

(\*The 2016 JAY in Dance will not be awarded this year.)

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**Vote at [www.JasperProject.org](http://www.JasperProject.org) from  
October 1<sup>st</sup> thru November 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Previous Jasper Artists of the Year Winners Include:**

Kimi Maeda, Kwame Dawes, Morihiko Nakahara, Kathleen Robbins, Vicky Saye-Henderson, Martha Brim, Philip Mullen, Dewey Scott-Wiley, Chad Henderson, Katie Smoak, The Restoration, Susan Lenz, Darien Cavanaugh, Julia Elliott, Janna McMahan, Greg Stuart, Craig Butterfield, Terrance Henderson, Regina Willoughby, Catherine Hunsinger

2016 *JAY Finalists*

# VISUAL ARTS



## MICHAELA PILAR BROWN

Among the programs that have occupied Brown's time of late are Summer Arts Residencies in both Sedona Arts Center in Sedona, Arizona as well as one in Künstlerwerkgemeinschaft Kaiserslautern, Germany. She also served as a visiting artist at Claflin University, Central Piedmont Community College, and at Tapp's Arts Center, here in Columbia. She was featured in a film by Roni Nicole Henderson as well as one by Wade Sellers, and her work, *Speak No', 2011* was acquired by the Columbia Museum of Art. Her exhibitions included 15-Jahre-Künstlerwerkgemeinschaft volksbank Kaiserslautern; Artfields in Lake City; a solo exhibition and site specific performance, *I'm a boss my house*, at If Art Gallery; a two-woman show and site specific installation and performance called *Making Time Marking Forever* at Carrack Contemporary Art in Durham, NC; *The Mother Wound* site specific performance at Spelman College in Atlanta; *Remix - Themes and Variations in African American Art* at the Columbia Museum of Art; *Wet Hot Southern Summer* Group Exhibition at The Southern Gallery in Charleston; *Where They Cut Her I Bleed - Site Specific Installation/ Solo Exhibition and Performance* at Tapp's Arts Center; *The Space Between - Solo Exhibition and Performance* at McMaster Gallery, University of South Carolina; *Ruptured Silence* Multimedia Performance and Collaboration with Wideman Davis Dance and Darion McCloud at Drayton Hall, University of South Carolina; *Liquor and Watermelon Will Kill You - Solo Exhibition* at Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery in Conway; and *Red Dirt and Doilies - Solo Exhibition* at Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter.



## JASON KENDALL

Kendall's work this year has included quite a few multidisciplinary performance art pieces including the following at The 701 CCA South Carolina Biennial 2015 comprised of *Speak to Me: "I've been mad for fucking years, absolutely years, been over the edge for yonks, been working me buns off for bands..."* as well as, *"I've always been mad, I know I've been mad, like the most of us...very hard to explain why you're mad, even if you're not mad"* and *Far away across the field, The tolling of the iron bell, Calls the faithful to their knees. To hear the softly spoken magic spells*, both with reconstituted performance costumes; *Lunatic on the Grass* and *Breathe*, a single channel video. Kendall also created the *"Goin Down the Road Feelin Bad"* performance at Tapp's Arts Center in conjunction with Michaela Pilar Brown, and *The Transitioner Episode 1- "Who Do You Love"* - 3 night performance at 701 CCA. For the Da Da Desque Exhibition 701 CCA, he created *The Bags* (50lbs Zombie Drawings), *The Uniform* (Custom Uniform for Work and Play), *Episode I, Who Do You Love* (Live video), and *Ol' Man*. He performed at Artista Vista as *The Transitioner Episode 2*, producing Corn hole Bags (50lbs Zombie Drawings), Extra Large Corn hole boards (Fear Vs. Fan Zombie Cheerleader drawings), and Zombie Drawings.



## LAUREN CHAPMAN

Among Lauren Chapman's accomplishments this year was winning second place in the 61st Annual USC Student Art exhibition for the painting *Still*, and her painting *The Flood* was featured at the ArtFields Festival 2016 in Lake City as well as being published in the 2016 ArtFields catalog. In May, Chapman had a joint exhibition at Tapp's Art Center and in August she showcased 25 oil paintings in her first solo exhibition and artist talk, titled *Repetitions* at the Pearson Lakes Art Center in Okoboji, IA. Chapman was awarded the Yaghjian Studio arts scholarship at USC and received a fully funded art residency at the international center for the arts in Monte Castello, Italy which she attended in June. Finally, Chapman's oil painting *the white rabbit* was selected for the "Figure Out" Planned Parenthood exhibition in August.

2016 *JAY Finalists*

# LITERARY ARTS



## RAY MCMANUS

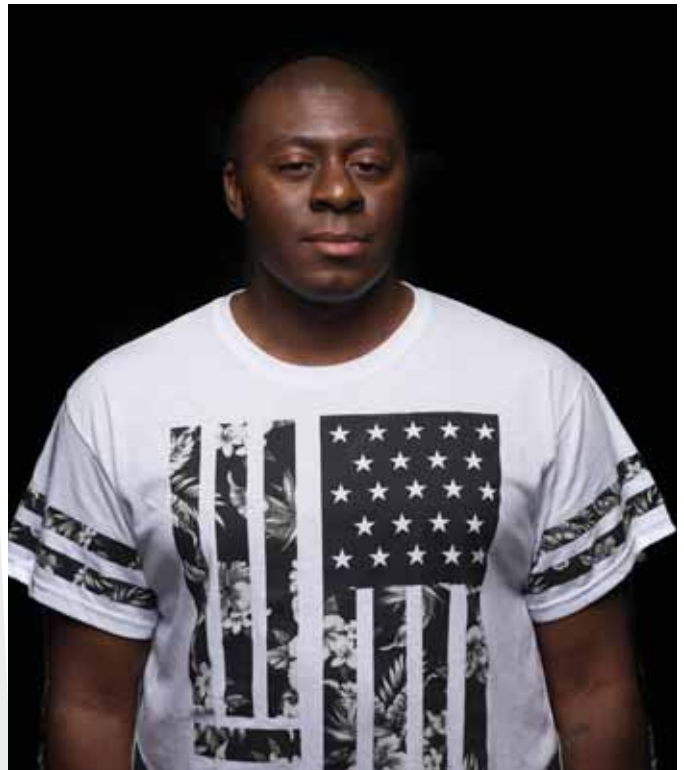
This year, along with R. Mac Jones, Ray McManus co-edited the anthology *Found Anew: Writers Responding to Photographic Histories* which was published by USC Press and nominated for the Lillian Smith Book Award. He published the following poems: “Caveman Survey,” “How Boys are Measured,” and “Manspread,” in *The Good Men Project*; “For the Hardest to Reach Places” in *Prairie Schooner*; “Dog Box,” “Disturbing Remains,” and “Staying in the Truck” in *Hard Lines: Rough South Poetry* from USC Press; “When a Dog Comes Back Rabid,” “We Were All Dead Once,” and “Natural Selection,” in *Red Truck*; “Ask Your Doctor,” “Origin of Species,” “In the Absence of Protection,” and “The Descent of Man” in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*; and, “Ruts” in *The State of the Heart Volume II*, from USC Press. McManus participated in community projects that included the Tri-District Arts Consortium, The Carolina Master Scholars program, Serious Young Women Writers Workshop, Poetry Out Loud Region II Competition, High School and Middle School ABC Site Training, Word Fest Charlotte, and the Center for Oral Narrative and gave readings at Festival for the Book in Nashville; Pat Conroy Lit Fest in Beaufort; LILA Author Event in Charleston; Book Tavern in Augusta GA; Deckle Edge Literary Festival as well as Mind Gravy in Columbia; the Upcountry Lit Fest; Two Writers Walk into a Bar in Durham NC; and, the Scuppernon Book Store, Greensboro NC.





## CARLA DAMRON

Damron's most important work for the year was the publication of her literary novel, *The Stone Necklace*, by Story River Books, a division of USC Press. *The Stone Necklace* was also chosen as the One Book, One Community selection for February 2016 which led to multiple events and appearances, which gave Damron the opportunity to explore the intersection of art and social awareness with hundreds of people (including a presentation at the SC National Alliance for Mental Illness conference). Damron has completed approximately 30 book club presentations thus far, with more scheduled. Damron's other works include a submission to the Jasper Project's *Marked By Water* collection, monthly blogs on the Writerswhokill website, a quarterly column in the SC Social Workers newsletter, and the completion of her fifth novel, which is now in her agent's hands.



## LEN LAWSON

Len Lawson's many poetry publications this year have included the following: "Briefcase of Little Tortures," in *Up the Staircase Quarterly*; "Down South," in *Charleston Currents*; "I Write My Body Eclectic" in *[PANK] Magazine*; "Feel the Vibration: Marky Mark & the Funky Bunch, A Retrospective" in *Yellow Chair Review*; "Church Fan," "Niger (Or the Country Missing a Letter)," and "When a White Man in Camden Tells You to Act Like You Got Some Sense," in *Drunk in a Midnight Choir*; "Google Search for Black Lives Matter" in *Winter Tangerine Review*; "The Black Life Anthem: Unarmed Black People Killed by Police or Dying in Police Custody Since 2012\*" in *Free Times*; "For the Dead Whose Caskets Flowed Out of Graves After the South Carolina Flood," "12 Year Old Inside Me Seeks a Father Figure," "Uneasy Dreams of a Presidential Hopeful," and "The Body is a Cave" in *Connotation Press*; "George Zimmerman as Jack in Titanic Painting Trayvon Martin as Rose" and "Krack" in *Public Pool*; and, "The Invitation" in *Get Free Books*.

2016 *JAY* Finalists

# THEATRE



## HUNTER BOYLE

In January 2016 Hunter Boyle performed in a staged reading of *Composure*, a screenplay by Jason Stokes at Trustus' Side Door Theatre, playing "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman and several other characters. Next, he performed at Trustus Theatre, where he is a Company member, in *Peter and the Star Catcher*, playing the roles of Mrs. Bumbrake and the mermaid called Teacher. Following that, Boyle performed with the South Carolina Shakespeare Company, where he is also a company member, playing Sir John Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Boyle taught several Master Classes in Musical Theatre (how to tell a story through song) and Acting (how to develop/train your voice effectively for stage work) for the Trustus' Apprentice Company, as well as a total of five classes (three classes in the fall and two classes in the spring) of Introduction to the Theatre at USC Aiken. Boyle is currently a member in good standing of the Actor's Equity Association—the union of professional actors in the US, as well as the Screen Actor's Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists in the US. As of the nomination cut-off date, Boyle is currently rehearsing the role of Dr. Scott in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at Trustus Theatre, being directed by Scott Blanks.



## BAXTER ENGLE

A perennial behind-the-scenes magic maker, Baxter Engle has served over the past year in the following productions: *Marie Antoinette* (Sound Design); *Blithe Spirit* (Scenic Design); *Peter and the Star Catcher* (Scenic and Props Design); *American Idiot* (Scenic and Video Design); and, *Anatomy of a Hug* (Scenic and Video Design.) In addition to handling the creative aspects of design, Engle is hands-on throughout the productions from conception to the birth of the show.



## ROBERT HARRELSON

The consummate theatre man, Robert Harrelson is the executive director and owner of his own company, and all the hard work and minutiae that implies, with On Stage Productions, a non-profit theatre company in West Columbia. This year, Harrelson directed *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Twisted Carol*, *Miracle in Memphis*, *Crimes of the Heart*, and *Oz: Dorothy's Return*, which he also wrote. He also teaches ongoing acting classes.

2016 *JAY* Finalists

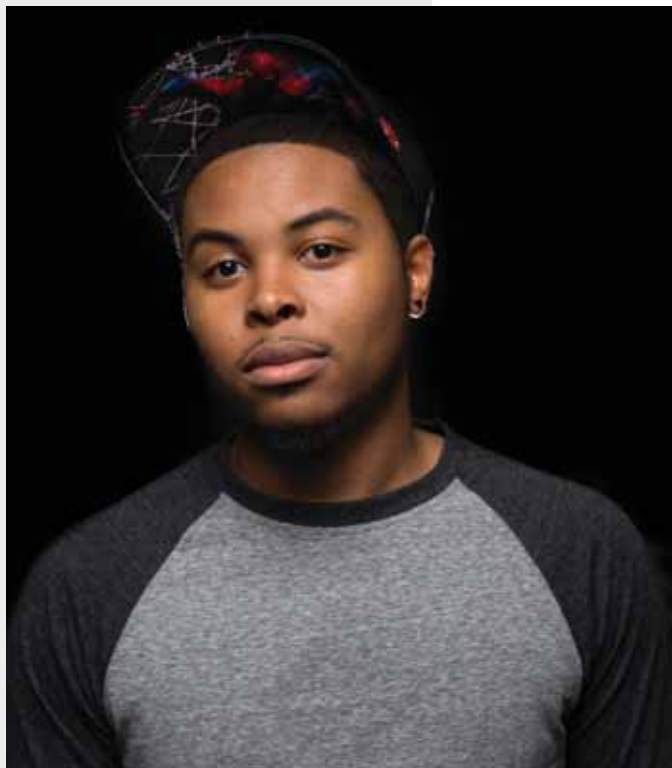
# MUSIC



## DYLAN DICKERSON

Although he's one of the most affable and easygoing artists in town, when Dylan Dickerson steps on stage with his band Dear Blanca and starts playing music that person seems to slip away. With his post-punk-meets-Hendrix approach to playing guitar and an unadorned bawl of a voice, Dickerson stands clearly out among his peers. His lyrics, pondering and painstaking, feel like anthems for twentysomethings who want to make it plain that their disaffection and distress should never be mistaken for apathy.

Dear Blanca, which is featured on page 86 of this issue, started out slowly but over the past year seems poised to make the next step, releasing two EPs--one produced by Triangle veteran Scott Solter (Mountain Goats, St. Vincent, Spoon), the other by Charleston's producer-of-the-moment Ryan "Wolfgang" Zimmerman of Brave Baby--that hold to Dickerson's idiosyncratic vision of folkie Townes Van Zandt drinking at a bar with D. Boon of the Minuteman while proving that Dear Blanca is a band capable of making music every bit as captivating as their heroes.



## JUSTIN DANIELS (AKA H3RO)

As much as Columbia has begun to champion its hip-hop veterans like FatRat da Czar and Preach Jacobs, there's no denying that much of the energy of the genre still lies with a powerful younger generation that is still forging its own identity. Of the newer crop of emcees in the Capital City, Justin Daniels, who raps under the moniker H3RO, is one of the best. His December release *Between the Panels*, despite its DIY sensibility, plays like a masterclass in how to embrace youthful swagger with a keen sense of history. His comic book motifs and love of pure bars harkens back to Wu Tang Clan; the joyful soul samples and backpack rap self-consciousness to Lauryn Hill and early-period Kanye West; and his charismatic exuberance not unlike current rapper-of-the-moment Chance the Rapper. Daniels is still hustling, but his past year suggests the sky is the limit.



## MARK RAPP

If there's a linchpin of Columbia's jazz scene, it's probably trumpet (and didgeridoo) player Mark Rapp. In addition to balancing a steady stream of gigs around the city with his constant national and international travel, Rapp has kept busy orchestrating a steady stream of recordings, including a long overdue set from jazz patriarch Skipp Pearson and two efforts under his The Song Project Series with guitarist Derek Bronston. And, as part of the Harbison Theatre Performance Incubator Series, Rapp teamed up with professional choreographer Stephanie Wilkins to create *Woven*, a unique collaboration that combines jazz and contemporary dance that stands as one of the most innovative original performance pieces created in Columbia in recent years.

# Local Record Reviews



## TYLER DIGITAL *Exit 8*

There's a bit of kismet involved with the fact that *Exit 8*, a long-gestating visual album from Tyler Digital (electronic artist Tyler Matthews, formerly known as Academia...) and Post Echo, arrived concurrently with the extreme hype surrounding the Netflix original series *Stranger Things*. There's a distinctly 80s cinematic feel to both, although *Exit 8* is a bit more noir-ish and claustrophobic in its presentation, and a fresh sense of revitalization and wonder to this certain palette of synths that both soundtracks use that feels warm and enveloping. Fans of the series looking to quench their thirst for those nostalgic sounds will definitely find something to love here.

