

# JASPER



## 2015 JAY AWARDS

# At the Gervair Street Bridge Dinner

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18 October 2015

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And here we all are, this golden hour  
on the river, on a bridge between

two cities, a bowl of blue sky  
and gold light above us, the brown water

below us, behind us, beyond,  
the current beneath all our conversations,

and later the lanterns all coming on.

\*

J. says there was this woman, Rachel,  
not really affected, but needed to do

something, needed to help—there, in his  
neighborhood, clipboard in hand, she made

sure that everyone got what they needed  
as the floods receded down the streets,

and people assessed what was left.

\*

Someone makes a toast—to the first  
responders walking by, a downed police-  
man,

to people making their way together, find-  
ing  
their feet, together. A mayor says the rivers

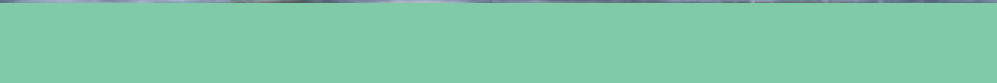
don't divide us, they bring us together,  
and with each toast we make—all of us

gathered at the long tables, the river  
threading our conversations—with each  
toast

a gust of wings above us, a flyover of geese  
following the river home, and in the dark,

the rough voices still singing.





Ed Madden is the literary arts editor for Jasper Magazine and the poet laureate for Columbia, SC.

Barry Brian Wheeler is an IT professional and a Columbia, SC artist, concentrating his work in photography and digital imaging.

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**08 ON THE COVER**  
2015 JAY AWARDS

**38 GAZES**  
MARIUS VALDES

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## Dear Friends,

Writing this message, it's difficult not to be a little overwhelmed by the soreness of spirit so many of us feel these days. Just last night, Paris was rocked by senseless attacks that left dozens dead, hundreds injured, and millions demoralized. In the days leading up to the attacks, Beirut, Baghdad, and other areas suffered similar violence. We don't know what else, if anything, might be in store.

A little over a month ago, our own community was also assaulted, not by acts of war but by acts of nature, when torrential rain and floodwaters tore through the SC Midlands taking homes, roads, and lives along the way. For a while, it didn't seem that the water was ever going to stop.

But finally it did and while, in many ways, we're getting back to normal, in many more ways, we'll never be the same. There is still much to be done and much of it needs to be done by artists.

The role the artists play in the healing of a community after a devastating event is multi-faceted. We document for posterity at the same time that we personally process our own complex feelings. And with the efforts of our talents and the products of our labors, hopefully, we help our neighbors process their feelings, too.

In this issue of *Jasper* we celebrate some of the leaders in Columbia's community of

artists in the form of the Jasper Artists of the Year Finalists and Winners—leaders chosen by artists and patrons through the most democratic of methods, the ballot. As we congratulate Martha Brim, Craig Butterfield, Julia Elliott, Kimi Maeda, and Dewey Scott-Wiley as Jasper's 2015 Artists of the Year, we are also honored to call these brilliant artists not only fellow Columbians, but trailblazers, diplomats, and friends.

We also celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vista Studios/Gallery 80808 in Columbia's historic Vista by catching up with the esteemed artists who are taking their places in the history of the space by creating their art there now. Like award winning artist and illustrator Marius Valdes, they each lend a unique quality to the landscape of virtuosity in the city.

In this issue we also play catch up with two of Columbia's oldest theatre companies as Ryan Stevens, a young, new playwright and director, takes the pulse of Workshop Theatre as it continues to find its way after losing its physical theatre space; and long-time theatre historian and writer, August Krickel, visits with new Trustus Theatre artistic director, Chad Henderson, to see where he plans to take the theatre under his newly minted direction.

Finally, we look at two people whose lives were inarguably changed by the floodwaters that devastated so much of our area

in October. Visual artist, musician, and filmmaker, Tom Hall, who we feature in our centerfold for his work on the anti-Confederate flag film, *Compromised*, added the title lifesaver to his list of many endeavors when he literally saved the life of an elderly Canadian gentleman during the floods. Tom, who has always been a hero to many of us, was featured in the national media for his acts of heroism. Sadly, Radenko Pavlovich, executive director of Columbia Classical Ballet, was also featured in the national media after it was discovered that his newly renovated ballet studio was almost completely destroyed by the same floodwaters. Soon thereafter, Radenko's life was also threatened when his (likely broken) heart angrily responded to the tragedy. Thankfully, both Radenko and his ballet company survived and will go on to thrive, continuing to create the beautiful ephemeral art that is dance.

When I look at the faces of the artists in this issue of *Jasper*, captured so sensitively by photographers Forrest Clonts, Thomas Hammond, and Michael Dantzler, I feel my spirits lifted to a place that is safer, happier, and healthier because I have confidence that, together, they and their fellow artists will help to grow a Columbia that is not only more beautiful, but stronger than ever before.

And I'm sure the same is true for the artists of Paris.

Take care,



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

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THE  
**JASPER GUILD**

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

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

ISN'T IT TIME THAT YOU JOIN THE

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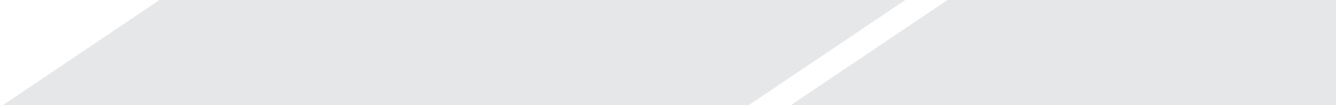
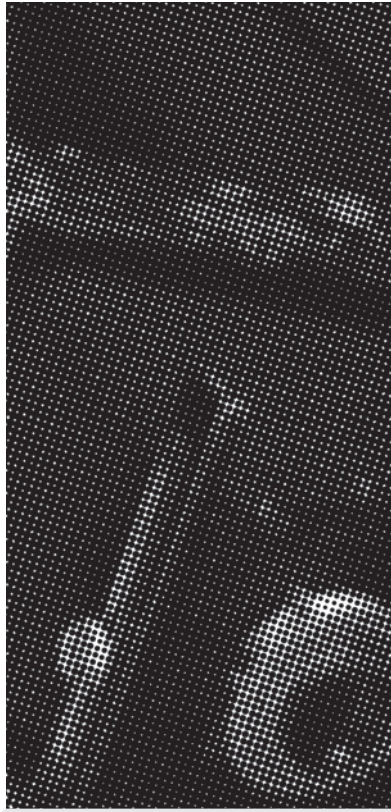
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*"But I'm just a starving artist myself," you say?*

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2015  
JAY  
AWARDS

Photography by  
FORREST CLONTS

A portrait of Julia Elliott, a young woman with long dark hair and light eyes, wearing a dark, short-sleeved top. The background is a neutral grey. On the left side, there is a vertical strip with a halftone dot pattern. At the bottom left, there is a dark green rectangular box containing white text. At the bottom right, there is a dark green vertical bar. The name 'JULIA ELLIOTT' is printed in large white letters across the bottom of the portrait.

**2015 JAY WINNER**

LITERARY ARTS

# JULIA ELLIOTT

## **JULIA ELLIOTT DESCRIBES THE PAST YEAR**

as “exhilarating and exhausting.” In addition to releasing two books since last September (with the continuing travel and book promotion), she turned in her tenure file in November, “all while rearing a headstrong toddler.” Her debut short story collection, *The Wilds*, was released in October 2014 to rave reviews. Reviewed by the New York Times last fall and recipient of a starred review in Publishers Weekly, *The Wilds* was selected as a New York Times Editor’s Choice at the end of 2014—along with being chosen for the 24 Best Fiction Books of 2014 by

Buzzfeed Books, the Best Fiction Books of 2014 by Kirkus Reviews, The Best Books of 2014 by BookRiot, Electric Literature’s list of the 25 Best Short Story Collections of 2014, and featured on Salon in The Ultimate Literary Guide to 2014. Kirkus Reviews said of this “genre-bending” collection, “This book will take you to places you never dreamed of going and aren’t quite sure you want to stay, but you won’t regret the journey.” In August, she was included in LitReactor’s list of “5 Female Short Story Writers You Should Be Reading RIGHT NOW!” Elliott follows up her award-winning short

story collection this fall with *The New and Improved Romie Futch*, published in October by cutting edge press Tin House. An early edition was released in April as a Powell’s Indiespensable Exclusive. In September the novel was featured on LitHub’s Great Bookseller’s Fall Preview in September, and Elliott was highlighted in an interview-review on Kirkus Reviews. Elliott’s short story “Bride” was selected by T.C. Boyle for Best American Short Stories 2015, and her essay “On Whoredom, Demonic Possession, and Penitence” was published in August on the New York Times Opinionator blog.



## AL BLACK

A lynchpin and ringmaster of the spoken word and open mic community in Columbia, Al Black produces and hosts Mind Gravy Poetry, a weekly poetry and performance venue, as well as hosting three monthly performances: Poems: Bones of the Spirit, Songversation, and Magnify Magnolias. In the wake of the Charleston tragedy, he also started and coproduces with Len Lawson the Poets Respond to Race tour, which has included readings in three states. Black hosts a live band every First Thursday in the courtyard of Tapp's and started and cohosts Non-Sequitur, a monthly poetry workshop.

Black has also seen his own work published or displayed in a number of local venues, including the chapbook *The Collective I: Selfies, Real or Imagined*; a collaboration with Susan Lenz for the Arts from the Ashes show; and poems to appear on the Comet this fall. In October 2014, he coproduced a multi-disciplinary arts event with Anastasia Chernoff and Bonnie Goldberg in conjunction with Domestic Violence Awareness Month. He also organized two performance fundraisers for automated external defibrillators (used in case of heart attack in a public space).



## RAY McMANUS

Ray McManus has not only published his third book and an edited collection within the past year, he also devotes his summers and spare time teaching poetry to young writers and equipping public school teachers to use poetry in the classroom. *Punch*, published by Hub City Press, was awarded the Gold Medal for poetry in the 2015 Independent Publishers Book Awards. McManus also published an edited collection in September with USC Press, *Found Anew: Writers Responding to Photographic Histories*, co-edited with R. Mac Jones. In the past year, McManus has published poems in a number of journals, as well as locally in *Art from the Ashes* and *Fall Lines*, and his essay "Ruts," appears in *The State of the Heart* vol. 2. Readings this year have included the NC Blue Ridge Book Festival, the Upstate Literary Festival, Emrys Reading Series in Greenville, among others.

McManus directs workshops on creative writing for teachers across the state in the Arts in the Basic Curriculum Program, as well as conferences, such as the 2014 SC Alliance for Arts Education conference, the 2015 Curriculum Leadership Institute in the Arts at Converse College. An associate professor of English at USC Sumter (where he was named 2015 Professor of the Year), McManus also directs the creative writing program for the Tri-District Arts Consortium, and teaches in the USC Adventures in Writing program for high school and middle school writers.

A portrait of Rumi Maeda, a woman with long, dark, wavy hair and bangs, wearing a dark blue top with a light-colored geometric pendant. The background is a neutral grey. There are decorative elements: a grey and white halftone pattern in the top left, a white triangle pointing right on the left side, a green bar at the bottom left, and a green bar at the bottom right.

**2015 JAY WINNER**  
VISUAL ARTS

RUMI MAEDA

**AS THE TAPP'S ARTIST IN RESIDENCE** in the fall of 2014, Maeda presented an “ephemera” exhibition and premiered her new performance piece *Bend*. This launched a busy year that utilized grants from the Jim Henson Foundation, Arkansas Arts Council, Arkansas Humanities Council, Alternate Roots, SC Arts Commission and the Japanese American Citizens League to perform *Bend* across the country. Maeda performed at the International Sonoran Desert Alliance Gathering in Ajo, Arizona, Brandeis University in Waltham, MA, a/perture cinema in Winston-Salem, NC, The Carrack Modern in Durham, NC, ROOTS Week at

Arden, NC, Mechanical Eye Microcinema at Asheville, NC, Maiden Alley Cinema at Paducah, KY, Ron Robinson Theatre in Little Rock, AR, McGehee High School in McGehee, AR, Puppets in the Green Mountains Festival in Putney, VT. Maeda also developed “Occupation/Reconstruction” with choreographer Martha Brim, Jasper Artist of the Year in Dance, for the Burning of Columbia commemoration as well as ArtFields 2015. The artist spoke on a panel about “Immigrant and Refugee Communities and the Changing South” at ROOTS Week in August of 2015 as well as on a panel about “Generations of Otherness in America” at the Pup-

pets in the Green Mountains Festival that September. She also helped organize Future Perfect art installations and the Spork in Hand Puppet Slam for Indie Grits in April of 2015. She created live visuals for The Prairie Willow’s “Guilty 2” at their CD release party in June, and performed “The Homecoming” and “Guilty 2” at Norfolk, Virginia’s Mid-Summer Fantasy Festival in July 2015. She also created shadow puppet workshop for teens for the Richland Public Library and St. Andrews Library that month as well. Finally, Maeda designed sets for *In the Red and Brown Water* at Trustus in January of 2015 and *Marie Antoinette* in September.



## EILEEN BLYTH

Blyth's busy year began with Volumes II – Women Bound by Art at Columbia College, Vista Lights at Gallery 80808, and Less is More – Carolina Gallery Group Show in Spartanburg in November of 2014. That winter she was also part of a group show in Kaiserslautern, Germany entitled "No Title/No Name," and would have additional shows at Gallery 80808 in February and April of 2015. Blyth was also showcased during Artfield's 2015 in Lake City, at the American Japanese Art Exchange in Tokyo of June 2015. Blyth also helmed a public art installation for the Mayor Council of Art in Gillette, Wyoming in June as well. She was part of group exhibitions at Art & Light in Greenville in August and Anastasia & Friends in April, was part of the 701 CCA Biennial in September, and was juried into the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry juried public art exhibition in Hilton Head, South Carolina in October.



