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Anila Quayyum Agha

Let a Million Flowers Bloom

February 12 – May 29, 2022

Pakistani American artist Anila Quayyum Agha’s works cast their images onto the walls like lanterns and create patterns that dance over visitors. The works explore notions of masculine and feminine, public and private, religious and secular, and particularly space and refuge, taking on the pain of losing one’s home and agency and the hope of establishing them both anew.

Rodin

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February 19 – May 15, 2022

Auguste Rodin saw the body as an envelope for the spirit, and the flickering surfaces of his modeled forms express this tension. His sculptures’ poses, inspired by Michelangelo’s marble works, capture the human condition in all its elation and anguish. Visitors will immerse themselves in more than 40 examples of the artist’s bronzework.

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BACK COVER:

#MASKSPROTECTCOLUMBIA

CENTERFOLD / MICHAELA PILAR BROWN



ON THE COVER(S)
JASPER COVER CONCEPT BY
BEKAH CORBETT

8 Dive into 701
RE-IMAGINED SWIMMING
POOL COMES TO LIFE

ON THE BACK COVER

Back Cover concept and design by Brian Harmon and Shigeharu Kobayashi. We asked, via social media posts, for those in Columbia's creative community and its supporters to share a masked selfie to demonstrate that, even without knowing who might benefit from their actions, they are proud to do their part to protect their neighbors by wearing a mask in public.

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JASPER IS

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REBEKAH RICE **ONLINE MAGAZINE MANAGER**



Dear Friends,

Ten summers ago, when I wrote the first editorial for Jasper Magazine, I knew very little about what I was doing. I had been writing for magazines for well over 20 years at that point, in addition to writing fiction and teaching women's studies at USC. But when it came to magazines, I primarily wrote about women's health and parenting with an occasional feature story thrown in. I loved art, but most of what I knew had come from traveling and voraciously preparing for trips by studying the artists who had creatively processed the places we would visit. I was, and still am, an autodidact.

However, a series of summers spent in New York City bookending three academic years living in Winston Salem, where our daughters were students at North Carolina School for the Arts, had changed my perspective. On everything. Art had become the lens through which I processed most of my perspective on the world. I had become something between a convert and a junkie.

Art helped me make sense out of a world that too frequently disappoints. I began to see art, no matter the form, as the thread that connects humanity when other factions of life do their damndest to pit us against one another.

I had to do something with this awareness.

So, having been edited all my adult life, in too many ways to mention, and just as the taillights of printed magazines were fading from view, at 52 I became a magazine editor. As I wrote in that first editorial, building a magazine from the ground up took a whole crew of experts who knew more than I did about an awful lot of jobs—photography, graphic arts, printing, and business, to name a few.

I was fortunate back then to find like-minded artists who were willing to share not just their talents, but to share in the dream of a collaborative, multidisciplinary, print-based arts project like Jasper, and across the past 10 years my fortune, our fortune, has continued. Granted, no one has made much money from this enterprise, and many of us have made none. Jasper has an unconventional business model, at best.

But that's OK.

Years ago, we could have taken on advertorial articles, built a bunch of overhead with comfy offices and nice salaries, direct mailed the magazine to the poshest zip codes so our advertisers would "get their money's worth," and become another economically driven project. That would have been one route to take our mission.

But in a world that too often measures all worth in terms of dollars and cents rather than the usually ephemeral moments in time that give multidimensional meaning to the way we expend our energies and construct our universes, we decided to bypass the monetization of this project, using money mostly as the simple tool it is meant to be.

We have been able to do this because people who cared about this project pitched in, giving their talent and time, their verbal, cyber, and financial support, and their always generous pats on the back which, over the past ten years, add up and are meaningful.

Ten years later I know more than I once did about the arts, magazines, people, and community, but I am more reliant than ever on smarter people than me chipping in with a vast array of contributions to this project that is Jasper Magazine—a work of art in the form of a magazine that changes every time it goes to the printer, and all of us can sign our names as the creators of this work.

Thank you for your contributions. And thank you for reading.

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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*Reading is that
fruitful miracle of a
communication in the
midst of solitude.*

-Marcel Proust

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701 WHALEY Continues to Come More Fully Back to Life with Pool Renovations



BY CHRISTINA XAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHLEY CONCANNON

Columbia residents are likely familiar with the historic 55,000 square foot brick building that has decorated Whaley Street for over a century—but how much do they know about the building’s deep history or the process behind its most recent venture to balance old stories and new experiences?

This story starts in 1903 when Columbia architect and mogul W.B. Smith Whaley opened 701 as a company store. It was a space people went to recreate after work, specifically those who worked in the textile mills; there was a bowling alley, a barbershop, and a library, with a pool and gymnasium being built later in the century.

Although the building went through various iterations of ownership, style, and purpose, it always promoted a unique sense of community, and it upheld that while beginning to lean towards the arts at the turn of the century. Unfortunately, on one night in 2000, the roof caved in, and a space once known for the people who populated its corners went quiet.

Then came Richard Burts.

“There are a lot of things that led up to this happening—it was kind of the lowest point in my professional life,” Burts recalls, “The day after losing out on a really big deal, the owner [of 701 Whaley] reached the point of being ready to hand over the space—if I had gone forward with the other deal, there was no way I could have ever done both of them. So, it was freaky the way things went.”

Fate has a funny way of making itself shown, like a building finding its way to the person who could breathe life back into it. To do this, Burts knew he wanted to amplify the space’s sense of community once more, not so much making it his own, but using his power to give the space back its voice.

“When Richard came in after Jack Gerstner had it, his vision was really to turn it back into a community center, back to a place where people could convene and have weddings and parties,” Lee Ann Kornegay, Video Producer and Event Manager, revealed, “And we all wanted it to have an art centric feel to it.”

Over the past 15 years, that desire has been successful, led mainly by the current team of Burts, Kornegay, and Tom Chinn, General Manager. Today, 701 Whaley is home to several offices and local businesses, an artist-in-residence space, areas of dwelling, and galleries, including their own hallway gallery and the 701 Center for Contemporary Art.

“Most tenants have come in by word-of-mouth—it’s been very organic the whole way,” Chinn shares, “Lots of people like to photograph here; we get lots of requests for photo and video sessions, so you’ll see commercials with the building in the background. ESPN was just here. Google was here.”

One of the main ways 701 reaches its goals, though, is through its five distinctive rental spaces, open to the public and used for art events, graduations, weddings, release parties, and more. Burts knew he wanted to expand and do more in this vein, so when the owner of the gym and the pool became interested in selling, Burts purchased and annexed them, officially reuniting the spaces of 701 Whaley in 2012.

Purchasing a building, though, is only the initial step of a journey. The main work is in renovation, which for 701 Whaley was divided into three phases. Phase One brought the aforementioned changes and transformed 701 into the place we know today. The nearly completed Phase Two will bring a brand-new event space—a modern take on the recreation and design of the 1900s. Phase Three, involving the gym, is yet to come.

When it came to the pool, Burts and his team knew that the space had potential, and they wanted to return it to the public in a fresh way while retaining its integrity. “We

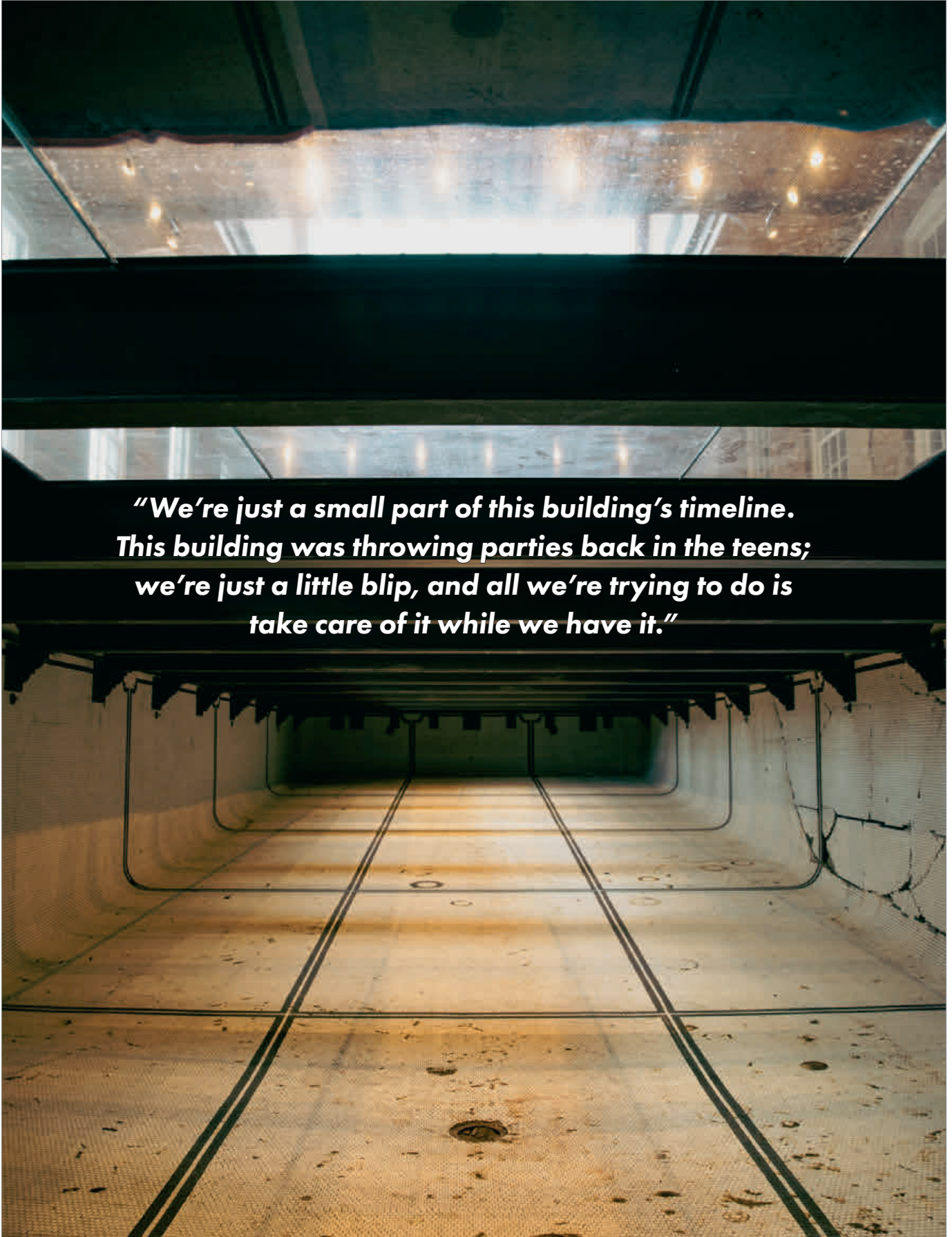
tossed around a lot of different ideas for a while about what to do,” Chinn recalls, “We knew we wanted it to be another rentable space. But we asked, you know, what does the community need? What do they want?”

The most important and identifying aspect of the pool space was, of course, the pool. However, for years, rain and the elements poured into the room, cracking the pool tile, caking the floors, and rendering the room unusable as anything more than a storage space. Beyond this, converting a pool into a fillable event space required thinking outside, or rather inside, the box.

“You could put up a fence or a railing around the outer edge, and you have maybe three and a half feet to be able to walk around the railing. You could go down in the pool with a set of stairs, but the pool bottom slopes, so you have to cover up the pool bottom,” Kornegay says of the process, “And we definitely didn’t want to cover it up, so that’s when we landed on the glass.”

Steel beams were inserted through the edges of the pool into the boiler room underneath, and thick pieces of plexiglass were cut, measured, and bolted on top. The effort took months, but the result is brilliant. The original pool is completely intact, and patrons walk, suspended, completely safe, several feet above. While parts of 701 Whaley are already in many ways a time capsule, this room provides a space in which the present iteration exists within and on top of the past.





“We’re just a small part of this building’s timeline. This building was throwing parties back in the teens; we’re just a little blip, and all we’re trying to do is take care of it while we have it.”

Gazing down into the tiled basin, each piece you see laid across the bottom is completely original. The pool may have been cracked and damaged, but all pieces remained, and the team painstakingly collected each tile from around the room and reassembled them so that no replacement had to occur.

“Elements that tell you their history are really important. You want a place to be nice and functional, but you want those imperfections too, and it’s not all, you know, perfectly manicured—it’s livable, and I think that’s what makes people comfortable,” Burts says. “This place has a history, and I think very early on it became a popular venue site because of how it looked and felt. This is an important part of the community’s history.”

Upon walking onto the pool deck and tilting your head upwards, you will see a stained wood ceiling with skylights embedded, one of the first parts of the restoration. While the previous space had a wooden ceiling and skylights, since such a significant portion collapsed, anything could have been done. But anything is not what this team wanted. They replaced the wood and skylights, and even thought about painting the ceiling white, but when Chinn and Burts saw the unfinished wood, “it felt as if it belonged there,” so they simply stained it.

“You know, anytime you do a project like this, it’s like choosing your path on a tree—there are so many branches that you go out on in every different direction, and then you hope at the end that you haven’t messed it up,” Burts effuses, “We’re just a small part of this building’s timeline. This building was throwing parties back in the teens; we’re just a little blip, and all we’re trying to do is take care of it while we have it.”

Save for the exterior lobby, the most significant difference within the pool was one of the simplest: the windows. Several large, arched windows lined each horizontal wall—but—they were just open arches. There was no point of reference for what the windows may have looked like, so there was little restoring to do; this was about creating. Once again, though, Burts did not flip through magazines and select extravagant windows. He stood in the room and asked it what worked—and it spoke. He landed on a simple window with thin white frames and muntins, each window divided into 24 glass panes, flowing with the sleek professionalism of the building as a whole while maintaining the simplicity of the original room’s design.



The lobby itself, however, was the most remarkable change, being a completely new addition to the space. While it is the most modern portion of the renovated area, you can still clearly follow Burts' desire to continue aesthetic of the pool room. The lobby is not particularly large, but it is spacious with an open inner atrium that parallels the open floor plan of the pool itself. The arch connecting the lobby and pool follows the arched shape of the windows. The mahogany tone of the lobby's wooden floors easily echoes the pool's stained ceilings. The unfinished brick communicates with the other brick walls within 701.