That being said, as an album without the accompanying narrative film, *Exit 8* features a few genuinely great songs while also including a handful of moodier sketches more appropriate to scoring than engaging listen-

ers directly. Lead single and lead-off track "Straight to the Head," which makes fabulous use of guest vocals from Stefanie Santana, is a clear highlight, with its bubbling synth riff and Santana's Sylvan Esso-esque lullaby delivery getting twisted to grand heights as Matthews uses a kaleidoscopic set of tricks to stretch the track from Italo disco horror to New Order pop perfection. "Night Talks" picks up where "Head" left off, with a driving, twitchy beat that feels like the perfect soundtrack to an 80s Halloween-horror dance party.

From there things get a little more ambient, with more use of orchestral effects and organic sounds (like the crisp string strum on "Kids," for instance) than you might expect. Tracks comfortably drift from languid synthesizer-driven digressions to kinetic explosions of abrasive dissonance or synthpop euphoria. The balance and tension between those competing impulses very much defines *Exit 8*, an offering as enigmatic as it is entrancing. —KP

## BOO HAG *Boo Hag*

Any two-man rock ensemble that deploys slytherine riffs and oozes 'tude is going to garner a few comparisons to the Black Keys, so I'll get those out of the way. It's true, singer/guitarist Saul G. Seibert shares some lineage with Dan Auerbach—his vocal delivery's effortless cool, his predilection for blues-influenced guitar lines without betraying any staunch genre purism. Likewise, drummer Scott E. Tempo takes a big cue from Patrick



Carney in his studied simplicity and knack for syncopation. From there, the similarities tend to taper off. *Boo Hag*, and, by extension, the debut album that shares its name, is undoubtedly its own kind of monster.

*Boo Hag*, from its pagan cover art created by native South Carolinian Tommy Bishop to its creature-feature lyrical themes to Seibert's inclination to emit an inhuman howl whenever the spirit moves him, is a decidedly macabre document. But unlike other horror-rock acts—like, say, the Misfits, whose aesthetic was complicated by one of the most self-serious frontmen in rock history; or Marilyn Manson, whose unabashed desire to be the Willy Wonka of parental nightmares has turned him into little more than a human monument to cartoon grotesquerie—*Boo Hag* relies neither on camp nor empty shock value to draw listeners into its rock and roll mausoleum. The tunes range from amped-up garage rock ("Crypt Keeper") to moody, extended psychedelic jams ("Buffalo"), but the whole album is united by the sense that it

was recorded live in some swampy graveyard whose active spirits provide natural, eerie reverb. Even for a would-be fan who likes a brighter take on rock and roll, it would be difficult to dismiss the suspicion that *Boo Hag* is one of Columbia's strongest debuts this year. -MS



## 2RU3

*Alpha (The Beginning)*

2Ru3 is pronounced True—a fitting name for the Columbia hip hop artist. On his debut *Alpha (The Beginning)*, he spreads the message about what constitutes true hip hop.

The major deity of 2Ru3's rap religion is Tupac Shakur. With the first lines of the opening track, the floating, neo-soul backed "Been There 4 Me," the mic-spitter's laid-back baritone flow rides the track like the West Coast martyr himself once did, words ascending for emphasis and with similar gravitas. His Tupac tribute only gets burlier as the record moves along with his ode to the 90s Golden Era, "Hip Hop (Still Livin')," which takes the strongest stance in 2Ru3's proselytizing.

"Remember the music that used to encourage you through knowledge and wisdom while at the same time it drop boom-bastic bomb lyrics," he raps over boom bap and speaker-rattling bass. "Tunes that used to have you teary eyed 'cause they resonate with suffering, gave you strength to keep

on fighting when this cruel world you had enough of."

The album's low-key, smooth production resides more on the R&B side of things, exemplified on "The People," a spiritual, hip hop descendent of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" that mixes in the minimalist sampling heard on records like Goodie Mob's *Soul Food*.

2Ru3 owns a steady flow and doesn't stumble like many young MCs. He can be a bit derivative of his influences and occasionally long-winded, with most songs clocking in at more than four minutes, but the dude's got a lot to say and one can always ride the beat. He boasts a little more lyrical swagger and bombast in "Dey Neva Knew," with mostly bass and drums back up his conscious musings. "Thinkin' Bout Life" brings a benediction of heaven-reaching instrumentation and his urgent, optimistic rap-riffing.

2Ru3 has his own gospel to spread and *Alpha (The Beginning)* should go a long way toward making us believe. -David Travis Bland

## DR. ROUNDHOUSE

*New Society for Serious Songs*

The experience of listening to Dr. Roundhouse's *New Society for Serious Songs* is (probably) not unlike that of wandering a rock and roll archive after hours with a quartet of half-stoned curators. As musicians and songwriters, the guys in Dr. Roundhouse know the history of and have an obvious reverence for the architects of their chosen medium, but that doesn't stop them from manipulating traditions and tropes to suit their musical worldview, which happens to include a frat-house party band's taste for mischief and a hip flask's worth of wry humor.

With thirteen tracks running a gamut of moods and personalities, *New Society for Serious Songs* naturally has its share of misses, but these low points are by no means the rule. For the most part, the record works as a thick slab of guiltless entertainment with



plenty of choice cuts. "David Byrne's Funeral March" plays like a funky Talking Heads B-side orchestrated by Frank Zappa, while "Paul's Brain" and the title track sound like Uncle Frank at his most accessibly freaky. The Dr. John-inspired "Oh No, Oh Yeah!" makes a meal out of barrelhouse piano rock; "Johnny Cash" and "What I'd like to Know" take the piss out of hangdog Memphis country while deploying serious genre chops; and "I'm No Good" is the sort of jukebox rocker Lennon liked to break out whenever McCartney's back was turned

"Ain't Found No Love" is *New Society's* standout track, as well as its most relentlessly earnest. A mid-tempo slice of white-boy soul set to waltz time, the song has The Band written all over it and is the best argument against any claim that Dr. Roundhouse has too much fun to be taken seriously.

This sort of eclecticism is usually a rookie mistake, the mark of a band so eager to please that they forgo their innate strengths in favor of the dreaded scarlet letter of mediocrity, 'something for everyone.' But in Dr. Roundhouse's case, it's not a mistake at all. The band's insatiable desire to consume and then regurgitate all that it loves about rock and roll is, in fact, its greatest strength. And on *New Society for Serious Songs*, there isn't something for everyone; but if you're the type that can hang with the weird and the wild, there's probably something for you. -MS

# TRUSTUS THEATRE IS **YOUR** COMMUNITY'S PROFESSIONAL THEATRE • THEATRE CREATED FOR THE PEOPLE OF COLUMBIA BY THE ARTISTS OF COLUMBIA



Photo credit: James Quantz, Jr.

## A message from Artistic Director Chad Henderson:

Trustus Theatre is entering its 32<sup>nd</sup> Season after a busy and challenging 2015-2016. Through your support we were able to renovate our Main Stage lobby and bar, we took our production of *The Brothers Size* to the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, we were featured in The New York Times due to our production of the Pulitzer Prize-winning script *The Flick*, we withstood October's flood with minimal water damage, and we produced ten major productions over the course of the season. Through all of this, one thing stayed consistent: our commitment to bringing you professional and provocative works that speak to the modern human experience. As we begin our new season, we find ourselves with an exciting year ahead that's filled with endless possibilities to connect with our community and tell you stories that you didn't even know you needed. All of these works will be created by people living and working in your own back yard. This is theatre created for the people of Columbia by the artists of Columbia.

I'm regularly honored to speak with our patrons after they've seen a Trustus show. A commonality among many first-time patrons is their delight with the quality of the work we create within our walls. Often times I'm asked "Where did these actors or directors come from?" or "Where did you find this designer?" I'm always excited to tell these folks that these artists are their neighbors

and fellow Columbians. This is frequently followed with the exclamation "I had no idea we had so much talent in this city!" I can say without question, especially as the Artistic Director of Columbia's contemporary theatre, that we truly have excellent theatre artists in our community that excel in their creativity, passion, and vision. We're so fortunate that many of them call Trustus home.

In the year ahead we are excited to introduce you to even more artists who call Columbia home. From our gallery space where local visual artists show their work, to our renovated bar space where local performers and music acts will perform after shows, and to the streets surrounding our theatre where buskers welcome you to the theatre with song — your nights at Trustus will surround you and your friends with the sights and sounds of the city.

Of course, the main course will continue to be engaging modern theatre that surprises you with the unexpected. Our board of directors, the staff, and the Trustus Company are devoted to making Trustus a safe place for the exploration and expression of the political, the personal, and all things human. This is the reason we're here, and why we do what we do. Co-founders Jim and Kay Thigpen asked patrons to "trust us" when they started Trustus in 1985 — and we still ask you to do the same. Every show brings a different story to Columbia, and a different range of experiences for our audiences. Trustus is a place where actors and audiences convene and learn how our differences are beautiful, our similarities are great, and that there is something special to celebrate in all of us.

Season 32 has a few blockbuster moments in it such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, *The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical*, and *Rock of Ages*. However, you won't want to miss some of our more challenging works that you can only get at Trustus Theatre this season.

*Marcus, the Secret of Sweet* is the exciting third installment of The Brother/Sister Plays - Tarell Alvin McCraney's imaginative trilogy that began at Trustus with *In the Red and Brown Water* and *The Brothers Size*. In this show we follow a young southern man named Marcus who's seeking his sexual and personal identity as Hurricane Katrina prepares to destroy his community. The impending storm and the clouds looming over Marcus' search for self careen towards collision as this trilogy comes to a close here in Columbia.

*Grey Gardens, The Musical* is based on the documentary of the same name, and tells the story of the once-grand relations of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy who have fallen on hard times. Through rich musical storytelling we explore how the haves can become have-nots and how virtuosic outlandishness can deter people from taking control of their circumstances.

*Boy* is inspired by a true story and introduces us to Adam Turner, a man who has to deal with the gender cards he's given (not born with). This show puts a twist on transgender-plays and asks us to look through human eyes and to consider the totality of a person's experience (something our neighbors to the north have done a poor job of doing). This play will surprise you and tug at your heart strings.

*Hand to God* was a Tony nominee for "Best Play". Wildly original, this play tells the story of a teenager who is part of his church's Christian Puppet Ministry. However, when our hero's puppet takes him and the church over — we're asked to consider the fragile nature of faith, mortality, and how we treat each other in the modern world.

Our season closer is the winner of the Trustus Playwrights' Festival: *Black Super Hero Magic Mama*. This intensely inventive show is one of the most creative pieces to come through our festival in the past years, and it is incredibly topical as it explores the epidemic of systematic injustice that African-Americans experience in this country. Following a mother who loses her teenage son to a police shooting, we watch her deal with her son's death and the social climate around her as she envisions herself as the comic book super hero that her son created before his passing.

We're excited about the plays we're producing in our 32<sup>nd</sup> Season, and we hope you are too. After all, our audiences are the reason we create this work. Trustus Theatre is your community's professional theatre.



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## WATER

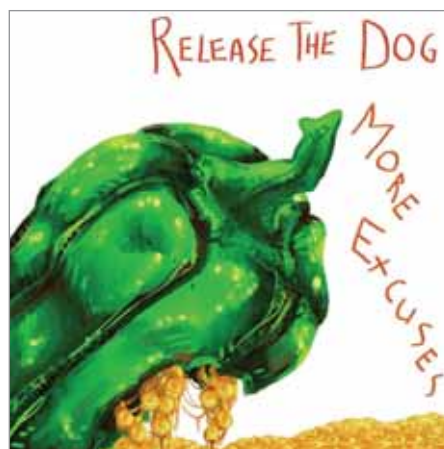
*Water EP*

WATER's EP burns through your ears like an El Camino speeding across desert flats. There's much more here than cock-rock chest pounding. This EP embodies the frenzied conscious streaming set forth by Black Flag.

This gas-soaked ride blazes out the gate with gravel-eating guitars in "Dark." For all the gut appeal of the fundamental punk rock strumming, the low end growls with no-wave nihilism. A simple backbeat is chopped up with fills and arm-whipping skin bashes until you realize you're in the grips of a white knuckled, psycho machine. The song sets the stage for the rest of the trek. With "GB1000X" you're seated in a punk rock master class, pounding into you all the grimmest elements of the Ramones and like-minded forebears, where the singing of Dee Dee Ramone is smashed into Greg Ginn's fury. "Sherpa Says" is the slow burner of the EP--the "Gimme Danger" on The Stooges *Raw Power*--that throttles you into the wheel-shaking "Good Things Too."

Part of the *WATER EP*'s allure owes a debt to a warm, mid-range vinyl tone that

conjures the feel of its '80s predecessors. Maybe they could have kicked up the vocals in the mix a bit, but this is essentially a live experience. The production stance throws you back to your days in the pit, full of blood and sweat. You're out of control by the EP's end, hallucinating on fumes amidst the psychedelic noise, careening into the final crash as the tires fall off. The whole blur is done in less fifteen minutes, but the speed made it feel like a matter of seconds. *-David Travis Bland*



## RELEASE THE DOG

*More Excuses*

It can be easy to forget, but there was a time when indie rock was fairly comfortable producing its own set of guitar heroes, from winding soloists like J Mascis (Dinosaur Jr) and Doug Martsch (Built to Spill) to shambolic rumpers like Stephen Malkmus (Pavement) and Isaac Brock (Modest Mouse). Although those days of riff-heavy glory in indie rock now seem to have been largely traded in for more punk and emo-inspired traditions, singer-guitarist Ross Swinson and his bandmates are very much products of that earlier era, and they keep getting better and better. Their 2013 LP *Out for Justice*

was a sprawling, lo-fi effort recorded at various homes that nonetheless had a knack for catchy, intensive guitar riffs and stop-start arrangements that befitted the slacker vibe of Swinson's vocals.

Their 2016 follow-up, *More Excuses*, follows that same basic template while upping the ante. There's more polish and assuredness to these recordings and songs, despite a similar DIY approach. While Swinson still has that same careless delivery of Heist-era Chaz Bundick, the vocal melodies and songs are more distinctive and warm, capable of encouraging casual road trip sing-alongs even as they never try and overplay their pop potential. There's a breezy quality to these tunes, something which seems designed to belie the furious activity and restlessness of the trio's instrumental bright and steely machinations.

The one possible exception, the sparkling ballad "Piece," is the closest thing to a risk the band takes and suggests a possible alternate path if they ever worth to aim for more conventional success. Built on a romantic, reverb-dosed guitar motif, Swinson balances his signature resignation with something close to romance. That swelling opening builds to a chorus that sounds like what would play during a prom scene while the wallflower indie kid looks on from the outside, ambivalent about whether he belongs or even wants to be in the tableau. It's a beautiful tune, and one that constitutes a high-water songwriting mark in the band's repertoire.

It's perhaps telling that "Piece" is followed by "Em," a nery instrumental that might actually be the record's best track. It's all taunt and stately post-punk guitars that spiral out to delicious ends, showcasing a band with an absolute mastery of their own particular abilities. Whether swinging for poppier terrain or holding fast to their own nostalgia for the days of indie rock guitar excess, *Release the Dog* has never sounded better. *-KP*



## ALARM DRUM

*Fragments of...*

Alarm Drum's latest, *Fragments Of...* is filled with as much sunshine as moonlight. It's a bright and glimmering EP, but simultaneously somber and sleepy-eyed. It's not the typical stuff you find pervading the streets and clubs of Columbia, the usual rock-centric four piece that's at least good to drink to. The band blends cerebral synths and shoegazing guitar into an atmospheric amalgam, topped by lulling vocalizations. In many ways they're exemplars of the town's potential, mining electronic elements with unpredictable structures in ways that helped Toro Y Moi and Washed Out earn much of their success. Alarm Drum has a quality that's decidedly more like French electro duo Air, with their laid back but still energizing jams more suited for swaying than hip-moving and independent of sampling in favor of original sounds. But the band can be propulsive, as with the lush and ethereal "Blush." But you feel the music more when the band is brooding and velvety on a track like "Coma," and the opener "Going to Bed Early."