## RUSSELL JEFFCOAT

Photographer Russell Jeffcoat was a finalist in the international "The Heart of Steinbeck Country" exhibition in Carmel, California, and was also a member of the Winner's Circle in the International Black & White Spider Awards, Los Angeles, California, the industry's most important event in black and white photography. He was also named as "among the finest photographers in the world" by an international jury consisting of the heads of The Royal Photographic Society (London), The Stockholm City Museum (Sweden), and The Fratelli Alinari (Italy) at that event.

In Spring 2015 he was selected for The Photographic Nude, the international juried exhibit celebrating the timeless elegance of classical, alternative and provocative styles in Astoria, Oregon, and in May 2015 his photography was featured in *Blur Magazine*, an international European publication dedicated to the best in fine art photography. This fall he exhibited in "The Photography of Seven" Exhibit at Gallery West, West Columbia, South Carolina.

A portrait of Dewey Scott-Wiley, a woman with short blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark green textured blazer over a maroon top. The background is a dark grey gradient. There are decorative elements: a grey and white halftone pattern on the left, a yellow and orange geometric shape on the left, and a yellow bar on the right.

2015 JAY WINNER  
THEATRE

# DEWEY SCOTT-WILEY

**LONGTIME COLUMBIA THEATRE ARTIST** and director, Dewey Scott-Wiley was co-Artistic Director of Trustus Theatre, as well as one of the backbones of the theatre company and the local theatre scene, until she left the post on August 31, 2015, but she did not leave the Columbia theatre scene. Scott-Wiley also played Sonia in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* at Trustus Theatre in September, 2014 and directed *The Actor's Nightmare*, at the University of South Carolina at Aiken in November of the

same year. Having received recognition for faculty achievement in directing from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, the multi-talented thespian directed *Godspell* at Trustus in March of this year which was recognized as "The Best Local Theatre Production" by the readers of *The Free Times*. Scott-Wiley also directed *Bill W. and Dr. Bob* at Trustus Theatre in May, a historically accurate account of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous with the Side Door Show selling out of seats before

the play even opened. Still busy in August, Scott-Wiley directed the World Premiere of *Big City*, winner of the 2014 Trustus Playwrights' Festival. She was the voice of *Gladys the Grasshopper* at Columbia Museum of Art, and served as Professional Division Chair of the Southeastern Theatre Conference. She was the Coordinator of Directing Initiatives at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival from September 15, 2014 until present and has been a Trustus Ensemble Member since 1993.



## JENNIFER MOODY-SANCHEZ

Jennifer made her Broadway debut this summer at Lincoln Center as Lady Macbeth in the Psittacus Production of, *A Tale Told by an Idiot*. She also was cast in a video game doing voice over in Los Angeles for 343 Industries (the creator of Halo) as one of the soldiers in their upcoming series. Jennifer just finished playing the title role of Marie Antoinette in Trustus Theatre's production of *Marie Antoinette*, directed by 2014 Jasper Artist of the Year Finalist, Robert Richmond. Moody-Sanchez was seen this past year in *The Other Place*, directed by Jim O'Connor playing three different characters at Trustus Theatre and was also in *Standing on Ceremony: The Gay Marriage Plays* directed by Elena Martinez-Vidal, again playing three completely different roles also at Trustus. In addition, Moody-Sanchez performed in an original 10 minute production for the Lenten Drama series.



## KENDRICK MARION

Kendrick Marion, who was recognized less than five years ago as an Emerging Jasper Artist to Watch, performed a number of plays over the past year including *A Christmas Carol* and *In the Red and Brown Water*, both at Trustus Theatre. He was the House Band singer in the Henderson Bros. Burlesque at Trustus as well as the host of *Link Up's The Orchestra Rocks* for the South Carolina Philharmonic at the Koger Center. Finally, in last summer's smash hit *Dreamgirls*, Marion played the role of Jimmy Early.

A portrait of Martha Brim, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a brown cardigan and a colorful patterned scarf. She is smiling slightly. The background is a plain grey color. There are decorative elements: a grey and white halftone pattern in the top left, an orange triangle on the left side, and a vertical orange bar on the right side.

**2015 JAY WINNER**

DANCE

# MARTHA BRIM

**A PROFESSOR OF DANCE** at Columbia College since 1998, Martha Brim is the Interim Director of the South Carolina Center for Dance Education and the Artistic Director of The Power Company Collaborative. In February 2015, Brim stunned freezing audiences observing the sesquicentennial commemoration of the Burning of Columbia with an outdoor dance she performed and choreographed in collaboration with artist Kimi Maeda and musician Bill Car-

son. The solo public art performance installation, *Occupation/Reconstruction, as I breathe I hope* was commissioned by the Historic Columbia Foundation and One Columbia for Arts and Culture. The work was 20 minutes in length and explored the parallels and distinctions between disease and war. As Brim left the site of her interpretive modern dance performance the artist walked barefoot up Main Street, leading the crowd to and up the steps of the South

Carolina Statehouse while carrying the burden of her unwieldy and cumbersome costuming in her arms, leaving spectators in awe. *Occupation/Reconstruction, as I breathe I hope* was selected for Artfields, a juried art exhibition held in Lake City, SC.

Brim also choreographed *Navigating Fallout* in February 2015, which was performed by eight members of Columbia College Dance Company at Cottingham Theatre, in Columbia, SC.





## WILLIAM STARRETT

Columbia City Ballet executive director William Starrett organized and presented the Body and Movement Explored evenings last winter inviting and facilitating 12 new works by 9 guest choreographers and choreographing a new dance of his own with music by Josh McCaa. He represented the company at the International Ballet Competition, in Jackson Mississippi, and acted as a mentor to the competitors. He created the choreography for the world premiere of Santa Clause is Coming To Town an educational outreach children's program to support anti-bullying and was the first to bring this program and the Nutcracker performance to Hartsville, SC children's audiences through an invitation from the city's mayor where Starrett directed and choreographed the performance, as well as to 6 additional cities.

Starrett directed a number of ballet productions including *Dracula*, *Nutcracker*, *The Lion King*, *Off The Wall*, and *Cinderella*. He brought an excerpt of *Off The Wall* and *Onto the Stage: Dancing the Art of Jonathan Green* to Georgetown, SC for the first time and artistically directed the largest performing arts organization in the state, coordinating, hiring, managing and directing the most performing artists in the state of South Carolina last year.



## DALE LAM

Columbia City Jazz executive director Dale Lam Received a 2015 "Dance Teacher Award" by Dance Teacher Magazine for being one of the top private studio/conservatory owners in the country this year and was also named an active Ambassador to the Dance Teachers Summit in Long Beach California in July. For Columbia City Jazz, Lam directed and provided the majority of choreography for *The Two Claras*, a contemporary retelling of *The Nutcracker* story as well as *A Beautiful Place* – a contemporary duet, *Never Forget* – also a contemporary duet, and *Clarity* for the JazzGroup as well as *Every Teardrop is a Waterfall* for a Contemporary group for Danz Studio, Costa Rica. She has also choreographed and taught master classes for the following: Center Stage in Asheville, NC, Dance Productions in Charlotte, NC, and Renee's Dance Floor, in St. Louis, MO.

A portrait of Craig Butterfield, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a light-colored striped button-down shirt. The background is a solid grey color. There are decorative elements: a red vertical bar on the right, a green vertical bar on the left, and a red horizontal bar at the bottom right. A white triangular shape is on the left side, partially overlapping the red bar.

**2015 JAY WINNER**

MUSIC

# CRAIG BUTTERFIELD

**AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR** of bass and jazz studies in the School of Music at the University of South Carolina, Craig Butterfield has had an unusually prolific year even by his standards. He's released two CDs over the past 12 months: *Pilgrimage*, a classical contemporary collection with guitarist

Matthew Slotkin featuring five new compositions commissioned by the duo and released by Summit Records, and *Stickerfoot*, a duo recording with mandolinist Jesse Jones featuring nine original compositions. He's given dozens of solo recitals and concerts, including a seven-date Midwest tour

with Slotkin, along with a variety of lectures, including one on vibrato for string instruments at the American String Teachers Association convention in Salt Lake City and one on recording solo double bass with electronics at TEDx in Columbia.



## W. HEYWARD SIMS

W. Heyward Sims, an uber talented guitarist, is a web designer at the local design firm Beam & Hinge, a graduate of the University of South Carolina with a BFA in Art Studio, and a former member of the bands Parlour Tricks, Death Becomes Even the Maiden, Bolt, and The Fastest Steed on Earth. He also happens to be the graphic designer and art director of Jasper Magazine, as well as an expert at plying his considerable production and songwriting skills under his current moniker, Devereaux, for which he has been nominated.

Devereaux's 2014 debut full-length, *Pineapple Flex*, released by Post-Echo records, showcased an uncanny blend of 80s pop, Krautrock, EDM, and French disco that won rave reviews locally and on notable online publications. In addition, his music videos have been premiered by reputable online publications such as Vice's Noisy, Impose, Under the Radar, Pop Matters, GhettoBlaster, Young Bright Things, and Auntie Bellum.



## JORDAN YOUNG

Young, a recent MA graduate from the Media Arts program at the University of South Carolina, had a busy year blending his visual and audio production skills together in a variety of ways. Along with musical partner Chris Tollack, his experimental electro-pop duo We Roll Like Madmen released *Hermetic Vol. 1* in October on Post-Echo records, and since then the two have toured steadily throughout the Southeast. He co-founded Fort Psych Media Events, a production group specializing in AV design and production, was a video performer and lighting designer for the Southeastern Piano Festival Opening Gala as well as the Ebb:Flow Music Collective, completed and showed his thesis installation *Faceless*, an audiovisual ecosystem exploring collaboratively using new musical instruments, at Tapp's Art Center, and had his music with We Roll Like Madmen featured at the semi-annual Spork in Hand Puppet Slam.

# Local Record Reviews



## CAPITAL CITY PLAYBOYS

*Bad Bad Man*

As the Capital City Playboys, Marty Fort, Jay Matheson, and Kevin Brewer have long been one of Columbia's top party bands, and, though I haven't done a precise headcount of all the rockabilly bands in town, I think it can be safely said they do it better than just about anyone else around. As expected, their proper record, *Bad Bad Man*, finds the Playboys in fine form, their trademark surfy doom-rock having lost nothing in translation from stage to tape.

The first of *Bad Bad Man's* standout moments is its eponymous opening track. With Fort's Marty-as-Danzig malevolent croon at its finest and his guitar dialed up

to Surf-Rock Phase 10, the song sounds like the soundtrack to a late-night beach party populated by seedy characters getting down in the moonlight. Grounded in a wild-dass tempo that doesn't let up for a second, "Roll the Dice" might be vthe album's most exciting track just in terms of pure rock 'n' roll bloodletting. The frenetic guitar line answers the rarely asked question, "What if Eddie Van Halen got sick and Brian Setzer had to fill in for him on 'Hot For Teacher?'" And the Playboys approach punk rock levels of energy on the closing "I'm A Playboy," which might pass for a long lost Ramones track if not for the finger-tapping guitar solo.

But *Bad Bad Man* isn't just fun and games. These are three solid musicians and they put their chops front and center on the instrumental tracks "Reposado" and "Shoot." The takeaway is that the Playboys could probably do more than justice to any genre they set their leisure-suited hearts on, so it's a refreshing testament to their love for good-time rockabilly that they put their efforts into a style that's overlooked perhaps a little too often. —MS



## SCHOONER / CAN'T KIDS

*Schooner / Can't Kids 7"*

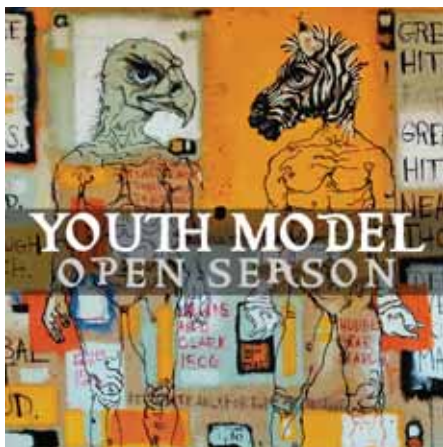
Sit-n-Spin's first release in 10 years features two of the Carolinas' quirkiest melody makers in a split 7" vinyl. Durham, NC's Schooner and Columbia, SC's Can't Kids have worked together in the past, and this merging of their distinct styles makes for a solid 7" split.

Can't Kids' "Walmart Parking Lot" is a premium start to the record. Right out of the gate, you are marching to the witty vocal play between Adam Cullum and Jess Oliver. There's beautiful tremolo on the guitar at subtle moments and a cello to add a pinch of tension. Towards the end there is this explosion of bass to really bring it

home, giving the song the foundation to hold up those rowdy group vocals. "I Never Liked You" is fun, ridiculous, and short with little more than children yelling and snoring. It does make for an interesting segway to "Pretty Sound Advice," my favorite on the Can't Kids side. It's got one of *those* rhythms - the ones you can hear swimming around in your head. The ones that swim in your head as you walk around the grocery store.

"Real Deal Ruse" is the strongest song on the Schooner side, a good mix of folk and psychedelic. Surfy licks are almost always overdone, but they reel them in with the patience of an experienced fisherman. "You Better Love Me" is enjoyable, but the fidelity is that of a well-structured, catchy tune someone threw a blanket over. It by no means destroys the song, but it ends the 7" on a little bit of a down note.

This 7" split makes for a great addition to your music catalog, but would not be the best initial exposure to either band. Both excel in the full-album format, and I highly recommend each and every one of them. Without a backlog of their captivating tunes to turn to when the needle goes back to its resting position, you'll only want more since this one is too short for continuous, repeat-play. -Greg Slattery



## YOUTH MODEL

*Open Season*

Youth Model's indie rock isn't the sort to be content playing it quietly cool in the corner, downplaying its ambitions and letting others have all the fun. Instead, the Charles-

ton band of Columbia music scene veterans goes all in with songs bolstered by tempestuous swells and an ear for unpretentious, dramatic grandeur—all present and accounted for on *Open Season*. What's most striking isn't the fact that most non-Irish, non-Bono-fronted bands would never be so bold as to even attempt a sound this musically dense; it's how Youth Model pulls it off without mucking around with the charming simplicity that that exists behind the billowing curtain of reverb and harmony.