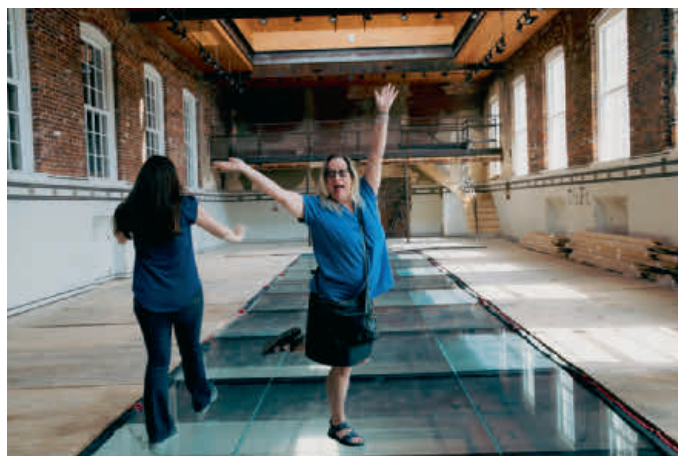
The courtyard outside the lobby is an open space that can function as its own venue or as an addition to the pool, designed to be easily tented. The lobby's tiered handicap ramp presented a surprising logistic challenge, but finagling from architects and engineers made it functional while staying true to the goal of ensuring it appeared as if always there.

In the end, the space is grand, classic, and fresh. When it comes to bridging new designs with original identity, the team was successful.

“One thing that we wanted to achieve was that it not feel like it's new but that it's gotten life breathed back into its original. A lot of times you go into a place, and even though you know this isn't original to the building, it fits the aesthetic,” Burts details, “I hope that when someone enters, they don't go, ‘Oh, which person thought of that’ or ‘When did this piece get added,’ and instead experience it as one cohesive identity.”

The team's goal is for the venue to be open for renting by the end of the year. Construction for Phase 2 began around three years ago, but as a historic property, it presented its own challenges, both in terms of city permission and material age. And, of course, the pandemic threw a wrench into existing plans. However, only final touches remain now, such as waterproofing the lobby floors.

In the coming months, a new multitude of voices will exist in the space, will bring new experiences and life to 701 Whaley, a building that will begin to have its pages more fully filled once more.





Poetry & Change

looking back at when it started

by Ed Madden

It was summer of 2011.

Al Black's Mind Gravy had been going for just over a year at the coffee shop Cool Beans. The weekly venue, which would migrate through other coffee houses over subsequent years, provided a venue for a growing community of poets, spoken word performers, and singer-songwriters. There were always a couple of featured readers and a lively open mike. As Jasper reported on the fifth anniversary, "Some people come to read or recite, others to listen. But everyone who comes know they have found a place where they belong."

Also going for just over a year was The Watering Hole, a community for writers of color from both spoken and written word traditions. It started as a Facebook group for writers who had participated in the Cave Canem South workshops 2009 and 2010. Those workshops had been organized by then USC Distinguished Poet in Residence Kwame Dawes and featured such prominent writers as Frank X Walker, co-founder of the Affrilachian Poets, and Nikky Finney. Two years later, in 2013, Finney would be offered an endowed chair in Creative Writing and Southern Literature at USC, and The Watering Hole would host its first retreat.

Kwame Dawes left the University of South Carolina for the University of Nebraska that summer. Dawes had founded both the South Carolina Poetry Initiative and the USC Arts Institute. Through the Initiative, he published a series of chapbooks by Carolina poets, and he founded a first book prize, published through USC Press. The Arts Institute created opportunities for artistic collaborations across media—writers, dancers, visual artists, music—unusual in a town and at a university that insisted on disciplinary boundaries as much as social ones. Dawes had also championed putting poets in residence around the state in parks and workplaces and museums. That writer in residence program, however, like the Poetry Initiative and the first book prize, didn't last after he left. At the end of

July, a group of poets gathered in the small, packed offices of the Arts Institute to celebrate all that he had done for South Carolina poets and poetry. And to say goodbye.

My dad died in June. I had been with him most of the spring, helping with his home hospice care as he died of cancer. I got back just in time to throw myself into teaching at TriDAC, the Tri-District Arts Consortium, a summer arts program for middle school students, where Ray McManus had taken over the creative writing program founded by Richland Northeast teacher Barbara Thomson. I honestly don't remember anything about what I taught that year, though I have in my files a poem about teaching with postcards. Morgan, a student who appears in that poem from 2011 showed up in one of my USC classes last spring. I remember I left the Dawes event early. One of my favorite MFA writers whom Kwame had mentored was crying. It felt too much like grief.

Earlier in 2011, as a short-lived arts journal folded, Cindi Boiter—resilient, determined, a champion of the arts—reorganized her collaborators for a new journal. It would be called Jasper. She asked me to be the literary arts editor. I said yes. The first issue would come out in the fall.

That first issue had poems by Terresa Haskew and Ivan Young. Both have since published books. It also included poems from Worthy Evans's new book *Green Revolver*, the fifth in the SC Poetry Book Prize series founded by Dawes. (Only two more would be published before the press dropped the series.) The third issue included poems from *Home Is Where: An Anthology of African American Poetry from the Carolinas*, edited by Dawes and



Ed Madden is the poetry editor for Jasper Magazine.

published by Hub City Press in Spartanburg just after he left the state. There were also two coming of age poems from a writing contest that Jasper sponsored with Trustus Theatre in conjunction with their production of *Spring Awakening*.

Looking back now, it seems like a year of ferment and change, people leaving, things changing. It was also a year of ferment and protest and change. And those first issues remind me of themes that remain important, urgent: support for emerging writers, diversity of representation, collaboration, leadership, sustainability of cultural work, community.

That fall, visual artists Alejandro García Lemos and Leslie Pierce (who passed away in 2015), staged a queer collaborative art show centered on the image of Saint Sebastian, including film, poetry, and installation art. I felt so lucky to be included. It was certainly not the first queer art show in the city but perhaps one of the most visible, selected by *The State* newspaper as one of the 10 best arts events of 2011.

That fall, Boiter organized the first Poetry & Pints pub crawl across downtown venues. We left *The Whig* for the statehouse grounds, where Occupy Columbia protestors became a human microphone, repeating and amplifying a poem about their own protest. Not long after, Gov. Nikki Haley had them arrested. (A federal court would later rule that arrest a violation of the protestors' First Amendment rights, and the state would ultimately settle, paying the protestors almost \$200,000, even as Haley continued to insist that she was right.) A continued opponent to arts funding, Haley had proposed cutting all state funding to the arts in her 2011 inauguration speech. In 2015, she cut the state poet laureate, Marjory Wentworth, from the inauguration program. Arts advocates saved the Arts Commission from Haley's philistinism and her exclusion of the traditional poem from her inauguration only gave Wentworth's poem—"One River, One Boat," an indictment of the state's racist past and a call for change—a much wider audience.

That fall, Nikky Finney won the 2011 National Book Award in Poetry for *Head Off & Split*.

That was a decade ago. I think the usual social and institutional barriers to literary community and arts community in general still persist here: town and

gown, spoken and written word, the disciplinary boundaries that hamper collaboration, and the social divisions (race, class, gender, age, education) that compromise accessibility and cripple community.

But I also hope that Jasper has done what it could to help to break those barriers down. To encourage collaboration and cooperation. To validate emerging as well as established artists. To get all kinds of artists talking to other artists in other disciplines, get them out of their silos and into places and spaces and events and communities where art can do and be something different, can enrich more lives, can strengthen our sense of community.

Ten years later, as cultural initiatives have come and gone or sometimes morphed into something else, the city feels so different to me. There is One Columbia for Arts and Culture, our city's de facto office of cultural affairs, incorporated in 2012 and led by executive director Lee Snelgrove since 2013. One Columbia has pioneered public arts programs, coordinated a comprehensive cultural plan for the city, and created the office of the poet laureate, to which I was named in 2015. In that position, I've tried to promote local writers—especially young writers—and create venues for local voices. We've put poems on city buses, sidewalks, theatre screens, coffee cups, parking tickets, street banners, and elsewhere. Jasper itself has grown from a magazine to a project, a short film festival, an annual summer reader, a tiny art gallery, commemorative and documentary publishing ventures, and often the best launch parties in town.

Al Black reminds me that *Mind Gravy* was "two weeks shy of 10 years when COVID shut it down" last year. Carolina Poets on Facebook jumped into the shutdown with virtual readings all year, but other events have been cancelled, postponed, postponed again.

COVID has brought into focus the things we miss, the things we need.

I am so proud of what we have done and often, frankly, amazed at the drive and energy Cindi Boiter and her loose crew of volunteers and artists has brought to this work. (Yes, volunteers.). I am glad I said yes ten years ago. I am so glad we're still here.

Looking Back A Message and Hope from Kyle Petersen

One of my favorite bands, the Drive-by Truckers, often close their encore sets with “People Who Died,” a 1980 Jim Carroll Band punk rock romp that can feel like a factual list of loss or a howling expression of grief, depending on the reading.

I can’t remember if I’ve ever heard them give a clear explanation for why they do this, but I think it makes a lot of intuitive sense. We mark the passage of time, in many ways, by who departed and when. It’s what stains the memory and enshrines in the timeline of our lives, over and over again.

I think that’s why, reflecting on ten years of Jasper Magazine, my thoughts often turn to those who from the music scene (as I’m primarily a music writer) are no longer with us. Scene stalwarts like Skipp Pearson and Robert Newton, my contemporary local music heroes like Aaron Graves and Adam Cullum who were taken before their time, as well as more periphery but just as vital scene figures like Mike Busbee and Paul Bodamer. My thoughts also turn quite keenly to those who we’ve lost that were dear to the heart of Jasper community itself—CCB board member and arts scene bon vivant Coralee Harris and sculptor and First Thursday arts gallery curator Anastasia Chernoff. Ten years ago, it was hard to imagine this collective loss, as inevitable as it might be in the sands of time.

We’ve also, in some ways, lost various versions of Jasper Magazine over the years, shedding some of our youthful exuberance and searching for identity as we turned over writers and photographers and editors along with visual styles, organizing structures and, arguably, renewed sense of purpose. From our early days of desperately profiling so many of the great artists and arts happenings in our city to hosting jam-packed magazine release parties that

were stuffed with offerings meant to enhance and extend our coverage to pivoting to a more truly events-oriented organization that made things like plays and literary journals and books and film festivals and more happen. We slowed down our publishing speed, built a non-profit, became alternative gallery space curators—it was kind of like watching a rapid-cycle process improvement that was responding to the corresponding changes in our city. And while I’ve been far less involved in Jasper in recent years personally, I’m still thankful for so much it taught and gave me. I wrote dozens of features, hundreds of music and book reviews, and learned much about the immense challenge of editing such a word-heavy publication. But more than that, I learned how to connect with disparate parts of the arts community, to open my own ears and eyes to far more of the world around me than I would have otherwise.

That process will always make me feel far more indelibly tied to this community I love than I ever would have been otherwise. I hope the existence of Jasper over the last ten years, in some small part, has done the same for you.



Kyle Petersen is the former music and assistant editor of Jasper Magazine.

Looking Forward At the Local Music Scene with Kevin Oliver

Looking back over a decade of the music scene in Columbia is one thing; predicting its future is another entirely different endeavor. Jasper spoke to several local musicians to gauge their feelings on where we go from here, including Jeff Gregory of the Americana act The Runout, indie folk musician Kelley Mclachlan Porterfield, Jeremy Scott of the metal band Decadence, veteran rapper Fat Rat Da Czar, and jazz trumpeter and ColaJazz founder Mark Rapp. With their input, what follows is a list of possibilities that, if they happen, would bring diversity, and improve the quality and accessibility of the music scene for everyone.

Looming over all of the potential growth in the scene is the ongoing pandemic, which has exposed weaknesses but also opened up new opportunities that point to a path forward.

Looking past it may be difficult right now, but there will still be a music scene post-Covid--what that will look like, however, is an open question. Here, then, are some possible answers.



Kevin Oliver is the music editor for Jasper Magazine and a long-time Columbia music writer.

Live Streaming

How many of us had watched live streamed local music content before last year? Now it's almost an expectation. The pandemic really accelerated what was already a trend; local artists such as Prettier Than Matt have been using platforms such as Twitch and Facebook to connect with fans for several years, but the technology became essential during months of lockdown.

"Online concerts have become commonplace," says Mark Rapp, who produced a series of hour-long livestreams last year with various local jazz artists through his ColaJazz organization. "Being able to enjoy your local artists online at your convenience is an incredible new reality," Rapp says.

Will people still watch online when they can go in person? The online performance series created last spring, "At the Addition," is betting they will, investing in a performance space in downtown Columbia with professional sound and lighting as well as multiple cameras for a high-quality streaming concert experience that they present on Facebook Live every other Sunday evening with local bands of many different genres. Traditional Irish pub musician Carroll Brown began "Music Monday" online during lockdown but has continued to stream weekly to reach fans across his touring route up and down the east coast.

"Looking forward long term, it will be an additional asset or revenue stream to traditional in-person shows," Rapp says.



Outdoor Venues

Kickstarted by Covid and the need for outdoor dining, Columbia is rising to the challenge of providing more outdoor venues for live music. The brewpub scene is a good match for this and will continue to use live music as a draw. Steel Hands Brewing and Savage Craft have done well with their large, open spaces hosting local and touring acts, mostly country and rock. Historic Columbia and the Curtiss-Wright Hangar have partnered with the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra to provide socially distanced, outdoor classical concerts. The Columbia Speedway has successfully brought in large national touring acts this year, and with the promise of increased capacity limits can do even more going forward.

With our mostly temperate climate, Columbia can host outdoor music well into the fall and start up earlier in the spring than many areas. Awendaw Green in the Lowcountry holds their outdoor “Barn Jam” concerts year-round with the aid of fire pits and outdoor heaters; outside of the few weeks of freezing temperatures we get every year, there’s no reason it couldn’t be done here, too.

More Venues

Can the Columbia music scene support more venues? Maybe, if they fill a particular niche or need that might be lacking elsewhere.

New Brookland Tavern may have the gritty indie rock club market cornered, but not everyone wants to stay out past midnight in a dark club to see a band, no matter how good they are.

Curiosity Coffee has bounced back post-Covid by hosting a wide range of local artists for smaller, intimate shows.

The Main Course complex on Main Street is a bit of an experiment with multiple stages and options, but their booking is both diverse (rock, R&B, hip-hop, country, and more) and ambitious for the size of the main room.

Columbia’s biggest deficit is in rooms that book original local music, not just cover bands or national touring acts, and listening rooms where the music is the main attraction, and the audience is attentive and not busy in conversation the whole time the band is playing.

