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THE WORD ON COLUMBIA ARTS

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CENTERFOLD // WILLIAM STARRETT

014 ON **THE COVER**
Alejandro Garcia-Lemos
Nimrata Randhawa

012 JASPER T**AKES NOTICE**
Zero in on this month's blossoming young artist

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Dear Friends,

I wanted this issue of the magazine to be our rainbow issue. I wanted to dedicate the magazine to Pride and fill it full of stories about the many ways members of the LGBTQ community make the arts in the South Carolina Midlands richer, fuller, better. But for reasons that literary arts editor Ed Madden addresses in his guest editorial on page 61, we opted instead to feature many LGBTQ artists along with the equally stellar straight artists you'll find standing strong beside them. We still dedicate the issue to Pride and to all those who work tirelessly to make our community, not only a more arts-friendly, but also a more welcoming place for everyone in it.

It's a happy time in Columbia when the arts season kicks off each fall. August Krickel, our over-worked theatre editor, takes a thorough look at the new theatre season in his expanded column, *Curtain Up!* as well as highlighting new management on deck at Trustus Theatre as Larry Hembree and Dewey Scott-Wiley take over after Kay and Jim Thigpen's 27 years of service.

This issue of *Jasper* also features three outstanding visual artists – Clay Burnette, whose day job finds him at the SC Arts Commission; Laurie McIntosh, who has a new exhibition and art book coming out in October; and Alejandro Garcia-Lemos, whose work *Nimrata Randhawa*, we chose as our cover.

Garcia-Lemos is a local artist, a native of Bogata, Colombia who, ten years ago, joined his partner Britt Hunt, a native of Columbia, SC, in making our Columbia their new home. Garcia-Lemos has a way of looking at social issues with a critical and clever eye that, at *Jasper*, we like a lot. We chose *Nimrata Randhawa* for the cover of this issue for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the painting's vibrant color palette and stimulating narrative quality.

In his cover painting, Garcia-Lemos depicts "the beautiful daughter of Indian immigrants from the Punjabi region," as is said in an "anonymously written" legend accompanying the painting, "whose parents raised her to follow the religious teachings of their Sikh religion from their native land. From her early years, Nimrata developed a profound interest in money and power. The story explains that by the age of 13, Nimrata was already in charge of the many exotic coins of her family."

The legend goes on to tell of the transformation that occurred in the young woman who "adapted her birth name to a more Americanized version," and how the "exotic Nimrata keeps changing colors during her constant evolution. She is quite conspicuous, especially since she enjoys sipping tea at high-end venues in Paris, while opposing funding for the arts and culture. ... Recently, those who have seen Nimrata say that she is turning blue ... which makes her look amazingly like Ganesh, the adorable Indian god of obstacles, both good and bad."

As pleasing as Garcia-Lemos's *Nimrata Randhawa* is to the eye, it is also an excellent example of socio-political art, a centuries-old discipline which uses art as a tool toward understanding complex social and political issues. Most South Carolinians will recognize the painting's title as the birth name of our current governor, with the social and political issues it addresses, both in its iconography and its accompanying narrative, being her steadfast opposition to funding the arts.

At *Jasper*, we debated whether our intent in featuring *Nimrata Randhawa* on our cover might be misunderstood – not by our readers, of course, who know too well the stingy hand of government when it comes to the arts – but by the diligent among us who constantly mine the media for ways to take offence. Then we reminded ourselves of the great history of socio-political art. We remembered people like Mercy Otis Warren, a Massachusetts writer who, during the American Revolution, wrote poetry and satiric plays that lampooned her own Governor Thomas Hutchinson for his blind allegiance to the British throne. Ironically, she used the pen name, "A Columbian Patriot."

So it is with great pride that *Jasper* joins the ranks of publications before us that have honored artists who use their talent and passion to inspire critical thinking and stimulate social commentary – artists like George Orwell, Diego Rivera, Banksy, Picasso, and Pussy Riot, and playwrights like Larry Kramer and William Hoffman, whom you'll read about in Ed Madden's article, "Jasper Looks Back: 1986," on the plays that began a conversation about AIDS and sexuality right here in Columbia.

Here's to Pride, to fearlessness, to how far we've come, and to the artists among us who make the road ahead a more beautiful, and charitable, path to follow.

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

THE JAM ROOM – TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF UNFETTERED CREATIVITY

This writer's first experience in the Jam Room occurred around 1989 at the studio's second location in a warehouse basement just off Huger Street. It was dark and dank down there, but the rooms resonated with an air of rebellious possibility, that anxious energy of pending power chords, pounding drums, and unleashed imagination. I wasn't there as a rocker, more as a Dylanesque caterwauler, but I fed off the atmospheric residue from previous punk, metal, and hard-core sessions. The Jam Room operated by that old rock 'n' roll DIY axiom, "There's no promise of tomorrow, let's bash it out now!" Almost 25 years of tomorrows have passed since the Jam Room got its start, and it's a bit surprising that a recording studio with a reputation for being edgy, contemporary, and uncompromising has thrived and survived in a city that decidedly doesn't often share those traits.

When the Jam Room's 25th anniversary began to loom on the horizon several months ago, it seemed only appropriate that a big celebration should be planned. Studio owner and chief engineer, Jay Matheson, brought up the idea of the possibility of staging a big music festival, one that would recognize the Jam Room's longevity while at the same time giving Columbia a live music event that would push the envelope a bit. Everyone agreed that the festival should celebrate the energy that the Jam Room has brought to the SC music scene over the years. After all, the studio has opened its doors to rock bands, blues bands, honky-tonk combos, rappers, and almost every other kind of musical artist.

While diversity is a watchword at the Jam Room, there's no denying that the studio has a hankering for punk, metal, and other genres from rock's heavier side. But Matheson knew that a festival filled with head bangers and mosh pits might not exactly fly in downtown Columbia. A loosely knit committee who understood this dilemma but also shared Matheson's vision for a successful festival gathered and began to brainstorm possible bands, events, and vendor options that would connect all the dots and make for a fun day downtown; the kind of festival experience Columbia rock fans have moaned about not having for years.

After six months of wrangling the first annual Jam Room Music Festival was hatched. It will be held from 2 to 10 p.m. on October 13th on Main and Hampton Streets in downtown Columbia. Headlining acts include

jam room
MUSIC FESTIVAL

a band from New York called The Hold Steady, and a rising Americana star, Justin Townes Earle. Other bands on the bill have more of that good old bash-it-out Jam Room ethic, like The Woggles, Cusses, Dead Confederate, and Say Brother.

Not only does the festival feature a highly credible line-up of rock acts, but there will also be a film event – *The Jam Room Documentary*, a 300-song MP3 compilation of Jam Room recording highlights, performances by Columbia's popular street circus, Alternacirque, and a guided bicycle tour around historic Columbia on the day of the festival. It's the kind of event that does justice to the Jam Room's reputation while also nudging Columbia towards a future that says, "Yeah, we're on top of things." ***// MM***

DIVAS

Bill Davis is a Diva. Well, not exactly. However, Davis, a local Columbia artist, finds his greatest muse in divas. From powerful pop icons like Madonna and Dianna Ross to classic Hollywood actresses like Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, Davis is passionate about making statements through the boisterous, frothy eyes of female entertainment icons. "My defining artistic moment was at an annual fall show where I included one opera singer; she was very buxom with loads of jewels hanging from her neck and arms. She was the first painting to sell that year and the idea if the diva series was born."

Raised in the small town of Abbeville, about 90 miles from Columbia, Davis describes his youth as being filled with comedy. "Throughout school, I was the "class clown," so I guess my attempts to make people laugh transferred to my painting." After receiving an undergraduate degree from the University of South Carolina and two masters' degrees from Furman, Davis started a program at the S.C Department of Mental Health called the Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity Clinic. "There is never a dull day with my work. Travelling the state and painting can be a true stress reliever, especially if work goes in the direction I hope."

Stress reliever, yes. Also, a real passion. Davis has been a lover of paintings for many years. "I have always loved art and began collecting when I was in school. The idea of producing my own works was quite intimidating." However, he did not let the fear of the unknown stop him from pursuing his dream. "I produced a group of 36 works and had a show with a friend at the Columbia Museum's Weekend Gallery. I felt as if I was running down the street naked, but by the end I had sold 34 of my 36 pieces, giving me the incentive to keep at it."