The eponymous opening track is a prime example. In a simpler, more stripped-down form, "Open Season" could work just fine as an enjoyable tune built humbly around drums and guitars, but, as it is, the song positively breathes atmospheric fire due to the simple addition of background synth that propels the chorus forward like a hot gust of wind. What we're left with is a song that would seem at home in both a small club as well as a high-stakes music hall, a trait that remains largely intact within the five songs that follow.

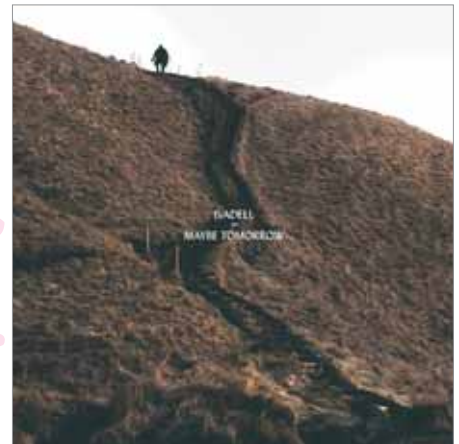
Upon the record's completion, Youth Model went from being a quartet to a two-man operation (Matt Holmes and Randy Borawski remain), so it will be interesting to see how *Open Season* is delivered live with fewer hands on deck. But given that the record betrays no shortage of creativity or skill, one can assume that the two left standing won't let their latest work's live potential go unrealized. -MS

## IVADELL

*Maybe Tomorrow*

The sound of Ivadell's latest release, *Maybe Tomorrow*, is that of a band reaching for a higher plain. It's a thing that bands that are authentically trying to carve out a unique path say—*maybe tomorrow will be a better show, maybe tomorrow we'll make it a little bigger*. *Maybe Tomorrow* is that flung arm, groping for the ledge that will pull a band up.

What hits you first is the onslaught of crunching guitar with a low end that follows suit. Floating on top you get a tuneful, reverb drenched falsetto. This is all held



together by the heavy, pounding rhythm section from a drummer that's refuses to sit quietly in the backbeat. In all sectors, *Maybe Tomorrow* knows how to heighten and temper fury with an airy deluge of melody and rhythmic pace. It's a powerful formula in a tune like "Antlion" with its low-tuned guitar dirge hedged by a dream like tunefulness.

*Maybe Tomorrow* primarily crosses two eras and genres. The loud part, soft part structure of the opener, "Temporary Sound," evokes the Pixies and the 90s grunge they influenced. The very next song, "Simplify," with its slow, head-rocking chorus and shimmering chords, draws inspirations from mid to late 2000s pop-punk and emo of a respectable ilk. There's also an undeniable Deftones influence. The record shows a mastery of post-hardcore that mixes in shoegazing pensiveness, unique rhythm sectioning, massive atmosphere, and furious strumming—all of which mounts to intense catharsis without the whiny residual of lesser emo. Ivadell isn't scared to throw in an acoustic guitar either, as the track "Rearrange" presents a Paul Westerberg-like sensitivity in lovely contrast to the mostly hard-churning record. The band gives you technical mastery and raises it with a beautiful studio sheen, which manages to strip none of the grit from their soundscapes.

With *Maybe Tomorrow*, Ivadell has put their heart and muscle into their work, reaching for the next notch to pull themselves higher up the heap of music that's out there. With everything a band grapples for, it's hard to think Ivadell won't find something more soon enough. -David Travis Bland



## INTERRUPTIONS OF THE MIND

*Interruptions of the Mind*

Interruptions of the Mind, a new project produced by songwriter Todd Mathis, is a big departure from the sincere and often-witty country-rock tunes about the ways of the world he brought us on as the frontman of American Gun. Part of that change includes his collaboration with musicians he hasn't work with formally in the past, and his selection for contributors say a lot about the direction he wanted to take this project: Garrett Burke from math-rock band Art Contest, Patrick Beardsley of synth-pop group Death of Paris, and his longtime friend Noel Rodgers, who played with Mathis in both American Gun and the Brit-rock group Boxing Day, are all on the roster.

The result is a 14-song instrumental album that is too weird and dark for the dentist, but earthy enough for a relaxed, zoned out session in a chair in the sun. It exists on a textured terrain where variety is valued over uniformity. The rhythms, progressions, and melodies blow a darker, more meditative air through the twangy sound you may be used to from Mathis.

"In The Beginning" starts things off on a strong note, with an appropriate slow-build before dropping you off into the pulsing step of "Untitled 3." "Designated Survivor" is one of the more interesting blends of influences among the collaborators, followed by the album highlight and debut single, "Seen Leaving." The music video may seem hollow to some, but it's simplicity highlights both the beauty of flight and the marriage of nature and technology—something Mathis has gone out of his way to experiment with on *Interruptions of the Mind*. **-Greg Slattery**



## ALARM DRUM

*Colorsick EP*

While most high school-aged bands are squirreled away in some dank garage, tinkering with their sound and developing their chops, Alarm Drum fairly radiates a confidence that might be called precocious if the term didn't carry such a heavy whiff of upperclassman condescension. The quartet's maiden release, the *Colorsick EP*, reveals a young group that possesses a clear vision of not only the music they want to create, but of themselves as artists worth more than just a passing listen. Both the EP's opener "You And Me" and second track "What Am I (When I'm Not You?)," with their squealing guitars buried beneath some hard-echoed gumdrop synth and computerized drumming, sound like the work of a more adventurous Postal Service. "Breathe" could have worked as a fuzzy pop number in the Depeche Mode vein, but is held back by a high-octave keyboard line that muddles the vibe and does the song few melodic favors. "In the Night" is *Colorsick's* standout track. The chorus progression is both haunting and familiar while setting the stage for singer/guitarist Andrew Graybill's strongest vocal work. "Dirty Fingers" is the EP's most straightforward rocker, while the closing "Tarmac," an atmospheric mood-piece whose most prominent instrument is a leaky faucet, could have been left off entirely at no detriment to the record as a whole.

Like anyone else, Alarm Drum isn't without their missteps, but, built around a structure of indie rock-indebted grooves and detours into electronic ambience, this record can be signed and sealed as a mature collection of six slow-burning bedtime

hymns with no detectable chinks in its intent or self-assuredness. The *Colorsick EP* is the work of a band short on neither the talent nor the time necessary to evolve and produce the more roundly satisfying music that, for the moment, is just a hair's breadth away. **-MS**



## FK MT.

*Fertilizer*

Among Columbia's heavy hitters, fk mt. has always been better at stumbling into punk than most of their peers are at actively aiming for it. Since the release of *underwater goddammit* in 2013, the trio has been unyielding in its dedication to emotional release through char-burned rock dirges, and on their latest, *fertilizer*, the band hasn't made any budget cuts to their trusted artillery. Despite moments of angular, Isaac Brock-ish lead lines, frontman/guitarist Ryan Morris's sturdy rhythm guitar—defined by thick distortion without a lot of low-end chunk—is the EP's driving force. At its best, Morris's playing is in lockstep with that of bassist Ony Ratsimbaharison and drummer Brandon Johnson (who has since left the band), giving the impression of a band that is essentially a three-piece rhythm section. This lets Morris dive into the heart-on-sleeve vocal lashings that root the songs in a sort of basic, howling humanity.

In a lot of ways, Nirvana is to fk mt. what the Pixies were to Nirvana. Kurt Cobain liked to describe some of his most popular songs as nothing but failed Pixies rip-offs, and while *Nevermind* doesn't sound much like *Surfer Rosa* at first listen, no one ever got a headache tracing the lineage between those two albums. Likewise, Ryan Morris

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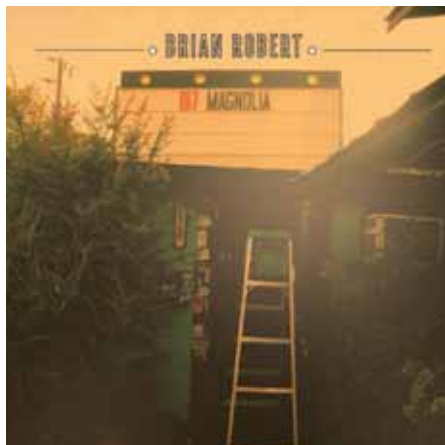
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can't disguise Cobain's influence on his own songwriting, but where Cobain wanted to be Frank Black and failed gloriously, *fk mt* only wants to be *fk mt*. *fertilizer* channels the Pixies better than Nirvana ever did, and by cutting out the middle man (albeit not quite on purpose), they've crafted a record that honors its heritage without having to answer for it. And in the often derivative realm of rock, that's an enviable kind of freedom. **-MS**



## BRIAN ROBERT

1117 Magnolia

Long a Charleston resident and leader of the indie rock troupe Company (often referred to as Co.), Brian Robert has shucked his wavering moniker for this, his first effort under his own name and since moving to Columbia this past spring.

While Co. operated in a variety of guises, including poppy guitar goodness on their full-length *Dear America*, and atmospheric indie-folk on their last EP *Bird Skulls*, *1117* is the most straight-forwardly alt-country effort the singer/songwriter has ever attempted. While traces of his old ways remain, particularly in the soaring lead single "Under the City Lights," a track which both evokes Band of Horses and gets an assist from its frontman Ben Bridwell. But that song is a bit of an odd man out, as elsewhere languid pedal steel and harmonious piano parts work alongside Robert's own

understated guitar lines to create a sonic bed for some truly great country tunes. The opening title track is a great paean to the Tin Roof in West Ashley, serving as both love letter and wry depiction of the bar's working life, and the triple punch of "All My Love's Gone Wrong," "Good for Nothin'," and "Cheatin'" that follow the single all feel like modern updates to the Gram Parsons model of cosmic Americana.

There's other great stuff here too—the pensive acoustic number "Drugs Inc." reads like a narcotic-strewn update to Kris Kristofferson's "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down," while "Strawberry Girl" tries on some Muscle Shoals soul costuming with surprising success—but on the whole this feels like a natural, fairly effortless reinvention for Robert, who remains one of the most talented, best kept secrets our musical community has to offer. **-KP**



## DANIEL HAMMOND

*Second Sleep*

Oh, what technology has wrought.

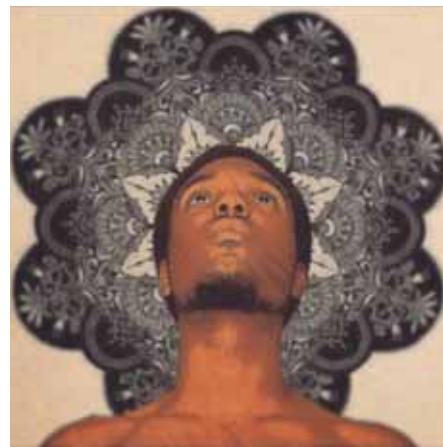
The curse of the digital age is the sheer abundance of music, with both an increase in access to the finished product thanks to the Internet and the ease with which each bedroom can serve as a makeshift studio. Fortunately, that also means we get records from guys like Daniel Hammond, who don't perform live very often, nor record traditionally accessible records, but nonethe-

less are producing music that is very much worth engaging with.

Hammond tends towards warm, electronic landscapes dotted with twinkling synth lines and built on atmospheric beats that feel like the quietest moments of the night, making him a sort of shoestring counterpart to the work of folks like Tycho or Boards of Canada. And while his 2013 effort *Peaks & Valleys* felt like it was trying to temper those experimental impulses with a Postal Service-like pop impulse, *Second Sleep* feels more comfortable in its own skin, trying on and shrugging off beats and spending as much or as little time in a musical moment as need be.

This kind of music is inherently modest, offered up to the world wide web with little in the way of expectation or self-importance. And yet, it's probably one of the most romantic ways you can actually spend your time online in our increasingly crass world.

**-KP**



## KENJI THE WISE

*Awakening*

The cover of the 2013 project from Kenji the Wise features the young rapper wearing a backpack as he walks down what appears to be Columbia's Riverwalk. It's a telling photo, given Leandre Scott's penchant towards self-aware, feel-good backpack rap and his guileless repping of his South Carolina roots.

*Awakening* is Kenji the Wise's follow-up, and much of those same building blocks are in place. Wise's flow is nimble and understated, reminiscent more of 90s alt hip-hop like A Tribe Called Quest and Digable Planets or even Nas than many of the stars of the day. His production largely follows suit, with laidback boom bap beats with tinges of jazz and soul samples or simple instrumentals filling out the sound for color on most tracks, although there's a chillwave

sheen that gives much of the album a more modern vibe nonetheless.

Lyrically, the album works hard to breathe new life into tried and true thematic tropes, taking joy in making music, explicating day-to-day struggles, and finding solace in sticking true to your principles, with a little weed to help you along. What elevates much of this material isn't so much what Wise says, and he says a lot, as the way he constructs each verse with an

obvious love of shifting rhythms and internal rhyme, giving this record an energy in the sheer tirelessness of his flow that otherwise wouldn't exist given the downbeat vibe of much of the production.

The record is good enough to enjoy on its own merits, but even more than that it serves to suggest the abundant promise and potential of a young emcee whose consummate skills suggest even greater triumphs on the horizon. **-KP**

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# DIVING DEEP INTO **COMPROMISED**

TOM HALL'S LONG STRANGE FILMMAKING ODYSSEY WITH THE CONFEDERATE FLAG

BY KYLE PETERSEN

PHOTOS BY **THOMAS HAMMOND**

## **TOM HALL IS NOT ONE TO DIP HIS TOE IN THE WATER.**

The singer/songwriter, filmmaker, BBQ chef, and Mardi Gras Columbia ringleader has developed into something of a folk hero in these parts, launching festivals and benefits, including last month's extraordinarily successful Big Dam Jam festival, at the drop of a hat and with the unflagging energy of a man inspired. His ramshackle, occasionally crazed performances as the leader of the Americana-zydeco outfit The Plowboys are equally unforgettable, featuring a defining mix of Hall's deep reverence for roots and history, love of revelry, and impish personality.