The trend towards the multiplex style venues such as Main Course or Savage Craft offers opportunities for more ambitious events incorporating music and more.

“Venues like Uncle Festers, Curiosity Coffee, New Brookland Tavern, and NOMA Warehouse have worked to create more art appreciation by providing environments where the singer-songwriter and indie artists are valued,” says Kelley McLachlan Porterfield. “Providing those outlets encourages more creativity.”

“We need more venues, and more music fans,” Rapp says. “If you do things that attract new audiences in new places, it’s like the old saying goes, ‘A rising tide lifts all ships.’”



Collaboration Between Musicians

By far, the most cited example from the local artists I spoke with for this story of what they liked about where the scene was heading was the ability to collaborate with so many other musicians both in their chosen genre and outside of it. From full theatrical productions to back porch jam sessions, getting together with other musicians is something all agree is beneficial to the scene.

“Columbia has tons of kind, talented people,” says Jeff Gregory. “Many of them work hard to make it possible for new and veteran musicians alike to meet, write, play shows together, and pick each other’s brains and hearts.”

For Jeremy Scott, it’s about exposure to other styles of music for audiences and musicians alike.

“The shows I remember most are where bands came from a variety of genres, from punk to hip-hop, metal and in between,” he says. “Not only does it expose people to a type of music they might not usually listen to, but it can also form unlikely connections with others. We can accomplish so much more just by working together.”

“Columbia was untapped when I started, and that allowed me to cross the aisles with other genres before barriers were put up and do more uniting of the scene,” says Fat Rat Da Czar. “Being overlooked on a national level for so long in the hip-hop scene has provided incubation for some really good artists here with a lot of different styles.” “It’s obvious when barriers break, and that it works well,” adds Gregory.



Early shows

This one is already happening, but I’d expect the trend to continue and even increase as nontraditional venues take on more live music offerings. Curiosity Coffee has been consistent in their 7-10 p.m. show times and managing to draw a crowd, for example. Steel Hands has live music in the middle of the day on many weekends.

Venues will need to do more to cater to the older audiences that still enjoy live music but can’t wait for four bands



to play before the headliner they paid to see goes on at midnight or later. Or, as Jeff Gregory puts it. “We need earlier shows at venues that are notorious for late shows with 5 bands where the first band starts after 8pm.”


It’s a “Music” scene.

It may seem like a simple concept, but without great music being made, there is no “music scene.” All of the above contributes to getting the music out in front of an audience, but the basic ingredient is the creativity of the individual artists.

“If you decide to go into music as a business, it comes with requirements and limitations,” says Fat Rat Da Czar. “That doesn’t mean you have to stop making art--don’t let anything get in the way of creating.” Gregory echoes that sentiment, stating, “Make good art for your own reasons, and stick hard to both.”

There is no crystal ball that will tell us what’s coming next in the music scene here in Columbia, but I can tell you one thing--if you enjoy local music and seeing it performed live, go to a show, buy a band t-shirt or album, eat dinner at a venue that’s providing live music, buy tickets to the kinds of shows you want to see when they come through town. If more people would do that, more often, the scene will at least have a future.

Photos courtesy of SC Philharmonic, Historic Columbia, Curiosity Coffee, and Fat Rat Da Czar.



CHRISTOFER COOK BRINGS HORROR TO THE COLUMBIA THEATRE SCENE WITH THEATRE MYSTERIUM

by Stephanie Allen
photography by Mason Freiberg

Christopher Cook is going public with his affair — his affair with horror, that is.

After ending his former company, High Voltage, in 2013 to focus on his family, Cook is starting fresh with Theatre Mysterium, a revitalized brand whose name better fits Cook's mission. The company will focus on all things mysterious, suspenseful, and horrific. "I think the genre found me," Cook says.

The company will be performing its first show, Amityville, the Play, from October 14 – 31 at the Columbia Music Festival Association (CMFA) with Tatway Tattoo as the title sponsor. The show will use some traditional expectations for a haunted house horror while still telling an entirely original narrative. "I don't just have a love affair with genre, I have a love affair with the tropes," Cook says. This passion dictates his directing and playwriting.

Though the story of the Amityville house has been told onscreen and in books, it has never been translated onstage. The horror seemed like the perfect play for

Cook to write, as the tale focuses intensely on a close, interior space. Using the tight confines of the black box venue as a tool, Cook aims to create a claustrophobic environment, physically and figuratively trapping the audience with the notions of paranormal violence.

"Any time you're talking about intimate space where you can get the audience closer to the performers, to what's going on, there's a lot of subtlety that is possible with a small production... If you're talking about a frightening experience, I think it's just all amplified," Joseph Kendrick, CMFA's assistant director says.

About seven years ago, Cook started exploring the tale of the Lutz family, the family that moved into the Amityville house following the massacre of the DeFeo family. Cook got in touch with Christopher Lutz (who now goes by Christopher Quaratino), one of the then-children who occupied the allegedly haunted Amityville house. Quaratino respectfully



but clearly told Cook that he did not want himself or his family portrayed as characters onstage, putting a halt to Cook's plans for the show. Cook scrapped the first act that he had already written and tabled the idea.

Three years went by and Cook still couldn't get rid of his hankering to do something with the Amityville story. He searched his legal options and decided to shift his focus to the Moynahan family, who commissioned the construction of the house. While there was no historical record of any paranormal activity happening to the Moynahans, Cook's fictional take on the tale of the house shifts history into horror.

"It's nuts. All hell breaks loose in the house," Cook says, "It's crazy. We've got special effects that you wouldn't believe." Goo dripping from walls and sounds of buzzing flies will serve as an homage to the original tale of Amityville. According to Rachel Pettit-Taylor, Amityville's stage manager, the performance brings magic to the stage.

Cook wouldn't give away too many secrets about what's to come this fall, but there's promise of a twist. Actors will be required to sign a nondisclosure agreement stating that they will not share the way that special effects were performed and that they will not reveal the ending of the play.

Not everything is horror and doom, either. The play is very firmly set in the mid-1920s which, according to Cook, will give it a Great Gatsby feel. Cook is focusing on authenticity, using old gramophones, victrolas, flapper dresses, and other period-appropriate costuming.

Cook expressed excitement for bringing this vision onstage and drawing in audiences with the familiarity of the Amityville home. "They'll certainly be familiar with the house and the trope of a cursed home, but they don't know this story because this story's never been told," Cook says.

After debuting Amityville, Cook sees Theatre Mysterium shifting gears. "I'm not a purist when it comes to horror," Cook says. Less focused on violence and gore than he was in his youth, Cook anticipates combining classic horror and jump scares with farce and irreverent humor in the future.

"It could be argued that a lot of what I do is lowbrow, because I have a penchant for horror... all things creepy and mysterious," Cook laughs, "and it probably is."

Comfortable with his tastes, Cook wants to have fun. The COVID-19 pandemic inspired him to shake off what he calls "complacent inertia" and get back to theatre, his way.





Free Will and the Artist

by Will South

Those who love life would wish for it to go on forever. That the sun will always rise, that the promise of a blossoming spring is an eternal one.

Science, the Great Party Pooper, says no. The sun will run out of fuel and when its light goes out, well, earth will be subsumed into its supernova. Meaning, in short, poof. No more earth.

Some of us might spend our days worried over the certain end of the world, while others won't cancel plans for a Fourth of July barbeque. Still others will choose not to believe it, as is the current fashion—if a fact doesn't accord with your personal view of reality, then deny it.

Whatever your hopes and dreams may be, the eminent and thoroughly sweet-natured cosmologist, Sir Martin Rees, rationally reminds us: "Our preferences count for nothing. We must accept the universe as it is."

So, there. You may wish to fly (as opposed to being flown, as in an airplane), but gravity won't allow it. You may wish to live your life under water (not in a bubble, but like a fish!), but again no. You need oxygen. A very common wish is not to die, but our parts wear out (on the bright side, our life expectancy is twice what it was 1920).

Happily, there is the world and its wonders. We are free to explore places near and far, having every manner of experience from haut cuisine to dive bars, from running

with the bulls to running marathons. We can choose to be whatever we wish to be.

Right?

Hm, no. This most precious of human prerogatives, to make free choices—between right and wrong, good and evil, vanilla and chocolate—to exercise what is known the world over as "free will," does not exist according to the Great Party Pooper. And, what's more, it never did. Now, some are going to lose sleep over this admittedly disturbing proposition. Others, you guessed it, are not going to miss out on a well done steak to debate the issue. And, for the ever-growing number of people who are inconvenienced by facts like climate change, the lack of free will is very easy to dismiss. Just watch: There. Dismissed.

Artists are not an homogenous bunch. They are dispersed along the bell curve of belief through doubt to non-belief. However, artists may have a unique stake in the existence (or, the non-existence) of free will. Without it, can any artist be said to be truly creative?

That is such a good, tough question. Makes me glad that I am no longer teaching.

In an essay I wrote on Van Gogh a couple of years back, I argued that there were prior causes for every artistic choice he made, using his well-known (understatement)

painting, *Starry Night*, as a good example. His formerly dark palette was changed upon meeting the Impressionists, his choice of subject matter was heavily influenced by literature, he dabbled in Symbolism, etc. etc. Add to this a knowledge of his difficult relationships with people, his abuse of alcohol, and his bouts with mental illness, and even more artistic choices may be reasonably linked to the zillion prior causes which culminate in an action.

To which an artist may reasonably respond: Of course we're all influenced by what comes before. That's not news. It's what you make of those influences that counts.

And there's the proverbial rub with a lack of free will: There's no freedom anywhere along the line. None. When Van Gogh made swirling yellow stars, he had seen the patterns of such stars in Gustave Dore, and yellow used for stars (and the sun, which is a star) in any number of paintings. When he went for yellow on the palette, it was already a done deal. Ditto the swirls. He was not "making" something with the influences, that is, using them as a free agent. A hard concept to swallow. Or, understand.

Think of the idea of free will this way, as many philosophers do: The idea of free will suggests that in any given moment when you do A, you could have done otherwise. That is, not A.

The non-existence of free will dictates that you will do A, and there are no other options. Again, a tough concept. Impossible to accept! Because we experience free will so fully, so completely, do we not? That free will must exist.

And the world must be flat. Because that is exactly how we experience it.

The idea (or, fact) that free will does not exist raises daunting questions. For example, wouldn't we have to completely overhaul the criminal justice system? Or, this one: What could a world without free will look like?

More tough, great questions. So, let's stay with art for this brief article.

The same Sir Martin Rees who told us that "Our preferences count for nothing, we must accept the universe as it is," agrees science is realizing how much of being human is shaped by genetics and environment. But, he believes, "I don't see why it [these realizations] should affect our attitudes or personalities, and of course I think it would be dangerous if this were used to diminish the sense of individual responsibility." In short, we may continue to behave as we do now, as if we have free will. He'll attend barbecues if he feels like it, even if he has to come to America to do it.

Not all scientists agree, naturally. Stanford neuroscientist and popular author Robert Sapolsky believes that we are biological entities and that our behavior is a product of our biology. He says, "a behavior is the outcome of everything from neurobiology one second before the action, to evolutionary pressure dating back millions of years."

That is going back a good ways. When we put in the effort to do this, though, Sapolsky believes you can see the "biological gears" at work underneath everything we do. And thus: "Ultimately, words like 'punishment,' 'justice,' 'free will,' 'evil,' 'the soul,' are utterly irrelevant and scientifically obsolete in terms of understanding our behavior. It's insanely difficult for people to accept the extent to which we are biological organisms without agency."

Free will: Scientifically. Obsolete.

What is a poor artist to do? Here are three options for your consideration, as a way of saying "thanks for reading this article":

- a) Believe in free will. Climate change is going to kill us anyway.
- b) Don't believe in free will, but continue to act as if you have it (per Rees). Think of people who don't believe in God, but do good works, just in case. Figuring, what have I got to lose? Besides self-respect.
- c) Accept that free will does not exist. But realize that all the myriad causes preceding you have led you to make art, and you are fulfilling that destiny. You are neither the alpha nor the omega of human creativity, yet you make art within the stream of life, and play a part, however small, in giving shape to the human experience.
- d) All of the above

If you answered a: Good luck. You just might be right. Or, not. If you answered b: These options were offered to artists, not lawyers.

For those who answered c: Believing in life, and the power of natural processes alone to result in beauty and ethics, diminishes neither.

As for the d's, it is truly impressive you made it through this article. Thank you.

Will South is the former chief curator at Columbia Museum of Art. Photo by Davin Spann.

An Architect Among Caterers



Chef Scott Hall

By Vincent Harris
Photography by Ashley Concannon

It's the kind of event-specific design he could never do as a restaurant chef and owner, as he once was at Bone-In Barbecue in Columbia. Not that he didn't excel at that position; in 2018, he was named Top Chef of The Year by the South Carolina Farm Bureau. But whether it's a brunch or a wedding or just a big party, Hall is much happier as a caterer and event designer.

"You have a huge amount of freedom with catering," Chef Hall says. "Let's say there's a particular dish we're talking about. Every time you cook that thing, you learn more about it. You get more accustomed to the ingredients. Even when you're cooking from a recipe, and you adhere to that recipe to the very last letter, the ingredients themselves change. Depending on what time of year it is, things are going to have different levels of

ripeness, they're going to come from different places, and the way that you approach foods that you're eating is different at different times of the year."

Hall says you can embrace those differences as a caterer, but they'd be unacceptable at a restaurant.

"In a restaurant, that dish needs to taste exactly the same every time someone orders it," he says, "because if someone falls in love with it, if they come back the next day it needs to be the same dish. In catering, you have this freedom where you don't have to do that. You're able to make micro-changes to the food so that all of the food on the menu works together. In a sense, every day you're opening up a new restaurant. Every day you're serving a totally different menu. That freedom is amazing. That's why I absolutely love catering."



Catering allows Hall to let his artistic imagination mingle with his skill as a chef. Just listen to him break down how he thinks of a well-designed catering spread; he speaks with the voice of an artist.

“When it comes to style and design of food, I think the first thing that I think about is the nature of the event. For something like a wedding, obviously it’s celebratory. You want things to be really kind of over the top, and really abundant, so that’s the first thing that will inform the look that we bring to the occasion. Then I like to think about the season, the time of year. In the fall we’re not going to use a lot of fresh, ripe, high-acid fruit.”