And keep at it he has. Davis does do other styles of art like landscapes, saying that the divas are the "bread and butter" of his paintings. "The divas are fun and they have enabled me to make political comments through paintings – they have been seen ripping down the Confederate flag from the State House and begging for monies for the arts." Davis's commentary on serious issues can be seen through a lighter lens with the divas, making his art fun and incredibly marketable. "They are what galleries ask for and what mainly sells at shows," he says bluntly.

What has changed for Davis throughout his artistic process with the divas is the definition of the word. "[Divas] are celebrated singers, but I believe the term has become much more. A female with unconquerable attitude who carries herself like a star – sort of like Bette Davis in *All About Eve*.

For making the Columbia arts community just a little bit more fabulous with his divas, Davis himself has achieved the icon status that he so admires in his fearless females. *// Christopher Rosa*

Photo by Thomas Hammond

THE GODZILLAFICATION OF SEAN MCGUINNESS

Sean McGuinness talks fast. But unlike the proverbial, badly dubbed, black-and-white Godzilla movies most of us know, his lips and his words magically sync up. And he has a great vocabulary for a "child" of 40 who still plays – quite unapologetically – with small plastic Godzilla action figures. McGuinness takes absolute delight in all things Godzilla. For the past 12 years, he's used these toy figures to channel that energy into a popular Web comic called *Twisted Kaiju Theater,* which has earned McGuinness a level of underground celebrity among audiences creatively evolved enough to appreciate the campy wit of McGuinness's writings. To date, he's published more than 1,800 comics online.

"I didn't get full-on Godzilla-centric until about 1995. That's when all the toys went on sale," he says. In its heyday, around 2004, McGuinness's website was getting 3,000 hits a day. "My website got me Internet-famous."

Indeed. In 2005, organizers of I-CON 24, a Stony Brook, New York-based science fiction and fantasy convention that draws 6,000 enthusiasts a year, invited McGuinness to appear, all expenses paid. That conference was pivotal, both professionally and personally. McGuinness's credibility peaked, along with long-craved mass validation for his work, and he met the love of his life, his wife of three years now, Shirley. The two even had a Godzilla/Hello Kitty wedding at Riverbanks Botanical Gardens, replete with signature cocktails – Cat Girl and Thunder Lizard.

"She is my center. She makes me better," he says. "It wasn't just lightning in a bottle; it was meant to be." These days, McGuinness doesn't make a move without Shirley's thoughtful input. "She is not a fan of Godzilla like I am, but she is a fan of my passion. I gave her the 'marital privilege' to look at my art first. For everything that I do, my number-one critic is my wife."

Photo by Kristine Hartvigsen

With Shirley's encouragement, McGuinness began making "Godzillafied" prints of existing art. His first, titled "1954 in 1865" depicting Godzilla stomping through an iconic image of the burning of Columbia, got him nominated as Artist of the Year in this year's Columbia Museum of Art Contemporaries Artist of the Year competition. Though he didn't win, he feels it was truly an honor to be nominated. "I am still shocked that they let me in," McGuinness says with a tone of wonder. He credits Shirley with that milestone. "It is because of her that I got into the 'legitimate' art crowd."

A couple of months after the Contemporaries' event, McGuinness was invited to have a show at the Art Bar in Columbia. What followed was a flurry of activity creating enough finished and framed pieces. A favorite theme is inserting Godzilla into standard works of art – what McGuinness calls "Godzillafication" – which became the title for his Art Bar show.

"Godzillafication lends itself very well to French Impressionism. There is not one French Impressionist painting I can't Godzillafy," McGuinness insists. "Godzilla is a malleable monster, a monster for all seasons. He is an allegory for war. He is a friend to me."

The Art Bar show, which ran July 19 through August 12, was McGuinness's first but certainly not his last. You can be sure we'll all hear from McGuinness again, as he outrageously notes online, "when you're ready to have your inner child be touched inappropriately." He is, like, seriously, the biggest kid you'll ever meet.

"I am the most enthusiastic Godzilla fan on the planet Earth," he says, adding that, quite honestly, he loves the attention. "I don't feel like an adult. I play with toys. I know I tend to run off at the mouth; that is just my excitement. I like the idea of being a subversive little guy who sits in the back of the class shooting spitballs!"

Learn more about McGuinness and Twisted Kaiju Theater at www.neomonsterisland.com. For information about I-CON in Stony Brook, visit www.iconsf.org. // *KH*

HIP-HOP AND COMICS – COLA CON

Preach Jacobs feels that there has been a marriage between hip-hip culture and comic book culture for a number of years, but that this union is often overlooked. Jacobs created Cola Con in order to bring both hip-hop and comic books together, especially for Columbia.
Jacobs, who is a local emcee and journalist, attended a number of comic book conventions over the years and says that they rarely have a musical component, which he found to be odd. "Hip-hop and comics go together so well," Jacobs said. "The alter egos, they're both really competitive industries. That's kind of the core of all of it." Besides the fact that it demonstrates the bond between two different art forms, Cola Con is different from other comic book conventions because it is centered toward the artists. Jacobs believes that is part of what made the 2011 convention so successful.

Last year, many folks in Columbia took note of Jacobs' appreciation of local artists, including Jay Potts, a Columbia artist who has an online Blaxploitation comic called *World of Hurt*. Potts felt the convention to be well-organized, and he enjoyed seeing the passion that Jacobs put into both art forms. Potts said that the convention also allowed him to reach a different demographic. "I was struck by the number of people who came in who weren't your typical comic convention-goers," he says. "A lot who I encountered weren't necessarily even comic book fans, but they were receptive to the medium."

"Being able to partner with the museum and have a space that can hold about 1,000 people allows us to bring the bigger names in hip-hop that we normally couldn't do," Jacobs says.

Jacobs has partnered with the folks at Columbia Museum of Art before. The museum previously hosted his *Fight for the Power* film series that brought together black cinema and hip-hop culture. After that idea was successful, Jacobs began to bring new ideas to the museum, one of which was Cola Con. He feels that bringing these

events to Columbia will allow visitors to see how strong the arts and music scene is and may help in the important task of continuing to revitalize the city.

Although Jacobs had hosted events at the museum in the past, he never would have imagined just how successful last year's Cola Con would be. The event exceeded his – and many others' – wildest expectations. The lack of knowledge about the art forms along with the fact that it was a new event made it initially difficult for Jacobs to gain support.

A great deal of blind faith was put into the event, as well as a number of sponsors who just had to take Jacobs' word that there was a fan base for hip-hop and comics in Columbia. Jacobs has discovered that finding sponsors for the event is easier now that they have seen the success of last year's event. The interest in Cola Con also sets expectations for this year's event to be even more successful. "Regardless of how successful last year was, I'm ignoring all of it," Jacobs says. "I'm pushing myself even harder."

Jacobs has lived up to his word by making this year's Cola Con two days long and booking even bigger names. "What I'm really interested in is taking this concept and putting it on the road," Jacobs said. "I've been contacted by museums in Charlotte, and I've been talking to people in South Africa who want to have this type of programming. I want to help facilitate this idea and this concept and say that this event started in Columbia."

"Hip-hop needs to be heard," Jacobs says. "We can be celebrated and highlighted, and I want the city to take notice."

Cola Con is scheduled to take place on October 5th and 6th at the Columbia Museum of Art.
// *Casey White*

DRAGGING WITH PATTI O'FURNITURE

Pat Patterson just wants to make people happy

This was increasingly apparent on a rainy Tuesday afternoon at Starbucks, where he sat cross-legged and relaxed, talking about a huge passion for him: dragging.

One would never guess that this well over 6 feet tall, clean-cut Southern gentleman dressed in crisp short slacks and a button down collar would be taking the PT's 1109 stage at midnight as Patti O' Furniture, his delightfully funny and crass drag

Photo by Sarah Kobos

queen alter-ego. "I don't do drag for the money. My mother doesn't cross-knit because she gets paid for it, she does it because she loves it. I feel the same way about dragging," Patterson said.

His love for dragging was not something that was planned. Born to a conventional family in Spartanburg, Patterson dryly describes his upbringing as a "Norman Rockwell portrait." Patterson studied at Wofford College and received a B.A in English. "I didn't quite know what to do with that," Patterson admits, "So I went to University of South Carolina and decided to get an M. Ed. in Student Personnel Services."