Despite all of this activity, though, for the last four years Hall has been preoccupied with *Compromised*, his long-gestating documentary about the Confederate battle flag that, until recently, flew prominently on the South Carolina State House grounds. He started this documentary with one deep, abiding question: why?

"I just wanted to ask people what is the real reason the flag is fine what does it really mean and stand for? What's the statement?," he says simply, before letting his frustration shine through.

*You start out in 1954 by saying, "N\*\*\*\*\*, n\*\*\*\*\*, n\*\*\*\*\*." By 1968 you can't say "n\*\*\*\*\*"—that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you're getting so abstract. Now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks get hurt worse than whites... "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "N\*\*\*\*\*, n\*\*\*\*\*.*

---

Political operative Lee Atwater, South Carolinian, 1981

*This monument perpetuates the memory, of those who true to the instincts of their birth, faithful to the teachings of their fathers, constant in their love of the State, died in the performance of their duty: who have glorified a fallen cause by the simple manhood of their lives, the patient endurance of suffering, and the heroism of death, and who, in the dark hours of imprisonment, in the hopelessness of the hospital, in the short, sharp agony of the field, found support and consolation in the belief that at home they would not be forgotten.*

---

William Henry Trescot, the Confederate Soldier Memorial  
on the South Carolina State House grounds, unveiled May 13, 1879

“Why do we choose to do things that are completely contrary to the rest of the world and revel in the defiance? Why?”

Hall, whose previous filmmaking credits include *Field Trials*, a short sports documentary, and the fever-dream experimental feature *Black Elk Speaks*, was inspired to begin making films by the Indie Grits Festival, but notes that his interest in the flag runs deep. His family’s roots in South Carolina stretch back hundreds of years, and he grew up on a family plantation in Chester, South Carolina, that was once farmed by his ancestor’s slaves. In many ways, the legacy of the Confederacy was a part of the daily fabric of his childhood—his parents had a collection of CSA memorabilia, including “Elect Jefferson Davis President of CSA” buttons, and he recalls, along with a photo of Robert E. Lee decorating the walls. Hall himself is named for Captain Thomas Brice, an officer in South Carolina’s 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry during the Civil War.

That family legacy also led him to attend college at The Citadel, although Hall is quick to point out that he’s also long associated himself with the a more liberal mindset.

“I’ve always been attracted to people who are liberal and open minded,” he says. “I hang out with a lot of musicians, people who are just a bit more honest and more open-minded culturally. There’s a lot more empathy there for more progressive things. I think moving to Columbia and becoming a musician in Columbia really changed me a lot, [too].”

Hall began the film with that simple question and relatively modest expectations—but, as with most things he becomes involved in, it didn’t stay that way.

“Making this movie opened my eyes so much more,” he explains. “As I interviewed more and more people, I became much more

of an activist and realizing how screwed up it was [that the flag was up there]. Neither the Republicans or Democrats up there in the State House, nobody realized how deeply rooted racism was in the entire ground of our government.”

The film takes begins with the same narrative position as Hall, starting from a place of questioning and using footage of rallies and person-on-the-street interviews to set up the history-less animosities on both sides of the flag debate before diving deep into the history of South Carolina.

But, after acquiring a few interviews and stalking around the grounds, Hall became obsessed with telling the larger story. Even though the original version of the film first screened in 2011, Hall continued to gather footage, diving deep into the state’s origins as a slave economy by interviewing experts like Clemson historian Vernon Burton and USC anthropology professor Ken Kelly, among others, and exhaustively cataloging the history of each monument on the grounds.

From there, he also takes a great deal of time explicating the original raising of the flag at the top of the dome in 1962 as part of Civil War centennial celebrations, the flag’s connection to the rise of the Dixiecrats in 1948, and how it functioned as a wedge issue and a dog whistle to racial prejudice for poor whites in South Carolina. Hall believes the flag was one of the defining ways political operatives like Lee Atwater engineered the shift from from the Democrat to Republican Party in the “Solid South” in latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

If that sounds like a lot, it is, and still the documentary continues onward, getting bogged down, appropriately enough, in the protracted debate and various proposals for bringing the flag down that occurred in

1999-2000, with the Hall-favored “Healing Waters” memorial getting the majority of the screen time.

More than presenting a particular argument or narrative, though, what Hall’s film succeeds at demonstrating is how digressive the issue of the flag is, how many rabbit holes exist in its heavily checkered history. But by foregrounding South Carolina’s racial legacy, Hall never lets us forget how fully the flag encompasses the great depths of our state’s race-based sins. Perhaps even more important is that this isn’t a one-sided liberal diatribe—Hall feels a natural, almost elemental kinship for those South Carolinians who are deeply concerned with celebrating tradition and heritage.

“I don’t think anyone has ever had the idea to put on film or paper in today’s age that [flying the flag] is completely disrespectful to the Southern soldier,” Hall says. “You guys are doing everything opposite of what they want for the flag.”

He’s fond of citing Wade Hampton’s speech calling for the flag to be furled, and for taking a clear-eyed view of our state’s dark-yet-rich history.

“Truth and reconciliation is the entire goal of the film,” he says. “The whole idea is, ‘holy crap I never realized all of this is right in front of you.’ You can’t have reconciliation without truth, you can’t look at people across the aisle or address a black and white issue without fully understanding the depth of suffering, the honesty behind it.”

He takes care to talk about the magnitude of the injustice of slavery, from the lives lost on the Middle Passage to the generations of people it enslaved, while acknowledging the great loss of life that occurred during the Civil War and the economic hardships a slavery-less South faced. For Hall, it’s always about grasping to understand *all* of it.











To the point, really, where Hall became preoccupied not just with the battle flag but with the entire State House grounds.

“The lessons learned just from our state capital is a pretty accurate picture to paint for the entire history of our state,” he says. “We celebrate one thing on the state capital, and it’s white supremacy that is engraved upon it. We don’t have a poet, we don’t have an athlete, we don’t have an artist up there. We don’t do anything but celebrate death and racism and this [Lost Cause] mentality.”

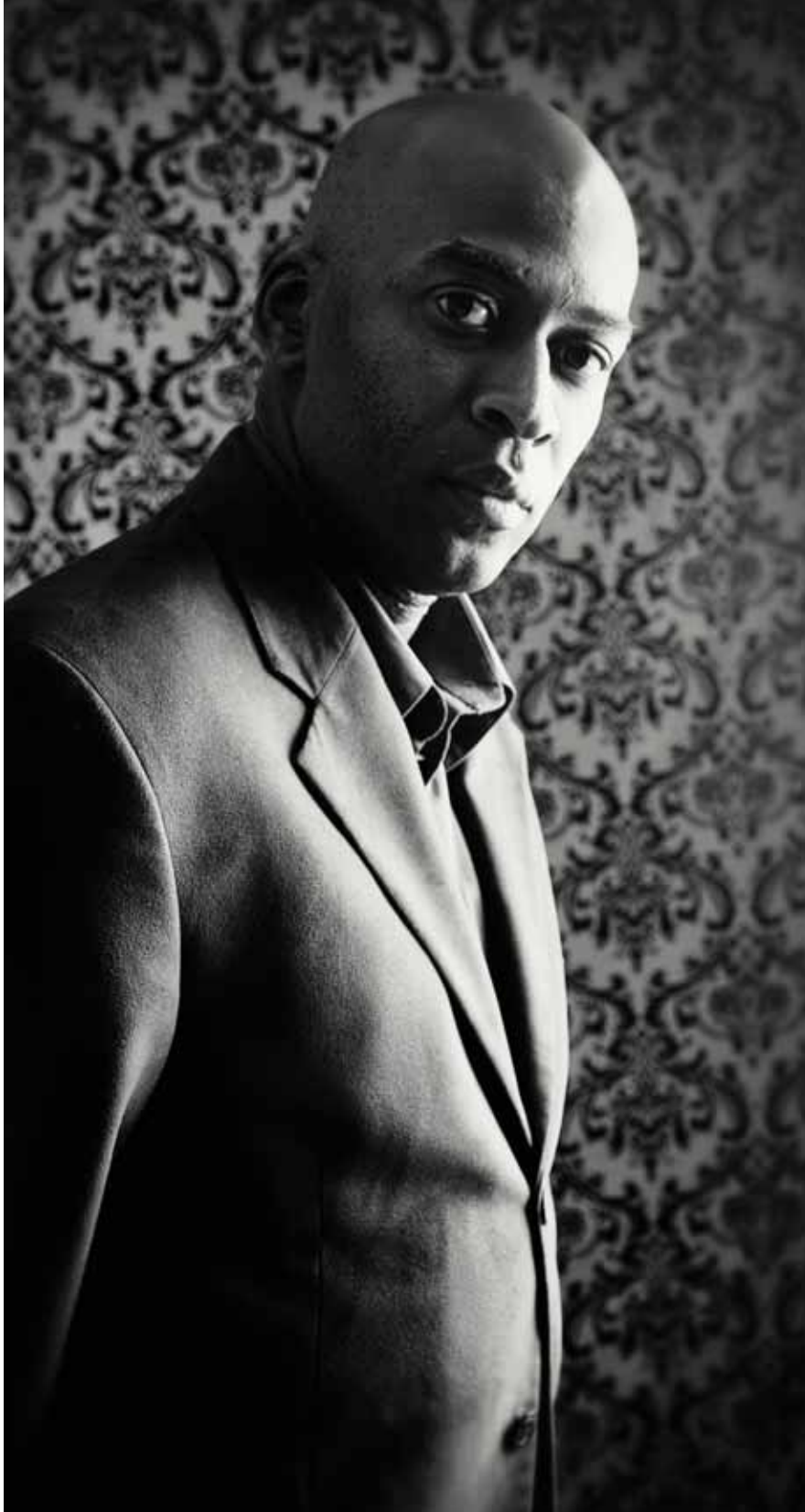
As a filmmaker, there’s a handheld, guerilla-style approach to Hall’s cinematography and a heavy emphasis on interviews and voiceovers, but there’s some beauty in the pure zeal of Hall’s quest for knowledge. You feel like you’re with him, talking to everyday South Carolinians and people in power alike, digging through the weathered pages of history that the grounds represent.

Hall says he’s happy to be done with the film, even though it finished just months before the tragic Emmanuel AME church shootings in Charleston that set off a chain of events leading to the flag coming down, something that occurred, perhaps, in part because of Hall’s activism and the rally he organized on the Statehouse steps.

And he hasn’t stopped learning. He points to Will Green’s speech at that rally as adding something new to his perspective, indicating his open and ever-evolving view of his state and commitment to staying open to the world around him.

“What he said his speech was tremendous that day,” Hall concludes. “Giving the responsibility of the state to more gentle hands, not all of these aggressive people who want to do things like [champion the flag].”

“The South is like one big huge William Faulkner story, man. That’s why people want to be here, with also all the bad parts and all of the good parts. It’s just like a good gumbo.”



*of*  
**ONE  
ACCORD**

RON WESTRAY +  
NOEL FREIDLINE

---

BY RACHEL HAYNIE

For two musicians who will meet in person for the first time on Columbia Museum of Art's jazz stage Friday, November 20th, Ron Westray and Noel Freidline already have a lot in common. At soundcheck they will discover just how simpatico they are.

Both came to jazz in a circuitous manner. Both are pegged primarily as jazz musicians, although each is equally adept at other musical forms. Both are influencing future musicians through their respective academic positions. And each, recognizing a jazz void in the heart of Columbia, worked to fill that void. Just not in the same century.

A Columbia native, Ron Westray was relegated to the trombone in the Alcorn Junior High School Band room when his band director had no more trumpets to dispense. The budding musician had stated that instrument as his preference but, noting the youngster had already hit a growth spurt, the band director said: "You got those long arms. Play the trombone, boy. Play the trombone."

And Westray has.

All the way to New York's Lincoln Center, on stages around the world as he toured with Wynton Marsalis and other iconic jazz leaders, and now at York University in Toronto where, as an associate professor, he has held the Oscar Peterson Chair since 2009. Westray is now one his generation's most highly-regarded trombonists.

It was late in the last millennium that Westray began gaining traction for jazz in the capital city by founding The Wooden Flute, a musical institution at 1520 Main Street from 1995-1997. The Wooden Flute survives as the banner name for Westray's various entrepreneurial undertakings, including the seven albums on which he is the leader.

Westray's jazz affinities came as he explored his musical roots and learned that

his grandfather, Joe Westray (1913-1980), helped cement the Pittsburg jazz scene, providing area black youth a venue to develop their entertainment skills. In this century, Ron Westray has followed in his grandfather's footsteps as a musician, composer, arranger and shaper of young musicians.

Charlotte-based Noel Freidline's introduction to jazz came when somebody in his hometown, Clearwater, Kansas, gave him Dave Brubeck's *Time Out* album. The eighth grader played the grooves off that record, setting his course toward jazz. His route towards improvisational forms took him through traditional forms of music as well, many of which he continues to excel in. When he's not entertaining, he's teaching; he is a Lecturer in Music at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

When he realized Charlotte had no regular jazz venue, he filled that void in the Queen City with a First Fridays series at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Arts at the Levine Center. Now Freidline's also being credited with restoring regular jazz to Columbia's Main Street.

Freidline returns to Columbia next for some musical time-travel. Westray has arranged and recorded the music of Jimi Hendrix – for trombone. "Jimi Jazz shows the side of my playing that is concerned with technical and harmonic maxims," said Westray, whose love of the source material is clear. The November concert will also feature music from Westray's 2015 album, *Magisteria*. "All funky jazz," said Westray.