Most often, Hall works with, or “curates” pre-existing foods like cheeses or charcuterie. But he enjoys working with from-scratch dishes just as much.

“If we’re making something from scratch, you’re really in more of a box because there are things you HAVE to do,” he says. “If you’re making a pâté for example, you have to be creative within the confines of what’s necessary to make that [pâté] work. But then you bring garnish and accompanying sauces and other things that work together and build out from that.”

Watching Hall work is very much an exercise in the actualization of design as he paints a portrait with the food he has assembled, very much the same way an artist fusses over the placement of specific colors and textures. A blackberry here, a cherry tomato there. Sprays of fresh herbs to titillate the senses.

The back story to Hall’s interest in presenting great-tasting food in a unique and aesthetically pleasing way is



“I’ve always been interested in cooking,” he says, “but when I was just starting out, I moved to New York City pretty quickly on. And I was really interested in the arts and theater and lighting, that sort of thing, and that’s where I started to focus on the way that color and texture work together. It goes without saying that everything has to taste good. That’s the most important thing. But then I started to obsessively think about the way things looked and worked together.”

But that wasn’t all. Hall also began to think beyond the barely-authentic “cultural” styles of cooking that were in vogue at the time.

“It was nothing back in the ‘90s to hear someone say, ‘I want an Asian buffet or Asian menu,’” he says. “That’s a little insulting and it’s also dishonest with the cuisine in that it doesn’t really mean anything. It often ends up meaning, ‘We’re going to put something in bamboo steamers and we’re going to use soy.’ And once I escaped from that, I feel like it really enabled me to start to look

at dishes and ingredients before looking at a regional, or cultural menu. If someone's cooking their authentic cuisine, or their regional cuisines, that's when it has value, but I'm not interested in authenticity because it's not really MY culture to present."

Instead, Hall decided to concentrate on his own vision.

"I'm just interested in, 'What's the most interesting thing we can do with this set of ingredients?'" he says. "What would that set of ingredients include, and how can they best be brought together for this particular event or this occasion?"

And for most of Hall's clients, they're more than happy to let him create a menu to go with their event.

"Most of the time people have some experience with me and they know my style," he says, "and they put it in my hands. I'm lucky in that generally, most people don't try to tell me what something needs to look like; it's more about what foods they want to eat. So, I'm usually able to find some common ground and steer it in the visual direction that I want to go in."

Most importantly, Hall uses his desired ingredients to create an inviting, luscious-looking expanse of edible art for his clients and friends, resulting in more of an experience than a plain and simple meal.





Inside the Head of Debra Daniel

By Kristine Hartvigsen
Photography by Jack McGregor

Debra Daniel hears voices. Lots and lots of voices.

Like an irritated mom at the wheel of a crowded clown car, she is tempted to scream: “Don’t make me stop this car!”

Yet the inner voices continue, incessantly, to bicker, laugh, nag, argue, even swat at one another.

There’s the handsome mortician, Henry Danvers, dolefully begging for his life. At the same time, his daughter, Willie Bert, is whining about the cruelly unrefined name she was given at birth. Or the narcissistic Myrtle Graham opining out loud that a woman of her superior talent was just too good to be cast as Scarlet in *Gone With The Wind*. Those no-talent idiots would be sorry one day.

These are just a couple of the colorful characters who appear in Daniel’s award-winning works of fiction. Daniel alone is the traffic cop among the voices.

“They are really driving the story. They are telling me where to go,” she says. “With poetry, I am driving the car, but when it’s fiction, they are in the back seat, and they won’t shut up!”

Now retired from teaching, Daniel has quietly collected awards and accolades for decades now, yet she is approachably modest and reserved when discussing her intricately rendered stories, which can be equal parts comic and tragic.

Her characters are complex and multifaceted, from ambitious to insecure to shifty to conceited and beyond. Most of them are connected by some form of eccentricity that both entertains and draws the reader in. Daniel comes by them quite naturally.

“My brain just goes there,” she says. “I am just attracted to quirky dark humor and bizarre characters.”

Seeing a tabloid headline at the grocery check-out one day inspired Daniel to create the delusional, unsympathetic, dearly departed Myrtle Graham in Daniel’s 2013 novel *Woman Commits Suicide in Dishwasher*. The entire novel is comprised of people in Myrtle’s immediate circle, each recounting their antagonistic relationship with Myrtle to a journalist writing about the unusual suicide. The novel concludes with Myrtle herself providing some illumination from the great beyond. The dialogue is brilliantly authentic and reflects the good, bad, and ugly of the human condition.

Daniel has all manner of literary street cred. She has won the Piccolo Fiction Open and The SC Fiction Project, twice was named SC Arts Commission Poetry Fellow, won the Guy Owen Poetry Prize from the Southern Poetry Review and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *The Downward Turn of August* and *As Is*. Her work has appeared in *Jasper*, *Kakalak*, *Emrys Journal*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Poetry Society of SC Yearbook*, *Inheritance: Selections from SC Fiction Project Winners*, *Twenty: SC Poetry Fellows*, and many more.

Daniel's latest obsession is flash fiction, the genre that challenges writers to somehow tell a complete story in as few words as possible, generally less than 250 words. Some of the wittiest flash fiction on record can tell a story in a single sentence.

"I think some of my early poetry was flash. It was more narrative and quirky. It told a story," Daniel says. "I took a workshop a few years ago in flash fiction. I started reading a lot more of it. We had readings. I was trying to tell a whole story in four minutes. It helped me hone what I was doing. It seems to be my genre."

Flash fiction is extremely popular across the pond, where the literary community has welcomed Daniel with warmth and cheer.

"In England — where I have had a lot of success recently — they like quirky, funny stuff," Daniel says. She learned about the Bath Flash Fiction Award from a gentleman in a workshop. A former Bath winner, he encouraged Daniel to begin sending in some short compositions. "I have sent stuff to them ever since. There is a whole flash community there. They are incredibly welcoming."

In June 2021, Daniel's flash story titled *Across The Street The Old Man Clears Out His House* received "commended" status and will appear in one of Bath's annual anthologies. Her novella-in-flash, *The Roster*, was a highly commended entry for the Bath Novella-in-Flash Award and was published by Ad Hoc Fiction in the UK in 2019.

Her most recent novella, *A Family of Great Falls*, was just published in July 2021, also by Ad Hoc Fiction. It tells the somber but oh-so-relatable story of an undertaker's family in the 1920s and 1930s. It focuses especially on the impact of tragedy and unforgiving grief on the family's two young daughters and how they navigate the changes that life unexpectedly asserts. The distinctive characters are expertly developed as only Daniel can.

Daniel is a multiple winner in this year's *Kakalak*, receiving third place for her poem, *In March When the Shutdown Begins*, *I Journey into Watercolor*, as well as inclusion of another poem in the publication. Appropriately, Daniel also received second place in *Kakalak's* art category for her watercolor, "Night City," an incredible feat since she only began to paint during the pandemic.

"I started doing watercolors by watching YouTube videos," she says. "With painting watercolors, I wanted to do something with my hands. I couldn't play the mandolin because of arthritis. But

it didn't hurt to paint." Daniel rather downplays her success with visual art: "It's just intuitive. I don't have the artistic eye yet. It surprises me more than anyone as it turns out. If the watercolors don't work, I cut them up and make bookmarks out of them."

In addition to her writing and (most recently) painting with watercolors, the multi-talented Daniel is an accomplished photographer. Two of her photographs were published in *Kakalak* in 2020, the issue when she just happened to place first in poetry. She also performs music (mandolin, cardboard percussion, singing, and yodeling) with her singer-songwriter husband Jack McGregor.

"I sang for my family very early and sang in church. I wanted to do theatre. I was in a lot of musicals. I took voice lessons in the 5th grade," Daniel says. She was inspired to take up yodeling after seeing *The Sound of Music*. "I would imitate Julie Andrews. It's difficult to do." Fun fact: Daniel taught TV personality Meredith Viera how to yodel when she appeared on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" in 2012. She won \$25,000 on the show. Being on stage in front of millions of viewers didn't faze her.

"I was born for it. I loved it," she exclaims. "I love performing, and I love making people laugh. I think that is why I like to write quirky. But it is hard to write funny."

Most artists will tell you they don't usually thrive in isolation. It takes strong support from the people around them to keep all the plates spinning. For Daniel, that primary source of support is her husband.

"Jack is a songwriter. He understands. He comes to writing workshops with me and even takes some poetry classes," she says. "He is a huge support. He listens to the same stories over and over again."

Another source is the Wildacres Writers Workshop. Daniel tries never to miss the Wildacres annual summer retreats in the mountains of North Carolina. "They are my tribe. There is no jealousy or envy. Everyone is happy for the success of everyone else," she says. "It's the kind of place where people are celebrated. You feel like you can be vulnerable and read raw stuff. It's for every ability of writer and every age."

Guarding against those pesky, ever-present voices, Daniel limits her literary diet when she is working on a project. "I don't like to read writers I like when I am writing, because I am afraid their voices will get in my head." Indeed, with the other voices in residence, it's clearly too crowded already.



Michaela Pilar Brown is in the Right Place at the Right Time

By Cindi Boiter
Photos: Brad Martin

Over the past decade, Jasper Magazine has written about Columbia-based multi-media artist Michaela Pilar Brown many times. This passage of time has witnessed Brown become a leader in our community, not only as a result of her myriad accomplishments but also by the now-international stature she commands across the most-sophisticated fine arts circles.

Brown's career has been punctuated by a steady continuum of shows, awards, residencies, and related experiences that have helped shape the 50-something artist into the fierce icon she is becoming. Taking home the 2018 Artfields Grand

Prize for her mixed-media installation *She's Almost Ready* is upmost among her accolades, as is being awarded the inaugural Volcanic Residency at the Whakatano Museum in New Zealand that same year.

Born in Bangor, Maine, and raised in Denver, Brown became an influential member of the Columbia arts scene soon after she moved here in 2013. Having spent many a childhood summer visiting the Fairfield County farm where her father lived, Brown had returned to SC a dozen or so years earlier to help care for her aging family patriarch. His land and its legacies were a part of who Brown

was even when she first left home to study at Howard University in the '80s and '90s.

“Howard felt like family. My professors let me continue my work even when I couldn’t afford tuition,” Brown says. “I spent a lot of time learning outside of academia.”

Critically influenced by such trailblazing American artists as Frank Smith and Jeff Donaldson, Brown identifies world-renowned sculptor Richard Hunt as impacting her work ethic the most.

Hunt, who may be the most highly accomplished contemporary Black American sculptor and creator of public art in the country, visited Howard to install a piece of his work during Brown’s time

as a student. When a piece of his art was damaged, Brown was recruited to help with the repair. A burgeoning artist-protégé relationship led to an invitation to study with Hunt for a summer in Chicago.

“I was green and just so honored,” Brown says. “He worked fervently all the time and I worked all the time,” noting that she initially wanted to make public art herself. In fact, the young artist had interned at the International Sculpture Center, part of the Washington Project for the Arts, as well as the Smithsonian Institution.

The emphasis on family and the support systems it can naturally provide had followed Brown to Howard, where the faculty became supportive







elders for the young artist. The intimacy and sacredness of her ancestral home not only informed Brown as an artist but also provided her with a profound understanding of the strengths and challenges of southern Black art writ large, as well as with the workings of the local arts community specifically.

After her father died in 2007, Brown’s mother soon also came to depend on her and her brothers for what ultimately would be end-of-life care. It was a crushing loss that further strengthened Brown’s resolve to take command of her platform like never before. The artist continued to bring the roots and wings she had embraced — on her home turf, in DC, and in Chicago — into an enduring relationship with Columbia-based theatre artist Darion McCloud and his daughter more than ten years ago.

“All these experiences changed the shape of the work I was doing and what I wanted to do,” Brown says. “My work became much more personal and honest. My focus came to include what it means to me to be Black in SC, but it also focuses a great deal on love and how we grieve.”

Among her major accomplishments over the last decade has been taking on the position of executive director of 701 CCA – Columbia’s Center for Contemporary Art. 701 CCA is located on the second floor of the historic 701 Whaley Street complex and featured on page 8 of this magazine.

Arguably the perfect person for this position due to her local and international profile, Brown is the first Black woman to have this role, and she handles the responsibility with a resolute intensity. “701 [CCA] has historically been a place of inclusion,” Brown says. “I am engaged in protecting that and expanding





it through exhibitions, programming, community dialogue, and programs outside our walls that engage the community directly in neighborhoods and through community partnerships. ... We had a challenging moment recently, and I'm proud of who we are on the other side of it. I'm proud of the public statement we made and the manner in which we supported our artist."

Brown is referencing the night of May 17, 2021. John Sims, an artist-in-residence at the gallery was living in an apartment assigned to him in the building at 701 Whaley Street when he was accosted, handcuffed, and held at gunpoint as a "suspicious person" by the Columbia Police Department. Brown released a statement in response to the attack, saying the incident was not the first time a resident at 701 had encountered the police. "It was the first time, however, such an encounter led to hostile confrontation, detention, cuffing, and a records check. On the contrary, such previous encounters have resulted in courteous apologies from officers. The difference? Race. Mr. Sims is a Black man; the other incidents involved a white man."

"Like other community-based, nonprofit institutions," Brown continues in her statement, "CCA has the responsibility to shine light on

injustice it encounters and to be part of an active dialogue to make real and discernible change. We cannot ignore the relationship between white supremacy that permeates our culture and the racial profiling we believe infected John Sims' treatment by CPD officers. ... What we can and will do is support the efforts of John Sims as the CCA artist in residence to tell his story, to provide context for that story through his artistic expression, and to seize the opportunity to join with him and the greater Columbia community as we continue the struggle for racial justice."

It is Brown's intimate knowledge of the patrons of 701 CCA and the community it supports that informs this position so well. "I am optimistic about the Columbia art scene," she says. "This is a community that wants change, that's ready to face the challenges of the moment with art leading the discussions. I am hopeful that our politicians recognize the value of art for the betterment of this community, for the comfort it brings, for the space it makes for challenging conversations, and for the expansive learning opportunities it offers young people. I also hope they support it with dollars, and not just the legacy institutions, but in an expansive, inclusive way."

A portrait of Lori Isom, an African American woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing a yellow tank top. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

12 Questions for Lori Isom

Photography by Ashley Concannon

JASPER: You are such an exquisite portraitist, but we love your paintings of other subjects as well. What is the difference in the kind of satisfaction you personally receive from these two different types of art?