With this degree, Patterson quickly became involved in LGBT groups at USC, which is where his drag career began. As his students were trying to scrape up the funds needed to put on their first big event, which would later be famously known as *The Birdcage* at USC, they found themselves short $500. "I told them that if they raised the $500 by the next week, I would perform and MC the event in drag," he says with a nostalgic laugh. "They had the money that next week."

Patterson's queen stardom materialized when he adopted his persona of Patti O'Furniture. "I was sitting with a friend one night and we were talking about possible drag names. I had come up with this serious queen name, but my friend told me 'that's not you. You need something funny like...' she then started looking around our seating area and saw patio furniture... 'Patti O'Furniture!' I loved it."

Patterson likes to describe Miss Patti as constantly seeking humor. "I like to have fun with her," Patterson says. "Whenever I'm performing a song, I like to find the humor in it or the joke. Patti is all about making people laugh." Patti's jocular performance style is apparent in the types of songs she chooses to do and the way she performs them. "If I perform 'Toxic' by Britney Spears, I'll put on a trash bag that says 'TOXIC WASTE.'"

So how long does it take for Pat to "queen up" for every performance? "About one hour," Patterson says proudly, "but if needed, I can do everything in under 45 minutes."

Although he loves his nightlife hobby, there is a huge aspect of it he could do without. "The bitchiness and cattiness amongst the queens is something I don't particularly enjoy," Patterson admits. Competition is at the heart of every major activity. However, Patterson insists that he does not put on his wig, make-up, and outrageous garb for the praise, the money, or the thrill of being the top queen in Columbia, but rather to just make people a little happier than they were before his show.

"There was a guy at one of my shows standing alone. After, I went up to him and asked if he enjoyed it and why he came alone to the club. He told me that he had just broken up with his boyfriend and needed to get out of the house. He sincerely thanked me for cheering him up and putting a smile on his face. That is why I do what I do. That is what it is all about." // *Christopher Rosa*

THE ROSEWOOD ARTS FESTIVAL

Jasper likes the use of okra, tomatoes, and bouncy castles as an excuse for staging a festival as much as the next person, but what he really fancies is when local fun-filled festivals are centered around the art that he loves so much – like the Rosewood Arts Festival.

The second annual Rosewood Arts Festival, presented by the Trenholm Artists Guild, will take place on Saturday, September 29th from 10 am until 6 pm at 2719 Rosewood Drive, in the parking lot of Rockaways. Featuring visual arts galore – think ceramics, painting, fiber arts, print making, furniture making, photography, and more – the festival will also serve up live music performances rang-

ing from the classical, courtesy of members of the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra, to the next-door neighbor kind, courtesy of Tom Hall and the Plowboys. Even the South Carolina Shakespeare Company will perform.

As an homage to host Rockaways, visual artists are invited to enter the Paint - a - Cheeseburger competition with the winning painting being awarded $150 on the day of the festival. Artists who display may submit their paintings on festival-day morning. Entries will be displayed as a group and the winning entry will be on display at Rockaways for one year. Even if you aren't an artist yourself, come out and offer your appraisals of the cheeseburger art and take home a selection or two from the myriad other artists and arts venders on hand.

The Trenholm Artists Guild (known locally as TAG) is located in Columbia, South Carolina. Members include, but are not limited to, amateur and professional artists who work in watercolor, oil, acrylics, pastel, sculpture, fiber, and photography. Residents of the Greater Columbia area over 18 years of age are invited to join. Meetings are held monthly September through May on the 2nd Monday of the month at Forest Lake Park, 6820 Wedgefield Road. Visitors are invited to attend the meetings.

For more information on the Rosewood Arts Festival, please contact David Phillips at 796-3352 or Karen Jamrose at 790-5224. For more information about TAG, please call Mary Lou Benton at 776-3839. *//CB*

KENDRICK **MARION**

BY BONNIE BOITER-JOLLEY

With a uniquely animated face, chest rocking vocal power, and a dedication to the theatre scene, Kendrick Marion has caught Jasper's eye. Since his Columbia theatre debut in 2010 in Town Theatre's production of *White Christmas,* Marion, a native of the SC low country, has only gotten more involved. From working backstage, to onstage, to MCing and audience building, Marion wants to be taken seriously. However, as he will tell you, he "was bit by the theatre bug" long before he got here.

The 22-year-old from Goose Creek attributes his first forays into acting to the encouragement of his fourth grade chorus teacher, Judy Winkle, who recognized his vocal abilities and pushed him to audition for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.* A natural vocal talent, Marion's musical foundations lie in gospel music. His mother, Gail Marion, the choir director at their church, gave him his first solo at the age of five. Though Marion has always had a passion for singing through chorus and choir, he characterizes his first experiences with acting as simply "fun." Marion's involvement with a production of *Oliver* at Dock Street Theatre in Charleston, his first paying gig and also his first experience with "real dancing," taught him that theatre could also be a challenge.

In high school, Marion continued his acting pursuits, appearing as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and Major-General Stanley in *Pirates of Penzance*, before enrolling in USC as an English major. Originally intending to pursue a law degree, Marion is currently taking some time to refocus, continue to pursue his passion, and plan for the future.

Raised in what he refers to as a "traditional household," Marion says his parents, Gail and Kenneth Marion, have been to every show at least once and couldn't be more supportive of his dreams. Marion has appeared in and worked behind the scenes in numerous shows at Town, Workshop, and Trustus Theatres. He names Trustus Theatre's production of *Passing Strange* as his favorite project thus far, citing not only a tight knit and talented cast, but also the growth he experienced and the privilege he felt to have been part of such a challenging production.

Marion has also had the opportunity to spread his love for music to younger generations. In February, he was tapped to be the Master of Ceremonies for the first *Orchestra Rocks,* a children's program through the SC Philharmonic Orchestra modeled after a program at Carnegie Hall and is slated to hold the same position th year in Augusta's *Orchestra Moves.*

Like many young actors, Marion dreams of New York, Broadway, and winning a Tony Award, but for now he hopes to stay as involved as he can in what he views as a thriving Columbia arts and theatre scene. "Get the word out, put the posters up, and be vocal," he says.

In a city this size, Kendrick Marion sees no reason not to make it happen.

Above: Photo by Jason Steelman

BIT BY THE THEATRE BUG

Photo by Bonnie Boiter-Joley

ALEJANDRO GARCIA-LEMOS AND CULTURAL ART

BY CYNTHIA BOITER

Visual artist Alejandro Garcia-Lemos does not call himself a cultural artist, but that's what he is – and he doesn't even have to lift a paintbrush to prove it. A native of Colombia, the one with the o and in South America, Garcia-Lemos has made an art out of studying other cultures, both formally and informally. Whether he is attending a French language immersion class in Montreal or working at his day job – a Spanish language service he and his business and life partner Britt Hunt founded ten years ago – Garcia-Lemos almost constantly transgresses the artificial boundaries of the various cultures by which he would most commonly be identified. This multiculturalism is evidenced in his art, not only via the subject matter, color palette, and the influence of other artists from a variety of cultures, but mostly by his sensitivity to the social issues that cultures tend to share. An astute expositor of humanity's strengths and its foibles, Garcia-Lemos has an eye for how the things that make us different make us all the same.

Born in the small town of Bucaramanga, Colombia in 1968, Garcia-Lemos grew up in Bogata and attended the Universidad Nacional de Colombia where he studied graphic design and painting. Influenced by his eccentric grandfather whose interests ran the gamut from magic to folk art to carpentry, Garcia-Lemos says he "wanted to study arts and music but that was considered to be for sissies," as he was growing up. "It wasn't until I graduated from high school that I began to be exposed to the arts." An internship at the university's museum of art required him to spend an entire year cataloging art by the Renaissance artist Tintoretto, as well as complete graphic design projects and, basically, "help with everything." Taught by professors in Colombia who were "part of that late twentieth century wave of Colombian artists," Garcia-Lemos knew he wanted to practice art for a living.

Upon graduation at the age of 21, the young artist moved to New York City where, he says, he barely survived. "I spent almost every day at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I had no job, and I was starving. I made jewelry to sell in boutiques." A day before his visa expired, he returned to Colombia and soon was offered a job as the creative director for a small advertising company where he worked for three years. However, advertising, according to Garcia-Lemos, was not his "cup of tea." After a brief stint in the US again, he was offered a temporary position with BP Oil Company to put together a book. "I thought, 'I can handle this for three months.'" At the end of the project though, the talented young man was offered the kind of salary to stay in the oil business that he could not turn down. "I painted a lot to take my mind off my work. I hated it. I traveled a lot, to New York and Paris, all over. I bought some real estate – visited museums. I tried to find a balance," he explains. When he was offered the opportunity to leave the company with an impressive severance package that would allow him a full scholarship to further his education, he jumped at the chance.