Friedline and Westray's collaboration will be an exciting cap in the feather for a jazz series that has really come into his own. The final concert of 2015 will pivot back to jazz standards, setting the tone for a series that looks to showcase the full breadth and very best of America's original art form.



# Q

## Questions

w / Marius Valdes

BY KARA GUNTER

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Marius Valdes' work is unpretentious and humorous. His bright colors, graphic but loose way of working, and a cast of goofy characters appeals to adults and children alike, and makes his work addictively collectable. The University of Miami is currently hosting an exhibition of Marius'

*Secret Species* work, and in December of this year, locals can find him at Crafty Feast. He's a full-time professor at the University of South Carolina, and a prolific artist. He's a pretty busy guy, but we were able to sit down with Marius recently and talk to him about his work.









***PRESERVING AND CELEBRATING THE CHILD-LIKE AESTHETIC IS IMPORTANT TO YOU—WHY?***

You ask that as if I have a choice! I think I have just embraced what I do naturally and I understand my limitations. My paintings look like my doodles, and I think doodles are the most natural form of expression. I'm talking about doodles you might make when you are talking on the phone and your mind is wandering, and not even really thinking about drawing. Have you ever noticed how great those doodles usually are?

***SO, IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU PREFER WORKING IN A LESS CONTROLLED MANNER, AND LEAVING CERTAIN THINGS UP TO FLOW OR HAPPENSTANCE?***

I recently started painting with inks on small canvases. I have no idea how the ink interacts with the canvas, and it leads to a lot of messy mistakes; but that is what I love--the cool little accidents when inks mix and blotch up. Kids don't think about the mistakes, and I like that attitude. I wish I could be more child-like.

***WHAT KIND OF THINGS DID YOU DRAW AS A KID?***

My dad used to bring home pads of paper from his work that had forms on one side, and I would draw on the other side. I would fill those things up. I would kill to see them now, but they are all gone. I remember lying on the floor and drawing Looney Tunes characters, superheroes, robots, and basketball players.

My dad would always read me comic books and the Sunday funnies, and that made a big impact on me. I learned to draw by figuring out the shapes of Bugs Bunny and copying them, and that is exactly how I make my characters now. Also, the joy of a new pen can inspire 100 drawings. I bought my kid some new felt tip pens for school, but after trying those out I made 200 new drawings for an exhibition.

***IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAD NEVER TAKEN AN ART CLASS UNTIL COLLEGE?***

I wanted to study art when I was young, but it was only offered during the same time as basketball practice and that was my top priority. As a psychology major at the College of Charleston, I took a drawing class with John Michel because I heard art would be an easy elective. I found that it was actually really challenging, but in a good way. Professor Michel challenged me, encouraged me, and taught me it was okay to make mistakes. When we had our first critique, it was for self-portraits. Everyone in the class had a way more polished painting than me. Michel told me mine looked more like Frankenstein, but he also said it was the only one that had any character. He asked me in front of the class if he could have it. His son told me it still hangs in his house.

***DID A FORMAL EDUCATION INFORM OR HINDER YOUR WORK? DID IT REMOVE THE NAÏVETÉ, OR DID IT TAKE SOME WORK TO DISCOVER IT AGAIN?***

I ended up transferring to University of Georgia to study graphic design because I thought I could have a better chance at

a creative career. I had interned with Gil Shuler Graphic Design, and I wanted to have Gil's career. Going to design school did instill a lot of rules, right and wrongs. I wanted to be a designer or illustrator, not a fine artist. I only came back to painting when I needed a break from the design world. I started finger painting on cardboard, and that's when I started winning design and illustration awards, oddly enough. It made me realize that you have to put yourself into your work if you want your work to look original. So, it took me three years after college not to be afraid to just do what I felt, instinctively. I identify with Outsider Art because those artists work so instinctively and passionately, and don't even know what the rules are to break. They just make. As a college professor, I have new rules that put pressure on where I show my work, for it to "count" towards tenure and promotion. I'm trying to get over worrying about whether my art is FINE ART enough, and just making what I enjoy making.

***What are you currently working on and where is your work headed?***

I would like to tell more stories about where my characters come from, so I'm working on a kid's book *The Secret Species* that I want to self-publish, and then expand on that story as a more adult graphic novel. I'm about 75% finished with the kid's book, and I hope to have a Kickstarter campaign to help me publish by the end of the year. I've also used these characters to help elementary students make art and write original stories; and I'm exploring ways to make an educational resource for art educators.

As always, I want to continue making fine art that is affordable and friendly to families. And lastly, I'd like to do a dog portrait series that connects communities.

***ONLINE, YOU CAN FIND MORE ABOUT MARIUS AND HIS WORK AT [WWW.MARIUSVALDES.COM](http://WWW.MARIUSVALDES.COM).***

# 25

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## Spending a Moment with the Artists of Vista Studios as the Art Space Celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Year

BY RACHEL HAYNIE AND CINDI BOITER

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Columbia's first open art studio space was first a vision, but today it stands as a touchstone for both new and established visual arts in the city's newly recognized official SC Arts Commission designated cultural district, Columbia's Historic Vista. Twenty-five years have passed since Vista Studios and Gallery 80808 were founded, but the arts space is as vibrant as ever, host-

ing the work spaces of twelve of Columbia's most accomplished professional artists. Jasper spoke with the resident artists who work and exhibit in the bustling area, asking what they most enjoy about being a part of Vista Studios, what they are up to artistically these days, and how they are celebrating this silver anniversary of the space they call their collective artistic homes. Here's what we learned.



**ROBERT KENNEDY** has been painting and drawing for a fast 25 years, he says, in the first studio the owner-architects leased in the repurposed warehouse at 80808 Lady Street in Columbia's historic Vista. A Clemson graduate and retired partner of GMK Associates, one of the city's primary architectural, engineering, and construction firms, Kennedy recalls how it all started. "Kirk Finlay, then mayor, envisioned that Columbia's response to art would develop around open studios where the public could meet working artists and observe their processes. Having seen such a concept work in other cities, he talked with Dick Lamar and Richard Molten about redesigning this Lady Street building for such studios," Kennedy recalls. "When the space was ready, I was the first artist to sign up. This studio was my pick." Kennedy, who studied earlier in Italy, both in Perugia and Florence, also studied under the muralist Gilmer Petroff.

**DAVID YAGHJIAN**, who is primarily a painter, lauds Columbia's foresight to coalesce energy and support for Vista Studios – at

rent rates artists could manage. "It takes courage and understanding to stand for balance in a community's life, to state that commerce is only one organ of a city's body, acknowledging that arts are equally vital," he bravely says himself. Yaghjian and his wife, artist Ellen Yaghjian, are displaying work that demonstrates their influence upon each other at the celebratory exhibit honoring the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the studios that is taking place now through November 29<sup>th</sup>. Something of an introvert, David Yaghjian appreciates how the studio has brought him out of his working shell. "Being surrounded here by other working artists since November 2004 takes me out of my solitude," he says, "[it] allows me to look at myself and my work in a larger context."

**LAURA SPONG**, painter, attributes at least part of the studio concept's success to the evolving ways in which Vista Studios has filled a community niche. "For these first 25 years, we have offered something different from what the museum has offered by making art approachable to Columbians and visi-

tors." But it isn't easy becoming one of the artists who get to call Vista Studios home or exhibit work there. "To maintain our high professional standards, we vet not only what shows go on view here, but also which artists become residents when the rare vacancy opens." Spong will celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at Vista Studios in February 2016.

**SHARON LICATA**, sculpts primarily in stone and has been president of Vista Studios for more than six years. Like her studio mate Spong, Licata strongly believes in the contribution the space makes to the greater Columbia arts community. "Our free art shows, changing every couple of weeks, have consistently drawn people to The Vista," Licata says. "Now that our lighting has been improved, the art can be seen at optimum advantage." Licata is celebrating the anniversary of the studios by collaborating with the band Sunshine Delusions to create a series of sound and stone sculpture installations which will feature a stone sculpture paired with a musical interlude, enveloping the viewer in what she hopes to be a complex arts experience like no other.



**MICHEL MCNINCH** paints in oils early in the day then, after school, usually teaches young adults in almost every medium. “Two students I worked with from their early teens went on to study at the Governor’s School for the Arts and are now pursuing college degrees in studio art,” she says, taking pride in reciprocal nature of the art experience. McNinch invited her former protégés to model for her in her celebration of the studio space’s anniversary, thereby honoring her love for both teaching and painting. “I love that Vista Studios is a hub for those seriously interested in art,” he says. “And I value the inclusiveness here.”

**SUSAN LENZ**, an installation and fiber artist who spends many weeks at a time in residency programs throughout the country, highly values the sense of community that a shared art space can provide back home in Columbia. “I am in debt to the ideas that fester and brew within the walls at Gallery 80808/Vista Studios,” she says. “To be so

near a kind word, sentence of support, or paragraph of honest evaluation is vital to my artistic practice.” A teacher and lecturer, Lenz is also an ardent blogger, documenting her artistic experiences at the studio space on Lady Street, as well as her home studio where she produces more of her 3D work and throughout her extensive travels in the United States and abroad.

**KIRKLAND SMITH**, assemblage artist, portraitist, and painter, felt she wasn’t fully part of the art community until she moved her work from a home studio to Lady Street. “Artists here generously share their collective knowledge, wisdom, and experiences. I have learned so much,” Smith says. Smith will be collaborating with her greatest role model, critic, and life-long cheerleader in her anniversary celebration, her mother, portrait artist Martha Thomas. Smith, who has studied on multiple occasions in France, also has an arts aesthetic that is grounded in larger issues facing the world,

such as consumerism and the environment. Her work at Vista Studios allows the artist to address these concerns freely.

**PAT GILMARTIN**, sculptor, feels “so fortunate to be a part of this diverse group of artists who make up Vista Studios. Our backgrounds, training, ages, and especially art forms make the studios a vibrant, dynamic environment in which to grow as an artist.” A stylized and sometimes whimsical clay artist whose medium of choice of late had been terra cotta, Gilmartin came to professional art after a full career as a geography professor. Gilmartin’s own artistic growth is evidenced by her work in a new medium—fused glass.

**STEPHEN CHESLEY**, originally from Virginia Beach and at one time a professional city planner, took occupancy at Gallery 80808 in 2007 envisioning Vista Studios as Columbia’s version of the Art Students League in New York. Chesley, considered by some to be Columbia’s Master Artist, says he was looking for “a place of art dialogue harkening back to the New York City’s Cedar Tavern in its time.” A leader among his neighbors and colleagues, Chesley sees the studio as “an alternate place where patrons feel comfortable, as opposed to a formal gallery.”

**LAURIE MCINTOSH**, a multi-media artist and former graphic designer, has noted in her years as a Vista Studios resident artist that “this is a creative community of like-minded artists; we all are dedicated visual artists.” McIntosh, whose work presents itself in chapters and fascinating projects, is the author of *All the In Between: My Story of Agnes* and is currently working on a series called Pages in which large, deconstructed paintings created with multiple layers of calligraphic marks are reassembled and then unconventionally re-bound to create new visual relationships between the images. For her celebration of Vista Studio’s Silver Anniversary, McIntosh is collaborating with Columbia novelist Jodie Cain in an examination of the stages of motherhood called, “New Nest. Empty Nest.”

**HEIDI DARR-HOPE**, a multi-medium artist who also focuses on art as a healing endeavor, was among the earliest artists at Vista Studios. Though she spent time on sabbatical for a while, she returned, drawn back by the prevailing collaborative spirit of the art space. Darr-Hope recently hosted *20 Years of Healing Icons: Using Creativity to Fight Cancer*, an example of how the studio space mirrors the community's diverse interests and needs. A recipient of the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Ward for the Arts, the 40-year veteran artist is celebrating by collaborating with her three-year-old grandson.

**EILEEN BLYTH**, mixed media artist, sculptor, and painter, is the newest resident of the studio collective. Chosen for the CCA 701 Biennial, Blyth's work has shown from Wyoming to Tokyo to Main Street, Columbia where she conceptualized and constructed the public art piece "Hanging" located in front of Drip coffee shop between Hampton and Washington Streets. It's been a comfortable blending of aesthetics says Blyth, who values "the respect given every artist here. We each bring something unique."

The artists of Vista Studios Gallery 80808 will be celebrating the space's silver anniversary with a collaborative group exhibition until November 29<sup>th</sup>. Admission is free and the gallery space is open weekdays 11am-6pm and weekends 1-4pm, or by appointment.

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY  
VISTA STUDIOS!**

*From Jasper,  
with Love*

**XOXO**



## **New Owners at The Big Apple**

Call it Kismet. Sometimes things just work out like they're supposed to. That was the case earlier this autumn when dance partners Richard Durlach and Breedlove, featured in the November issue of Jasper last year, agreed to purchase the Big Apple dance hall from Historic Columbia. The partners had been using the space frequently for various dance events and lessons, and we photographed the two dancing there last year. This year, they're welcoming us back to celebrate our JAY gala once again.

Breedlove and Durlach have grand plans for the former synagogue themselves, and they will still be renting the hall out to the public. In the meantime, it's nice to know that the birthplace of the Big Apple Dance remains safely in the loving hands of these two stewards of dance arts.

# TAKING THEATRE SERIOUSLY

## Chad Henderson Takes the Helm at Trustus Theatre

BY AUGUST KRICKEL

"Theatre is my passion and my heartbeat," Chad Henderson told *Jasper* in 2012, when readers voted him the inaugural Artist of the Year in Theatre. Three years later, he stands poised to make a lasting impact on the local theatre scene as the new Artistic Director of Trustus Theatre. Henderson's vision is bold, ambitious, risky even. But then taking chances has been an integral part of Trustus from day one of its 31-year history. "We must no longer compare ourselves to other theatres in this city," Henderson feels. "I'm done with that. All of us here want to be a part of a professional theatre with a regional presence – so that's what we must become. If we work

together, nobody can stand in our way. We must celebrate professionalism, raising the quality of our art, raising the expectations of this ensemble, and start believing that audiences in Columbia are smart enough and sophisticated enough to be served challenging and provoking material."