ISOM: I'm assuming you're asking about my figurative art versus portraits, since capturing people pretty much covers what I do. Occasionally, I may add a structure in the background, like a building, or objects in a room, but I usually try to keep them understated. I prefer to focus on the emotion of the piece, even if it's through the subject's body language in the case of a figurative painting. Between the two, I would have to say that portraiture is the most satisfying to me because each face has its unique characteristics. I love the challenge of bringing that uniqueness to life, particularly in the eyes.

JASPER: When creating a portrait what are your essential needs?

ISOM: The biggest requirement for me is good lighting! I say this first because proper lighting is usually the biggest issue that I have to deal with. As with most artists, ideal

lighting for me is natural daylight. Besides that, I just really need to have things orderly and within reach. Some good music or favorite podcast is a plus!

JASPER: What are your favorite subjects to paint?

ISOM: My favorite subjects to draw/paint are women. I enjoy drawing the softer edges and curves that women have. When I'm drawing a man, I do have to fight against the tendency to make them look a bit feminine at first. I also really enjoy capturing children.

JASPER: You studied at Parsons School of Design. What is the most important lesson you learned while there?

ISOM: Mmm...Parsons was a long time ago! I suppose I'd have to say that getting a strong foundation in drawing the figure from life was the most important thing for me. We drew people from all walks of life, and those sessions were instrumental in helping us to learn how to really see. This is one of the primary things that I emphasize when I'm teaching - draw what you see, not what you think you see!

JASPER: You also enjoyed a more than two-decade career as a performing artist. Tell us about that.

ISOM: Well, I had to switch gears two years into attending Parsons, as I could no longer afford it. I'd been taking dance classes for a while and decided that I would take advantage of this "opportunity." I began taking voice and acting lessons and was fortunate enough to be cast in several plays and musical theater productions, as well as a hand full of tv commercials and industrial videos.

JASPER: You were actually in some music videos – Details, please!

ISOM: I really only did a couple of music videos, one was for a song called "Let the Beat Hit 'Em" by Lisa Lisa and the Cult Jam, and the other was for a remake of the Bill Withers' song "Use Me" performed by Aaron Neville.

JASPER: Any other celebrity connections or brushes with greatness we should know about?

ISOM: Quite a few of the people I hung out with when I lived in L.A. were up and coming in the industry and went on to have pretty decent careers. I did get to meet Will Smith after the taping of the final episode of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Aire*, through a friend of mine who had been cast for the show. Those were good times.

JASPER: Tell us the story behind your painting of the little girl in the green dress, please.

ISOM: The painting "Public Housing" is an homage to the projects I lived in as a child called the Pink Houses, in Brooklyn NY. A lot of people think of public housing as a crime ridden, unkempt place where kids pretty much raise themselves. That wasn't the case for us growing up. Parents had to take care of their children, maintain spotless apartments, and show proof of stable employment, as these things were monitored by the housing authority. My friends and I played outside all day long and didn't go inside unless we had to use the bathroom or until it got dark.

JASPER: Whose work would you most love to have hanging on your own wall, but don't – and why?

ISOM: There are so many artists whose work I would love to own if I could afford it! My favorite watercolor artists Mary Whyte and Dean Mitchell, artist and illustrator Kadir Nelson, Amy Sberald who painted Michelle Obama's portrait, local artist and teacher Tyrone Jeter, and one of the most influential artists for me, Mary Cassatt.

JASPER: Where can we next see your art in person?

ISOM: 2020 and 2021 have been pretty busy for me, artistically speaking. My work has been included in a few group exhibitions, one of which is happening right now at the Richland Public Library on Assembly Street. I've been working really hard on producing several large pieces for a new gallery opening on DeKalb Street in Camden this September. I'll also have a studio in the gallery where I'll be able to do portrait sittings as well as portraits from photos, so I'm really looking forward to it.



Columbia Graphic Novelist Noah Van Sciver Has His Own Ideas about Success

By Vincent Harris

Imagine writing an autobiography. Now imagine providing art for every event in that autobiography. Sounds like a daunting task, right? But that's basically what Columbia-based cartoonist and author Noah Van Sciver has spent most of his career doing, starting with his one-person anthology series *Blammo*, which he began as a self-published project in 2006 before Kilgore Books & Comics picked it up.

Van Sciver is both a gifted artist and talented storyteller, and in *Blammo*, he was able to bring both meaningful and mundane situations to vibrant life. Van Sciver wrote about experiencing sexual harassment while dressed as a woman at a Halloween party and a simple afternoon of shopping and watching movies with his girlfriend with equal humor and empathy, and it wasn't long before he was able to parlay his work with *Blammo* into all manner of projects.

He moved into graphic novel work in the early 2010s, creating a critically-acclaimed book called *The Hypo: The Melancholic Young Lincoln*, a narrative biography that covers Lincoln's life from 1837-42 and was ranked as one of the Best Graphic Novels of 2012 by the *Library Journal*.

Over the past 14 years, Van Sciver has amassed an impressive list of publications and accolades, putting out nearly 100 different titles and winning the 2016 Ignatz Award, which recognizes outstanding achievements in comics and cartooning by small press creators, for his autobiographical mini-comic *My Hot Date*.

But a prolific publishing career and awards don't define "success" for Van Sciver. His definition is a lot more personal.

"Basically, being in charge of my own schedule," he says. "That's what success is. I work from home, I'm able to pursue anything I want to artistically, whatever



is inspiring to me, and I'm able to make a living at it, so I feel like I'm successful." Van Sciver is married to SC State Museum curator Amy Chalmers with whom he is expecting a baby at press time.

Van Sciver seemed destined to become a cartoonist from childhood.

"I grew up in a family that was really into comic books," he says, "so I always drew. As a teenager, I got into trying to be more of a painter or a fine artist, but it wasn't working for me, and I got back into drawing cartoons and comics. It just felt so natural that it was just like, 'Oh yeah, this is what I was supposed to be doing the whole time.'"

The move into graphic novels as he got older was a natural one, because for Van Sciver, a graphic novel isn't as dramatic a genre as it might sound. It's just a natural extension of his love of comic books.

"I don't think there's that much of a difference between comics and graphic novels, actually," he says. "It's just the length of the story. A graphic novel to me is like a long story, that's all."

As for his autobiographical work, which spans from *Blammo* to *My Hot Date* to tales about a thinly veiled fictionalized version of himself named Fante Bukowski, he says it's simply one route that a cartoonist can go.

"I like telling fictional stories, but sometimes I have stories that I want to tell that are from my own life. I don't think there was a specific moment where I thought I should be doing things from my own life, it was just, 'Oh yeah, I'll talk about the first Internet date I went on or something.'"

Van Sciver says that his typical approach is to throw himself into the cartooning of his stories after creating a broad outline of the plot points.

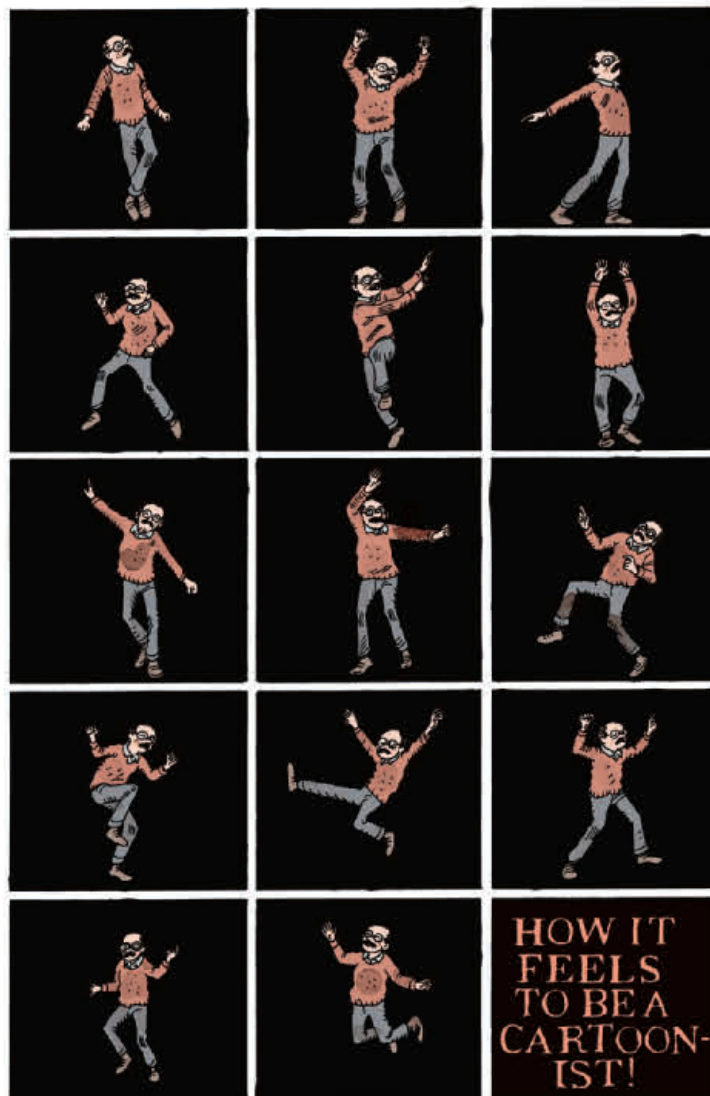
"Usually I'll make a list in a notebook of all the events that are supposed to happen in the story," he says, "and then I dive in and start drawing, trying to connect the dots. You're trying to hit all those bullet points that are the story and connecting them. That's my favorite way of working because it leaves me enough room to be creative. Little things happen in your mind when you have pen to paper and you're fleshing that story out that kind of enrich what your story was. I just like to leave myself enough room to be creative in the process of the story, so

I do very minimal work in the very beginning. I need to know what the bare bones of the story are and then flesh it out when I'm drawing it, because it will come to life in that stage."

That's how he works on his own material, but Van Sciver has done a good bit of collaborating over the years, working with other artists and writers. How is his approach different in those cases?

"I like working with other people," he says. "If they come to me with a script that's basically done, all I have to do is draw it. If I'm doing something on my own, I have to be so involved in it, and when I'm working with a writer on something, I feel like they've done 50% of the work and I can just kind of free up my mind and just draw. I like taking a page from the script every day and just sitting down and drawing it and not putting so much





creative thought into other things that could happen with the character and things like that.”

We’d be remiss not to mention of the highlights of Van Sciver’s career that don’t really fit into his autobiographical work or his graphic novels or his collaborations. For several years in the mid-2010s, he fulfilled a childhood dream and wrote for the legendary MAD magazine.

“I was pitching stuff to MAD all the time as a young cartoonist in my early ‘20s,” he says, “and they would never answer me. Then I was on Twitter when I was 27 years old, after I’d kind of made a name for myself in the small-press comic book scene, and one of the editors sought me out on Twitter and asked me why I’d never submitted stuff to MAD! And I said, ‘I’ve been submitting to mad forever!’”

“That was like an open door,” he continues, “and I just started sending them gags, and they started publishing them. I came up with a character specifically for MAD

magazine called ‘Brown Bear,’ which was like sort of teddy bear character, and that became my character for the magazine, and it was great while it lasted. It was an American institution. I was so excited to be working with them, because when I was growing up, I definitely had a lot of MAD Magazines underneath my bed.”

Now that the 37-year-old Van Sciver is a respected veteran, it made sense to ask him what his advice is for young cartoonists. The first piece of advice he gave was practical: Be prepared to self-publish your work at first and learn all you can while you’re doing it.

“You have to self-publish,” he says. “You’re just not going to get a publisher right away. So, you have to learn all these skills. You have to be your own PR person. You have to set up a file correctly so that the images aren’t pixelated and blurry. You have to learn to lay out the images and all this stuff that’s just part of the boot camp of being a cartoonist. I did that for a long time until I got the attention of publishers.”



Interestingly enough, even after years of working with different publishers like Kilgore, Fantagraphics and Grimalkin Press, Van Sciver still returns to self-publishing his work, as he did with a 2019 autobiographical piece called *Boring*.

“When I started working with publishers, that was great,” he says, “but eventually, you start to realize that you can make more money if you go back to self-publishing, so I like to still mess around with putting out things that people can only get directly from myself. And even if you have a publisher, it’s still really good to flex those muscles that you learned early on when you were first starting out, because you do still need to be your own PR man, you still need to take charge of your own career, and you can’t depend on a publisher to do that.”

His second piece of advice is more personal: Seek out a role model.

“You have to find yourself a real hero that you can

emulate,” he says, “because that will take you really far. If you can find someone that you think of as successful and you can figure out how they got there, that’s really a valuable thing to have because it will give you a template.”

He lists his own heroes as the infamous underground cartoonist R. Crumb and *Ghost World* author Daniel Clowes as his own heroes, but perhaps some young cartoonist out there is looking to Noah Van Sciver as a hero right now. You could do a lot worse.



Photo by Chris Diaz.

Haggle

In the furniture store my shy soft-spoken mama
turns into a dealer wheeling for a sum
below the ticketed price.
Purse clung. Arms crossed with decision.
My emotions mix between
horror and awe as she shapeshifts.
I'll take the couch and the love seat,
If you throw in the coffee table,
the two end tables
and those two green glass globes lamps.
When the salesperson returns,
from talking to his boss.
He shakes her hand, "I can do that."
At mama's feet once again, I learn
how she spins nothing into something.

by Glenis Redmond

Glenis Redmond is an award-winning poet and teaching artist, and recipient of the 2020 South Carolina Governor's Award for the Arts. She is the author of three books of poetry, and her fourth, The Listening Skin, will be published by Four Way Books in 2022. Her chapbook The Three Harriets and Others, which includes poems about Harriet Tubman (conductor of the (Underground Railroad) Harriet Jacobs (enslaved woman who became an abolitionist and writer) and Harriet E. Wilson (first African American novelist), will be published this year by Finishing Line Press. As Poet-in Residence at the Peace Center in Greenville, she co-founded and led a Peace Voices, a program of workshops, poetic conversations, and book clubs through which she mentored and coached young poets. She is also a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist and a Cave Canem alumni poet.