It was while pursuing a master's degree in international studies at Florida International University in Miami that Garcia-Lemos met his future partner, Hunt, a young student from Columbia, SC who had been living in Bogata before coming to school. "We realized that we had mutual friends," Hunt says. A relationship blossomed between the men and the two moved together to Columbia in 2002. "I remember driving up from Miami to Columbia and I was listening to music on the radio," Garcia-Lemos says. "After a while I realized that all I could pick up on the radio was preachers talking about anti-gay rights, anti-abortion, and God. And I called up Britt and said, 'where is the music? They don't have radio stations here.'" At this point Hunt interjects into the story, "That's when I said, 'Oh, I forgot to tell you. It's called the Bible Belt.'"

This Page: Photos by Jonathan Sharpe

THE FRIDAY COTTAGE

BY AUSTIN BLAZE

Columbia is no stranger to historic buildings. From USC's allegedly haunted Longstreet morgue-turned-theater to the bronze dome of the capital building scattered with commemorated cannon-ball strikes, our city is riddled with architectural relics of our Confederate history. The preservation of such sites serves myriad historical, aesthetic, and even tourist functions. They maintain the white-pillared charm of the plantation style, as well as remind us of the strides we've taken to improve upon our regrettably plantation-oriented past. But rarely do these structures serve the most fundamental edificial function: housing.

The Friday Cottage is a bit of an exception to this rule. Located on the corner of Henderson and Richland Streets, this inviting circa-1840 Columbia-style cottage has served as private residence to Alejandro Garcia-Lemos and partner Britt Hunt for six-years, bringing them simultaneously closer to what Garcia-Lemos and Hunt refer to as Columbia's contemporary "downtown renaissance" and its storied Civil-War past.

During the period in which this property housed several generations of the eponymous Friday family, it served as a way station for refugees fleeing from Charleston to the mountains of North Carolina and was "one of a handful" of Columbia houses that survived the flames of Sherman's 1865 raid (though it did succumb to plunder by Union soldiers). After the Fridays came the Fields, and after the Fields this house was converted to office space. Thanks to Garcia-Lemos and Hunt, it has since been resurrected from its role as a glorified and aesthetically over-qualified cu-

It is somewhat ironic, but not unexpected, that Garcia-Lemos's responses to many social issues that are grounded in Bible Belt culture often arise in his art. Homoerotic images of Saint Sebastian, a chastity belt, migration letters in Spanglish, a depiction of SC's former governor Mark Sanford after the Appalachian Trail debacle that brought ridicule to the state and its government, and a depiction of Nikki Haley, SC's current anti-arts governor as the goddess Nimrata Randhawa, a cross between Ganesh, the Indian god of obstacles, and the governor herself. (For more on *The Tale of the Infamous but Exotic Goddess Nimrata*, please see *A Message from Jasper* at the front of this magazine.) The artist, who likes to create paintings in a series format, has previously created both full-scale exhibitions and single paintings inspired by sexuality, religion, politics, and immigration. "The issue of immigration is very important to me," he remarks, calling up years of frustration as he tried for so long to obtain a green card which would grant him permanent legal resident status in the United States. According to Hunt, the last straw occurred in September ten years ago when Garcia-Lemos and his partner finally decided to start their own business. Comunicar is a Spanish language service specializing in Spanish language interpretation in the medical and legal fields. "It took years, and there was so much paperwork," Garcia-Lemos says, "In so many ways I had to put aside my art so I could get my visa." The company, which has 17 employees, was founded on September 6, 2002, exactly ten years before Garcia-Lemos's most recent show opened at Columbia College. "Once I got my green card, I could paint again. The last four years I have been able to dedicate most of my time to my art."

His newest series, entitled *Red Social – Portraits of Collaboration*, deviates from the majority of the artist's work in that there are few, if any, socio-political messages in the collection of 24 portraits of the friends and colleagues Garcia-Lemos has come to most cherish over the past ten years. "They are realistic pieces that represent people that I know, that I like, who I support and who support me. They are my social network," he says. "The pieces are strong, but not political. They are an homage to these people who I appreciate so much."

For more on Alejandro Garcia-Lemos check out his website at www.garcialemos.com. *Red Social – Portraits of Collaboration* will show at the Goodall Gallery on the campus of Columbia College from September 6th through October 15th.

bicle. The pair was awarded the Historic Columbia Foundation's 2008 Preservation/Restoration Award for "ensuring its future through sensitive rehabilitation."

This award-winning rehabilitation features a unique and tactfully contemporary flair that complements its modest antebellum design. Modern furniture and artwork harmonize surprisingly well with the home's original exposed brick walls, gracefully melding the 19th and 21st centuries in a space that dons progressive design while paying homage to southern styles of the past. The main floor features Garcia-Lemos's studio and occasionally hosts exhibitions for emerging artists. "Columbia still lacks good places where emerging artists can show their work without breaking the bank," Garcia-Lemos explains. "We think Friday Cottage Art Space helps a bit in that regard."

Garcia-Lemos and Hunt's home also doubles (or, perhaps more accurately, triples) as a bed and breakfast, offering both short and long stays. Previous house guests have provided unanimously rave reviews on airbnb.com, awarding the Friday Cottage a perfect five stars in each and every category, praising the hosts' hospitality (as evidenced by comments such as "Brent lent me his bicycle" and "get Alejandro to share some of his guitar playing with you!"), the décor, and the convenient central location. "You'd be crazy to stay anywhere else in Columbia," as one reviewer puts it.

When asked about any future plans for the Friday Cottage, the couple rattles off ideas including "live/work space, art gallery, youth hostel/guesthouse, [and] café," but emphasize that there are "no firm plans." What they do assure is that the surrounding Robert Mills neighborhood is evolving, "growing beyond its stereotype as only lawyer's offices with the addition of bakeries, a language institute and a number of massage/spa centers." This artisan influx, in addition to the recent sale of Bull Street's abandoned mental hospital to Greenville developer Bob Hughes (who is in the process of planning a residential community that "respects the property's special place in the city's history and enhances the quality of life in the region"), suggests that the surrounding community may soon embody the same visionary eclecticism prefaced by the Friday Cottage.

To learn more about the Friday Cottage or to schedule a stay, visit fridaycottage.com.

"Monkey Business"

PALMETTO & LUNA

BY AUSTIN BLAZE

As both an artist and an avid activist for social issues relevant to South Carolina's growing Latino/Hispanic community, Garcia-Lemos and partner Britt Hunt have managed to incorporate these two passions into a single foundation, Palmetto & Luna. Since its genesis in 2003, P&L has been driven by the complex mission of "foster[ing] Latino arts and culture in South Carolina."

One event that embodies this mission is P&L's annual COLORES Children's Drawing Contest. Each year, Latino children from all across South Carolina submit original pieces of artwork revolving around a certain theme (past themes have included "My Favorite Story" and "My Roots: My Family, My Community, and My Culture"). In 2012's "Fantastical Dream Creatures" themed contest, P&L received 345 drawings, sketches, and paintings from 31 different counties.

On a social front, P&L has collaborated with ETV to create a fotoNovella entitled *La Ropa Sucia*. P&L's website explains that the show's name is derived from "the Hispanic adage, 'La ropa sucia se lava en casa,'" (which translates to "Dirty laundry is washed at home or "Don't air your dirty laundry"). By "shed[ding] light on the issues facing Hispanic teens, such as racism, assimilation, and religious and sub-cultural division, as well as more universal issues such as poverty, domestic violence, access to healthcare, and low self-esteem," the program targets Hispanic and non-Hispanic teenagers alike, fostering "cross-cultural empathy and awareness."

But P&L is not strictly a youth organization. In addition to programs geared toward instilling the value of art in young South Carolinians, it also hosts galleries and exhibitions for SC's already flourishing Latino artists. Last year's "BREAK! Artistas Latinos" exhibition at the Community Gallery of the Columbia Museum of Art proved to be hugely successful; over 300 people attended the opening ceremony. The event hosted Latino artists from a wide variety of creative media, including (in addition to Garcia-Lemos's own visual art) "the works of Argentinean visual artist Marcelo Novo, Ceramic Sculpture artist Diana Farfán, [and] Mixed Media artists and brothers DRE and Sammy López (of Piensa Art Company)."