Full disclosure: Henderson is married to the daughter of the editor and the publisher of this publication. This writer has no such connection, however, and has long admired Henderson's work. That work has included directing many of the newer, riskier, and more provocative shows produced at the popular Vista venue, including *Spring Awakening*, *Passing Strange*, *Next To Nor-*

*mal*, and *Evil Dead: The Musical*, as well as pop hits like *Young Frankenstein* at Workshop Theatre and *Pinkalicious* at Columbia Children's Theatre. Growing up, Henderson was a typical theatre kid, performing in school plays and at the Spartanburg Youth Theatre, yet he initially headed to USC as a music major, and was the lead singer in a ska-rock band. The band thrived, toured, then broke up, and by then Henderson had switched his major to something hypothetically more stable: Advertising, with a minor in Theatre, where he realized his heart was. In fall of senior year, he co-wrote and directed an original rock musical, based on an album by the band Guitar Show, which





debuted as a late-night offering at Trustus. Kay and Jim Thigpen took notice, and the following summer, they invited Henderson to recreate his campus production of *Hedwig and The Angry Inch*, originally a part of his Honors College senior thesis, on the Trustus Main Stage. As luck would have it, there also happened to be an opening on staff for a Marketing and PR Director, and the recent graduate realized that he had found his home. Eight years later, he's still there.

The origins of Trustus have become a local legend: how two high school teachers took out a second mortgage on their house to lease a 50-seat upstairs space on Assembly Street in the mid-1980s, then three years later become one of the earliest arts group to settle in the Congaree Vista. The Thigpens' goal was to present fresh and often controversial shows that were being done in New York, but might never get produced in Columbia. "In the early years," actor Hunter Boyle remembers, "Trustus provided a uniquely safe place to do theatre that wasn't mainstream enough for the other theatres in town. Jim and Kay steadfastly and doggedly built an artistic stronghold, choosing programming that was always varied and not stodgy." Alex Smith, who started as a teen member of the Apprentice Company and later joined the staff as director and performer, describes that era as "savagely grassroots, yet there was a real sense of quality in the shows they chose. The seasons were all just knockouts, really great material. And Jim, who was directing all the mainstage shows at that point, was magical. He was at the top of his game, and everyone who was working there brought their A-game too. It was beyond inspiring." Jennifer Moody Sanchez heard about Trustus while attending USC, and sensed that the "really cool dark



rebel actors did shows there,” taking great pride when she finally “thought I was cool enough to experience the world of Trustus. I loved that they did edgy, gritty plays, and I was amazed that I could find shows like this in Columbia. I wanted to see shows and be a part of stories that didn’t always have a happy ending or wasn’t just fluff. I wanted raw human emotion.” Yet the Thigpens also strove to create a cozy, mom and pop atmosphere where theatre folks could feel at home, where one could relax with popcorn and a beer or glass of wine in a comfy chair while watching a live performance.

Just three years ago, the Thigpens retired, with Larry Hembree succeeding Kay as Managing Director, while longtime Associate Artistic Director Dewey Scott-Wiley dropped the word “associate” from her title and took over for Jim. Both Hembree and Scott-Wiley were veterans with decades of experience in the arts; the latter was a professor of theatre at USC-Aiken and a prolific director and actor at Trustus, while the former had held management positions with the Kershaw Fine Arts Center, the South Carolina Arts Commission, and the Nickelodeon. At the time, they joked that if Jim and Kay were the mom and pop, they were the crazy gay cousins, and they brought both business and marketing savvy to the theatre as well as a sense of joy. Hembree’s high visibility and popularity in the local political and business worlds, and his sassy, no-holds-barred showmanship made him the ideal pitchman for the organization as it weathered the recession. Boyle describes Hembree as a dynamo. “He could sell ice to Eskimos,” Boyle says. “He made everyone - actors, technicians and audience members - feel appreciated and part of the Trustus team.” The number of productions increased; quality and selection of beer and wine choices increased;

marketing of the Side Door (an intimate 50-seat black box designed for smaller shows that could run in between season productions on the main stage) increased; ease of making reservations increased via a new online ticketing system; fundraisers and special events - including new work produced by local artists - increased. And naturally ticket sales and memberships increased too. Mainstage productions included name-brand hits - *Ragtime*, *Dreamgirls*, *Avenue Q*, *Ain’t Misbehavin’* - that still spoke to the original mission of the organization: tackling sensitive themes, for example, or exploring the African-American experience, or possibly just being naughty, R-rated fun. A capital campaign was launched, the first result of which has been a significantly enhanced sound system, and plans continue to develop the familiar bar area into Marv’s Piano Bar, a venue for cabaret performances named for longtime arts patron Marvin Chernoff. As a slogan Chernoff once developed for the city proclaimed, it was undeniably happening *now*. Yet Scott-Wiley’s commitment to her teaching career led to her stepping down as Artistic Director, while Hembree announced his own retirement this past summer; both, however, will continue as active members of the Trustus family, and each will direct one of the new season’s mainstage productions. This left Henderson, already set to follow Scott-Wiley as Artistic Director, temporarily taking on all management duties while the board conducts a search for a permanent Executive Director. The opportunity of a lifetime for any young professional, to be sure, but be careful what you wish for: in October Henderson actually donned four hats, directing *The Brothers Size* in the Side Door Theatre, and overseeing theatre fundraising, marketing and promotions (although some of these have been contracted out, so

perhaps only three and a half hats.)

Henderson’s colleagues and peers are excited. Smith observes that “Chad is brilliant. He is the perfect combination of incisive and intuitive artist, and song-and-dance-man for the job. His work as a director is thoughtful and provocative, yet he has a firm finger on the pulse of what will get people in seats. He has soul, which was that quality that Jim had, which made it so easy for those of us around at the beginning to follow him. With Chad at the helm, I see no end to the possibilities for what can happen at Trustus.” Multiple roles and responsibilities notwithstanding, Henderson has wasted no time in making his mark, and has mapped out an audacious path for the theatre’s future. This includes:

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**A RECOMMITMENT TO CHALLENGING PROGRAMMING.** “I feel like Trustus is returning to its roots,” Henderson says, “embracing modern scripts that explore life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While many of our shows don’t come with name recognition, they are certainly stories that are contemporary, unexpected, and need to be told here in Columbia. These scripts call for creative storytelling, and will attract audiences craving art, resonance, and, at times, activism with their entertainment.” The 2015-16 line-up includes big hits like *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *American Idiot*, but Henderson notes that both “were crafted in workshop productions that took long roads to Broadway. The theatre will also “embrace the creation of original works crafted by local and nationwide artists,” measuring their ultimate success by “commitment to collaboration and innovation,” and their impact by “the creation of a more diverse and vibrant Columbia.”

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**A RECOMMITMENT TO ORIGINAL WORK IN THE SIDE DOOR.**

Henderson explains that “Columbia has shown great support for new theatrical works created locally. The Side Door is going to start housing new script readings, locally crafted productions, and other special events that are homegrown.” One such production will be a three-week run of Kimi Maeda’s *The Ephemera Trilogy* in the spring of 2016. “Her pieces are getting booked all over the east coast, so we’re certainly thrilled to give her pieces an installation home here at Trustus. She’s one of ours, and we want to show her work off,” says Henderson. He adds that “the space will also become a more productive home for shows and showcases from our high school-aged Apprentice Company,” and that talks are under way with other performing artists for future premieres.

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**A RECOMMITMENT TO THE CONCEPT OF AN ENSEMBLE.**

The Trustus Company (the core group of performers and technicians who can be counted on when needed, and who often double as bartenders and ushers when not on stage or behind the scenes) are being rebranded as the Trustus Ensemble, a “collective group of theatre artists who celebrate the further development of their craft, and who constantly strive to innovate and discover.” The name change comes from what Henderson feels is “the ideas of unity that we’re promoting within these walls.” *Company*, he explains, can be defined as either “a business organization that makes, buys, or sells goods or provides services in exchange for money,” or “a group of persons or things,” such as an organization of performing artists. An *ensemble*, however, is “a group of people or things that make up a complete unit,” or a group producing a single effect. That last one excites

him. “It’s about working together, celebrating unification, dismissing ego, and focusing on the power of group expression.”

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**A RECOMMITMENT TO BEING A PROFESSIONAL THEATRE.**

Henderson hopes to attract more guest artists to the Trustus stage, “career professionals who will bring new voices and talents to the Columbia theatre collective.” The end goal, endorsed by the board, is to transition into an SPT (small professional theatre) Equity House, attracting professional members of the Actors’ Equity union, and allowing “more theatre artists to maintain a career here in SC.” This affiliation will also afford “the opportunity to create beneficial partnerships with other theatres and training institutions,” as well as create “a bit of a Carolina theatre artist highway, because theatre artists would have Warehouse, Atlantic Stage, the Actor’s Theatre of Charlotte, and Trustus to bounce between. Do you know how many talented people leave South Carolina after they’ve completed their undergraduate or graduate training? Quite a lot of them. This change would make Columbia a more inviting place for people who have developed their craft and are looking for a place to plant their artistic roots.” Plus, he adds, “it has the potential to raise the bar of the performances on our stage. I’m very proud that Trustus is held in high artistic regard in this community. But I want us to push further. I want us to be a popular destination in the state, and ultimately the Southeast. Being an Equity house would not only create more opportunities to work with Equity actors on our stages, but it would also allow deserving performers and stage managers to gain Equity points at Trustus – resulting in their ability to join Equity - something that you often have to leave SC to do.”

Sanchez is just that sort of performer, a Screen Actor’s Guild member who left Columbia for many years. “I’m much more picky with my work and the roles I want to play now,” she concedes. “I choose scripts that inspire and provoke me. I believe Chad will do great things at Trustus. Bringing in professional directors, professional actors, and stage management is the step in the right direction. I’ve worked in several Equity houses, and I think Columbia deserves a professional theatre company. It’s the capital city! My friends are salivating for this season’s line up. In this complex, modern, ever-changing world, I want to see new works that speak about modern issues. Or classic works that are relevant to today’s society. That’s what turns me on!” Boyle, an Equity member, agrees that Henderson “has strong artistic visions of what he wants to bring to life on the stage. As Trustus moves forward, I think Chad’s leadership, vision, and his ability to communicate what he needs and wants will be invaluable in helping to get Trustus to make that step to a small professional theatre. Choosing plays that are cutting-edge and thought-provoking, or just fun entertainment. I know Columbia is ready for and deserves the best. I truly think Chad’s leadership will get Trustus there.”

Henderson is quick to caution that “most of these are goals – and they will take time. Trustus can’t flip itself into a different kind of theatre overnight. But what we can do is depend on our strengths as we move forward: provocative programming, dynamic performances, approaching everything we do with sincerity, and nurturing our genuine desire to provide experiences for our patrons that are singular and inviting.”

“Are we taking ourselves *seriously*?” he asks, and then quickly replies, with conviction, “Without question. And Columbia deserves it.”

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# COMMUNITY OF THEATRE

WORKSHOP THEATRE AND THE 2015-2016 SEASON

By Ryan Stevens

“

Entering our 48th season  
the bar is set pretty high.

”



olumbia's historic Workshop Theatre has had a very, ahem, dramatic time as of late. In tandem with their forced relocation, due to the long-awaited construction of USC's new Law School complex, from their longtime home at Bull and Gervais Streets to the Market Space at 701 Whaley Street last year, Workshop put on an impressive season in 2014 - 2015 offering traditional and modern classics demonstrating verve and energy not unlike that of a brand new upstart theater company. The theatre company, founded in 1967 as a director's theatre, seemed eager to show the world that it has what it takes to not only survive, but to prosper and, perhaps, be ready to finally tackle fundraising for a permanent theatre home. But as the season closed and other

Columbia performing arts organizations began announcing their upcoming seasons and, eventually, starting to perform, Workshop Theatre lagged behind in announcements of any kind. Theatre patrons and actors alike wandered *What's Next?* for Workshop Theatre. Some wondered if anything was next at all.

The answer finally arrived in October with the announcement of the company's new season which starts, oddly enough, when many other seasons are half over, in January of 2016. Theatre insiders hope the three classics announced will both fill seats and satisfy long-time Workshop fans.

*The Odd Couple (Female Version)*, directed by David Britt—his fourth Neil Simon production with Workshop in as many years—opens on January 15<sup>th</sup> with a run through the 24<sup>th</sup> will start the season off with the kind of dependable comedy some theatre lovers crave. In March, Jocelyn Sanders follows up her success with last season's *Lend Me a Tenor* by directing *Steel Magnolias*, a guaranteed tear-jerking comedy-drama about life, death, and a group of Southern women in northern Louisiana. Written by Robert Harling, *Steel Magnolias* is poignantly based on Harling's experience with his own sister's death. Bring your tissues. Finally in May, Workshop offers the non-musical version of *Around the World in 80 Days*, directed by Frank Thompson, a frequent contributor at Town Theatre who is making his Workshop debut.

Regarding the new season, Workshop executive director Jeni McCaughan says, "The challenge of producing theatre in 2016 is selecting a season that is well-rounded. It can be tough to find a good array of shows that will be well received by the theatre patrons, but also provide the high level of art

that we strive for." McCaughan and company have given a lot of thought to selecting their new season, citing past shows that did not garner the attention she believes they deserved. "A good example is last season's *The Dining Room*. I thought that was one of the best all-around shows last season. The directing, the acting, the storytelling – it was all spectacular. The patrons who came to see the show couldn't stop raving about what great theatre it was. But it didn't have name recognition, and was a difficult show to describe to people who weren't familiar with it, so while it was a satisfying and worthwhile show to produce, it wasn't a big draw for audiences."