"Mercury," one of the EP's standouts, begins with a electro-driven groove, twinkling synthesizer osmosis, and robo-singing charm. then swells into a My Bloody Valentine-type of fuzz-rock, pooling together melodic emotion with fizzling sonics and even some airy, seductive sax.

*Fragments Of...* is like the rays of light diffusing through the water when you're drowning—a soothing kind of coma in sound.

—David Travis Bland

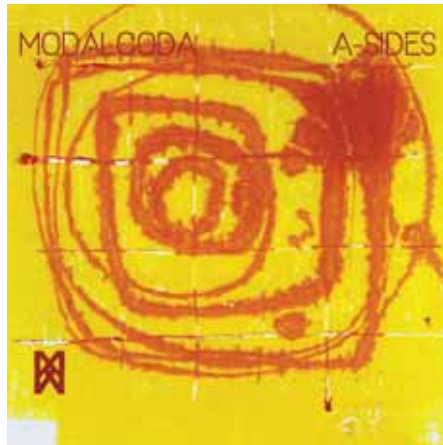


## INTERRUPTIONS OF THE MIND

*Systems of Listening*

The second ambient instrumental offering from American Gun frontman Todd Mathis under his Interruptions of Listening moniker, *Systems of Listening*, like its self-titled predecessor, is built more for backdrops than as the main event. Melodies are more suggestive than infectious as simple guitar figures and piano lines guide these soft-bubbling soundscapes of inscrutable synths and minimal or pre-programmed drum beats. There's almost always a low-key cinematic effect at play, as if the music was crafted for the most lonely or wistful montages of a quality indie film.

While by its very nature a humble offering, Mathis has clearly developed an aptitude for crafting these atmospheric vignettes. Fans of jazz guitarist Bill Frisell or electronic musicians in the vein of Album Leaf or Eluvium might find a more-than-suitable local alternative in Interruptions of the Mind, and that ain't nothing. —KP



## MODALCODA

*A-Sides*

"Put simply, they can swing like a hammer but can't be nailed down." reads the closing line of ModalCODA's bio. That line defines the band whose debut album *A-Sides* bends genres from punk and jazz to psychedelia and metal, channeling their shared interests.

Made up of Columbia musicians Gabe Madden on guitar, keys, and trumpet, Craig Keeney on bass, and Kevin Keeney on drums, the seven instrumental songs burn like a controlled fire. Chaotic at times, each song finds a groove, hanging on hooks that serve as beacons bringing your ears back as sounds crumble out of control. *A-Sides* thrives in the anti-sphere of music. In the No Wave genre that boomed for only a short time in the 1970's New York art scene, spawning bands that eventually did find a wave like Sonic Youth and Swans. With ModalCODA, Madden weaves art and music, with song titles like "Solace Wound/Hot Rothko Asian Action" and "Giganto" a reference to the Marvel Comic character.

While many No Wave or anti genre bands come off as an angry reactionary response to society or pop music, ModalCODA doesn't. *A-Sides* seven songs just feel like musical freedom. The album opens with some of the only words on the album as the mics rolled before recording, "You guys ready to rock out?"

You wanna lay on the floor and play? Let yourself go?". That's where *A-Sides* succeeds most, in the comfort of being undefinable. — David Stringer

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*Proceeds benefitting The Jasper Project and One SC Flood Relief Fund.*

*This project was supported by a Connected Communities grant from Central Carolina Community Foundation.*



*Background artwork by Lauren Chapman*

# OLIVIA ANDERSON

## DANCE STUDENT COMES HOME TO CONTINUE TRADITION BY TEACHING AT USC

BY MARY CATHERINE BALLOU



native of Augusta, Georgia, Olivia Anderson has been dancing for twenty-five years. Currently, she teaches ballet and holds the position of Administrative Director at the USC Dance Conservatory, serving as a local leader in the Columbia dance community. In the following interview, Anderson graciously provides *Jasper* readers with information about her artistic background and pedagogy and her approach to dance and dance education.

**Jasper:** Where did you first study dance?

**Anderson:** I began studying with the Augusta Ballet School under the direction of Zanne Colton and Bon Ellis. At the age of 17, I joined the Houston Ballet II, where I continued under Claudio Munoz and Stanton Welch.

**What else have you done professionally?**

After dancing with Houston Ballet II for two years, I decided to attend the University of South Carolina where I studied both dance and journalism. When I graduated from USC, I began teaching ballet at Dancefx Athens, a not-for-profit dance studio in Athens, GA. After teaching there and subbing at the University of Georgia, I fell in love with teaching. I realized it was important for me to further develop my teaching and pedagogy; therefore, I pursued my Masters of Fine Arts at the University of California, Irvine. I recently finished the two-year program

when Susan Anderson, Artistic Director of the USC Dance Conservatory and Dance Program, asked me to join USC.

**How did you decide to start teaching dance?**

To be honest, I started out of necessity. Like many dancers, I began teaching to supplement my income. At the time, however, I had no idea how much joy it would bring me. While teaching full-time in Athens, GA... I realized I enjoyed that role more than that of a dancer. After two years, I knew I needed a more formalized approach to learning about dance pedagogy and the body; therefore, I pursued my MFA at UCI.

**Please explain your dancing pedagogy – what philosophy informs your teaching methods?**

Ultimately, it is my goal to inspire lifelong learners. It is my hope, whether my students

become professional dancers [or not], that they are trained to voluntarily pursue excellence in all that they do. A quote that inspires me is by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: "The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile." It is important to me that what I do in the studio can be characterized as both difficult AND worthwhile.

**Does being a feminist inform your teaching methods? If so, how?**

In an art form that has had a reputation of focusing on the body and not the mind of the female dancer, it is important that every dancer I train, male or female, knows they are invited physically and intellectually to my class. I take my role as a teacher and leader seriously. I don't take lightly that I am [a] role model and that my words have weight, especially for my female students.



**What role does body type play for a dancer?**

There are certainly dancers who are born with bodies that make ballet easier than others. However, it is NOT the body that makes a dancer successful. There are a multitude of dancers who demonstrate exactly this. Intelligence and work ethic always come before body type.

**How soon should someone who wants to be a professional ballet dancer begin classes?**

As soon as they know it! Most dancers begin between the ages of 3 and 8. Like I said above, however, a smart dancer with a work ethic can overcome starting what is considered late.

**How soon should a female ballet dancer go en pointe? Can you go en pointe too early?**

There is no perfect age for a dancer to be invited to begin pointe. For many it can be anywhere between ages 8 and 13. While that is the guideline, it is more important that a dancer be evaluated on whether they have mastered the ballet technique skills, positions, and strength required. If a dancer cannot do a step in flat shoes, pointe shoes will not change that. It only makes it dangerous for that dancer. By going on pointe too early, they are more susceptible to injury and poor habits.

**How important is it that male dancers take classes from male instructors? How is it different teaching male dancers?**

I believe it is important that all dancers are taught by both male and female teachers. The perspectives that each can offer is invaluable. When dancers are older, classes are typically split to focus on certain skills. For example, ladies are typically taught pointe by female teachers and men are typically taught a men's class that focuses on jumps and turns. This is simply because each have more experience in their respective disciplines. However, I've had excellent female teachers teach me partnering and male teachers teach me pointe!

**What are the major curricula being taught now? What is taught at USC?**

Right now, most schools teach a blend of the traditional ballet curricula. We are very fortunate at the USC Dance Conservatory to teach the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet curriculum developed by Marcia Dale Weary. It is a methodical curriculum that has trained some of the most successful dancers in major companies such as New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, and San Francisco Ballet. I was very fortunate to attend the CPYB Teacher's Training this summer where we thoroughly examined the syllabus and observed their students. While it is hard not to be star struck by its alumni, what is more impressive is the strength and discipline the dancers develop.

**What is the number of faculty members in the USC Dance Program and USC Dance Conservatory?**

There are currently 16 faculty members for the USC Dance Program and 8 instructors at the USC Dance Conservatory.

**What is the difference between the USC Dance Conservatory and the USC Dance Program?**

The USC Dance Program is a training program for collegiate dancers. It prepares dancers to work within the dance field in a multitude of ways. The USC Dance Conservatory is a school primarily for dancers ages 3 and above. Our primary focus is training young dancers in ballet technique.

**Where do you teach?**

I teach in both! My primary position is at the USC Dance Conservatory where I am the Administrative Director. I oversee the everyday conservatory operations, teacher training, and scheduling. I also teach each of the levels, 1-6, ballet technique and pointe. For the USC Dance Program I am adjunct faculty. I teach the Dancer's Body course and Dance History courses to dance majors.

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For more information about the USC Dance Program and USC Dance Conservatory, please visit: [artsandsciences.sc.edu/dance/usc-dance-conservatory](http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/dance/usc-dance-conservatory).



## ArtBreak: A Peek at the Exhibition *Spoken* with Consulting Curator Porchia Moore

Tuesday, October 11 | 10:30 a.m. – Noon

Begin the morning at the museum with pastries and coffee sold at The Wired Goat pop-up café, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the educational initiatives at the museum. Program starts at 11:00 a.m. Free with membership or admission.



## A Shift in the Landscape

Tuesday, October 18 | Galleries and Cash Bar at 6:00 p.m. | Panel at 7:00 p.m.

In honor of *Eyes on the Edge*, join us for a panel discussion on environmental issues within the Palmetto State with Amy Armstrong from SC Environmental Law Project, Dana Beach from the Coastal Conservation League, Van Whitehead from the Department of Natural Resources, and David Shelley from Congaree National Park. \$12 / \$10 for members.



## CMA Chamber Music on Main

Thursday, October 27

Happy Hour and Galleries Open at 6:00 p.m. | Concert at 7:00 p.m.

CMA Chamber Music on Main is a critically acclaimed chamber concert series featuring world-renowned artistic director Edward Arron. In this first concert of the season, Adam Neiman, Arnaud Sussmann, and Edward Arron play works by Handel-Halvorsen, Janáček, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. Sponsored by U.S. Trust. \$35 / \$28 for members / \$5 for students.



## Spooktacular Night at the CMA

Saturday, October 29 | 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Come have a ghoulishly good time at the sixth annual Spooktacular family fun event. The museum transforms with ghosts, bats, pumpkins, art stations, sweet treats, and more! Make sure to wear your costume for our costume parade, embark on a spooky gallery tour, and partake in the ghoulish scavenger hunt for prizes. Free.



## A Conversation with Catherine Walworth and Susan Felleman

Friday, November 18 | Noon

CMA Curator Catherine Walworth and USC Art History Professor Susan Felleman discuss the work in *CUT! Costume and the Cinema*. Free with membership or admission.

# SESSION

# 22

PHOTOGRAPHER  
ACTIVIST  
TAKES  
ON  
VET  
SUICIDE  
STATISTIC



Jim Dukes didn't set out to be a photographer or an activist, and he certainly didn't set out to be a statistic. But after his 5<sup>th</sup> traumatic brain injury as an explosive ordinance technician working as a contractor for the United Nations and the Departments of Energy and Defense, the Cary, North Carolina native and civil engineer decided that, in order for him not to become the third in the list above, he would have to assume the paths of the first and the second. His photography, which began as an easily accessible creative outlet, and his position as a community ambassador for Operation Enduring Warrior, combined to create the latest in Dukes' endeavors to use art to illuminate the lives of damaged and injured veterans, Session 22.

Starting from the statistic that everyday 22 American veterans end their lives via suicide, Dukes allocated 22 hours on August 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> to do 22 photo shoots and charged \$22 per shoot, with proceeds going to Operation Enduring Warrior. The project started at 2200 hours, or 10 pm.





Dukes brought more than his talent behind the lens to the project. “I am permanently disabled from multiple traumatic brain injuries and have had to make the conscious decision to fight back,” Dukes says, including early on “learning to walk, read, see and speak properly. I’ve also worked hard in talk therapy to deal with my trauma, my past, and where I’m going in the future. I attempted suicide twice and fully understand that dark place. While we struggle to reduce the number of deaths somehow, I want to do my part in talking about the problem, being there for others, and helping people relate.”

While raising attention and funds for the problem was the primary goal of Session 22, Dukes also created a collage of images from the project to frame and present to the regional Veterans Affairs office in Columbia. “I make art to help myself and others heal from their invisible and or visible wounds. I’ve been through a lot of trauma starting at 6 years old; abuse of all kinds, survived explosions, suicide, saved lives and taken them. I’ve been sober since 2006 and facing my past in therapy ever since. Over three years ago I arrived at a cross roads. Was I going to be a disabled man, or a man with a disability. I started making art my therapy tool.”

“My work means forward progress, healing and growth,” Dukes continues. “Sure, I care if people like my work, but I don’t feel the pressure of creating the perfect piece. My photography is an expression of my emotion. Emotions are neither right nor wrong, they just are. With every piece I create I feel a little more whole.” - *CB*



# THEATRE & DANCE

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**THEATRE & DANCE**

# JOSEPH BYRNE

B Y K A R A G U N T E R

P H O T O G R A P H Y B Y M I C H A E L D A N T Z L E R

*“It’s in the conspicuous absence of people that the place feels inhabited, as if the home’s occupants are out for a short stroll on the beach, or just disappeared around the corner.”*

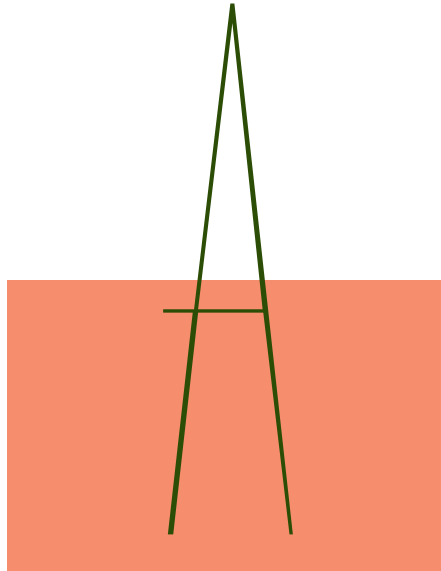
*“Maybe we can even hear a screen door clapping shut as they withdraw inside.”*



Early Spring



Vacation Block Island



artist Joseph Byrne's workspace is deceptively small, especially when you consider that he sometimes works on six foot canvases. He shows off an ingeniously designed easel fashioned from a drafting table with a tilting top. It's able to accommodate his largest paintings, and can tilt at any angle. He's installed a series of pegs mounted at the top of his canvases, so he can slide a custom hand rest onto any one of them. This allows him to work closely and steadies his hand as he fleshes out the smallest of details. There are space saving cabinets and drawers along two walls, filled with paint and brushes-- so many brushes! A seemingly infinite number of them, there are tiny ones with two hairs, large fan brushes and everything in between. He pulls out two he made himself from horse-hair because he couldn't quite find what he needed in the stores.

Byrne is gearing up for a solo exhibition, so his schedule and his house are full of his work. Paintings hang, lean, and stack. He paints seven days a week, beginning around 9 o'clock in the morning and wrapping up around 3:00 AM. Meals and an afternoon nap break up long days in the studio, but one gets the impression he would have it no other way.













Even when he tries to unwind in front of the television, half of his mind is always planning the next painting while his hand blindly traces brush strokes. He wouldn't sleep at night if he didn't get up and write down his plans, making notes on color and composition.