P&L's other projects have included: La Tropa Theater Group (which now has rehearsal space at Trustus Theater); a dance collaboration with the Vista Ballroom; "Páginas," a book club focusing on Latino authors; "El TREsome," an event in which three Latino artists come together "for sixty minutes to create three different perspectives of a common theme"; and the Mariachi Clown, a group of three men, each donning one of Mexico's three national colors, that wordlessly and comically improvises for family audiences.

Though P&L functions (as do many arts organizations) on what Garcia refers to as "a shoestring budget," its Board of Directors has applied for multiple grants and held its first fundraiser. Accordingly, it "hopes[s] to mature [its] programs" in the near future.

For more information about Palmetto & Luna, its events, or its affiliated programs, visit them at palmettoluna.org or find them on Facebook.

Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY – LAURIE BROWNELL MCINTOSH

BY CYNTHIA BOITER

"Just Swallow Your Spit"

Visual artist Laurie Brownell McIntosh approaches her art as if she is on a mission. Once the seedling of an idea sprouts in her head, she cannot shake it until she has conquered the question at hand; met the precise and exhausting goal she sets for herself. For a while, McIntosh dedicated herself to exploring the process of creating batiks, focusing on color saturation and lines. Once satisfied with that endeavor, she found herself determined to both learn, and convey through her art, the intimacies and intricacies of body language by studying and creating single iconic figures using layered colors and textures, demonstrating the unspoken communication that individuals share. But as soon as she had completed this series she already knew what her next project would be. "I wanted to tell a more complete story, so I decided to explore this idea by using multiple canvasses and images to push my art to a more narrative place," she explains from her workspace in Columbia's Vista Studios on Lady Street. The artist knew she wanted to use the concept of multiple canvasses to tell a "cradle to grave story of a life well lived," but the problem, at first, was finding the story to tell.

McIntosh was born in Greenville, SC in 1960, the youngest of four children and the daughter of parents who lived greater than ordinary lives. Her father, Iverson Oakley "Ike" Brownell, was the first psychiatrist in Greenville, and one of the founders of the Marshall Pickens Psychiatric Institute. Her mother was a trailblazer as well. Agnes Smith Brownell entered college at the age of 16 to study chemistry, going on to pursue a second degree in laboratory sciences at Duke University – a rare endeavor for women of the time – where she met and, in 1942, married McIntosh's father. Ike liked to boast to his children that his bride was the first female toxicologist in the country. Agnes also had a life-long passion for art, having begun training when she was just twelve years old. The couple enjoyed exciting and meaningful careers before starting a family. Ike was a flight surgeon and, in addition to working for the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Agnes volunteered to accompany chaplains who had been charged with delivering to families the sad news of soldiers lost to the war.

And so the story goes.

Ike and Agnes's children were born and taught, disciplined, loved, and eventually brought up to be adults, more by Agnes, who embraced the role of the doctor's wife, than by Ike, who kept long hours and shared a high community profile with his wife. Some of the children, like young Laurie and her oldest sister Lynn, came to share their mother's love of the visual arts – all of them went away to college, married, and had children of their own. Sadly, in his later years, Ike was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, and the ever-dutiful Agnes took up the role of constantly caring for her dying husband. After Ike died, Agnes, whose pre-widowhood life had been filled with important charitable works and socializing with friends, card games, cocktails, and cigarettes, now entered the stage of her life in which she was alone. She filled these days with ritual. Coffee, reading the newspaper, monitoring the weather. Finally, at the age of 94, the proudly independent widow, mother, artist, and groundbreaking intellectual could no longer care for herself. McIntosh and her siblings made the difficult decision to move their mother to a facility in Columbia where she would ultimately spend the final days of her life. Because of McIntosh's proximity to her mother's facility, she often found herself by her mother's bedside, remembering, celebrating, speculating, and patiently watching and waiting for the life of her mother to come to a close.

It was there, on one of those sweetly sad, introspective nights, that the idea of preserving her mother's life in paint came to McIntosh like an epiphany. "I realized the inspiration for my story was literally lying right in front of me. I could see it. I could visualize the whole piece from beginning to end. I have spent my whole life telling stories about Agnes," McIntosh says. The time had finally come for her to reconcile all the pieces of life she had gleaned from her mother – a home, a history, an honest approach to the world around her, a sense of humor that facilitated that honesty, and a love for visual arts and the ability to act on that inclination.

Laurie Brownell McIntosh would paint the life of her mother, Agnes. And she would do it with the same passion she had taken to every other project in her life. Her newest project, *All the In Between – My Story of Agnes*, and a book by the same name, was begun.

Though McIntosh fell in love with visual arts when she was a child – "In the first grade, I won the art contest," she admits. "It was on litter." – She started out her professional life as a graphic artist, graduating from the University of South Carolina in 1982 with the first graphic design (concentration) class. "I always knew I would be an artist," she says. But McIntosh had no interest in "living the life of the starving artist in New York. I wanted to be successful and financially independent. I knew I had to make a living. I didn't want to be at the mercy of anyone. I was never told by either parent that being female was a handicap. My mother was an example of that."

McIntosh's career as a graphic artist began long before computers eased the way and opened doors to limitless creativity. Her early jobs found her designing lay-outs for *Sporting Classics Magazine*; working with Don Fowler and Lee Bussell doing public relations and graphic design at Fowler Communications; as well as at the SC Department of Commerce. "I had the opportunity to do some great work," she says of her time at the Commerce Department. "We truly believed in pushing the arts and pushing education. I got a real understanding of the arts as a vehicle for economic growth." Her steadfast sense of humor and "comfort in her own skin" allowed the young woman to grow both as an artist and a person.

In 1987, McIntosh married the attorney Duncan McIntosh and the two soon started a family of their own. Two years after her marriage, McIntosh decided it was time to start her own business as well, and founded Brownell McIntosh Graphic Design. An eventual location for her office in the Five Points area of Columbia put her in the company of a number of local artists whose work and support inspired her and, in 1997, she began to dedicate a specified amount of time to painting.

"I built a studio in the backyard because I wanted to be home when the children got off the school bus. I would get in the car and drive around the block, then park the car again so I'd feel like I was really at work," she remembers. McIntosh credits time spent at Penland School of Crafts as "life-altering" when it came to her art. "I was told by [noted Tennessee artist] Pinkney Herbert, 'You're not a

designer, you're an artist,' and I embraced that. That's when my painting became more important."

In typical McIntosh fashion, once she accepted the challenge of being a professional artist, nothing held her back. In 2009, the opportunity arose for her to temporarily occupy a studio space among the artists at Columbia's Vista Studios – Gallery 80808. McIntosh had been anxious to begin her work with batiks, having traveled to Africa on numerous occasions and been influenced by the art there. She moved into the studio space, which eventually became a permanent arrangement, and was welcomed into the community of artists already working there. "It is a phenomenal environment to be in the middle of," McIntosh says, citing the motivation she gets from her neighbors in the communal arts setting. "I'm still in awe of Laura Spong," she admits.

A natural in a community arts environment, McIntosh frequently travels with other local artists to a variety of homes and studios, often in the mountains, where she and her contemporaries get away from their regular routines and devote days on end to creating art. "I enjoy the company and the inspiration," she says. And McIntosh's easy-going spirit makes her a pleasure to work with, as well. "I'm just not dark and brooding," she says. "My art tends to be either humorous or happy art." She admits to trying abstract work for a while, but "everything I did looked like an aerial view of a cul-de-sac."

It was on a group-get-away with her artist companions that McIntosh began her current project, *All the In Between – My Story of Agnes*, and it was with her characteristic humor and laid-back attitude that she approached a subject matter that could have manifested as something sentimental or brooding. Instead, McIntosh's collection of 70-plus canvasses telling the story of the life and death of her mother – literally from cradle to grave – is filled with wry observations and witty remembrances. In one panel in which the artist depicts her mother driving with thirsty children in the back of the car, Agnes tells the complaining children to "just swallow your spit." In another, she grasps her head with her hands in mock desperation as an unknown caller disturbs her by ringing her on the telephone.

Making use of the storyboard idea as a vehicle for telling her story, McIntosh also uses lines to facilitate the narrative forward motion of the story. "I knew I had to be truthful, and I knew I had to tell the story from my perspective," she admits, saying that some of the stories depicted by the panels "tickle my funny bone; others, hurt my pride."