"The goal for this season is to continue to create the same high level of theatre patrons of Workshop Theatre have come to expect," McCaughan continues. "Entering our 48th season the bar is set pretty high. I feel like we did a good job satisfying those expectations last season, and I have no doubt that we will continue to exceed those expectations with the three great shows we have selected. The 2015-2016 season is in good hands with David Britt, Jocelyn Sanders, and Frank Thompson. I just can't wait to see it come to life."

McCaughan is grateful to Richard Burts and Tom Chinn of 701 Whaley who, "have gone out of their way to work with us to create a theatre environment in the Market Space. The patrons really embraced the space last season, and we got a lot of positive feedback," she says, citing the comfortable open-aired feel of the front porch, especially on nice evenings, as an alternative to the courtyard at the old theatre where the company had been located since the 1970s. This season the theatre will offer new, more comfortable chairs in the his-

toric space. "It took the Columbia theatre community a show or two to warm up to the new location, but once people caught on ... they really grew to like the space and the experience that we are creating at 701 Whaley. As last season progressed you could see our attendance grow with every show," she says.

The public benefit of the theatrical experience holds a clear priority in Workshop's hopes for the coming season. In a time when a sense of community in Columbia is so highly valued, the uniting energy of local theatre has been a source of great comfort for McCaughan, and she hopes it has been for others. "I'd like to see this season help use art to create a better and brighter Columbia as we continue to rebuild from the flood. An evening of theatre should be a happy event where you can put your worries on hold and transport yourself to another place and time for a few hours, and have fun and laugh and carry on talking about it with your friends after the show is over. I think Workshop Theatre has a season that can do that. I look forward to sitting in the audience and experiencing the journey along with everyone else."

The announcement of every new theater season brings with it the notion of facing one's future. For McCaughan and Workshop, this is a welcome encounter. "I am really excited about the future of Workshop Theatre. These upcoming shows have great potential for our actors to showcase their talents. Our acting school is doing well. We grow each year, and last year we saw many new faces at the theatre...We look forward to reconnecting with patrons and friends from previous years. The Workshop family is big and diverse, and there's a place for everybody."

# ON POINTE AFTER THE FLOOD THE COLUMBIA CLASSICAL BALLET

B Y J A N E G A R I

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On Friday October 2, Radenko Pavlovich and his dance company, the Columbia Classical Ballet, were rehearsing at their studio for upcoming performances of two Tamas Krizsa pieces billed together as *Night of Passion*. Everything was going smoothly in the state-of-the-art studio space whose recent overhauls totaled \$260,000. Within 72 hours everything about this plan changed in ways neither Pavlovich nor his dancers could imagine. When Pavlovich purchased the iconic Calvert Brodie School of Dance 12 years earlier, he knew it lay in a flood plain and

made sure to procure the appropriate insurance. The building is nestled in a virtual bowl, funneling run-off from the Forest Lakes area on even the lightest rainy day. But the thousand-year rain-event that pummeled the Midlands in early October was anything but light. The almost unthinkable happened. Just two months after The Pavlovich Dance School had opened their refurbished doors for the fall session, the studio was horribly flooded. "There was 8 to 9 feet of water inside and snakes and fish," says Pavlovich. "Our piano was literally floating out the door. It was surreal." As Pavlovich led CNN reporters through the wreckage, he mourned most for irreplaceable mementoes of his globetrotting career that spanned decades: musical scores, letters, photographs—gone. His head was reeling, and he felt sick.

But after watching his students sift through the tattered remains of costumes and pointe shoes, Pavlovich shrugged off his grief and assured his students and staff they would persevere. Anita Ashley, the owner of the Columbia Ballet School, immediately offered studio space to ensure *Night of Passion* would open at the Koger Center on October 16<sup>th</sup> as scheduled. The prevailing attitude in the aftermath was, "the show must go on."

Despite his drive to push through rehearsals and make the upcoming performance a reality, Pavlovich couldn't shake a persistent, sick feeling. One week after the flood, he called Lee Lumpkin, his friend and chair of the board of directors for the ballet company. Lumpkin had taken Pavlovich to the hospital 14 years earlier when he suffered a heart attack requiring major surgery. Ignoring Lumpkin's pleas for him to seek medical help, Pavlovich forged ahead to rehearse. By the time he arrived at Ashley's studio, the artistic director was turning gray and sweating profusely. Dr. Marinella Hall, wife of Pavlovich's cardiologist (Dr. Patrick Hall), was there for her daughters' classes. Pavlovich is grateful for her insistent and quick action. "She took one look at me and knew what was happening," he says. "We went to Providence Hospital. I was indeed having a heart attack. I received

three stents after they discovered a 90 percent blockage in an artery."

After hearing of Pavlovich's heart attack, Michael Taylor, the executive director of the Koger Center reached out to Lumpkin. "I'm so grateful for his compassion," Lumpkin says. "He put everything into perspective." Up until that point, the performance had been the glue keeping the dance company together. But under the circumstances, it made sense to postpone. "The show would go on," says Lumpkin. "But it didn't need to go on right now."

*Night of Passion* was rescheduled for February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The decision to postpone did not come easily for Pavlovich, whose first concern was for his dancers. Preparing for the performance had galvanized the company in the face of disaster. Many of his dancers travel here on international visas to dance with the Columbia Classical Ballet. For all the dancers, the school is definitely more than studio space. "It was devastating," says Emma Stratton, a dancer in the company. "But the dance community has been so supportive. People from everywhere have been sending donations to our GoFundMe Campaign which raised \$15,000 in just the first two days." Another boost came when Pavlovich was well enough to travel with the company to Charleston, West Virginia where they performed *Night of Passion* on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

All of the dancers have stayed on with Pavlovich, and since the flood, the school has even picked up some new students. While thankful to Anita Ashley for her studio space, Pavlovich knew he couldn't infringe on her indefinitely. The company is leasing space at the Richland Fashion Mall on a month-to-month basis while they wait for FEMA and insurance approval to rebuild the original space off Forest Drive.

The expected coverage for the damages is only around 60 percent of the loss. Before those insurance dollars are approved, however, the company has had to move forward with clean-up efforts at their own expense to avoid future mold and bacteria growth. Despite the daunting tasks ahead, Pavlovich is optimistic about the future and has been humbled by the outpouring of support:

"Yes, it was a disaster, but we can fix it and move on. To receive well wishes and donations from the global dance world—it's a wonderful feeling."

Consultants for the company, Big Eyed Bird Creative and Fisher Communications, organized the Go Fund Me campaign, accessible through the websites for the Columbia Classical Ballet and the Pavlovich Dance School. Most moving, Lumpkin notes, have been donations from strangers, including one from Lindsay Sprague, owner of The Dance Floor in the Vista. Sprague had recently conducted a fundraiser for her own school, but then donated the proceeds to the Columbia Classical Ballet after learning of their loss.

The other stand-out reaction has been from individuals and institutions with whom the Columbia Classical Ballet usually competes for grant dollars. William Starrett, artistic and executive director of the Columbia City Ballet, immediately offered them studio space and dance supplies. "There is a perceived competition between our ballet companies in the general community," says Starrett. "But the bottom line is we're all artists and respect one another as artists. When someone is facing challenges of this magnitude you put everything else aside and reach out, not just as a fellow artist, but as a humanitarian."

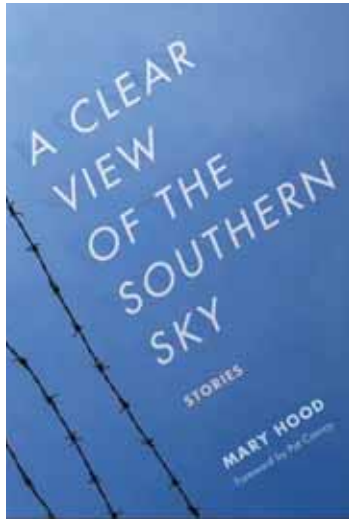
Bonnie Boiter-Jolley, former Columbia Classical Ballet dancer and current soloist for the Columbia City Ballet, was especially moved. "The unfortunate toll the flooding took on their studios has had no little response from the dance community. I know we all feel for the dancers. Despite the damage, it has been really touching to see the dancers band together and support one another."

The Columbia Classical Ballet has always stood for paying it forward, as exemplified by their Life Chance outreach programs for charitable organizations. Now, the same company is the beneficiary of such philanthropy, hopefully continuing a tradition not only of artistic excellence, but also camaradery as the Columbia dance community grows in strength and compassion.

# Beauty in the Everyday

## Mary Hood's *A Clear View of the Southern Sky*

BY ALEXIS STRATTON



Irene, a middle-aged, working-class woman who is trying to make ends meet at Frazier Fabrics while her farmerhusband keeps up their property in rural Georgia. The thing is, Irene's life is not notable—she is a seamstress who used to work at a clock factory, she has a handful of grown kids who she worries about (one of whom is serving in the military and deployed in Iraq), and she works to navigate a new job after the clock factory shuts down. And yet, as I read this story, I wanted to know every last detail about her, and her family, and her town. And as Hood draws the moments of Irene's daily existence with deft and gentle strokes, I felt deeply immersed in and connected to the lives of those folks in Ready, Georgia: I breathed in with them and out with them, and I even held my breath for what seemed like pages as I waited for a step forward from the losses that come so naturally in our quiet existences.

And that is the beauty in all of Mary Hood's stories in *A Clear View of the Southern Sky*. They are not for the impatient; they are not even for those who need that succinct emotional payoff that short stories so often deliver. But what they do offer is a breath while standing in another person's shoes—a person who is perhaps repentant of her mistreatment of her grown son and perhaps regretful of her romantic

failures, waiting as the flood waters rise up to her attic in a small town by a river; or a teenage girl who steals tampons from a general store because her mom has died and her traditionally minded father can't even stand the smell of Avon shampoo in her hair, let alone walk her through "this Changing Woman business," as she calls it; or a woman who, as a trucker, is on the road for weeks at a time, and yet finds a sense of home along her truck route and a sense of belonging in the soon-to-be husband she finds along the way.

When you read Mary Hood, read her slowly. Take in her words, but more importantly, be willing to dwell with her characters. As she guides you through the mundane and the life-changing moments of their lives—many of which occur simultaneously—allow her words to flow through you like your breath. Allow her characters to rest in your heart. Listen to all they have to say. While each story might not pull at your heart or tug at your gut, the sense of life that breathes from these pages might just tell you something about living, might lead you to think of the "other" beside you and all the stories that make up who they are—and might remind you how the smallest of those moments can teach us something about love.

If and when you read Mary Hood's *A Clear View of the Southern Sky*—which, if you love being dropped into the deep end of characters' lives, you should—flip to the last story, "Seam Busters," first

Now, in a novel, this may seem like cheating. But in a collection like Hood's, it's like getting a hold of the map before plotting your course. "Seam Busters"—the novella tucked in as the last among this collection of ten stories—draws us into the life of

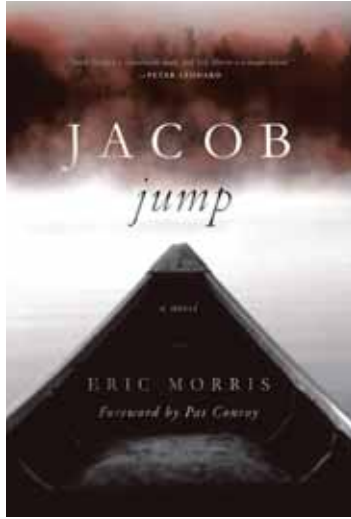




# A Dark Journey

## Eric Morris's *Jacob Jump*

BY KYLE PETERSEN



Sound familiar?

For all of those surface similarities, though, Morris' novel is a cagier, dreamier, and ultimately bleaker story than even Dickey's eco-nightmare. While there's nothing as spine-tingling dramatic as the famous rape scene from *Deliverance*, there are moments of elemental, hard-brush violence that seem straight out of Cormac McCarthy, and Verdery and Rhind's level of desperation at the end of novel hits lows that Ed and Lewis never so much as hint at. This trip isn't about a brief stint of spiritual renewal before returning to suburban domesticity so much as it's literal last-ditch escape from a world that the two protagonists can no longer cope with.

And yet, Verdery and Rhind are not unfamiliar characters, and their male-bonding turn towards the wilderness as a compensatory move is a time-honored trope of American literature. This makes for a narrative that is fraught with seeming traps, particularly for a writer who wears his influences on his sleeve (Dickey, Faulkner, McCarthy, Larry Brown, Ron Rash) as much as Morris does. That it succeeds anyway is largely a credit to how truly powerful the prose is throughout much of the novel. Mark Powell described the novel as a "half hallucinatory prose poem" in a book jacket blurb, and he's not far off. There's a distinct intensity to Morris's evocative descriptions and stream-of-conscious psychological probes,

and his deft pivots from plain-spoken dialogue to poetic abstraction are the hallmark of the high-modern brand of Southern literature that he aspires to. Readers who love to spend time getting wrapped up in the knotty complexities of language itself will no doubt leave satisfied.

As for the narrative itself, it's difficult not to hold it up to *Deliverance* and ask how it differs, what else it might have to say about a particular sort of white Southern male experience in our contemporary moment. These men don't appear to be caught up in the economic plight of working class men or drawn to the weight of southern history in any particular sense—instead, they both seem to struggling primarily romantically, although it's easy to see that as the most obvious symptom rather than an underlying problem that causes their angst. There's a certain aimlessness to these men's motivation, but without the accompanying anxiety of purpose. It's a bit of a puzzle.

But perhaps that's not the point, at least not for Morris. At the darkly satisfying end of the novel, I felt as if perhaps he might be taking the oft-cited Tom Waits quote as inspiration: "The world is a hellish place, and bad art is diminishing the quality of our suffering." With *Jacob Jump*, Morris is, if nothing else, increasing the quality of our woe.