A retired illustrator and graphic designer, Byrne now paints for a living. I. Pinckney Simons Gallery in Beaufort, who represents him, has sold over 100 of his landscape paintings. Byrne's highly detailed landscapes of South Carolina's low country are his bread and butter, but he's not a one-trick pony. His heart belongs to his industrial works. Close up, to the point of abstraction, he explores every pit and pock of the steel surfaces of train cars and ships. His love of the accoutrements of industry is fueled by a strong nostalgia for growing up around the dockyards of Brooklyn and Eastern Long Island. Byrne can wax poetic about the smells of ozone wafting up from the subways, and creosote.

These industrial paintings, which he refers to as Abstract Realism, are amassing. He's never approached a gallery with these works, and Byrne feels South Carolina is probably not the best market. He has plans to connect with galleries in New York where he feels this work may be better appreciated. Instead of buying one of his paintings to match the décor, he would rather "people buy different couches to match my artwork."

Indeed, the industrial works are harder to slip into a space without commanding a lot of attention. The paintings are large, and can conjure a Rothko color-field painting, or some of Kline's more geometric investigations. Byrne refers to himself as a frustrated abstract painter, and he has begun to experiment with a series of works which are considerably looser in structure, and appear more spontaneous. He still plans these paintings out however, and when he goes to his canvas he knows how he will proceed. He loves Jazz, and it's easy to see the influence of this type of music on these particular pieces. There is quick movement and rhythm, with glowing edges of form like neon. The subject matter is the same, though—riveted steel, rust, massive nuts and

bolts and pistons. One of his more realistic paintings might take a month to paint, but these go faster, and he sets up two to three easels at a time. Painting like this, he says is like “releasing the energy in a drawn bow string.”

A marriage pulled him away from his beloved Northern industrial landscape, and brought him to the deep South. He good-naturedly jokes that he left a trail of his nail marks down the highway from New York to South Carolina forty-something years ago, but there is no malice or regret. No longer married and far away from the coastline of New York, he found a new love in South Carolina’s low country, in the ocean, the marshes, the wind-swept dunes and palmettos, the patinaed homes and beached boats. He retains a strong Brooklyn/Long Island accent, but even that has become rounder and slower creating a lovely, weird hybrid of the Northern and Southern accent.

Spending some time with his landscapes, an affinity for ruggedness is apparent here, as well. In these paintings of the worn beaches of the less refined and less populated islands and spits of South Carolina, one can sense the sting of the salt in the air, the indifference of nature to our human machinations. These are not soulless, vapid, “pretty” things. They are stunning, yes, but there is a bit of pensivity and quietude-- not unfamiliar feelings to those well-acquainted with the ocean. Indeed, in another life, Byrne is a mariner. In this one, he’s made a little money here and there transporting boats up and down nautical miles of waterway; and with great attention, care, and in rich detail, he records on canvas the seaside experience.

While he doesn’t rule out the future possibility, he’s not particularly interested in painting people right now; but he pulls out his painting *Blue House* and talks about the



suggestion of people. *Blue House* depicts a portion of a coastal home, a little worn, clothes on the line. Every detail is recorded—we can make out every shingle, every wildflower bloom, even the logo on the satellite dish affixed to the corner of the house. Byrne’s paintings have been described as photo-realistic, but there’s more poetry to it than that. It’s in the conspicuous absence of people that the place feels inhabited, as if the home’s occupants are out for a short stroll on the beach, or just disappeared around the corner. Maybe we can even hear a screen door clapping shut as they withdraw inside.

Byrne tends to work from photos he’s taken, which are tacked up around his studio. He would rather spend time painting than swatting flies, plus photographs allow him to capture a fleeting shadow which becomes integral to the composition. That said, Byrne takes plenty of artistic license with a piece, moving an element from the landscape into the viewers’ field of view, or changing the color of the subject in *Hydraulics* from a “boring” gray to a varied and enticing blue. Time and experience cured him of overworking a painting, he says, and he really doesn’t have any trouble knowing when to stop recording the minutiae of the scene. It’s a just a feel-

ing, but he knows it’s done when he’s ready to send it out into the world.

As a keen observer, and always interested in seeing the world from a different angle (sometimes very literally), Byrne has learned to fly. From the sky, he’s noticed things about perspective that he would never see from the ground, and it’s increased his understanding of how the physical object exists in space. Flying has perhaps even supplanted his love of sailing, as it allows him a level of speed which he’s never been able to achieve earth-bound.

A steadfast explorer and a dedicated student of our existence, he’s always watching, learning and calculating. When he began his journey as a young artist, it was as an escape from a sometimes rough adolescence. Now, less of an escape and more of an immersion, Byrne encourages his viewer to examine closely that which may be typically glazed over or ignored. It’s in the noticing that there is an appreciation or even a celebration.

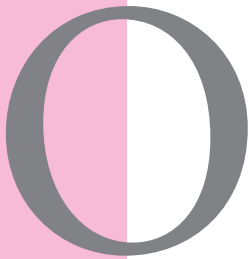
It would seem a contradiction that a man so in love with hurtling across the planet at great speeds, would also be the one who would encourage us to slow down and just *look*. And not just look, but *see*; for it’s in the details that life happens.

*Joseph Byrne’s solo exhibition will be at City Art in Columbia in September of 2016.*



# COLUMBIA THEATRE: EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

BY AUGUST KRICKEL



**r at least that's the impression** given by much of the upcoming local theatre season. Revivals of popular hits, timeless classics, and a few new shows fresh from Broadway - but many of those are based on famous movies, books, or TV shows from an earlier era. Is this a good phenomenon, or a bad one?

You certainly can't fault an arts group for bringing back popular works that audiences want to see again. Nor can one overstate the value of exposing successive generations to important masterpieces of the stage; after all, no eyebrows are raised when a centuries-old opera or ballet is performed, and indeed, usually the producing group is hailed for their efforts. Ultimately, local theatre programming usually reflects national trends, where the likeliest guarantee of success these days is a musical based on a hit film, or casting a celebrity in a revival of a name-brand play. In other words, *Steel Magnolias: The Musical* with Patti Lupone and Barbra Streisand is just one elevator pitch away. Thankfully, most local groups strive for some balance, not only in genre and target audience, but also in scheduling: this season,

there are fewer conflicting opening nights, with runs staggered more evenly across the calendar. One promising trend continues: six groups have committed to debut original works, while two more staged original shows this past summer.

While there are nearly 20 performing organizations in the Midlands, only eight have announced full seasons of four or more plays plus a summer production. The South Carolina Shakespeare Company, about to celebrate its 25th anniversary, hopes to announce outdoor productions for the spring and possibly summer of 2017 after expected renovations and upgrades to Finlay Park are finalized. Workshop Theatre, closing in on 50 years, plans a 2017 calendar-year season at 701 Whaley, while performance classes continue at their facility on Elmwood, where plans continue for a permanent space to be built.

Lexington's Village Square Theatre, under the leadership of new Artistic Director Debra Leopard, offers perhaps the most familiar titles in their line-up, with January's *Seussical* the newest - and it's based on Dr. Seuss books from the 1940s and 50s. Season opener *The Music Man* runs through October 9, followed by Glenn Farr directing *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Seussical*, and Frank Thompson's Lexington directorial debut with *Guys and Dolls*. Their season concludes with one of the 20th century's greatest yet least-produced comedies, Kaufman and Hart's *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

Town Theatre's season similarly pays tributes to the classics, with Milena Herding directing Kaufman and Hart's Pulit-

zer-winning *You Can't Take It With You* in January. Hart won a Tony for directing the original production of *My Fair Lady*, and Town's revival of this beloved musical was scheduled to close September 25th, but might just be held over even as you read this. Charlie Goodrich will then helm a musical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. The season concludes with local premieres of *Million Dollar Quartet* (based on a chance meeting and recording/jam session involving Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash) and *Catch Me If You Can*, the Tony-nominated musical version of the Spielberg/DiCaprio/Hanks film, featuring a libretto by Terrence McNally (*Ragtime*, *The Full Monty*) and a score by *Hairspray*'s Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman.

The NiA Company, Columbia's diverse and intentionally peripatetic acting troupe, will present shows at assorted venues, including *Broken Fences* (running October 27 - November 5 at the CMFA ArtSpace), *Together We Are Making a Poem Honoring Life* and *Song for Coretta* at locations to be announced in January and March, and *Whatchamacallit!* (running May 12 - 21 at Columbia Children's Theatre in Richland Mall.)

West Columbia's On Stage Productions - their founder Robert Harrelson is featured in this issue as Artist of the Year nominee - continues a tradition of a little something for everyone, book-ending their season with local premieres of musical adaptations of the Tom Hanks film *Big* (running September 30 - October 9) and the classic tv series *The Beverly Hillbillies* in April. In between, look for *Twash the Night*, Harrelson's original



retelling of the Christmas poem, a scaled-down youth production of *Annie*, and a musical revue, *Broadway Past... Present... Forever*.

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Chapin Theatre Company operates on a calendar year, and will be presenting their 2017 season at American Legion Post 193 - dubbed the Firehouse Theatre - in downtown Chapin, although their summer children's production will again take place at the Harbison Theatre. New Artistic Director Jessica Fichter will announce a full roster soon, but in the meantime, get ready for a comically skewed take on the holidays with the premiere of Lou Clyde's original play *Heck the Dolls with Chardonnay*, running November 17 - 19 and December 9 - 11.

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Columbia Children's Theatre continues with another season of shows for young audiences performed by professional actors. Included are stage versions of *Cinderella* in December, *Miss Nelson is Missing* in February, *James and the Giant Peach* in April, and the premiere of another original fairy tale done in the madcap, improvisational commedia dell'arte style, *Sleeping Beauty*, in June. (Their previous commedia works have gone on to be performed off-Broadway.) Additionally, Midlands schools will be treated to touring productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Just So Stories*, scaled down for teen audiences.

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Just a few miles to the northeast, Jami Steele Sprankle is leading Camden theatrical efforts, directing three shows at the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County: *Footloose the Musical* (running the first two weekends in November), followed by *Steel Magnolias* in January, and *The Jungle Book* in March.

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A number of groups have special ventures planned: the Vista Theatre Project, for example, will present an original musical revue, *Christmas Vacation*, just in time for the holidays, featuring performers from the Broadway Bound Musical Theatre Company. WOW (Walking on Water) Productions

will tour their original play *Confessions of a Good Man* around the Carolinas. New Life Productions is focusing on film work, but continues to host theatre workshops and stage readings of original plays. Plates and Plots Dinner Theatre presents interactive murder mysteries at the Seafood Academy (formerly T.G.I. Friday's) in Richland Mall.

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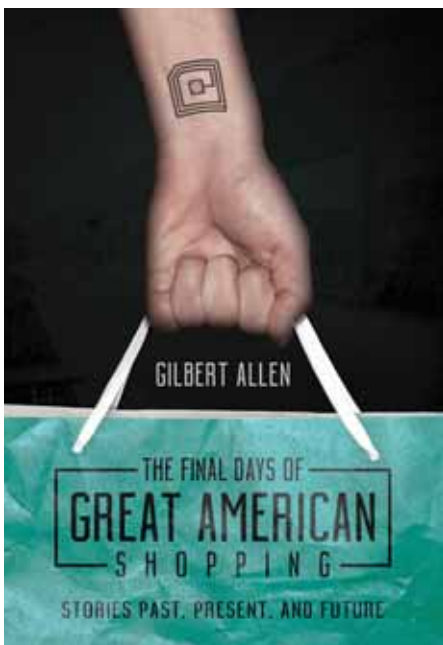
The champs for this season, however, at least in terms of sheer volume and diversity, are Trustus Theatre and the University of South Carolina, both outdoing themselves with this year's schedules. For the first time Trustus is offering a traditional fall-to-summer season membership, which includes the winner of the annual Playwrights' Festival, the musical paean to 1980s bands *Rock of Ages*, *Marcus*, or *the Secret of Sweet* (the third installment in Tarell Alvin McCrane's Brother/Sister trilogy, directed by Artistic Director Chad Henderson), the musical *Grey Gardens* (based on the 1970s documentary about the eccentric and reclusive cousins of Jackie Kennedy, and directed by Milena Herring), and *Hand to God*, an "irreverent, Satan-possessed puppet comedy" that was nominated for five Tony Awards. The season kicks off, however, with just a jump to the left as Trustus revives one of their perennially most popular hits, *The Rocky Horror Show*, running in October just in time for Halloween. While Scott Blanks could undoubtedly rock those fishnets once again, this time he's taking over as director, passing the bustier along to Walter Graham. With an all-star cast including Michal Hazin as Riff Raff, Katie Leitner as Magenta, Kayla Cahill as Columbia, Josh Kern as Rocky, Cody Lovell as Brad - all alums of the recent *American Idiot* - plus Hunter Boyle (also featured in this issue as Artist of the Year nominee) as Dr. Scott and Gerald Floyd as the Narrator, this production will likely knock your socks off, and inspire you to replace them with stiletto heels. Non-season shows include the return of *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* and *Jingle Bell Jazz* in December, plus small-cast shows in the Side Door Theatre such as *Boy* in January and *Sex on Sunday* in July.

USC hopes to enchant and mesmerize with their season opener, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by new department chair Robert Richmond, and running September 30 - October 8 in Drayton Hall. Main stage shows include *Cosi* in November, *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play* (in which "survivors of a near-future apocalypse piece together an episode of *The Simpsons* entirely from memory, setting in motion an exploration of how the pop culture of one era can become the mythology of another") in February, and a stage adaptation of *Animal Farm* in April. Yet another season featuring mainly undergraduates takes place in the black box Lab Theatre, including *Grounded* in October, *Almost, Maine* in November, Ryan Stevens' original work *Outlaw Song* in February, and Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* in April. Opera, of course, is its own genre, yet Opera at USC is presenting an operatic Broadway musical, Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*, running November 4 - 6 in Drayton Hall. But wait - there's more! The Center for Performance Experiment - conveniently located on Devine Street around the corner from *The Thirsty Fellow* in case one needs a pre- or post-show beverage - hosts another full season of work from faculty as well as undergrad and graduate students. The lineup includes *Away* in September, *Clearing* in December, *Balance* in February, and performances of both dance and Shakespeare in April. However, we'd be remiss if we neglected to mention that Sartre's great existential work *No Exit* will run in the CPE November 2 - 5, and the cast of three people trapped in hell will include frequent Jasper contributor and former intern Haley Sprankle.

That's 50 or more live productions to see in the next eight months. Some naughty, some nice, some old, some new, and quite a few original - we don't know about you, but we're up for the challenge!

# Gilbert Allen's *The Final Days of Great American Shopping: Stories Past, Present, and Future*

BY CINDI BOITER



As the author of six collections of poetry, Furman University Professor of Literature Emeritus Gilbert Allen has rightly earned his place as a Carolina literary luminary for his poetry. Now, with the publication of his collection of prose, *The Final Days of Great American Shopping: Stories, Past, Present,*

*and Future* (USC Press, 2016), Allen has given us an arrangement of short fiction that not only entertains with its quirky characters in surprising situations, but also begs us to look within the culture we have created to where we find real happiness. And better yet, where we don't.

The 16 stories that make up *The Final Days of Great American Shopping* are loosely connected though they span across a period of time into the future. His tales begin innocuously enough with "The Skylights of Hell," the story of a long married couple, each dealing with their own combinations of life-assessments, frustrations, and best-laid plans. Then, a few stories in, "Gabriella's Shoes" introduces us to an oddly mystical pair of bright red stilettos with 4-inch heels that seem to help a widow get her groove back, and "Speed Dating," the story of a misanthropic professional speed dater who sees the world through mud-colored lenses. By the time we reach "Friends with Porsches," the story of young hairstylist at the He and Thee Christian Cut and Curl who shops for men by bumping their Porsche 911s at 5 m.p.h. then offering them free haircuts to make amends, we're all too aware that there is nothing typical about the odd-angled characters who make up what at first blush had appeared to be the all-too-typical small Southern town of Belladonna.