McIntosh does not shy away from painting some of the more difficult parts of her mother's story – especially when she addresses her father's battle with esophageal cancer and her mother's last days. "I had feared that year of my mother's life, but it ended up being one of the coolest years of my life," she says. "I know I got the lesson of my life with Mom. I learned that life is just a circle. There's nothing extraordinary about this story, but it is pretty universal. Agnes was a tough old bird and she went out happy."

One of the most touching scenes in the series is the final one, depicting the rose garden at the chapel at Duke University where Agnes and Ike had first courted, "on the back pew," as McIntosh says. In the accompanying narrative McIntosh describes how, "On what would have been her 96th birthday, Agnes' three daughters drove to Durham to close the final chapter on her story. On that early morning, in the drizzling rain, each set out with a small paper coffee cup filled with the intermingled ashes of the two people who had brought them into this world. They set out to find the old rose bushes, the ones that might have stood in view of the chapel where Ike and Agnes fell in love so many years before."

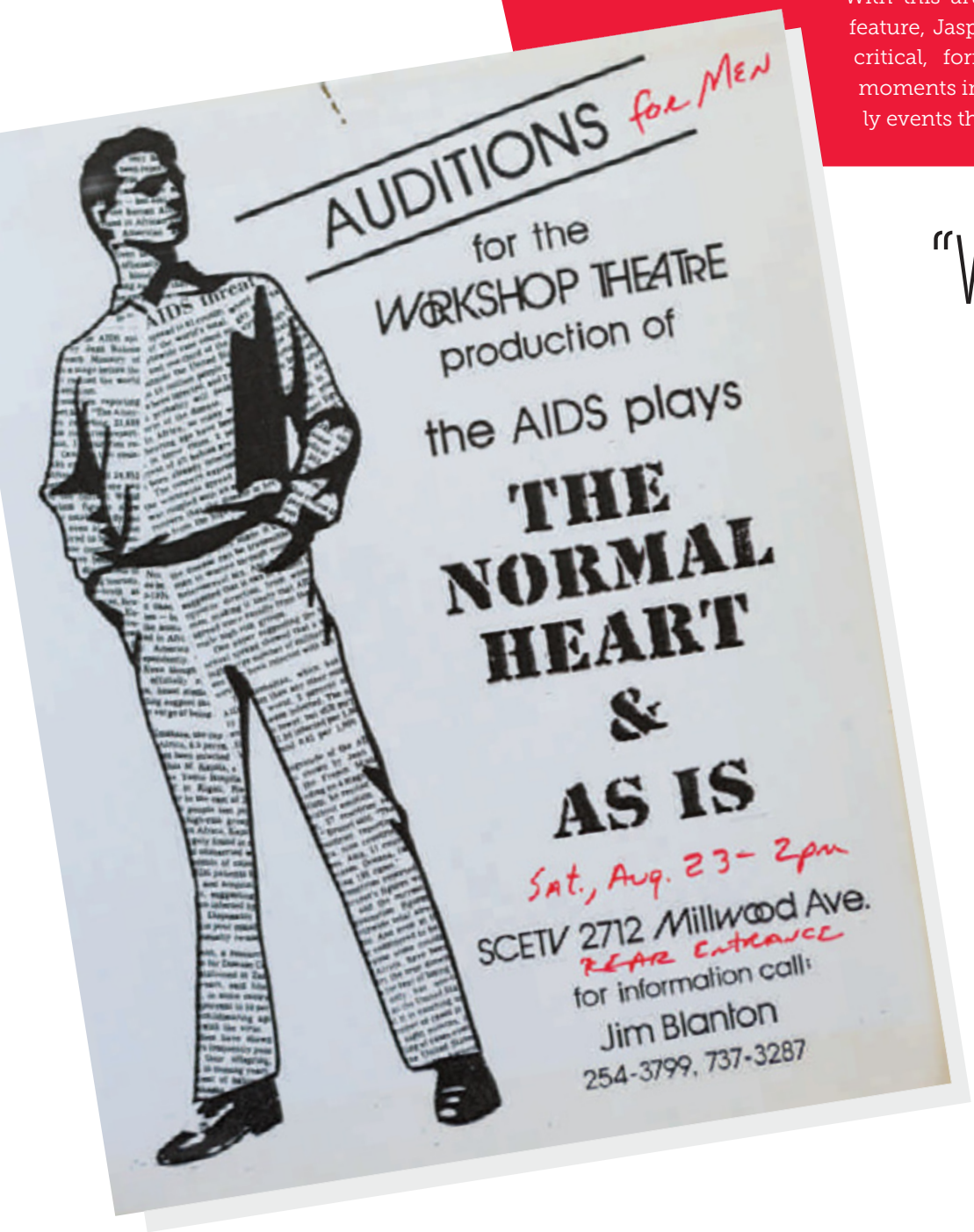
In addition to the exhibition of *All the In Between* at Vista Studios – Gallery 80808 from October 18 through November 6, 2012, McIntosh has also compiled an art book of the same title that is being published by Muddy Ford Press. The book will be available for purchase during the opening reception on October 19th and at selected dates throughout and beyond the running of the show. [Full disclosure, this writer also wrote the forward for McIntosh's book.]

Above: Photo by Forrest Clonts

TWO PLAYS AT WORKSHOP THEATRE START A CONVERSATION ABOUT AIDS AND SEXUALITY

BY ED MADDEN

With this article, *Jasper* begins an occasional feature, Jasper Looks Back, in which we recall critical, formative, or historically important moments in the arts of the Midlands, especially events that helped to shape our culture.



"WHO CARES IF A FAGGOT DIES?"

– DR. EMMA BROOKNER
IN *THE NORMAL HEART* (1985)

In the fall of 1986, when Workshop Theater produced a double bill of plays about AIDS, director Jim Blanton said that he didn't know anyone who was infected. Bill Edens assured him that he knew people with HIV or AIDS – he just didn't know yet that he did. Edens had helped to found Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services (PALSS) in Columbia in 1985, just a year before Workshop's production of Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* and William Hoffman's *As Is*.

Left: Audition Flyer

The AIDS epidemic was in the national news, but most South Carolinians assumed AIDS to be a problem elsewhere. The week the play premiered in Columbia, newspapers reported that there were 87 confirmed cases of AIDS in South Carolina (surely many more unconfirmed), more than half of them deceased. Looking back now, Blanton and others involved insist that those plays helped to start a conversation in South Carolina about AIDS. Although the plays were not a commercial success for Workshop, the media surrounding the production guaranteed their impact, shaping a very public discussion about AIDS, terminal illness, stigma, and homosexuality in local media at the very moment such a conversation was inevitable.

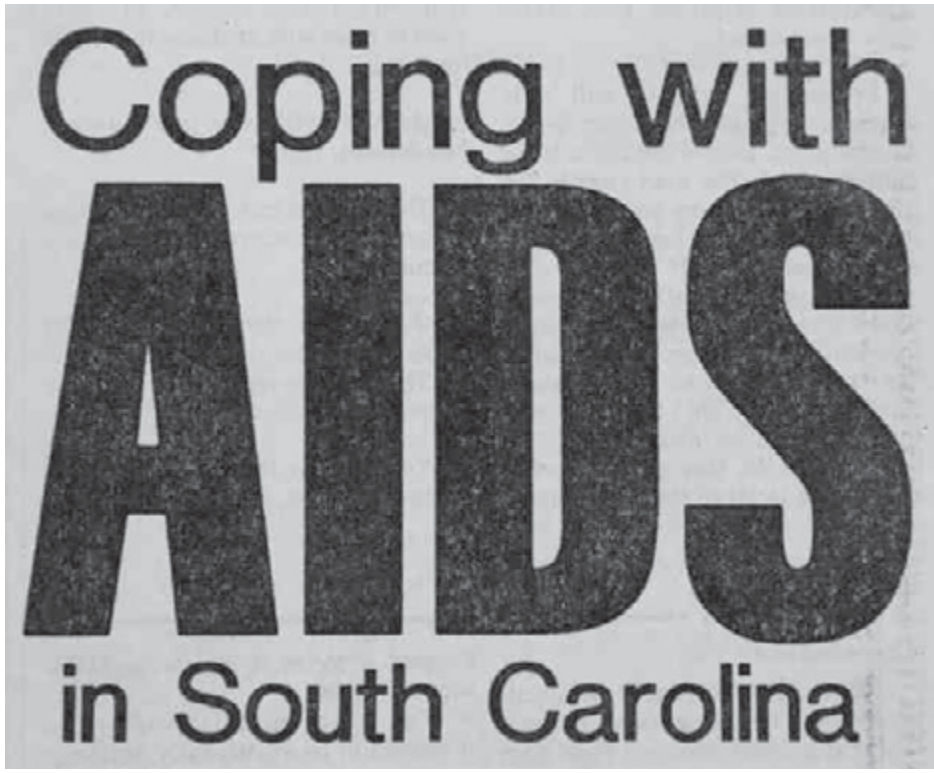
In 1986 *Columbia Record* reporter Dave Moniz asked "Phillip" (a 35-year-old HIV-positive man who chose not to use his real name in the newspaper): "How has the 'gay community, if there is such a thing,' dealt with the AIDS threat?"