Villanelle County

Dreams is fled
like little kids that's run away.
It don't much matter what he said

this time, or did. The kids is all afraid.
I holler for 'em night and day.
Dreams is fled,

but dark ain't near so dread
like morning with its bloody-lookin' ray.
It don't much matter what he said:

HURT HURT HURT is what we read
on the gravestones we drove by yesterday.
Dreams is fled

from the bed where they's naturally born n' bred
to the cupboard where he puts his guns away.
It don't much matter what he said

or didn't never say since we was wed.
I shut him up for good and all today.
Dreams is fled.
It don't much matter. "What?" he said.

by Laurel Blossom

Laurel Blossom's chapbook Un- was published by Finishing Line Press in March 2020. Both of Blossom's book-length narrative prose poems, Longevity (2015) and Degrees of Latitude (2007) were published by Four Way Books. Her work has appeared in a number of anthologies, including 120 More: Extraordinary Poems for Every Day, edited by Billy Collins. Blossom has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, and Harris Manchester College (Oxford University), where she was elected Regent Emeritus in 2008. She served as the first ever Poet Laureate of Edgefield, South Carolina from 2015-2017. She currently lives in Los Angeles. Visit her website at www.laurelblossom.com.

Blossom appeared in issue #4 during Jasper's first year of publication.



One of the first projects Ed Madden took on as the City of Columbia's inaugural poet laureate when he was appointed in 2015 was to put poems on the Comet, the regional transit system buses. Late this summer, the sixth version of the bus poetry project started to appear on advertising placards in city buses and social media. Both The Comet offices and One Columbia for Arts and Culture are distributing booklets with this year's poems.

The theme this year is "When It's Over." Inspired by the lists people posted on social media of things they hoped to do when the pandemic ended, Madden asked writers, "What do you dream of doing when the pandemic is over? Or thinking more broadly, what will you do when that interminable office meeting is over, when the semester is over, or when winter is over?" Madden describes this year's batch of poems as "poems about dreams about plans, poems about transitions, poems about 'what's next.'"

Though the project always prioritizes local writers, there are many South Carolina writers included this year, and one international contribution from a writer in

Yemen. There are also poems by students from Spring Valley High School and Longleaf Middle School in Columbia and Spring Hill High School in Chapin.

Past bus poetry project themes have included the stories of the city (2015), rivers (2017), "two cities" or what separates and what unites us (2018), and "write on time" or poems about how we experience time in the city—a theme that felt more pressing as COVID warped and altered our lives.

In what follows, Jasper offers a selection of poems from this year's project.



When It Is Over

Malak Al-Lawzi of Sanna (Yemen)

I dream
that the war will end in my country
and I have the tree near our house
in a little garden.
Birds and butterflies will visit
my tree one day, and I will
read my poems to them.
I am sure that I will see it
with my open eyes one day
as I see it with my closed eyes.

Again

Ridha Fatima, Spring Valley High School

A pencil and a yo-yo
Will reach the end of the line at the same time.
As the pencil moves down to start the next sentence,
The yo-yo is jerked back up, only to be let down
again.

When this is over,
I want to be like the pencil and the yo-yo.
Whether I am let down, or I find a hand to pull me up,
I will make myself a new beginning and start again.

When it's over

Bryan Gentry

I'll take off my masks,
show off the tan line around
my chin when it's done.

I won't hold my breath
when pausing to say hello
to strangers I meet.

I'll Zoom in, not out,
for a closer look at life
and how much it's grown.

Welcome Back

Len Lawson

Here we are
riding to places
once locked down
knocking on doors
to lives we always
lose keys to

Venture

Jisoo Lee, Spring Valley High School

I will unleash what I have
saved away: words not yet spoken
best delivered face to face,
shoes not yet broken, for I will
rewalk worn pavement in strides
emboldened by the time that felt
frozen, and the unseen smile
from our faces stolen
in the courteous gesture
we each had chosen.

When it's over

Abigail Shirley, Spring Hill High School

When the sunrise does not feel like the restart of
yesterday,
and we can actually see each other's smiles,
instead of trying to read the creases of eyes,
I will drive across city limits with people I used to
know,
listening to songs on a playlist from a trip we'd planned
to take.

Cliff Edge

Nicola Waldron

We have been,
to the brink.

If we did not
fall, we flew—

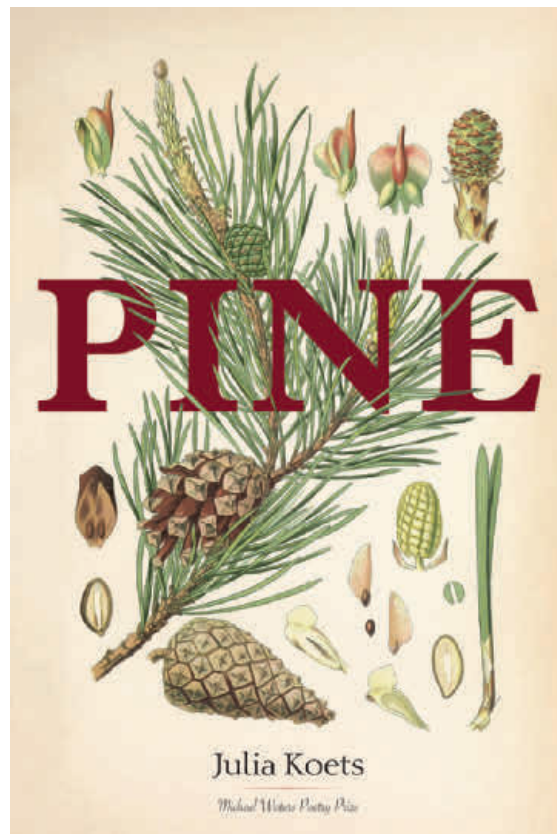
An Omnibus Review of Badassness: Poetry Reviews

by Ray McManus

I've always been drawn to badasses. It has nothing to do with an unrequited desire to be one. It has nothing to do with finding strength vicariously. It's just that in a world that has become increasingly fake and self-righteous, where colored lights hypnotize even the best of us, I am drawn to the bravery and risk it takes to step up and say I am real, this is real (whatever this is), and like or not, we're all going to eat what I put on the table.

Side note: my mom and my wife are badasses. In fact, most of the women in my life are badasses. And that is certainly the case when I think of poets who have had the greatest influences on me through their work: Eavan Boland, Nikky Finney, Kay Ryan, Sharon Olds, Honorée Jeffers, and perhaps more recently, Tiana Clark, Nickole Brown, Jessica Jacobs, Jillian Wiese, Ashley M Jones, and Rebecca Gayle Howell. That's nowhere near a complete list, by the way. All badasses. All women.

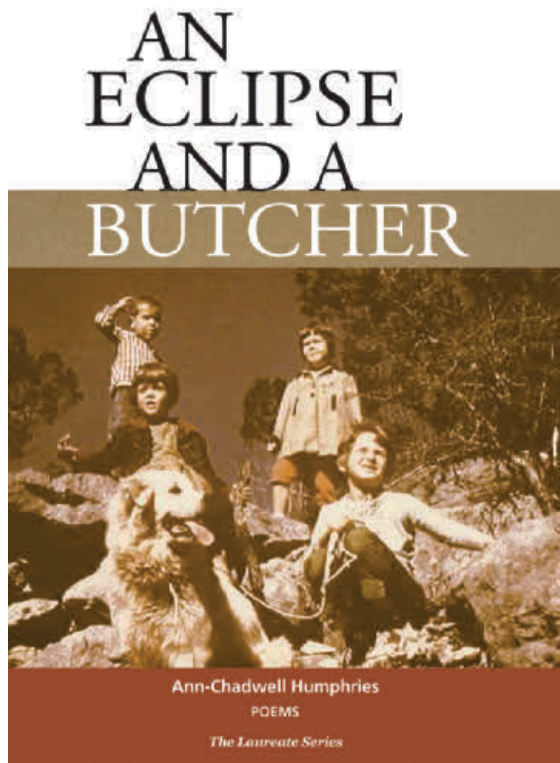
This past (insert whatever expletive you'd like) year and a half, I was particularly drawn to four poets who probably don't see themselves as badasses, but their work certainly speaks it. Julia Koets's *Pine* came out early 2021; *The Beauts* by Terri McCord and *An Eclipse and a Butcher* by Ann-Chadwell Humphries came out in 2020; and *Betsy Thorne's Measured Words* came out towards the end of 2019. Their work couldn't have come a better time. So necessary. So badass.



Koets, Julia. Pine. Southern Indiana Review Press, 2021.

In the conclusion of “Thank You Note to College Algebra,” the speaker states “I know now that if we’d set each factor equal to zero; we’d have solved everything.” It reminds us that the formulas of love, identity, even definition are often reset, and should be. *Pine* is an amazing collection of poems that work within the structures we inherit to build new. Aesthetically, Koets is masterful. Her villanelles are stunning. Her definitions are fucking brilliant. And it all comes together, at its heart, through a queer desire from the private and the collective.

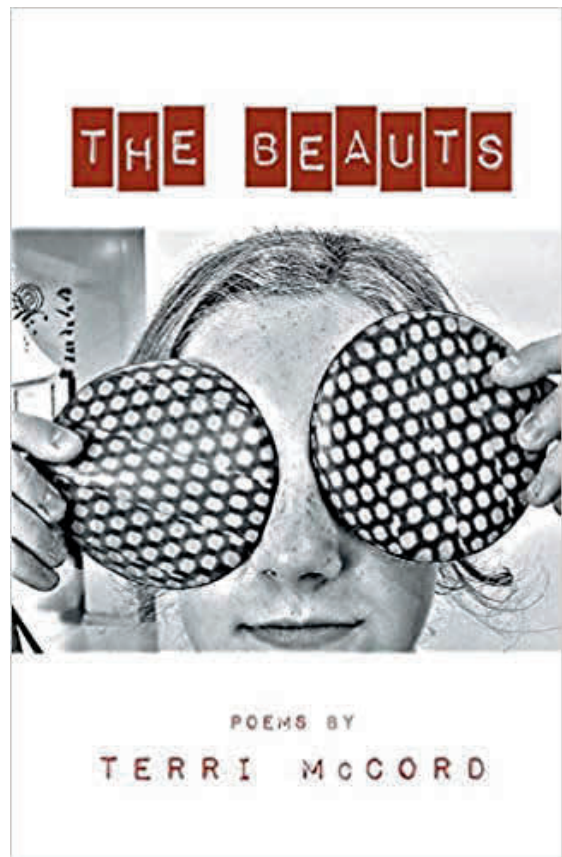
The genius of this collection rests in the dynamics – Eros, both god of passion and fertility, as well as a respiratory aid and extremely operating system, and pine, a marker of the Southern landscape – as well as intense longing. There are always the alternatives – the alternate names, the alternate definitions, the alternate objects of flesh, nature, and desire – for how we breathe air around us, and how we don’t. All to show that arrangements made between two bodies, from what is left, and what is left to come, are written only by the present. As the speaker states in the poem “Preservation” – “The only thing remaining are things we kept coming home to. Place where memory slept.”



Humphries, Ann Chadwell. An Eclipse and a Butcher. Muddy Ford Press, 2020.

If one thinks of an eclipse as something that blocks or obstructs, they will miss the clarity in this collection. Instead, think of the edges, the space where light escapes just enough for the image to take shape until it ruins the eyes. That's the space where memory, even history, becomes the rod in which we trust, and we learn that feeling is seeing.

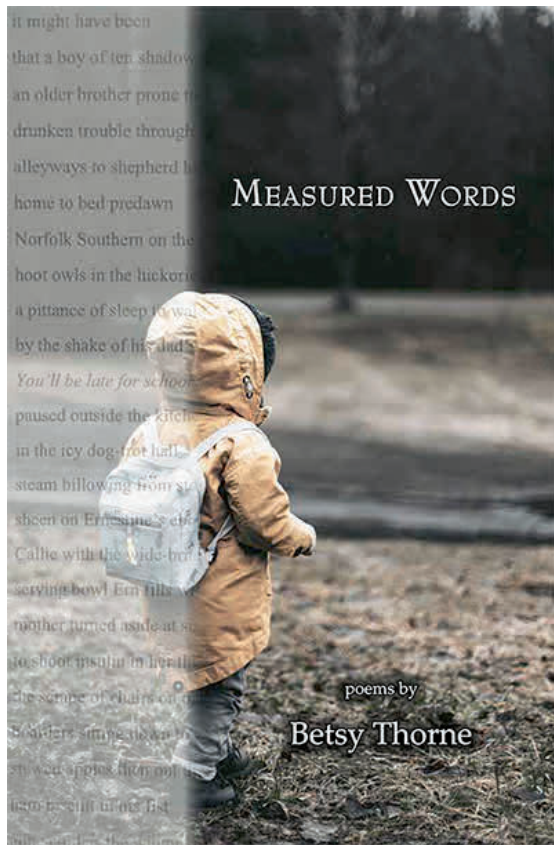
Humphries reminds us that life is a catalogue of what we lose along the way if that's the way we choose to see it. The speaker in these poems, though medically left without sight, understands that living is a gift, that through "hearing and healing" she will "thrive as blind." *An Eclipse and a Butcher* is a stunning revelation, a book of beautiful poems frolicking in the song of poetry with an impressive command of form, so matter-of-fact that the reader doesn't walk away with sympathy. Instead, they walk away with understanding. Surely, we could use so more of that, now more than ever.



McCord, Terri. The Beauts. Finishing Line Press, 2020.

The Beauts is a beautiful (I know, I know) collection. But what other way to describe this language that pushes us to chase what we see and feel for context, where the natural world and the creative world collide? Everything becomes a visual collage, a tumblefest of language that quite frankly makes these poems downright fun to read out loud.

Perhaps the greatest element of McCord is the stillness in her voice. It's vulnerable. It doesn't pretend to make assertions without belief. If the voice seems unsure, it is because the image is unsure and constantly changing. If the speaker questions the relationship of subjects, it's because the question is for all of us. There is just no pretense here, and it's relieving. Especially now. After all, change is natural and necessary. We need a "testament," as the speaker calls it in "Delaying the Cat's Appointment," as the natural world reminds us, "our bodies becoming spent, to how long we will let out love go before we collect faith in the graves around the yard."



Thorne, Betsy. *Measured Words*. Main St. Rag, 2019.

Every now and then, we get lucky and find a book that hits us right in the sweet spot of the cloudy space between certainty and uncertainty – a bridge, if you will, or line perhaps – that pulls us forward when we needed it the most. *Measured Words* does that for me. Honestly, it’s Thorne’s well-controlled voice in these poems: something deeply human and connected, certain, and tenacious, yet tender. The voice guides readers through some of the murkiest spaces that parents find themselves in – spaces where caregiving becomes two-fold and heart-breaking, spaces where kids grow up, leave, and come back different, and our parents will just be leaving.