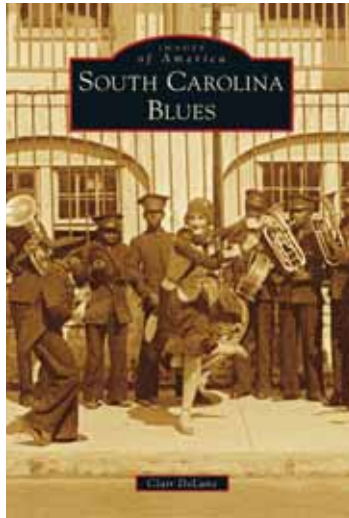
**O**n the surface, the premise of *Jacob Jump*, the debut novel from Augusta native Eric Morris, reads like a *Deliverance* homage. Old friends Thomas Verdery and William Rhind, both down on their luck and suffering from late 20<sup>th</sup> century first-world ennui, decide that taking a long, ambitious boating trip that neither is terribly equipped for is the answer to their problems. Not surprisingly, a combination of mysterious locals and the unanticipated challenges of the natural world lead their trip drastically astray.



# Preserving the History of the Blues in the Palmetto State

## Clair DeLune's *South Carolina Blues*

BY KYLE PETERSEN



Part of the Images of America series from Arcadia Publishing, a fascinating line of books with the goal of celebrating local histories by collecting archival photography in book form, *South Carolina Blues* manages to both illustrate the particularities of Palmetto State musicians while also telling the broader story of the blues in our national culture. Beginning with the early roots of the music that West African slaves brought with them to the Americas, DeLune charts how a mixture of different styles and modes, like ring shout worship and work songs, along with the rudimentary instrumentation African-Americans had access to, led to what we now know as the blues in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From there, DeLune carefully establishes the foundation of the genre in the Carolinas, focusing on the particular evolution of the Piedmont (or East Coast) blues and its tangential relationship to a variety of other roots music styles while celebrating early bluesmen from the state like Cootie Stark, Simmie Dooley, Peg Leg Sam, and Pink Anderson. The book's best moments, however, come when she begins diving into the modern period of the blues, when folks like Nappy Brown and Drink Small emerge and the photographic collection really gets ripe. While this is where the book gets the most particular, DeLune's expertise shines through, walking us through not just Brown

and Small's careers, but also the lesser-known threads of groups like guitarist Doug Allen or Elliot & the Untouchables. She also devotes a section to "People and Places" that catalogs the movers and shakers of the genre since the 1960s.

The nature of the series, though, means that it's the pictures that are the real draw here. Fortunately, DeLune proves to be a diligent researcher, pulling from folklore archives across the Southeast as well as using her contacts to draw from the private collections of many longtime blues patrons. There's a revelatory quality here to having all of these images sitting cozily next to one another—James Brown, Buddy Guy, and Little Richard casually sliding in and out of the frame to make room for familiar community stalwarts like Marv Ward or Shelley Magee.

It's that juxtaposition that gets at the heart of the book, and of DeLune's vision of the blues—a living, breathing tradition that is about people of all stripes coming together. "Humans have a hardwired need to connect with other humans" she poignantly notes in her introduction. As much as threads of history, sociology, and anthropology are at play here, it truly comes down to explicating that elemental desire of taking salve in song that *South Carolina Blues* ultimately documents.

**Y**ou'd be hard pressed to find a fiercer advocate for the blues in South Carolina than Clair DeLune, the author/curator of the new *South Carolina Blues*.

As a host of a blues radio show on WUSC 90.5 FM since 1992 and a frequent lecturer and writer on our state's musical history, DeLune has been immersed in this music scene for decades, giving her just the right mix of personal contacts and historical perspective to tackle the kind of local history that her book provides.





## Lecture: Brad Collins

Friday, December 4 | Noon

Brad Collins, USC professor of art history and CMA favorite, focuses on the work of O'Keeffe in the context of American life through the 20th century. Free with membership or admission.



## A Night with Anita

Monday, December 7 | 6:00 p.m.

The CMA and *Auntie Bellum* magazine present a discussion of Anita Pollitzer. Meeghan Kane with Benedict College and Graham Duncan of the South Caroliniana Library delve into the life of Anita Pollitzer, a friend and (informal) agent to Georgia O'Keeffe. Instrumental in launching O'Keeffe's career, the native South Carolinian was a photographer and activist in her own right, eventually becoming a suffragist with the militant National Women's Party (NWP). Free with membership or admission.



## CMA Chamber Music on Main

Wednesday, December 9 | Happy Hour 6:00 p.m. | Concert 7:00 p.m.

Phillip Bush on piano, Yehonatan Berick on violin, Nicholas Cords on viola, and Edward Arron on cello perform works by Mozart, Mahler, John Musto, and Fauré. Cash bar. Galleries open during happy hour. \$35 / \$28 for members / \$5 for students. Season tickets: \$140 / \$100 for members. Presented by U.S. Trust.



## Salon Talk: The Figure in *Independent Spirits*

Friday, December 11 | Noon

Columbia artists Mary Robinson, Susan Lenz, and Kathleen Robbins join us to discuss their artwork. Though the media they use is diverse—encompassing printmaking, textiles, and photography—their work all deals with the human figure. Free with membership or admission.



## ArtBreak: Dr. Julia Elliott

Tuesday, December 15 | Café 10:30 a.m. | Lecture at Noon

Begin the morning at the museum with pastries and coffee sold at a pop-up café by Drip followed by a talk from USC Professor of Women and Gender Studies Dr. Julia Elliott, who discusses South Carolina women artists and how feminism shaped the art world in the 20th century. Free with membership or admission.

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Join us for these exciting events and more. Details at: 803-799-2810 or

[columbiamuseum.org](http://columbiamuseum.org)

# Rain

By Mark Szasz

The rain sounds soft, a mother  
trying to cover the sounds of the thunder  
with a song of calm, calm, calm ...

Lightning gutters in the curtains  
like a windswept candle  
shushing on, and on, and on ...

If you listen close, you'll hear  
the pond making love to the sky—  
do you wonder where their bodies meet?

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Mark Szasz is a lover of the written word hailing from Lugoff, SC. His ambition is to discover writing within himself worthy of adding to the human oeuvre, and his hope is that you would, too. This is his first poem publication.

# Hardware

By Darien Cavanaugh

There is some consensus that peanut butter or bacon is the best, but killing something just to kill something smaller is so American, and for years I've been trying my best to be the worst American I can, so before I put on my shoes I've already decided on peanut butter.

I'm skeptical of the selection at Ace because it's a shitbox, straight-up pathetic compared to all the great big bad-assedly big bigness of Lowe's, but Ace is a co-op or something, and when I'm in the right mood I pretend I support things like that, things that are an easy walk from my house.

Even on this nostalgically short aisle there's a cornucopian overabundance (7000 "humane volts," shimmering pools of glue, crystalline Hydramethylnon,) of options for killing the mighty little ant, the adorably blind mole, the Indian meal moth, and the god damned rat, with its great plagues and puny turds.

I'm holding a Havahart X-Small 1-Door trap in my hands, but the door looks chintzy, slow to drop, and I can't take my eyes off of the Victor BM201, its crisp little plank of wood, its boldly simple red logo stamped right there, all the steely efficiency and snappy confidence, the proven success.

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Darien Cavanaugh received his MFA from the University of South Carolina. His fiction and poetry have appeared in several journals and magazines. He is one of the founding editors and current managing editor of *The Frank Martin Review*, the founding director of *The Columbia Broadside Project*, a writer for *War is Boring*, a writing instructor at the *Tri-District Arts Consortium*, and a bartender at *The Whig*, North America's greatest dive bar.

# CRITICISM AND COMMUNITY



BY KYLE PETERSEN

## I'VE NEVER LIKED REFERRING TO MYSELF AS A CRITIC.

That might sound funny coming from a guy who has spent most of his 20s writing about the arts in some capacity, but it's true. As a title or description it always felt a little too sanctimonious, as if I was glaring over my horn-rimmed glasses with obvious disdain at pitiful plebeian attempts at self-expression.

The reality is, though, that anytime we talk (or write) about art, we are always already offering up an analysis, a form of criticism. While we absorb art in its ineffable totality, putting words to that experience requires picking out pieces of that work and putting them in a coherent order. This privileges certain values and understandings of the world around us, for better and for worse. At its best, such thoughts are girded by a strong historical perspective, an acute awareness of the artist's practice, a desire to provide insight, and a sensitivity and empathy towards that individual expression. At its worst, criticism can be predicated on ignorance, personal prejudice, or dispassionate artistic proofreading that is more nitpicky than revelatory. And always, a question of taste will color everything.

My hope is that, more often than not, when I or another *Jasper* writer puts the proverbial pen to paper, we are closer to the former than the latter. Criticism is an inherently messy process, but our magazine is built around the idea that there is a clear desire, a hunger in our community for more stories, more conversation, and more thoughtful celebration of the arts. Pre-

sumably, if you've made it this far into our world, you agree.

That being said, what that sounds and looks like has never come easily to us. As a magazine, we've always wanted to balance our cheerleading of the arts with constructive feedback, to act as curators and arbiters of quality while also reaching outside of our comfort zones and gathering work from the fringes. To be keenly aware of the social dimension of art while not being defined by it. To draw distinctions between the hobbyist, the journey person, and the professional while lifting them all up.

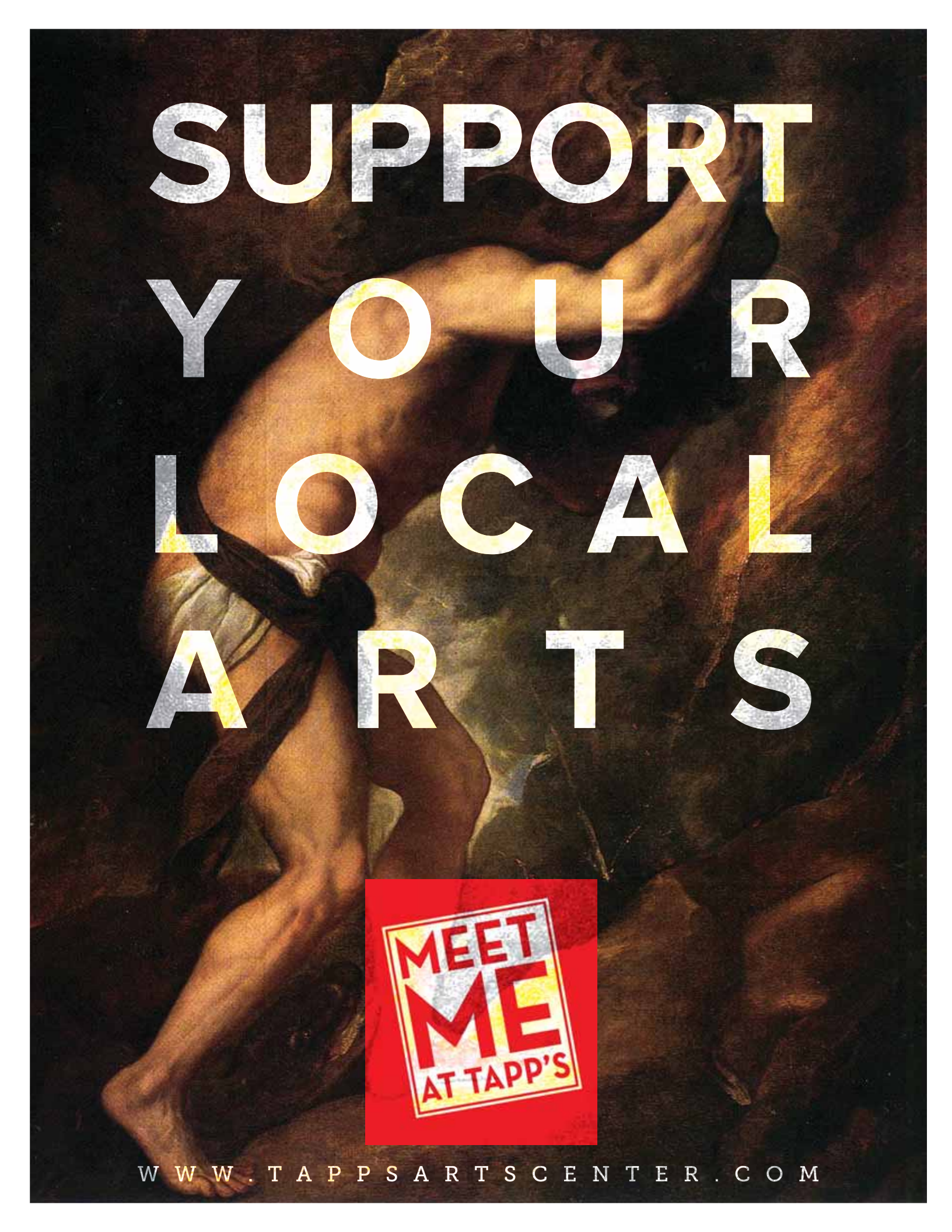
Those goals require more than simply taking in a play or record and offering up an informed opinion. They require acts of selection, of discerning positionality, of measuring our relationship to the art and artist sensitively, yet assertively. If this sounds like vague calculations, they are—again, criticism is messy.

The reason, though, that I'm wringing my hands so delicately over this is that we want criticism to breathe life into our arts community, to serve it and be inspired by it. That's a lofty hope, but it's one implicit any time somebody tries this stuff. I can't promise that we'll always hit the sweet spot or that we'll always live up to your standards or our own. But I can promise that we will do our best, and that we will listen to you when you think we've gone astray.

In the meantime, we're going to continue to think about how best to make criticism a part of our community, and we'd like to hear your thoughts on the matter as well. Email me at [kpetersen@jaspercolumbia.com](mailto:kpetersen@jaspercolumbia.com) with your concerns, suggestions, or rants. We can all get better.



PHOTO BY **BARRY WHEELER**



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