As entertaining, and sometimes surprising, as *The Final Days* is, there is more to Allen's stories than a fun read full of comfortable

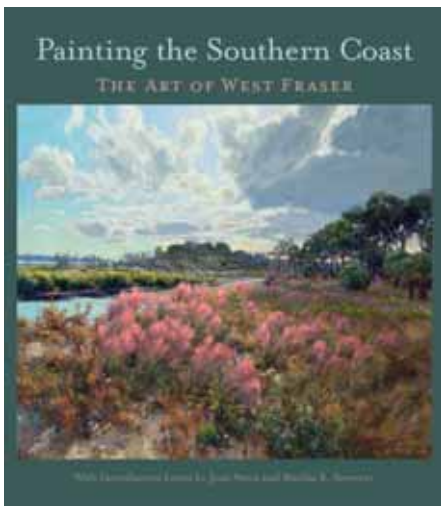
colloquialisms and classic upstate grammar—though there is something about Allen's writing style that makes the extra-long Spartanburg County "I" read like the "eye" in "eyeball" without phonetic clues, and his appreciation for the traditional Greenville County distaste for articles ("*Never did see her without no coupon in her hand*") is both authentic and admirable. Without realizing it, Allen offers the reader a series of cautionary tales about the dangers of acquisition. The problem is not necessarily with what we acquire, or with how we acquire it—though process is often the vehicle he uses to deconstruct the psyches of his characters—the problem is with why we acquire whatever the latest thing is that we must have or do. At what point is it too late for us to turn back, both as individuals and as a culture?

There is a broodingly happy weirdness to all of Allen's stories that, if read in succession, gradually shifts the readers' realities into an unfamiliar place populated by familiar characters, and that's an unusual quality in a set of short stories. *The Final Days of Great American Shopping* is more than it seems, more than its title suggests. It is a masterfully crafted trip to the future with all of your friends meeting you there. Whether you want them to or not.

# A Journey Worth Taking

West Fraser's *Painting the Southern Coast: The Art of West Fraser*

BY MARY GILKERSON



Love poems come in a variety of forms - sonnet, sestina, free verse. Arrangements of words across a page that capture the sense of connection, intimacy, and relationship of the emotion. But they also come in visual forms. Marks gliding across the surface of a canvas. Gestures that mimic the energy and movement of the subject. Colors chosen to capture the quality of light moving across a beloved landscape.

*Painting the Southern Coast: The Art of West Fraser* (University of South Carolina Press, 2016) is first and foremost a collection of visual love poems to the experience

of place, chronicling artist West Fraser's long standing relationship with the Southeastern coast. The book opens with essays by Jean Stern, executive director of the Irvine Museum, and Martha R. Severens, former curator at the Greenville County Museum of Art, introducing the reader to Fraser and contextualizing his place in the current art world. Fraser himself then picks up the narrative with his own autobiographical essay, a story grounded deeply in the changing development of the Southern coastal landscape. Born in Savannah, he spent much of his childhood on Hilton Head Island before and during the gradual development of the island by his father and uncle. A childhood spent running free on the island ingrained both a keen sense of observation and a rootedness in place that is reflected in his adult work.

Fraser is an observational painter, working directly from life. His process has shifted from finishing the painting directly in front of the subject to making field studies leading to the final studio painting. The subjects of many of Fraser's painting will feel familiar to anyone who knows the coast, but they are far from being just picturesque. He includes the grit and beauty of both urban and rural subjects, while avoiding the hackneyed clichés that are the bane of so many paintings of coastal subjects.

Most "retrospective" art books, meaning ones designed to be a career overview, follow a very predictable path leading the read-

er from early life, the turn to art and early years, mid-career, and mature period. While helpful in assessing the artist's overall career trajectory, the reader is put in the position of passenger and is not really engaged in a participant.

In *Painting the Southern Coast* Fraser literally takes a different direction. He creates a travelogue guiding the reader on a journey down the Southeastern coast beginning with the Winyah/Georgetown basins and moving along seven distinct coastal environments through the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida Sea Islands. Each section begins with a hand drawn map of the area listing the area's paintings, each site clearly marked.

This is not a just coffee table book that will sit forgotten as part of a decorative living room still life. Fraser uses a format that invokes a desire in the reader to join him in exploring what he calls "my country," from Debidue Island above Georgetown south to Talbot Island on the Florida coast.

A journey worth taking.

*Mary Gilkerson is an artist, writer, and educator in Columbia, South Carolina. After serving on the art faculty at Columbia College for over 20 years, Mary has created her own series of workshops and online courses that teach people how to make their own paintings come alive and bring balance to their creative careers.*

# CAMP SORGHUM, LATE 1864

BY ANNE CHADWELL HUMPHRIES

In an open field above Saluda rapids,  
I guard fourteen hundred Union officers  
who dig troughs by hand and cut limbs for shelter.  
Unfit to fight, I was drafted for these last days.  
Twenty men share one broken spoon for meals  
of rationed cornmeal, mostly roughage and weevils.  
Like them, I eat it raw with sour sorghum.  
Can't remember when I was paid, so I take bribes.  
Wearing rags this winter day, we march  
to the walled asylum to wait for Sherman.

---

Ann Chadwell Humphries of Columbia has poetry in *The Collective I*, a chapbook of poetry and prose released with the “Selfies: Real or Imagined” show at Gallery West, as well as in the 2015 and 2016 Poems on the Comet. She takes writing classes with Shepherd’s Center and Hadley Institute for the Blind.

# HAMLET STREET 1965

BY PATRICK SAUCIER

Mémé worked at the Rag Man,  
Where rag pickers,  
Who roamed the streets  
Calling for old clothes,  
Brought their gleanings.

She sorted the clothes,  
Some for resale,  
Some for shop rags,  
Some to make fine paper,  
And some to bring home.

My cousins, my brother, and me  
Wore these clothes even if  
They didn't fit so well,  
We were the best dressed clan  
On Hamlet Street.

---

Patrick Saucier, who moved to Columbia in 1996, is first generation American. His father and his paternal grandparents were French Canadians who moved to Massachusetts to work in the cotton mills. Saucier teaches sociology at the University of South Carolina. Mémé is the French-Canadian term for grandma.

# SUMMER

from "Four Seasons in Carroll County"

BY PAUL TOLLIVER BROWN

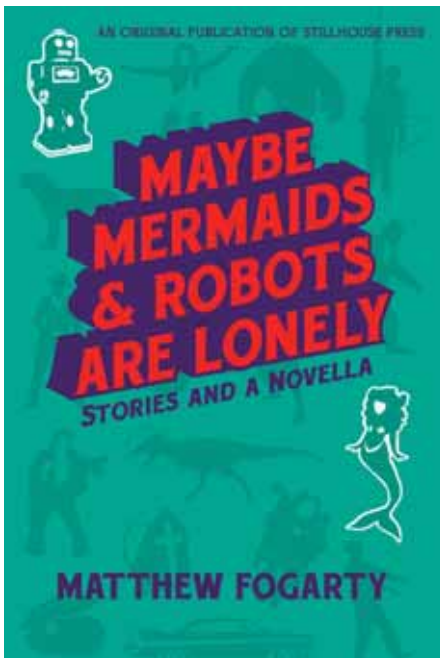
It's too hot for yard work,  
and the children play beneath the shade  
of a large oak tree in the pasture.  
We listen to their laughter and the  
far-off drone of the highway.  
Cicadas sound like landing spaceships  
in the evening when crickets  
herald the stars between their legs.  
On the porch with the hanging, blue bug-zapper,  
we retell stories that our grandparents told  
about the time the black bear  
dug up all the sweet potatoes in the garden,  
or when that snake scrawled up the side of the barn.  
We point out profiles in the  
sugar maples like kids spotting  
changing faces in the clouds.

---

Paul Tolliver Brown has published a variety of short stories, poems, and scholarly works, and has recently been featured in *The Society of Classical Poets* and *the Journal of Modern Literature*. He is currently a full-time English instructor at the University of South Carolina.

# Matt Fogarty's *Maybe Mermaids & Robots Are Lonely: Stories and a Novella*

BY KYLE PETERSEN



about the first and last words of that title than the protagonists that lay in between. These stories are fundamentally imaginative exercises concerning the inability to connect, and Fogarty's true gift, and what makes this such a sublime collection, is that this blend of magic and sadness never feels forced.

Fogarty, a recent graduate of the University of South Carolina's MFA program, where he was the editor *Yemassee Journal*, is every bit the student of the short story throughout this collection, with a keen attention to form along with a powerful sense of poetic imagination that exists from line to line as much as it does in his introspective style. The combination of these dual creative impulses provides a necessary balancing act, never succumbing to the button-down fastidiousness of academia nor the self-indulgent flights of fancy that can often drag down journeymen.

The subject matter itself varies widely over the course of the book, bouncing from wilting romance and heartbreak ("Plain Burial"), short character sketches of oddball loners ("Cardboard Graceland," "Bigfoot's Overcoat"), to dark, often fantastical reflections on childhood memory ("Frozen Alive," "A Monster for Always"). He often takes on multiples of these threads over the few short pages of a story, confident that he can cut to the heart of the metaphorical matter quickly and cleanly.

What binds this diverse collection together is an investment in exploring the interiority of these characters, even when in

the most distant third-person perspectives. In the book's centerpiece, the novella "The Dead Dream of Being Undead," Fogarty tells the story of a zombie infestation that is really about the existential angst of a father and his two sons, coming across as an impressionistic update of DeLillo's *White Noise*. Even though he opens these characters up through an omnipotent perspective, it's what we don't know, or rather what the characters themselves don't know, that the tension of the story hinges on. Written as a kind of parable about the breakdown of the nuclear family, Fogarty reveals the depths of emptiness, or loneliness, at the heart of these people.

And even aside from the thematic or eclectic premises he's exploring, it is Fogarty's distinctive voice and masterful use of figurative language that lingers with the reader; Fogarty is capable of moments of pure poetry-prose, imbuing many fleeting moments here with deep poignancy and insight. There's a moment a few pages in "The Dead Dream," for example, that he spends simply describing the dirt in, on, and around soldiers that will haunt with both its descriptive power and haunting atmosphere.

Given the obvious talent and the burgeoning promise inherent in *Maybe Mermaids*, Fogarty has the potential to become a relative star in the literary world; but even if he didn't, the quality of the work itself makes him worth paying keen attention to.

**T**he titular story of Matt Fogarty's debut collection of stories, which came out this September from Stillhouse Press, is a predictably strange one. A short, playful tale of a hypothetical romance between a robot and a mermaid, it deftly sidesteps its absurd premise to weave strands of tender fantasy and grim sci-fi into a spry bit of flash fiction.

But as an anchoring work, "Maybe Mermaids & Robots Are Lonely" is more

# STONED PUPPIES FOREVER

BY MICHAEL SPAWN

Frank came downstairs into the living room where, in the bookshelf corner, Lilith was bloodying the last unclaimed blanket in the house. Margot and Scott were on the sofa watching her while the news was on TV. “If you guys want to say your goodbyes, this is the time to do it.”

“I don’t know if I can handle that right now,” said Scott.

“There isn’t much choice.”

“How is she?”

“Confused. Just about dead, it seems like.”

Scott wiped his cheeks and forehead. “Do I look normal?”

“For you, I guess,” Frank said, and knelt beside Lilith. She was panting gusts but otherwise hadn’t made much noise since the whole thing started. “I wonder how many she’s going to have.”

Margot turned to the news where a man in a suit was pretending to know the next day’s weather. Scott inspected his pupils in the mirror by the front door and then climbed the stairs until his footsteps disappeared somewhere overhead. There were three little ones so far – spotted, blind, all squirming and soft cries.

“What are you going to say to Gram?” asked Frank.

“I don’t know, but it’ll be kind of hard getting up that flight of stairs with a busted foot, don’t you think?” It seemed to Frank like she was talking to the man on the screen

“I’ll help you.”

She pretended to almost laugh. “Whatever you say.”

“Oh, just let it go,” he said. “I already told you I was sorry.” He scratched Lilith’s ear and she looked up at him, grateful in spite of everything.

“You sure did. Like always.”

“Didn’t Scott give you one of his pain pills?”

“Yeah.”

“Did you take it?”

“I gave it to her,” she said, jerking her head toward the corner.

“To Lilith? When?”

“While you were upstairs. I figured she needed it more than me.”

“What’s the matter with you? You know Scott takes those really strong ones.” He stared at her, but the TV had her full attention. “Jesus,” he said, walking into the kitchen, “it’s gonna be in her milk now, you know.” He came back with a bowl of tapwater and placed it next to Lilith’s blanket, but she was distracted by another one sliding out, naked and breathless.

Though he had sat and played on its nog-yellow carpet more times than he could know, Scott came to the windowless bedroom at the hallway’s end with an explorer’s anticipation of the unfamiliar.

He tapped his fingertips on the open door. “Gram? You awake?”

There was no response and the room was too poorly lighted to make out more than the mere suggestion of a figure in the bed against the wall. He went in and stood over her. The air was stale and heavy and the lamp on the bedside table poured a modest trickle of light across her rosary and the scattered inhalers and medicine bottles. The ceiling fixture had burned out years ago. By then, he and Frank and Margot had long since abandoned the bedroom as a hideaway from all of the things outside its four walls that seemed so deliberately mundane and unfair.

As it always had, the walk-in closet in the corner stood open, but instead of Grandpa Dick’s museum of overcoats and the litter of dolls, trucks, and picture books on the shelves and floor, there were only a few lonely coat hangers. The big wooden desk was gone. He wasn’t sure if this was the first time he had noticed. Gram had always called it the work desk, though he couldn’t remember anyone ever using it for work. Instead, the three of them would huddle among its ancient oak legs and pretend there was a search party out for them, like they were special people worth recovering. Sometimes in the dark they would take Grandpa Dick’s flashlight underneath, where Scott would read aloud from the ghost story book they kept in the top drawer. Margot would get scared and



beg Frank, often through tears, to take her to their mother. Sometimes he was able to calm her down and sometimes she was made to simply suffer through. Either way, Frank would hear the story's end and Margot never left his side.

The bed had been theirs too. Whenever staying overnight, they splayed between the sheets like a threepile of runts, always with a threadbare view of the nightlight keeping vigil in the hall.

And now here she was. Under the covers, lacy gray nightgown matted up under her chin, eyelids fluttering, attended only by hanging photographs of everyone she had accidentally outlived.

"Gram?"

She turned at his voice. "Richard?" The name dragged from her mouth like a wisp of smoke.

"No, it's me, Scott.

She moved to raise herself and then settled slowly back. "Richard, what are you doing coming home at this hour?"

"No, Gram. It's Scott."

She studied his face through stormcloud eyes.

"Scotty."

"Hey, Gram."

"What time is it?"

"It's a little after seven. At night."

"Is your grandfather home yet?"

Scott shook his head. "He isn't here."

"I swear, if he's been out—" she began, before lurching into a violent coughing fit. Scott thought he heard the blood and fluid boiling over and crashing against her lungs like tiny ocean waves. He sat on the edge of the bed and waited while she struggled to reclaim air. Composed for the moment, she looked to the doorway and then back. "Your cousin was just in here visiting." Her voice was small and distant and she punctuated her sentences with a deep swallow as every breath became increasingly precious and unnecessary.

"Yeah. He's back downstairs with Margot."

"Margot? Did she come for supper, too?"

"Yeah, she did. How are you feeling?"

"She's turned out to be such a beautiful young woman. I always knew she would."

He nodded and began to count the medicine bottles on the table, only to realize he already knew there were seven.

"She gets those long eyelashes from her mother."

"How are you feeling, Gram?"

"And her mother got them from me, you know."

"I know."

"Is Margot staying for supper?"

He didn't know if he was supposed to be crying. "Yeah, Gram," he said, and decided that he wouldn't be able to even if he wanted. That he would just wait and try later.