The going away is haunting here. Even memory, even in snapshot, fails to hold things the way they were or are. But there’s no rage to Thorne’s voice. Just a quiet, determined search for firm footing. Whether it’s in the act of witnessing or taking her place to tell the stories, or in the honest moments when writing a letter to her son who is at war in Iraq to reassure him “that things are as he left them” and she admits to the reader that “it isn’t true.”

What is true is perhaps what this book hammers at so eloquently, that no matter where we’ve been, where we are, and where we’re going, we should channel the strength anywhere we can get it. Because lord knows, in this life, we are going to need all the strength we can get.



Ray McManus is the author of three books of poetry: *Punch*, *Red Dirt Jesus*, and *Driving through the Country before You Are Born*. He is a Professor of English at the University of South Carolina Sumter, Writer in Residence at the Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, South Carolina, and chair of the Board of Governors for the South Carolina Academy of Authors.



A Play Takes a Village

Announcing the Jasper Project's 2021-2022 PLAY RIGHT SERIES Call

By Jon Tuttle

Rembrandt painted about eighty self-portraits, most of which were meant to ennoble the popular conception of artists. In “Self Portrait at the Age of 34,” for instance, he dons an opulent, fur-lined tabard, an embroidered collar, and a dashing gold-rimmed, broad-brimmed chapeau. The artistic life, such portraits tell us, is really very glamorous.

But he also painted a series of solitary figures sitting in cavernous, darkened chambers, so many in fact that one might reasonably conclude that these too are self-portraits meant to describe the artistic life as dreary and monastic. In, for instance, “A Man Seated Reading at a Table in a Lofty Room” or “The Philosopher in Meditation,” his subject sits in stoic contemplation, eclipsed by the light of life coming from the world beyond his window. In “The Artist in His Studio” for further instance, he stands cloaked in shadow well away from his enormous canvas, clearly intimidated.

Both remain popular if contradictory conceptions of the artistic life. And fair enough. Painters, poets, novelists and composers gladly invest great chunks of their lives laboring in lonely garrets in the hope of glitzy gallery openings, book launches, and premieres—or of just being able to say, “Look at this. I made this.”

And who wouldn't? What a joyful thing it is to just create: to confront, in solitude, the inchoate images and ideas and strangers in your head, and to forge them, in the smithy of your soul, into coherent life. But you already know that. You're reading Jasper.

For playwrights, though, the process is a bit different. Certainly, we spend many an hour in silent contemplation, staring at a blank screen, clearly intimidated. But then, at some point during its birthing process, a play becomes, as it must, a joint venture. Ultimately, it takes a village to make a play.

The process goes something like this:

- **In the beginning** are the words, and the words are by the playwright and of the playwright, and in them there is life. And the playwright beholds the work and sees that it is good, and so shares it with his wife, who deems it masterful and reminds him that maybe now he should come eat.
- Then **the playwright shares the work** with several trusted friends whose opinions may vary, depending on their commitment to the friendship. This step is frequently attended by dyspepsia. But from their feedback, the playwright gathers ideas and continues to polish the work until it is ready for Submission.
- **“Submission”** has two completely different definitions. Both are correct. The playwright, all atremble, conveys the script to one or more Accomplished Theatre Persons. After several billion years, one such Person might say, “I like this, let’s get a table reading together.” It is here the village really begins to populate.
- The **table reading** occurs in a living room or a basement or an abandoned warehouse on the waterfront. Each actor has a script, as do several interested others gathered round. There are beverages. The director reads the setting and stage directions, and then, as the first actor utters the first line, the playwright begins to vibrate. Something is amiss. Something is awry. The timing is off, the jokes are flat, the whole thing lags, this is all drivel.
- Later, after the reading, the playwright is encouraged to **stop vibrating** while the actors, whose job it is to drill down into the characters, do exactly that, asking about motivations and deliveries and frequently offering congratulations because the vibrating has not stopped.
- The playwright returns to his lonely garret to iron stuff out and **maybe eat something**. This cycle will repeat itself until some Person so empowered says, “I think this script is ready for production,” whereupon the playwright will start rattling.
- **The play is scheduled for production**, sometimes a year or so in advance. In the interim, a cast is chosen, precisely none of whom look or sound exactly like the characters the playwright had in his head, but that’s okay, that’s okay, that’s perfectly okay. And then, several weeks before the premiere:
- **Rehearsals begin.** Each rehearsal is a cesarean section. The timing is off, the jokes are flat, the whole thing lags—my God, it’s all still drivel. For a week or so, revisions are allowed; thereafter, they are forbidden, because savage are the frowns actors give

when asked to learn new lines each night. Slowly, the playwright learns to let go of the play, to let go and trust his village, because this is what they do, this is the process, inhale, exhale, beverage, repeat.

- Now, suddenly, it’s **Opening Night**. The village is large now. There are well-dressed strangers milling about in anticipation. Whereas poems and stories and novels exist as private transactions between a text and its reader, a play needs these strangers to receive it and construe it and bless it.
- And now the playwright arrives in splendor, no longer rattling but actually undulating and donning an opulent, fur-lined tabard, an embroidered collar, and a dashing gold-rimmed, broad-brimmed chapeau, because **this is the artistic life, and who wouldn’t want it?**

You do, I do, we all do, of course we do. And so, the Jasper Project has created the Play Right Series, which is part contest, part development opportunity, culminating in a production or public staged reading. In its first year—2017—the play selected was *Sharks and Other Lovers*, by Irmo native Randall David Cook. It was presented at Tapp’s Arts Center and since then has gone on to the Centre Stage New Play Festival where it won the Best Play Award and then officially premiere in August 2021.

But now it’s back, and it works like this: South Carolina playwrights—those living in or native to the state—are invited to write and submit previously unproduced one-act plays (that is, about an hour) on any subject. Submissions are due on or before December 1. One play



will be selected for a development cycle of readings and discussions with actors, dramaturgs, literati, otherati, and, most importantly, Community Producers.

Who are Community Producers? Persons supportive of this state's rich literary and theatrical tradition. Persons hoping to venture beyond the veil of the production process. Persons wanting to learn more about and become involved in the creation, evolution, and presentation of a new play in August 2022.

Community Producers are invited to attend and participate at readings, rehearsals, talkbacks, and conversations with the entire village, including the playwright, cast, directors, costumers, lighting designers, stage managers, everybody. A wide array of different talents contribute to every theatrical production, but the better it is, the fewer you can see, because a good play disguises all its parts and presents itself as a unified, coherent whole. It's kind of a miracle, really.

The Jasper Project therefore invites persons interested in submitting a play or becoming a Community Producer to visit the Play Right Series page at <http://jasperproject.org/play-right-series>.



Jon Tuttle is the author of The Trustus Collection, (Muddy Ford Press, 2019), which includes six of his plays that premiered at Columbia's Trustus Theatre, and a recipient of the South Carolina Governor's Award in the Humanities.

Winners of Jasper's 2021 Fall Lines Awards

For the eighth year in a row the Jasper Project is excited to announce the winners of the *Fall Lines* – a literary convergence prose and poetry awards.

Congratulations to Kasie Whitener whose short fiction, *The Shower*, is the winner of this year's Broad River Prize for Prose and to Angelo Geter whose poem, 'Black Girl Fly', is the winner of this year's Saluda River Prize for Poetry. Both winners will receive a cash prize and certificate at the release celebration for Fall Lines on Sunday **January 23, 2022 at 2 pm** at the main branch of Richland Library. All contributors are invited to read a single piece of their work from the combined 2020-2021 volumes 7 and 8 of Fall Lines.

In its 8th year of publication, *Fall Lines* is a literary journal and the result of an ongoing collaboration between the Jasper Project, One Columbia, Richland Library, and Richland Library Friends and Foundation.

The call for submissions for Fall Lines volume 9 will open on March 1, 2022.

*fall
lines*



The Columbia Fall Line is a natural junction, along which the Congaree River falls and rapids form, running parallel to the east coast of the country between the resilient rocks of the Appalachians and the softer, more gentle coastal plain.



Profile: Stephanie Wilkins

Photos by Kevin Kyzer

It's warm, mid-August, and dancers have just taken the stage at Trustus Theatre, using their bodies to express the often-intangible aspects of human emotion. Among them, one dancer, a bit taller, a bit older, a bit more experience under her belt, stands out in a violet gown, reaching, fingers-curling, into the soul of the audience.

"Why shouldn't I dance?" she says shortly before the show, "I'm not done yet."

Dance has been in Columbia artist Stephanie Wilkins' life since she was three years old when her mother first signed her up for tap. As a teenager, Wilkins honed her dance skills, dropping other electives and leaning heavy into the ballet scene. She studied with Ann Brodie at Columbia City Ballet (CCB) and soon after with William Starrett.

"I enjoyed ballet, but I knew I wasn't meant to be a ballerina forever. I don't have the frame—I'm athletically built and tall at 5'9"," Wilkins says. "My junior year in high school, I went to the North Carolina School of the Arts and was introduced to contemporary dance. Immediately I knew this was better for my body—you can be any size, and it felt more natural; it felt like my path."

That path did not start out as her main branch, however, as Wilkins attended Emory University majoring in Pre-Med with full intent to become an OBGYN. She danced through college, though, and the passion brimmed so bright from her edges that, by graduation, Wilkins had a spot in the NYU Tisch School of the Arts' MFA program.

For nearly fifteen years, Wilkins called NYC her home, performing professionally with the long-term goal of

joining a company and traveling the world before settling down as a dance professor. Bebe Miller and Bill T. Jones ran her dream companies, the latter of which she auditioned for four times.

“The final time I made it all the way to the final cut. I was 29 years old when [Jones] pulled me aside and said, ‘I’m at the point in my career where I want to work with younger dancers and mold them, and so, I’m not choosing you today,’” Wilkins emotionally recalls, “I was devastated, I mean, it felt like a stake in my heart.”

It was Bebe Miller who pulled Wilkins aside and said, “I never danced for anybody. I was never in somebody else’s company. I just did my own work. Why don’t you just do that?” Suddenly, a lightbulb went on, echoing around similarly veined advice from her father, “Stephanie, dancers dance. That’s what they do. And if you’re dancing, you’re doing what you love.”

These words acted as a baptism for Wilkins, reviving and reorienting her drive and soon sending her back home to Columbia, SC. As she stepped into this new confidence, she began teaching dance at Coker College, Columbia College, and the University of South Carolina. While she loved her students and felt interacting with them not only fulfilled a dream but was one of the highlights of her career, Wilkins needed more space to move.

Stepping away from teaching, Wilkins could pursue choreography whilst giving time to her job as a Pilates instructor—a passion of hers she claims continuously makes her a better dancer. It was around this time that she reunited with William Starrett at CCB to choreograph.

“Wherever I come from, I start thinking about movement in my own body. All my dances start with a phrase of movement, and I show up with that phrase and teach it, and then I start manipulating it,” Wilkins says. “And I want the dancers themselves to make decisions. Your dancers might think that like it’s lazy on your part to make them choreograph, but to me, it makes it so much more interesting because they are weaving themselves into the story.”

These stories peaked when Wilkins, along with CCB Principal Dancer and friend, Bonnie Boiter-Jolley, founded the Columbia Summer Reparatory Dance Company (CSRDC) in 2019. In an attempt to keep

dancers local in their off-season and to present contemporary dance to Columbia patrons, CSRDC teamed up with Jasper as their fiscal agent and presented their first show in 2019, a sold-out performance. In 2021, they premiered their second, two-night show, *Limitless*, brimming with unique contemporary dances to packed houses.

“Offering contemporary dance is unique because when you watch it, there’s often not a narrative. Maybe there’s just an emotion, maybe it’s abstract, maybe it’s just about shape,” Wilkins explains. “But with my work, I really want people to feel something, whether they feel angry or happy or sad or depressed or just confused. I want people to take something with them even if it can’t be put into words.”

Limitless was more than a show for Wilkins and emerged as a culmination of her experiences as a dancer. She choreographed the majority of the pieces and danced in two, even though fear of taking the stage loomed large. Her solo was performed in shades of violet with resonant, intentional movements as Michael Kiwanuka’s song repeated “you can’t take me down; you can’t break me down.”

Not fear, not injury, not loss, not boundaries can keep Wilkins from her goals. She’s taught. She’s traveled. She’s danced. She’s co-founded a fresh new dance company with a dear friend and colleague. She’s found herself. As she pulls her dress strings from around her neck and slowly drags her chair off-stage, you can hear, reverberating off her body, a message—Stephanie Wilkins is only just getting started, and no one, not even herself, can hold her back.



8 Questions with Emerging Visual Artist Malik Green



JASPER: First, tell us about yourself, please. The normal stuff -- how old are you, where are you from, where did you go to school?

GREENE: Hey, what's up, my name is Malik Greene, I was born on July 8th, 1997. I was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, but in 2019 I received my bachelor's degree in psychology with a late minor in studio art from Coastal Carolina University.

JASPER: How did you get started painting?

GREENE: I've always had a curious mind and just wanted to find my own way to be different turned me to an exploration of self; figuring out where I stand in this world and what it is I want to accomplish in my time here honestly led me to dabble my hand in anything that conveyed self-expression. As a kid, I gravitated towards art forms such as illustration and clothing design through learned experiences with family and friends, but I developed a strong passion for painting my second semester of college. I actually made my first painting on the floor of my best friend's dorm freshman year, so I have a pretty vivid memory of my origin as an artist. I remember ripping up an old trash bag and splattering paint as my heart desired. After I made this first painting, I unintentionally started a fire that still burns today and one painting turned into two and two into four now my entire life is covered in paint... I love it!

JASPER: What's your favorite medium?

GREENE: I think for me I love how tangible paint is, so I'm constantly amused by how it moves, dries, is applied -- it's almost like a science for me mixing the paints. Specifically, I am intrigued by the naturalness of oil paint, and I love that from its origin until its completion finishing a painting is almost like solving a puzzle.

JASPER: What visual artists have influenced you and your work most and why?

GREENE: I think for me I like to be my own biggest influence. I kind of love that I do not know of any artists who create work that looks like mine, especially in my geographic location! My work is uniquely mine and I love how it is strengthened based on the fact that it comes from my own conception. Of course, I have been inspired and have artists that I do admire. George Condo was the first artist whose work I researched greatly and early into my creation of art he was definitely my biggest influence.