If there is such a thing.

In 1986, the only visible gay organization was the local chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), a support group founded by Harriet Hancock in 1982, the same year a groundbreaking lawsuit required the University of South Carolina to recognize the Gay Student Association as an official student organization.

The state's gay community tended to center on bars or social networks – or the arts – and attempts at community organizing were more often social than political. Pride events were not public marches but private community picnics (no media) at local parks.

"Phillip" told Moniz that he had read about AIDS in *The Advocate*, the national lesbian and gay newsmagazine, but, he said, "I guess smugness, stupidity – call it what you will – I figured, that's in New York; that's in San Francisco it's not gonna come to South Carolina." He said half the people he knew still felt that way, and he


Coping with
AIDS
in South Carolina

described the gay community as unengaged on the issue – "insular" and "low-key."

Blanton had read about AIDS in the national media, too. And, though he knew of no one locally affected, he says now, "It was something I felt was coming." He hoped the plays would not only be good theatre but also a chance to educate. He told reporter Dottie Ashley in *The State* that he wanted "to dispel some of the fears" people had about AIDS and address misperceptions about transmission. And he said he "wanted the average person to see that homosexuals are people just like anyone else and should not be ostracized."

On both fronts, as Blanton says now, "It was still a time of fear and loathing here."

Blanton believes the Workshop production was the first theatrical performance in South Carolina about AIDS. Charlotte's Little Theatre would stage *As Is* in July 1987. Trustus Theatre in Columbia would take on AIDS with Alan Browne's dystopian (and heterosexual) *Beirut* in 1988.

Blanton directed both *The Normal Heart* and *As Is*, with Bob Waites producing. Blanton also played Ned Weeks, a thinly disguised version of Kramer and the protagonist of *The Normal Heart*, and Brad Baber played Felix, his lover. Thomas Richards played Rich, the protagonist of *As Is*, and Alex Skidmore played Saul, his lover.

The production notes for Kramer's *The Normal Heart* call for simple staging with whitewashed walls. "Everywhere possible," writes Kramer, "on this set and upon the theatre walls, too, facts and figures and names were painted, in black, simple lettering"—updated figures of infection and mortality, statistics about government inaction and the lack of media coverage, and the names of the dead, lists of names like a war memorial.

According to Drucilla Brookshire, who played Dr. Emma Brookner in *The Normal Heart*, the Workshop production used the lobby to similar effect. The cast and crew covered the wood of the lobby with white sheetrock, "and we took statistics and quotes and everything we could find related to – we didn't know it was HIV at the time – AIDS and wrote it on the walls."

Local reviewers praised the performances of Blanton, Baber, and Brookshire in *The Normal Heart*. They

Program, Workshop Theatre production (1986)

commended David Hardee (who played a gay city employee) and Jay McLeod (the play's "swish" character, to quote Ashley), and they singled out Jocelyn Sanders for her performance as a hospice nurse in *As Is*. Reviewers also praised the boldness of the play – and the theater. Ashley said she felt "a chill of excitement and recognition" when she watched *The Normal Heart*. "The chill was a recognition of one of Workshop's original purposes: to make people think about and openly discuss controversial issues."

The idea of using theatre to educate wasn't new for Blanton. When he directed Marsha Norman's Pulitzer-winning *'night Mother* the year before at Workshop, a play focused on suicide, the theater provided information about suicide in the lobby and hosted post-performance discussions. For the AIDS plays, volunteers from PALSS were stationed in the lobby at some performances with information about safe sex practices, and the cast and crew chipped in to give AIDS ribbons to theatre patrons with their programs. The preview show was a fund-raiser for PALSS. The biggest donor that night received a copy of *As Is* signed by the author.

In a letter included in the PALSS newsletter at the end of that year, PALSS Board President Tony Price thanked Workshop, adding that the production "will be remembered always as a giant leap towards openly putting AIDS issues into the general community."

However, it wasn't the plays that put AIDS into a general community conversation; it was the publicity surrounding the plays. Economically, the plays bombed. "People stayed away in droves," says Blanton. Box office receipts show that Workshop sold only 39 percent of the house. "People didn't want to hear it," says Waites. Brookshire says she remembers a woman and her daughter who did makeup for Workshop productions. They stopped when they learned the subject matter of the plays. "They refused to do makeup," she says, "and they never came back."

Unlike most plays at the time, which received one review in each of the Columbia newspapers, the AIDS plays got both pre- and post-performance coverage, and in forms that clearly seemed to set the terms for discussion. One full spread on the plays and AIDS in *The Columbia Record* included a story about the "Facts about AIDS," a short glossary of AIDS terms, and a story on "Coping with AIDS in South Carolina," which included interviews with Bill Edens of PALSS and Dr. Bosko Postic, an infectious disease specialist who was one of the first doctors to treat AIDS patients in Columbia. In 1988, two years after the production, a *Free Times* theatre reviewer would say that even if you never actually saw either show, you *heard* about the AIDS plays at Workshop.

As historians now note, AIDS contributed to the growing visibility and politicization of lesbians and gays in the United States. It would become clear soon enough that AIDS was in South Carolina, and that 1986 was a tipping point for both AIDS activism and gay visibility in the state. Directly and indirectly, the AIDS plays helped to shape the local culture.

The next spring, 1987, the USC Honors College offered a new course on the ethics and medical issues of AIDS, co-taught by Dr. Postic with philosophy professor Dr. Nora Bell. Bill Mould, then-director of the Honors College, told *The Columbia Record* that his viewing of the two plays at Workshop "convinced him USC needed to find a way to educate students about AIDS." That fall, Waites and Blanton founded a healing circle that met at Trinity Cathedral for the next three years, attended by people with cancer and AIDS, as well as clergy, friends, and caregivers. Waites subsequently helped to organize a series of healing retreats for gay men from North Carolina and South Carolina. "We were facing our friends dying," he says.

The 1988 Trustus production of *Beirut*, a play about quarantining HIV-positive individuals, turned out to be prophetic. In 1989 the General Assembly introduced a bill proposing to quarantine people with AIDS. On April 21, 1989, members of the national AIDS activist group ACT-UP (or AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) joined local activists in demonstrations on the State House grounds. They staged a "kiss-in" on the grounds, trying to make it clear that AIDS could not be contracted through casual contact (also making homosexuality visible), and later a "die-in" on the street, during which protestors blocked traffic and refused to move as police carted their bodies away.

"Who cares if a faggot dies?" asks Dr. Brookner in *The Normal Heart*. "I'm frightened nobody important is going to give a damn," she says, "because it seems to be happening to mostly gay men."

The plays may have been explicitly about AIDS, but homosexuality was the implicit problem. Despite her praise of the play, Ashley sniffed that *As Is* "rather graphically depicts gay bars." Moniz emphasized that the symbolic gay marriage that ends one play was "staged tastefully." Blanton himself warned playgoers in *The State* that *The Normal Heart* included two men kissing in one scene, which

could offend some playgoers. "What I'm hoping," he said, "is that people will not leave, even if they want to, but will stay around and be drawn into the stories of the characters. I hope they will see them as real people, just like heterosexuals – some are good and some are bad."

Looking back at press coverage of the productions now, one senses a very careful appeal to heterosexuals and a persistent plea that gay people are real people, *just like* straight people. Worse, there is a constant argument that "universal" and "human" themes actually can be found in gay subject matter – as if audiences are unable (or unwilling) to find the human in the gay, as if only heterosexuals can lay claim to *universal* human themes.