She started to say something else but it cracked and fell to dust as breath escaped her again. Her chest heaved under the blanket and he took her hand, trying not to squeeze too hard. Her lungs released all they had left to reckon with.

---

"What's the matter with it?" asked Margot, limping across the floor to the corner.

Frank was hunched on his heels over Lilith's fourth. "It isn't breathing."

"It was fine a second ago, right?"

"I don't know. It isn't moving."

Side by side, they hovered over the tiny thing, Frank poking its hairless belly and Margot watching, careful to keep her weight off the bad foot. Its eyes were closed like its sister and brothers', but where they were busy blindly scouting for their mother's underside, this one lay alone, untrembling and without a sound.

Scott appeared at the bottom of the stairs.

"What's going on?" he asked, and came over to see.

"Doesn't look like this one's gonna make it," said Margot.

Lazy-eyed but careful not to disturb the feeding, Lilith adjusted herself and lowered her head beside it. She breathed it in and licked its back, then prodded it with her nose. It did not move and never would.

Scott leaned in closer. "Damn. What happened?"

"I can take a guess," said Frank, the words dangling just beneath his breath.

Margot glared. "You don't know. This kind of thing happens all the time."

"What do we do with it?" asked Scott.

"We can't just throw it away."

"We'll bury it in the morning."

"Do you think she's gonna have any more?"

Lilith rolled her eyes up at them as if she understood the question and was curious herself.

"Doubtful," said Frank. "The old girl looks just about spent."

Scott helped Margot to her feet and supported her as they all moved to the back patio for cigarettes in the frosted air.

Lilith stayed behind, exhausted and weak, stretched out while the newborns ate away and drained her for all they could get. They could not have known it, but they were happier now than they would ever be, no matter how long they lived.

---

*Michael Spawn is a writer and musician who lives in Columbia, South Carolina. He is the music editor for Jasper Magazine.*



## Dirya We Home: A Look at *Daughters of the Dust*

BY JENNIFER BARTELL

**n filmmaker Julie Dash's** groundbreaking film *Daughters of the Dust*, the Unborn Child runs into her mother's body before she is even born. The Unborn Child is embodied in the physical body of a child and her voice that helps narrate the story of the Peasant family. She's playing with her future cousins, and pulling on her auntie's dress. This girl-child running through the film is a thread between the past and present; she is the present and the future that yearns to migrate to the mainland and the present and past that remains on the island.

*Daughters of the Dust* is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and is also a featured film in the Nickelodeon's *Daughters: Celebrating Emerging Female Filmmakers Festival*, which highlights the work of a selected group of contemporary female filmmakers of color.

Set near the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century on St. Helena Sea Island, the film follows the Peasant family as they make preparations to leave the island to go to the mainland and

Philadelphia. Family members are preparing feasts and gathering one last time before departure.

I was only eight years old when the film was initially released, but I was born into a family like the fictional Peazants. Only we were swamp water Geechees of South Carolina. Unlike most of the Peazants, my family did not get caught up in the Great Migration. Just as millions of Black Americans fled the South in hope of a better life, millions more stayed in the South, hoping to make the best of it.

The family name Peazants is one letter away from peasants, which was largely the perception of Geechees when I was growing up. To be Geechee was to be ignorant, was to be backwards, was to be rife with stereotypes that went beyond being Black and/or Southern. I didn't find pride in my Geechee heritage until I was much older. I always make an attempt to look for myself in the arts. In this film, I see myself. I see my grandmother. I see

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my cousins. I cannot help but conflate the fiction of the film with my reality of growing up Geechee.

Several characters in the film are forced to make decisions and consider the implications of those decisions. Not only the decision to migrate to the North, but also the decision to disclose to a husband the identity of the wife's rapist and the decision to take Gullah culture with them or not when they leave. Each of these decisions is deeply personal, but they also have larger implications on how the family will develop in the future. The dialogue is all in Gullah, a creole language that is a blend of English and Western/Central African languages, with no subtitles to guide the reader. The Gullah language adds to the rich portrayal of Gullah culture throughout the film.

"Outside of its artistic splendor and pertinence to the American canon, Julie Dash's 1991 jewel of film broke through an industry that did not see interest in black skin outside of exploitive modalities," says Roni Henderson, a writer and director who is co-curating the film festival. Dash's film also moves through the industry by having the story centered around Gullah women and their stories. Nana Peazant and Eula/Eli's unborn baby girl primarily narrate parts of the film.

In her book *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman Film*, Dash writes about her childhood, how she became a filmmaker, and how she made the film. Dash says she did not imagine herself as a filmmaker. "None of the images I saw of African American people, especially the women, suggested that we could actually make films. We were rarely even in them," Dash writes. But once she made the decision to become a filmmaker, she knew that she "wanted to make films about African American women. To tell stories that had not been told. To show images of our lives that had not been seen." A feat she expertly achieved in her debut film that she wrote, produced, and directed.

The poignant cinematography (shot by Arthur Jafa) and beauty of the island helps the viewer enter the Peazant family's world. Some of those images include women in white dancing on the island's shore, the striking opening image of dirt blowing out of

hands, the images of the women cutting okra and preparing shrimp for a gumbo in the sand dunes, and hands dyed blue from indigo. All of these images invoke in me the real Gullah/Geechee community and its effort to preserve its land and culture. The beauty of the island is no fiction and still exists today; however, the beauty of the island and Gullah people that has lived there for the better half of two centuries is under threat.

Marquette "Queen Quet" Goodwine founded the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition. The entire Gullah/Geechee Nation from Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL continues to battle to maintain land ownership in the face of destructionment [sic] and tourisms, which has caused displacement, according to Queen Quet.

"Many of the followers of the film learned that there was a culture called 'Gullah' by seeing it, but then missed the major part of the storyline concerning the fact that we have land that we must protect. The film did not help us with that process and instead caused more people to look for a mythological place instead of a living culture that they should support. This is not the filmmakers' fault, but it is the fault of a society that places more value on entertainment than it does education," Queen Quet says.

"Lack of land and human rights by many that have migrated off of the islands to other places is a major contributing factor to family land loss as was seen in the fiction film," Queen Quet says.

There is a part in the film where Nana Peazant says they are the "children of those who chose to survive." Choosing to survive has never been an easy task, especially for those who have chosen to stay on the real Sea Islands and face the possibility of being forced off of their land through excessively high taxes or developers who wish to build resorts.

Gullah/Geechee folk worldwide have joined Queen Quet and the coalition in an effort to preserve the Gullah/Geechee culture, which is not an archaic culture of the past, it's a living breathing culture, that continues today, and we survivors intend to keep it going. "Disya we home" is a Gullah phrase that is prominent on many of the coalition's literature. "Disya we home" is something Nana

Peazant and the others who chose to stay on the island would say.

Although Dash's film is a fictional account of a family's move to mainland, it's rooted in a reality that is still relevant today. Dash did an immense amount of research on Gullah and West African culture for this film. Her diligence is present in the script, the Gullah dialects of the actors (who all were trained in Gullah), and the images she chose to portray.

With *Daughters of the Dust*, Dash became the first Black American woman filmmaker with a feature film in theatrical release. The film shows the complexity of Gullah culture and the multi-dimensional/generational familial relationships women have with one another. *Daughters of the Dust* is the American story of a family striving for a better life for themselves and their posterity. However, this story isn't told with a linear plot or with the Euro-centric gaze in mind.

The last image of the film is of the Unborn Child running after the women who remained on the island, Yellow Mary, Nana, and Eula (Unborn Child's mother). It's a powerful symbol of the future running after the present and the past. In that same way, the women of color whose work will be presented in this important film festival are like the Unborn Child: Their work is possible because of women like Dash who laid the footwork for them to be able to tell their stories on film.

*Jennifer Bartell teaches at Spring Valley High School in Columbia. She has an MFA from the University of South Carolina and her poetry has appeared in Callaloo, PLUCK!, Kakalak, the museum of Americana, among other places. A Callaloo Fellow, Jennifer is also an administrator for the poetry collective The Watering Hole.*

*The Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition is an organization people can join if they truly want to assist the Gullah/Geechee Nation in keeping their land and maintaining their culture. To join their efforts, visit gullahgeechee.net.*

# MARKED BY THE WATER

## Artists Respond to the 1000 Year Flood

**T**he role that artists play in the healing of a community after a devastating event is multi-faceted. We feel the urge to document for posterity while, at the same time, we use our work to process our own complex feelings. And through the products of our labors we hopefully help our neighbors process their feelings, too.

When the rain first started in Columbia on October 4, 2015, we had been warned about the kind of devastation that might lie ahead, but few of us could have imagined what the next week would bring. Sunken roads and breached dams, cars and trucks abandoned and washing downstream, flooded homes destroyed, families separated, friends dead.

Columbians didn't wait for the rains to stop before they got busy. From the physical labor of hauling supplies and minimizing the damage to coordinating relief efforts and keeping tabs on needs and news via social media, everyone had a job to do. Even those who were not directly affected by the floods looked for ways to help. We bailed out mud and ripped out sheetrock. We tore down and built back up. We delivered fresh food, dry towels, clean clothes, and more bottles of water than any planet should have to handle.

Later that month, many of us sat down together to break bread on the Gervais Street

Bridge as the waters that had terrified us just weeks before washed peacefully beneath our feet.

It was obvious by then that the time had come for the artists to step in.

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015, a group of artists led by poet Ed Madden, painter Mary Bentz Gilkerson, and myself convened at Tapp's Arts Center around a beaten old couch and cold metal chairs to talk about ways to harness the complicated amalgam of emotions churning within our community. We decided to put forth a plan for a multidisciplinary project to commemorate the first anniversary of the flood in 2016, giving ourselves the better part of a year to get ready for it.

Madden recalled local writer (and Jasper contributor) Travis Bland posting on Facebook that he felt he needed a tattoo. "With all the rain and all you know, we've all become marked by the water," Bland had said. Taken by the found prose of Bland's off-hand remark, Madden recommended that *Marked by the Water* would make a fine title for the endeavor, and it was agreed.

The *Marked by the Water* project started with approximately 20 visual artists and 20 literary artists, split between poetry and prose. Over the next 9 or so months additional artists joined us and others dropped out. We created a 100-plus page, full-color book of juried poetry, prose, and visual art

titled *Marked by the Water* that is scheduled to launch alongside an expanded exhibition of flood and recovery-inspired visual art on October 4<sup>th</sup> at Tapp's Arts Center. The project also grew to include a group of dancers under the direction of Martha Brim and Amanda Ling who will perform to a new musical composition at the launch, as well as a small group of actors under the direction of Vicky Saye Henderson who will offer a staged oration of a prose piece by writer Nicola Waldron. At least two films have been made, one by Ron Hagell with Terrance Henderson and Eileen Blyth, and some artists who were attached to a similar project the Nickelodeon implemented via Indie Grits joined up with us once their project was complete. More and more artists have come to work together, with products inspiring process and, even as this magazine goes to press, new aspects are being inspired and realized and added to the deadline for commemoration of the first anniversary of the 1,000 Year Flood on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

The following pages offer just a sample of what's in store as we realize the year that has passed, what we have lost, and how we have grown since we were all marked by the water of October 2015.

--Cindi Boiter

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*Offered under the auspices of the Jasper Project, Marked by the Water is generously supported by a Connected Communities Grant from Central Carolina Community Foundation and hosted by Tapp's Arts Center.*



And Then the Dam Broke by Laura Spong



Hard Rain by Stephen Chesley



# Crawlspace

By Nicola Waldron

You can't foresee how,  
long after the event, things  
will fester: in your

body, as in the  
dark spaces under the house,  
the fine membranes torn

and permeated  
as your once pristine threshold,  
the mind now swollen

within its frame, the  
self gone under, left to wave  
from its own doorstep,

stunned at how the world  
came so easily to flood:  
its ordered gardens

drowned and littered with  
old hopes—lilies, peace strewn  
across entrance and

egress both, mildewed,  
ruined: the house, the body  
habitable now

only by those who  
knew the land before, how it  
stood once, virgin, firm,

a home. Too late now  
for compensation  
of any kind.

# Worry

By Worthy Evans

It was then about nine when the helicopter came  
and started to fling sandbags into the gap of the canal.

I remember not a cloud that morning and that the Chinook  
cut into the bleached blue sky with its blades that beat down

a firm thump and a part of me certainly appreciated  
that physical tamp onto my spine merely those sound waves

maybe they were also a recovery component  
that with every sandbag dropped one less leak to worry about

while the rivers still swollen from the flooding here and from the upstate  
and all the big houses in the flood zone rattle with restoration work

and all the boil advisories along the riverfront drop and one morning  
we'll wake up again to a rain that dampened the ground

and not think a lick of bread and milk except for in those low down places  
where the potholes wait to sink where bridges wait to fall strong people

wait to fail and say things like we never expected for water to be this way  
and when the sun goes down on another clear day somebody comes

teaching farming folk came up from the fields and trip off the clods  
that got them the crops that pay the note and make college a hope

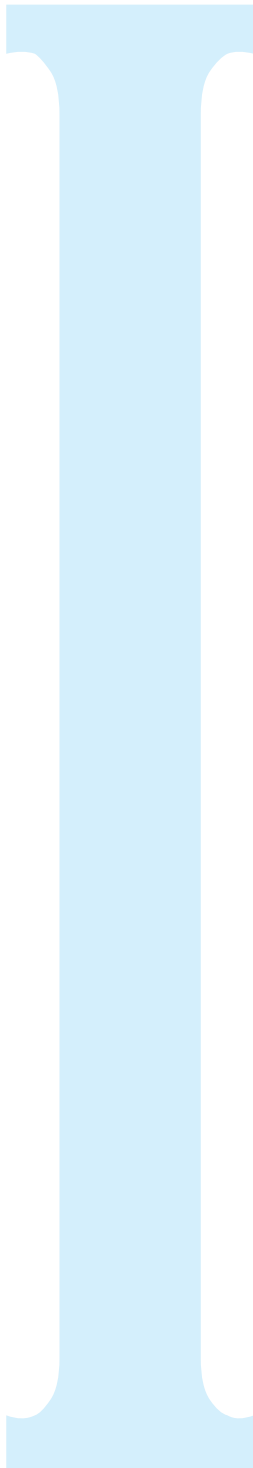
for those wanting to get out.



Chinook by Eileen Blyth

# 18 Random Miles

B Y C Y N T H I A B O I T E R



**I**t is entirely possible to feel the rain without getting wet. To look out the window at the water coming down and soaking into the soil and see it rise like a phantom to the sill and beyond. To watch your photographs, families drawn in crayon, favorite pillows that fit your back just-so float by, mingled in some bizarre and random arrangement with those of your neighbors, the ones you know, the ones you don't, the ones who live 18 miles away where the flood has really come.

For whatever reason, or lack thereof, there were those of us who were flooded when the 1,000 year rains came that October of 2015, and those of us who were not.

Blame it on prevailing winds, the ancient dunes, a random burst of warm or brisk air that engineered the path and purpose of the downpour. Maybe it was the mood of Surupa. Oya, distracted by a shock of lightening in her eye, or Hayas returned from the hunt, drying the tears of the Hyades before they ever reached the place where Wateree Creek feeds into the Broad River.

I don't understand how it happened, and I wouldn't venture to guess why, but I know with certainty that there are those of us who were marked by the water of the 1,000 year flood of 2015, yet we never even got our feet wet.

We built our home on a hill. Twenty-three years ago, we chose the highest knoll on the woody property we owned near Chapin to build the house of our dreams on. When the rain came that night in October we were more concerned about water-logged trees tumbling over than flood waters washing away the bits and pieces that made up our world.

We watched from afar on our own personal screen in high definition. Doppler radar sending pulses of microwave energy into the atmosphere to collide with walls of water

then reflect back, echoing in shades of yellow and gold, saffron then deadly serious red. We wore sweat pants and drank coffee with cats curled in our laps, comfortable in naiveté. We had candles and flashlights within arm's reach and clean water collected in pitchers and tubs. Just in case.