Art goes deeper than just something that is pretty I think art can make one uncomfortable and curious respectively, so I seek artists who entertain my psychology and the unconscious pleasures. From older, more venerated artists like Kerry James Marshall (who has become my favorite artist) and Lucian Freud who plays around with texture to younger artists like Gerald Lovell and Reginald Sylvester II, I am truly inspired by artists who do things their own way,

aren't afraid to break the rules and are still extremely aware of these same rules they break.

JASPER: Tell us about why you paint – what's your mission and what are you trying to communicate to your viewer?

GREENE: My mission is to be able to live a life not controlled by the stigmas that are placed on everyone in this human experience. I think a lot of the things that we as people have been taught are tailoring us to live a carbon copy cookie-cutter “American Dream” -- but who even created that standard? No one asked to be on this earth so it bugs me even further that those expectations are placed on people, why can't we just live life? Do the things that make us happy and inspire others to do the same with what little time we have.

I do believe the role of an artist is to speak on the world that is around them. So, if the world of politics is full of issues, and this is what I see in my world, I think it does become my job to relay my message. I think oftentimes people and artists get pigeonholed into what they should be expected to be, but the only expectation I place on myself is to make the best art I can make while staying authentic to my own story.

JASPER: Can you talk more about your Baby Boy exhibition recently held at Stormwater Studios in Columbia?

GREENE: My debut solo exhibition titled ‘Baby Boy’ is literally like my baby, it opened up July 9th, 2021, and closed July 18th, 2021. The title came from just the feeling and sentiment of me always being “Baby Boy” to those closest to me. I'm the youngest of six siblings so to them, to my mother, to those who know me the best I am always a baby boy no matter how old I am. This exhibition was to convey the many sides of me more as a man. Like a coming home for me celebrating the many sides of me the world



may never see. I felt as if the exhibition went extremely well and brought a lot of attention to me and the works that I have put so much time, effort, and love into. It was such a relief to see my work on the walls and to have the feeling of completion. To know an idea of mine was nurtured, developed, and made into a reality empowers me and that alone makes me certain my exhibition was successful.

JASPER: As a young Black artist, what are your specific challenges?

GREENE: I think the biggest challenge for me as an artist is just being labelled solely a “black artist.” I think I am an amazing artist in general! I want to break the barriers and walls that black artists face where they are seen as only “good for a black artist” or the feeling of making art based on the plight of my ancestors. I choose to make art that brings me progression and strength. I think for me and a lot of other artists who are black we get placed in a box of making contrived art as opposed to art that genuinely speaks and has a message.

I love making art that speaks for those who look like me, who feel like me and those who have felt as I have felt before. Within that umbrella those who identify with me may not be black, but within my art I represent what is tangible to me. I find strength in my identify, but the sentiments of my identity span deeper than me just being black. I think that what I create, and the content of my work is what makes me great, I just so happen to be black.

I think another challenge for me is just having a point of reference that looks like me. I've been lucky enough to come across some amazing individuals who have motivated me to continue pushing further but when I see my 8-year-old self I wish I had someone pushing me to be better. As someone who is self-trained, I don't have a million references or resources, but for me instead of seeing this as a challenge I see it as an opportunity to be what I didn't have.

JASPER: What's next for you?

GREENE: I honestly see myself just diving deeper into my process and the narrative of Malik the artist. My work is directly related to where I am in life so to be inspired to work, I have to experience life. For the better or worse, see some things, do some things better, and feel some things. It's exciting to know as long as I have my hands, I have a gift no one can take from me.



As the lights shine on the marquees outside of Trustus Theatre, Kay and Jim Thigpen are the power making that magic happen.

Kay Thigpen doesn't suffer fools, nor does she tolerate foolishness. Yes, I refuse to use the past tense when writing about this woman who changed a community's entertainment values, impacted countless theatre artists nationwide, and loved her family (blood and chosen) with intense loyalty and support. Her influence and impact are ongoing. Just ask anyone who spent a little time at Trustus Theatre – the brainchild of Kay and her late husband, Jim, who died in 2017. She's always going to be with us.

Kay and Jim started Trustus Theatre in 1985. Kay was the managing director and Jim was the artistic director before they retired, (forgive the past tense). With an empty nest, a second mortgage, and a desire to bring cutting edge theatre to Columbia, they created the professional contemporary theatre that now lives at the base of the Vista district. In its 37th Season now, Trustus won the SC Governor's Award for the Arts in 2000 and the SC Theatre Association's Theatre of Distinction Award in 2014.

But back to my original point: fools and foolishness.

Kay "went home" (she'd hate that) on September 20, 2021. She knew it was coming. She had cancer and it was terminal. She wasn't going to go through endless bouts of treatment because she'd "lived a full life, and it is what it is." This is what she said when she called to tell me the news. Fighting the inevitable would have been "foolishness," which Kay would never be a party to. So, with the same matter-of-fact approach she'd used the entire time I'd known her she accepted that her clock was ticking.

When I say Kay doesn't suffer fools or tolerate foolishness, it doesn't mean she doesn't know how to let loose and have a good time. "Let's check props" means I'll roll a number and smoke it in the shop with you. "We're going to the beach" means the family is going to the coast this summer, don't bother me or burn anything down. "Good job, honey" means you may have possibly just done your best work yet.

(AN ASIDE) PRO TIPS FOR WORKING UNDER KAY'S MANAGEMENT: Don't ask for more money in a production budget. If you ask for more money, you better be damn sure that purchase is going to serve the theatre for longer than one show. Don't be an asshole as a customer – if you do that too much, she'll tell you to never come back. Smoking in non-public spaces (like offices) is not against the law as she interprets it. The actors have to project – she can't hear them. The music in the show is TOO LOUD. Friday is for Jin Jin's Chinese takeout before the show. She will sweep the entryway of the theatre with that same old broom that hides in the back of the bar – don't offer to do it for her, that's her thing. Jim is going to buy that damn jar of Gefilte fish on Jewish holidays, but don't take it when he offers it, it's blech, she says. Max, her grandson, is everything to her.

The greatest testament to her management style is

her grace. Always grace. When she sees people being imperfect human beings, she gives them the allowance to learn from their mistakes and become stronger, a management style that many leaders and governing boards could learn from. She believes that as long as the work gets done, then there's no need to satisfy every working minute of a 40-hour work week prescribed by an establishment she's not a part of. And let people work when they're productive, damn it! Strange, I've heard this same philosophy at countless theatre conferences recently. Guess she's ahead of her time (no surprise there).

I tried to avoid the past tense in writing this remembrance because the lessons this woman instilled in me will live there forever. She's here with us every day. As the lights shine on the marquees outside of Trustus Theatre, Kay and Jim are the power making that magic happen. It's like the kids standing outside of Willy Wonka's factory: something is going on in that building. Something that started 37 years ago with boldness, confidence, and a belief in this city. They expected more of Columbia artists and audiences, and they gave it to us – whether we knew we needed it or not. It's funny, a risk like they took might seem foolish to some people, but I guess they knew something we didn't.

Kay don't worry about us – we'll sweep the entryway. We'll banish fools and foolishness (as much as we can). And yes, we'll kindly decline the Gefilte fish.

But we will never forget everything you taught us, and we will love you forever.

Chad Henderson served as company member, marketing director, artistic director, and executive director of Trustus Theatre over the course of 14 years. He's currently the marketing and communications director at the SC Philharmonic.

Photo by Molly Harrell.



Making Shots Move Like Music

Dan Kneece (1956-2021)

Dan was a very special and unique individual. Dan grew up in a small town in South Carolina called Blackville. His father was a physician there for 50 years and his mother a pharmacist. There was a great pressure for Dan to enter medicine as there were multiple generations of physicians dating back several hundred years. His first love however, was music. Dan played the saxophone in the high school band (winning the John Philip Sousa award) and a Fender bass guitar that his mom bought him when he was 14 years old. His mom, who had a masters in music and played multiple instruments including the piano since she was 3 years old, encouraged Dan's music and always pushed him to follow his interests and dreams.

His world was turned upside down when his father had a stroke when Dan was 18 years old. To help deal with this, he and his friends started playing music at his Dad's office. The rock music could be heard loudly all over town. Instead of the town folks complaining about the loud music, they would sit on their front porches listening

to the music and drinking tea relaxing. In fact, when they did not play, citizens in the town would call the local police across the street and ask "isn't the band going to play tonight".

Dan started out in school to become a pharmacist. However, his mom could see that he had other interests and that his heart was just not in it. Without asking him, when he was 19, she sent him to UCLA for a summer film course because she saw that he needed to get away. He came back from that summer with a renewed vigor and changed his major to media arts at the University of South Carolina.

This was not his first interest in film. At 13, his mother bought a Super-8 camera, and Dan started shooting motion pictures. When he graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Master's degree in Media Arts in 1979, Dan started his professional career shooting news at WIS-TV in Columbia, SC. He then moved on to filming movies in North Carolina at Earl Owensby Studios there.

It was during that time that Dan heard about a new invention that would determine the course of his future. After completing a course with Garrett Brown, the inventor of the Steadicam stabilization system, Dan took out a loan, borrowed money from his mom, and bought his own Steadicam. He knew that if he wanted to make it big he had to move out west, so after a lot of practice and some solid mentorship, Dan moved to Los Angeles to work as a Steadicam operator.

In Hollywood, Dan learned everything he could about the Steadicam and spent nearly 3 decades as a Steadicam operator in high demand. Dan's filmography includes David Lynch movies such as *Blue Velvet*, *Wild at Heart*, *Twin Peaks* and *Mulholland Drive*. He shot the opening sequence to Wes Craven's *Scream*, one of the most memorable opening sequences of any film. He also worked with Quentin Tarantino on *Jackie Brown* and *Death Proof*. He also shot memorable music videos for the likes of Massive Attack (*Unfinished Sympathy*) and Beyonce (*Crazy in Love ft. JAY Z*).

He went on to co-found the Steadicam Guild in 2002. He was named President of the Society of Camera Operators in 2007. Always pushing boundaries, Dan made friends with camera mechanics so he could make his own improvements which resulted in a novel Steadicam + Segway rig. He eventually moved out of camera operating and Steadicam work and established himself as a Director of Photography (DP) in his own right. One notable DP role was for the South Carolina Film Fund short film called *Civil*. Dan always worked closely with students to pass his knowledge and experience to the next generation.

There were so many facets to Dan's career that I can not describe them all here. He was always willing to teach and spoke frequently to advance the art of filmmaking. Throughout his busy career and travels, he always made time to play his trusty Fender bass guitar that his mom got him so many years before. Dan lived life on his own terms making close friends wherever he went. He traveled and explored more than many of us only dream of. His legacy lives on in his students, his colleagues, and on the big screen.

This remembrance was written by Dan's brother, Robert Kneece, M.D. of Columbia, SC.

Photos by Robert Primes ASC and Brian Harmon



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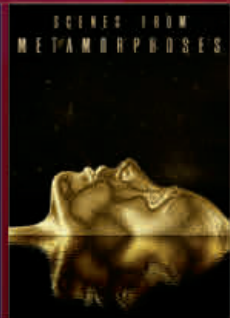


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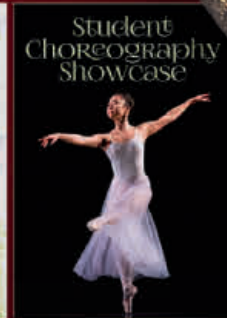
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Lab Theatre



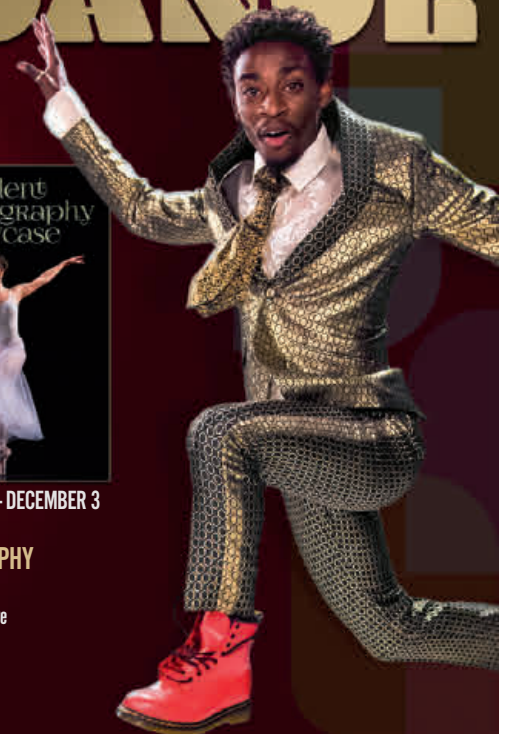
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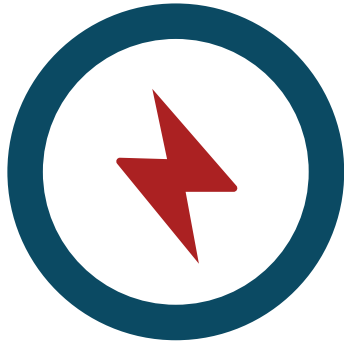


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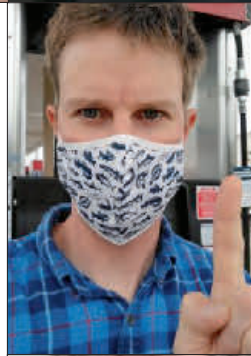
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COLUMBIA'S DOWNTOWN SOURCE FOR ANTIQUES

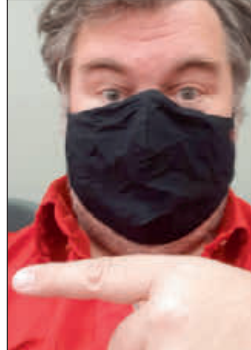




When we wear a mask in public, we think we are sending a message. The message might be, I've seen how this spreads. I am worried I could be a silent disease carrier and I wouldn't want to pass that to my neighbor. The message might be, I am on the mask-wearing team. I don't want my peers to think that I am not on their team, so I wear this mask. The message might be, I have someone close to me who really can't afford to be sick, so even if I am not on the mask-wearing team, I must wear this mask for a very important person in my life. The message might be, I am a kitchen sinker. I don't know what the best thing to do is, but I will do several good things that have been proven to work, like getting vaccinated, practicing healthy spacing, and wearing a mask, and I hope that they add up to a good result.



We all have a reason and a message. No matter the message, healthy pandemic actions work together to protect ourselves and the neighbors around us.





My pandemic actions
take care of this person.
#MasksProtectCola