Surely we would be hit, too. A power outage? Broken limbs across the roof? We scanned the ceiling for shadows on the sheetrock, tell-tale signs that the water was gathering its strength and volume, the leaks would come and we would be victims, too. We'd have our own story to share like all the rest.



It was slow coming before it was on us.

When the body count started on the news we began sending out and receiving electronic assurances that those we loved most were safe or rescued.

Dams we never knew of ruptured and sprawled their contents across the places we knew well, places where we drove and parked, where we ate and played and worked. Places where our neighbors, 18 miles away, lived.

Smeared images of immersed landmarks and stranded drivers appeared, and a pickup truck went down a creek over and over again on a never-ending loop. Was that a person in that tree? Were those the distraught faces of people we knew?

Closed roads and collapsed bridges separated us.

Home is bigger than the place you lay your head.



Stories came in about people and places, some familiar, some not, and a culture began to form around the flooded areas. As we waited, ready to play our parts, slowly, the way

a kettle cools, the rain stopped. And that was that.

Yes, we had the rain and the worry, and the creeks rose higher than they ever had before, but when the sun finally came out again our world simply went on. Bright, fresh water from the faucet. Dry sheets. Favorite art still hanging, still gathering dust on the shelves. The sometimes carefully, sometimes haphazardly placed bricks of the lives we had built still safely surrounding us, sheltering us.

18 miles away.

I've seen us on the news before. Not us, but people like us.

We're the ones whose house the tornado left untouched, china still in its cabinet, fruit ripening nicely in a bowl, while all the next door neighbor has left is a muddy concrete slab and the stuffed animal of some stranger's child left lonely on what used to be his lawn.

We're the ones who call 911 on the highway when the cars just feet in front of us collide and spin their passengers into another paradigm. Our hearts beat fast, but we catch our breath and drive on to the next stop in our day.

We're the ones holding our children even tighter when the worst news a human can hear makes its way to a family we know.

The ones whose number didn't come up this time. The ones who didn't flood.

There must be a word for the conflicting feelings of guilt, helplessness, and relief those of us who were spared felt that week, but I haven't found it.

We pitched in. We wished well. There was plenty to do but more than enough people to do it. Did anyone really need more bottles of water?

We cleaned our closets and loaded up trunks full of winter coats, shoes, and household supplies. Took them to collection sites like offerings to the gods. We punched a clever code into our cell phones, dialed the number on the screen, took word from the blood bank to heart.

We waited to venture in to the damaged areas. How soon was too soon so as not to invade privacy, not to be seen as a looky-look, a rubber-necker, one of the lucky who still slept in her own bed, wearing her own dry nightgown, while others crowded into cavernous and institutional halls because their beds were halfway to the Atlantic Ocean?

How were we to wear our guilt with our empathy at the same time?

What could we offer to fill the gaping holes the rain had washed into the worlds of our neighbors 18 random miles away?

Recovery came on the wings of swift angels, though every time the skies darkened pits formed in our bellies. Quick reparations happened with gusto, bigger jobs took, and continue to take, far too long. We gathered over the Congaree to break bread and toast the freshness even harsh water can bring.

We mingled together, those who were flooded and those who were not, and eventually there were no others, only us.

It was almost November when my daughter was visiting and she noticed a dark gray powdery stain on the upper walls in the hall upstairs. Climbing a step-ladder I wipe it off time and again, but I just can't seem to make it go away.

We were all marked by the water.

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Film Festival Returns for the Third Year

BY WADE SELLERS

2<sup>nd</sup> Act Film Festival, under the direction of Emmy-nominated filmmaker and Jasper film editor Wade Sellers, returns for its third year on Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm at the Tapp's Arts Center.

Each year, dozens of South Carolina filmmakers apply to participate in the festival and ten are selected by a panel of local film experts. Sellers teams up with Jasper editor Cindi Boiter and one additional Columbia-based writer—this year's guest writer is Columbia poet laureate and Jasper literary arts editor, Ed Madden—to write the first and third acts of a screenplay. Participating filmmakers will write the second act of the play then film their rendition of the completed screenplay. This year, for the first time, filmmakers will receive a \$100 stipend to offset the costs of creating their films.

Festival Director Sellers states that “our feeling has always been that we should not charge artists to create their work and our future plans included a stipend to the filmmakers. We are starting small, but our goal is always to show our support to our filmmakers in every way we can. The starter cash is a great way to do that.”

The filmmakers for the 2016 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Film Festival are: Chris White, Ebony Wilson, Tyler Matthews, Jason Kendall, Michael Tolbert, Collins White, Tamara Finkbeiner, Jennifer Baxley, David Holloway and Cory John.

Each of the ten films is screened during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Film Festival to typically SRO crowds. Audience members vote for their favorite film and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Audience Award is presented to the winning filmmaker. In addition to a hand-hewn one-of-a-kind trophy created by Matt Kramer, the winning filmmaker also receives \$250, Final Draft software, and additional prizes.

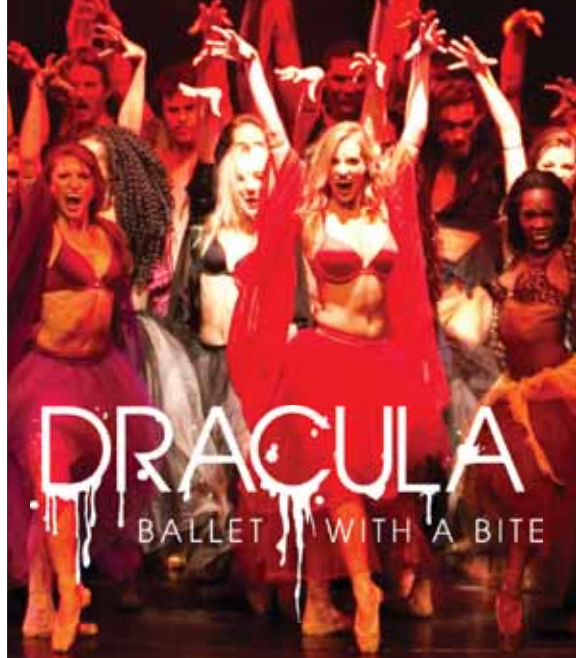
According to OK Keyes, winner of the first 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Audience Award, “2<sup>nd</sup> Act was a wonderful experience for me as a young creator trying to find inspiration to do art outside of a school project. I also think the parameters for the project create a unique challenge to not be like everyone else that pushes you to really know your own style.”

For more information on 2<sup>nd</sup> Act Film Festival visit the website at [secondactfilm-festival.com](http://secondactfilm-festival.com). Tickets to the event are \$10 at the door.



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WILLIAM STARRETT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



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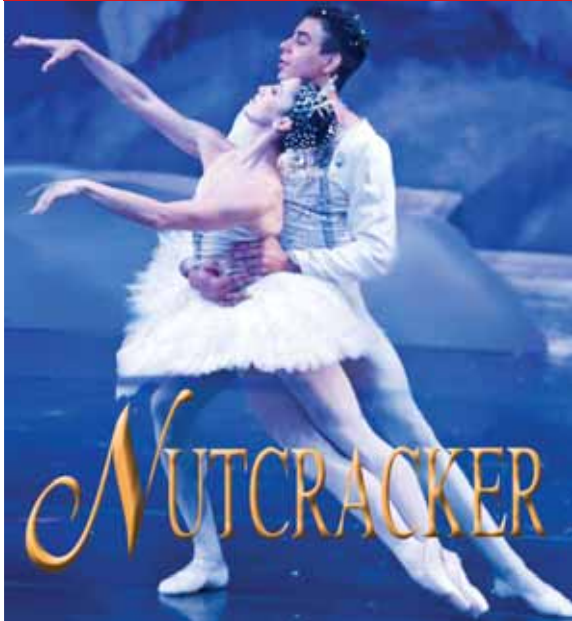
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B Y L A R R Y H E M B R E E

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







espoke Tailoring,” as we learn through Stan Brown’s award-winning performance in the newly released short film *The Bespoke Tailoring of Mr. Bellamy*, is defined as tailoring without the use of a pre-existing pattern and made from scratch for each customer – i.e., tailoring that is the opposite of factory-made in finished condition and in standardized sizes. Like bespoke tailoring, Brown’s life could never be described as fitting into a standard pattern. Having resided in many places, he has recently resettled in Columbia after a 20-plus year absence from the South, and is beginning his third year teaching voice and diction to students in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of SC.

In his early life, the stage was set for Brown’s success as both a performer and a teacher. His mother was born in the small SC town of Smoaks in Colleton County, eventually moving to Harleyville, about 30 miles southeast of Orangeburg in Dorchester County. It was there where Brown and his sister were born and raised. His mom was a career middle school teacher, and his father traveled four hours each day to his job at the Savannah River plant. The senior Brown

was the grandson of a man from Ghana who planted rice in Dorchester and who bought his freedom from slavery but then stayed in Dorchester County. Because his grandfather had land and money, many of Brown’s ancestors were college educated, and George Washington Carver was actually a professor of one of his uncles. Brown himself was educated in the Harleyville school system, which was integrated when he entered the third grade. And later, he graduated from Harleyville-Ridgeville High School.

In addition to his mother, there have been a long line of teachers in Brown’s family including his older sister, who still teaches in Dorchester County and has won teacher of the year for her work many times. “My mother still corrects my grammar to this day,” he admits. Alongside the teachers, there have also been a long line of preachers in his lineage. He has always been surrounded by relatives who are confident speaking in front of people, a trait he also inherited.

At the same time, there is a long history of musicians on both sides of his family. Many of his uncles were singers and musicians and his mother was the pianist in their church. Brown spent many hours in his youth alongside her at choir practice. Not surprisingly, he started singing at a young age, and as he grew older, his mother would drive him to Claflin College in Orangeburg for voice and piano lessons.

Because of his musical talent, Brown received a voice scholarship to the University of SC in 1980. However, instead of music, he opted to study journalism, never accepting the scholarship. He recalls he stayed away from pursuing a serious music career for two reasons. First, he thought his family might not support his choice of an artistic career, and he also knew that he would have to perform a lot of opera, a genre he didn’t particularly enjoy. However, he did continue singing during college as both a member and vice president of *Carolina Alive*, a USC show choir that performed locally and all over the world.

The holiday season and Christmas break of his junior year brought hardship to Brown. First, his father died, and he contracted an intense case of pneumonia around the same time. Despite these setbacks, Brown returned to school, very sick and very de-

pressed. “I had never lost a parent. I really don’t know how I got through that semester.” He recalls that he slept most of the time in his room, but still managed to complete classes for which he had registered. It was during this down period of his life that he did a lot of soul searching about who he was and what he really wanted to do next.

Brown realized that his passion for studying journalism was lacking, so he compiled a list of new majors that interested him more. He concluded that Library Science and Theatre were at the top of his list. “I was living on campus in Preston Residential Hall, and Longstreet Theatre was the closest academic building to Preston,” he jokes. “I went over to Longstreet, and met with theatre professor Ann Dreher who convinced me to become a theatre major because, as she said, I was ‘big and could sing.’” That convinced him to change his major, and he eventually graduated with a B.A. in Theatre. Brown now credits Dreher as one of his influential mentors. “To this day, I still use her approach to creative dramatics in solving problems in the theatre,” he says.

After graduation, Brown moved to Atlanta for a year, and worked for the son of Annie Green Nelson, writer of the first novel published by a black female novelist from SC. Brown had met Mrs. Nelson earlier when they were both taking an acting class at USC, and she was in her 90s at the time. He ended up working in her son’s PR firm, hired to drum up business, mainly in the Middle East. During that year, Brown realized that performing was his real passion, so he returned to Columbia in 1989, entered graduate school at USC, and ultimately completed an M.F.A. in Acting.

During those days in the M.F.A. program at USC, candidates were required to complete an internship for a year. Brown landed an internship at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C. Reflecting on that year, he says, “I did not return to SC the same person. My year at the Folger was transformative.”

While Brown was busy in DC, USC President James Holderman had enticed film star/writer/producer Robbie Benson to move to Columbia and work for the university as an artist-in-residence in filmmaking. And Benson had convinced the university



“

I WENT OVER TO LONGSTREET, AND  
MET WITH THEATRE PROFESSOR  
ANN DREHER WHO CONVINCED ME  
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”

to let him teach a class where the students would also help him produce a movie based on his screenplay, *Modern Love*. Students would learn all aspects of filmmaking during the course. Hundreds of students wanted to be in the class but only 40 could register for it. Benson had interviews with all prospective students, and Brown was fortunate enough to land a spot in the class. Around the same time, Benson's wife, singer Karla DeVito, had relocated to Columbia with Benson. DeVito had a long musical history including touring with Meat Loaf in the late 70's and performing opposite Benson on Broadway in *The Pirates of Penzance*, replacing Linda Rondstadt. DeVito and Benson attended a USC production of a musical version of *Animal Farm* starring Brown. The next day, DeVito asked Brown to be a part of a show she was presenting at the Koger Center, and the two ended up doing several concerts together. This was the beginning of a new chapter for Brown, and years later, they arranged to fly Brown back to Columbia from England where he would sing an Andrew Lloyd Weber themed concert with DeVito again at the Koger Center. At this concert, Sir Andrew Lloyd Weber and Sarah Brightman, of *Phantom of the Opera* fame, were in the audience.

Benson's film *Modern Love* was produced and released in 1990 with Brown co-starring in the film, solidifying him to receive his Screen Actors Guild card, and also enabling him to establish relationships with co-stars Louise Lasser, Burt Reynolds, Kaye Ballard and Rue McClanahan.

After Brown received his graduate degree, Jim and Kay Thigpen, who had founded Trustus Theatre in Columbia's then nearly-deserted Vista, hired Brown as full time employee. "They gave me my career," Brown says of the Thigpens. "They paid me a salary to act." It was at Trustus that he performed some his favorite roles including Midge in *I'm Not Rappaport* and Lucien in *The Boys Next Door* along with roles in *The Colored Museum* and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Kay Thigpen touts Brown as the first actor Trustus ever hired, and she adds the "multi-talented Stan Brown set the bar very high." Of his time at Trustus, Brown respectfully reflected, "I had more action in the minors (at Trustus) than I ever did in the majors!"

While at USC, Brown became familiar with an exchange program that USC had with the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, and was especially interested in the Contemporary Shakespeare and Performance courses offered there. He applied and was accepted to the program, but was not able to go for two years because of the expense. He saved money during that time, and Trustus held a fundraiser to help him in which he once again performed with Karla DeVito. This enabled him to relocate to England where he studied for over two years in the program.

In England, Brown became increasingly intrigued by the study of the voice, especially energized by the work of Cicely Berry, the voice director of the Royal Shakespeare Company at that time. As fate would have it (and Brown is a strong believer in fate), one day he was on a commuter train reading one of Berry's books, *The Actor and His Text*, and Berry happened to be sitting right across from him. She saw he was reading her book and struck up a conversation with him, eventually inviting him to work with her at the RSC. Brown credits Berry as another of his strongest mentors saying, "She revolutionized voice training by helping you find your authentic voice".

After working with Berry, Brown decided he wanted to be a theatre educator. He applied for university teaching positions, and was hired to teach in some prestigious college theatre programs, including those at Miami of Ohio, Towson University, and SUNY-Oneonta. Just before his recent return to Columbia, he had a 15-year stint at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

Although live theatre has driven most of his career, Brown has been fortunate to act in over ten films. Just last year, he was featured in the short film mentioned earlier, *The Bespoke Tailoring of Mister Bellamy*, winner of the Louisiana Film Prize. In the film, Brown plays a bottle collector who discovers an old sewing machine which ignites an old passion. Cast in a challenging role, Brown is in all 17 minutes of the film but only speaks one line at the very end. He received two awards for his acting in the film including Best Actor in the Louisiana Film Prize and also in the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival. The film is

continuing to make the rounds in the film festival circuit, and is receiving accolades through the country.

As for what's next, Brown will be directing a production of *Animal Farm* at USC during the 2016-17 season, and will also travel to Maui to work on a new musical with his old friends Robbie Benson and Karla DeVito. He is also interested in working to bring something similar to the Louisiana Film Prize to Columbia. The competition brings an estimated \$10 million in economic impact to Shreveport, LA each year. All of the films entered in the \$50,000 grand prize festival must be filmed there utilizing a multitude of production and on-camera talent. He imagines roles for many of his talented friends in Columbia, especially the actors who struggle to find good roles as they get older and whom he describes as "world class."

It seems that Brown has settled comfortably back into the South, a place whose history he declares is "a wonderful thing to have with you throughout your life." He recently married his partner, Joe Bowie-Brown, who has moved to Columbia after having his own stellar dance career in New York with prestigious companies like Mark Morris Dance Group and Paul Taylor Modern American Dance. Joe and Stan like nothing more than relaxing in their Belvedere neighborhood home. They particularly enjoy Joe's baked goods as he has begun his new post-dance career as a professional baker.

Has Columbia changed in twenty years? "Oh definitely," says Brown, seeing Columbia as "more progressive and more urban with actual traffic jams." He laughs as he remembers his early days at Trustus when the Vista had one restaurant and you had to get in your car to go find something to eat.

Both the film and theatre scenes in Columbia could not be happier that the bespoken Mr. Brown has returned.

*Retired from Trustus Theatre, Nickelodeon Theatre, and the SC Arts Commission, Larry Hembree is the president of the board of directors for The Jasper Project which publishes Jasper Magazine.*

# A Voice in the Attic

DEAR BLANCA CONTINUES  
ITS WINNING STREAK BY EXCAVATING  
AN UNSUNG PAST

**BY MICHAEL SPAWN**

Among Columbia's creative class—and that of pretty much any city, one imagines—there exists a hierarchy, whether or not we like to admit or acknowledge it. It's only natural; as human beings, we're psychologically engineered to look for order and to create it where it might not otherwise exist. As there should be, there's plenty of debate among our artists and chroniclers as to who is creating the best stuff, who is doing the most meaningful, interesting work, and whose prime can now be only be seen receding in the rear-view mirror. But when it comes to music in the Capital City, you're unlikely to hear too much argument about the merits of Dear Blanca. Since its formation, the band has been making a swift, steady climb into the upper echelons of the city's rock heap, and for plenty of good reasons.

The band started in the waning months of 2011 when singer/songwriter Dylan Dickerson began performing under the name Dear Blanca as a one-man band, his only artillery being a guitar and a small drum kit. Finding this arrangement unsatisfactory, as many do, it wasn't long before he enlisted drummer Marc Coty to man the rhythm end of things, who was then briefly joined by second drummer Dayne Lee (who remains a frequent col-





PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS HAMMOND



laborator, though no longer an official band member). Finally, bassist Cameron Powell joined the ranks to round out Dear Blanca's core, which remains unchanged today.

2013's *Talker* was the inaugural full-length record featuring the Dickerson/Coty lineup, but, a few moments of brilliance notwithstanding, it's mostly useful as a document of a young band finding its personality through classic trial and error. If nothing else, it rightly heralded Dear Blanca as a band worth watching. It wasn't until the release of *Pobrecito* the following year that Dear Blanca, now a trio with Powell on board, came to us confident and fully formed with recorded proof of its maturation. Rife with urgency and passion, "Boulder," *Pobrecito*'s opening

track, signaled in no uncertain terms that this was a band that would be difficult—maybe even foolish—to ignore. *I Don't Mean to Dwell*, released last March, though shorter in length than its predecessor, marked a dramatic leap forward in emotive power and lyrical poignancy ("Given the opportunity, I might break the old routine / Just let me know when so I can ask off" from "Temporary Solution" is still my favorite Dickerson line), with the added benefit of contributions from ET Anderson's Tyler Morris and perennial Blanca wingwoman Lee. *Dwell* was and is an exhilarating and confounding record, one that undeniably represented Dear Blanca at the height of its songwriting and performative powers, its sharpest faculties firing off

all at once. And now, not content to unveil merely one stellar record in a year, the band is preparing for the September release of its latest effort, *To Tell a Half-Truth*.

Due to the proximity of their releases and similar lengths—five songs apiece—*To Tell A Half-Truth* could be considered a sort of sister record to *I Don't Mean to Dwell*, or perhaps its dénouement, that arc to the finish line in any dramatic work where lessons are learned, loose ends tied up, and a new social order takes shape. Where *Dwell* had moments of earnest stabs at pop songcraft and an occasionally manic sense of near-punk fatalism, the tunes on *Half-Truth* are, on the whole, slower and more deliberate, parting the curtains for the lyrics to stand front and center. And as good as the music is on this latest effort, it's indeed the words that matter most. They're heart-wrenching and melancholy, even by Dear Blanca standards, and this is due in no small part to their credited co-writer, a decidedly un-famous, now-deceased poet and songwriter named Scott Crane—Cameron Powell's uncle.

"My uncle—my mom's brother—passed away in the early '90s—'91, I want to say," remembers Powell, "and over the last twenty-five years or so they thought they had found the grand majority of his things, and then my mom and others were cleaning out some stuff in my grandparents' attic and found a laminate presentation folder, a book, all these pages that Scott had written and she told me about it. So the next time I went to my grandparents' house I asked them about it and they showed it to me. It was a pretty lengthy book. There were thirty or forty songs and poems he had written and copyrighted...the grand majority of them were about struggling with depression and love lost, things like that, and when I told [Dylan] that I had this, he actually had the idea of turning it into a record in and of itself."

"They're all very rooted in the heartbreak he was going through at the time," Dickerson says of the unearthed works and their late author. "It doesn't feel quite like he's got his head on straight throughout the whole thing, but then in the midst of all this despair there's some really profound and poignant



stuff, and I tried to search for those and expand on those ideas to create a short record that represents a little snapshot of Scott's life at that time...I would look for the lines that resonated the most with me and all of those found their way pretty much verbatim onto the record."

By looking to the past to fortify the emotional power of its own present, Dear Blanca is ensuring the vitality of its musical legacy, but it might also be said that the band is performing a literary service as well. The mythology of the tortured artist who perishes believing his voice will remain forever unheard is a tale as old as Kafka, but, through a chance discovery, Scott Crane's words are now a matter of permanent and public record. It's almost cinematic in its narrative trajectory, a notion Marc Coty confirms, albeit inadvertently. When I ask him if Dear Blanca's music were the soundtrack to a film, what sort of film would it be, his doesn't hesitate.

"It would have to be a drama, because all of Dylan's lyrics are pretty fucking sad," he says. "I think someone would have to die in the movie."

I THINK SOMEONE WOULD HAVE  
TO DIE IN THE MOVIE.



# Dance and Design

A LOOK AT HISTORIC COLUMBIA'S HORTICULTURIST, FORMER BALLET DANCER KEITH MEARNS

BY OLIVIA MORRIS



The Henry Powell Memorial Children's Garden of the Hampton-Preston Mansion is Columbia's miniature Neverland. The garden has a foot-wide pebble allée that is lined by flowers that would dome over a child walking through. Southern live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*), an indigenous tree that grows laterally, sprawl over the grounds. Their limbs are low and seem to be made for climbing. One branch, about ten feet off the ground, has a series of crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) sticks surrounding it in a tent shape. "The idea," says Keith Mearns, Historic Columbia's horticulturist, "is to have vines grow up the side, so it makes a tipi for children to play in."

Every detail is highly intentional, a meticulously-planned fairytale, as if it might be perfumed plastic. The grounds of Historic Columbia exist in a unique class of artistry — a living medium, with all of its beauty and unpredictability. To accomplish this feat, Mearns starts work around 7:30 AM. He has been the horticulturist tending to Historic Columbia for the past year, primarily responsible for the planting, maintenance, and planning of plants on the grounds, alongside the Director of Grounds, Evan Clem-

ents. Historic Columbia has six properties that Mearns tends to: the Hampton-Preston Mansion and Gardens, Robert Mills House and Gardens, Mann-Simons Site, Modjeska Monteith Simkins House, Seibels House and Garden, and the newly restored Woodrow Wilson Family Home.

Every property, both building and garden, has its own distinct history. In 1818, Ainsley Hall commissioned the building of the Hampton-Preston Mansion, selling it to Wade Hampton in 1823. Hampton's wife Mary and her daughter Caroline cultivated a rich garden as a monument to antebellum wealth and social cachet. The Robert Mills House was, of course, built by Robert Mills (who also designed the Washington Monument), but was also commissioned by Hall in the 1820s, then handed down through various religious and educational institutions. The Mann-Simons Site was home to the formerly enslaved Charlestonians, Celia Mann and Ben Delane, and was kept in the family for generations, often rented out as offices and personal rooms. The Modjeska Simkins House was home to Modjeska Monteith Simkins, a champion for civil rights and post-



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humorous recipient of the governor's highest honor, the Order of the Palmetto. The home served as a meeting place for activists such as Thurgood Marshall during a time when Blacks were denied entrance to city hotels.

Though the paperwork is thought to have been lost in Sherman's burning of Columbia in 1865, the Seibels House is touted as the oldest house in Columbia with the date 1796 carved on a basement beam. Finally, the Woodrow Wilson Family home sheltered the 26th President in his boyhood, Wilson's mother, Jessie Wilson, having established both an ornamental and a working garden at the site on Hampton Street.

By the early 1960s, however, several of the historic properties had seen better days,

with some facing dilapidation and being condemned. It was in 1961 that the Robert Mills House was saved from demolition by a grassroots movement, subsequently providing the house with extensive restorations and the establishment of its garden. The same occurred in 1970 with the Mann-Simons site. In fact, according to the 1969 form nominating the Hampton-Preston Mansion to the National Register of Historic Places, the once-enviable garden had been replaced by a parking lot.

Decades into reconstruction efforts, challenges still exist. When it comes to the gardens, "We were never given an explicit list of plants," explains Mearns, who has had to forage for information about the plants

that might have been historically available or naturally occurring in South Carolina at various times. Mary Hampton and Caroline Preston were both Victorian plant collectors, so the Hampton-Preston gardens are filled with non-indigenous plants. According to Mearns, "The Victorian age was an age of plant discovery, people were going around the world ... collecting plants that nobody had seen from the tropics and [elsewhere], putting them in the greenhouses or putting them in the ground if they could live. So, a place like this was grabbing what they could from many places and bringing them here." The long-lost age of plant artistry in the South is being revitalized in Historic Columbia's gardens, capturing a piece of the city that was almost forgotten.

The Woodrow Wilson Home currently is growing Bradford Watermelons, an heirloom crop, meaning the seeds of one generation are used to create the next generation, and so on. "Kind of like a cultural artifact but it's a living thing," Mearns explains. These watermelons were immensely popular in the 19th century, but almost disappeared because they don't ship well. The Bradford family has maintained this crop since its commercial disappearance in 1922, and now Historic Columbia is growing three of these ultra-sweet watermelons.

A former professional ballet dancer, Mearns grew up dancing, traveling around the country to attend various schools and dancing for well-known professional ballet companies. He has a thorough knowledge of both plants and choreography, both acting as forms of aesthetic arrangement. He explores the connection between dance artistry and horticultural from his personal experience with both, stating, "Dance gave me an appreciation for visual organization and evolution, because dance is something that is never really the same twice, no matter how many times you perform the same variation, and gardens aren't either. As much as everyone would like for gardens to look the same forever, they won't," and they aren't ever going to.

Other challenges for successful garden design includes thorough vision into the future, not only imagining how plants will look



once they have matured, but how they will look years, even decades, later. For example, Mearns points out a youthful redwood tree, its green trunk flexible and infantile, in the middle of a field. In just twenty years, he says, the tree could be fifty feet tall and dominate the setting.

Once Mearns completes his research and selects a plant, he also must consider viability, spatial availability, and aesthetic appeal. But less predictable, particularly in a temperamental climate like Columbia's, is how the plant will respond to changes in weather. The shift between extreme heat and relatively cooler temperatures can happen very quickly, and that can create change too shocking for many plant species. "Plants either do amazingly, or just die. In a big planting bed, 30% of what we start with is just going to die," says Mearns. There are also other capricious factors that lead to difficulty. For example, Mearns had planted heirloom corn only to have squirrels feast on it and decimate it in the night.

The grounds of Historic Columbia are a continuous project, and require daily maintenance. They are also still expanding, reviving pieces of southern history and cultivating a perennial form of art, one that will succeed and reveal itself both with *and without* human involvement. The grounds of Historic Columbia bring a strictly literal interpretation to the ideas that art is both independent from the artist and never truly finished.



# I DON'T HATE COLUMBIA

BY KYLE PETERSEN



I've been thinking about Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* a lot lately.

Well, I guess that's not strictly speaking true—I'm kind of always thinking about that film. You might think it's because I write about music and the protagonist of the story also writes about music, and both of those things are true. But the film itself isn't really about writing about music, or even, I would argue, specifically about music as an art form. Instead, what it's really exploring is what it means to be a fan—what does it mean to be analytical, to

be pure, pragmatic, corrupted, commercial, transcendent. All of it.

Most of the plot, which I'm not going to recount at great length here, is centered

around a teenage music fan and aspiring rock critic who manages to luck his way into writing a cover story for *Rolling Stone* about a relatively young band called Stillwater (insert willful suspension of disbelief). What seems to matter more than the outlandish circumstances, though, is the pitch the fictional Lester Bangs (played by the late great Philip Seymour Hoffman) feeds the kid to give to the magazine editor in order to land the gig: "tell him, you know, it's a think piece. About a mid-level band struggling with their own limitations in the harsh face of stardom. He'll wet himself."

While it's not a 1:1, for some reason I think Columbia is kind of like Stillwater. Over the course of the film the band proves itself to be a capable live band, occasionally brilliant, but also often divisive, buffoonish self-saboteurs. They are a mix of good and bad, a group that might be working up against its own limitations but nonetheless has something powerful, something great, something worth preserving. Something worth fighting for. And sure, larger structural forces, or snobs with their sideline opinions, might count them out, but these guys aren't some pawn in a chess set—they are a living, breathing entity, and as such don't have to be hemmed in by perception. Sound familiar?

I've also been thinking about this more lately because a friend, Bakari Leiby, recently asked me (on his podcast) what I liked about Columbia, and I kind of said I liked its limitations as much as anything. At the time I was speaking about the more practical benefits of having enough, but not too many, culinary options, cultural events, general political activity, etc. But now I'm starting to think it might be an argument of philosophy, a faith in the underdog, a belief

that anything labelled mediocre is simply misunderstood.

This isn't meant to be overly negative or positive, to suggest we should expect more or less of this city that we live in. Rather, I think that part of the reason people love our city's arts and culture scene has to do, at least a little bit, with the struggle, with the sense of possibility and delight that comes from subverting expectations. It's a different kind of calculus and joy then comes from a giant cultural center like New York or a relative desert like some of the truly small towns that dot most of the physical landscape of South Carolina. There's something about an uphill battle that is still winnable, that might be long and hard and ugly, but at the end of the day you can look back and see where you were as easily as where you're going.

Not long after Bakari asked me that question, I got to see him perform under his sandcastles moniker at Hoechella, a body empowerment and anti-slut shaming festival he founded. He played a lot of new songs from a forthcoming LP he's working on, but one lyric in particular stuck out to me: "I don't hate Carolina but I don't want to die here." While that might sound grim, consider the provisional title: "Carolina I love you but you're bringing me down." I am, even though it sounds pessimistic, more a fan of the latter sentiment. Even when we're down on this city, this community, this state, I think we always have to take into account that there is love in our hate, hope in our despair. That Bakari sang this song at Hoechella, a festival brimming with progressive forward movement, artistic outpouring, and a vibrant sense of community that is undeniable.

Or something like that. However you feel about it, for better and for worse, it's ours.

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