In the local papers, Dottie Ashley insisted, "It should be made clear that *The Normal Heart* is not just about political maneuverings within the gay community. It is also about complex human relationships."

In the fall of 1986, Blanton said that he didn't know anyone who was infected. As it turns out, he did. Three months after the production closed, one of the principal actors, Thomas Richards, died of AIDS-related illness. No one in the cast knew he was HIV positive.

A ballet dancer, Richards had fought hard for the lead role of Rich in *As Is*, his first acting role. "At that time," Waites says, "none of us understood why he fought so hard." Blanton and Brookshire say they didn't know that he had AIDS until after the play, when he was hospitalized. "I suspect he kept it from us, in part," says Blanton, "because he knew we wouldn't have worked him as hard had we known."

Mary Jeffcoat says, "Afterwards, finding out that Tommy had AIDS, and thinking . . . just having nightmares that every night he discovered that mole," referring to the moment Rich discovers a tell-tale lesion of Kaposi's sarcoma (an image echoed in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*).

"He died every night on stage," says Waites.

"Tommy was my hero," adds Blanton.

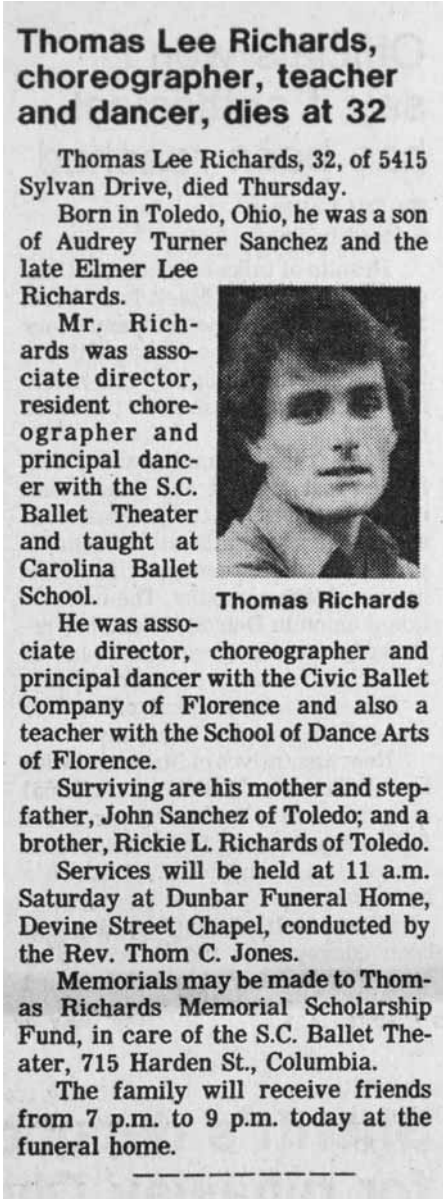
Sometimes art can change the culture. Sometimes what happens on a stage echoes beyond the walls of the theatre.

Thomas Lee Richards, associate director, choreographer, and principal dancer with the South Carolina Ballet Theatre, died on February 5, 1987. Blanton and Waites say theatre friends tried to reach out to his mother. "Many of us tried to reach out to comfort her," says Waites, "but she was unwilling or unable to accept those attempts." Waites adds, "We offered to distribute AIDS ribbons at Tommy's service, as we had done with the audiences each night, but his mother asked us not to."

AIDS rainbow ribbon, circa 1986

In 1990, four years after Workshop staged the AIDS plays, the first South Carolina Gay Pride March would make its way down Main Street. Jim Blanton was co-chair of the march.

According to the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, more than 15,000 people now live with HIV infection or AIDS in South Carolina, including about 200 children and teens.



Thomas Lee Richards, choreographer, teacher and dancer, dies at 32

Thomas Lee Richards, 32, of 5415 Sylvan Drive, died Thursday.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, he was a son of Audrey Turner Sanchez and the late Elmer Lee Richards.

Mr. Richards was associate director, resident choreographer and principal dancer with the S.C. Ballet Theater and taught at Carolina Ballet School.

Thomas Richards

He was associate director, choreographer and principal dancer with the Civic Ballet Company of Florence and also a teacher with the School of Dance Arts of Florence.

Surviving are his mother and stepfather, John Sanchez of Toledo; and a brother, Rickie L. Richards of Toledo.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at Dunbar Funeral Home, Devine Street Chapel, conducted by the Rev. Thom C. Jones.

Memorials may be made to Thomas Richards Memorial Scholarship Fund, in care of the S.C. Ballet Theater, 715 Harden St., Columbia.

The family will receive friends from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

from The Columbia Record, Oct. 6, 1986, B1

I am deeply grateful to Jim Blanton, Drucilla Brookshire, Mary Jeffcoat, and Bob Waites for talking with me about the play. I am especially grateful to Jim, who gave me access to his files. Without his box of newspaper clippings and reviews, I could not have written this. I particularly appreciated the extensive coverage of the plays by Dave Moniz in The Columbia Record. Thanks also to Tony Price at DHEC, and to archivist Santi Thompson and to the AIDS and Its Impact research collection in the Thomas Cooper Library at USC. // EM

THE WORLD OF WILLIAM STARRETT

BY KRISTINE HARTVIGSEN

Lounging by a pool in the Florida sunshine, William Starrett buried his nose in a copy of *The Little Prince* by the late French author Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Like the novella's protagonist, Starrett was searching for answers to seemingly unsolvable questions. How could he translate this exquisite parable into a ballet unlike any other, a ballet that captured the audience's imagination as it did his own?

"At first I thought, it's impossible. It's too hard," says the engaging executive and artistic director of the Columbia City Ballet (CCB). "I just couldn't figure out how to make it work as a ballet." But Starrett could not let go of the idea. A weighty desperation began to set in.

"I got calm and went for a pedicure – and I slept on it," Starrett explains. "And I said, I am just going to read it again and again." Perhaps it was the nearby splash from the pool, droplets of water depositing on the dog-eared page; it is difficult to say. "But it all just came to me, all in one big rush. I couldn't write fast enough, seriously. It was like a miracle. It all made sense." That's not unlike the passage in the book in which the little prince and the aviator come upon a perfectly working well in the middle of the Sahara Desert:

> *"Do you hear?" said the little prince. "We have wakened the well, and it is singing." ...*
>
> *I raised the bucket to his lips. He drank, his eyes closed. It was as sweet as some special festival treat. This water was indeed a different thing from ordinary nourishment. Its sweetness was born of the walk under the stars, the song of the pulley, the effort of my arms. It was good for the heart, like a present.*

"For me, inspiration tends to happen whenever I am around water," Starrett explains. "Whenever I am around water, I get a lot of ideas."

And that is how *The Little Prince* became part of CCB's outstanding 2012-2013 season of performances, which features *Dracula* on October 25-27, *The Nutcracker* on December 8-9 and 14-15, *Snow White* on February 1-2, 2013, and closing out with the world premiere of *The Little Prince* on March 8-9, 2013.

Born in Palm Springs, California, Starrett (whose mother taught dance) began ballet when he was 5 years old. By high school, he was dancing with San Francisco's Ballet Celeste. In 1973, he quietly fibbed about his age to qualify for a full scholarship to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, where he became the company's only soloist at age 18. While Starrett was in Canada, acclaimed dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov defected from the Soviet Union and came to Winnipeg, where he took a keen interest in Starrett. "I just latched onto Misha," Starrett said in an interview with Dance Channel TV. "We became great friends, and then I just got the bug."

From there, Starrett moved on to become a principal with the Joffrey Ballet and subsequently joined the American Ballet Theatre in 1977, where Lucia Chase was director, soon to be succeeded by his friend and mentor Baryshnikov. Starrett danced with ABT until 1981. In 1982, he came to CCB as the Artist-in-Residence. Legendary CCB Founder Ann Brodie actively recruited and groomed Starrett to be her eventual successor.

By the early 1990s, many years of executing his famous 180-degree grand jete and pushing himself beyond physical exhaustion took their toll. Starrett experienced a dismaying loss of flexibility and increasing pain. It was osteoarthritis; the cartilage in his hip joints had worn away, leaving bone to grind on bone. Feeling he had no other choice, Starrett reluctantly retired from dancing at age 39, pouring all of his energy to his other work with CCB. Still, the dream of performing remained until Starrett learned of a relatively new hip resurfacing surgery that could allow him to dance again. He decided to go for it, and the Dateline NBC television show came along to document the journey for some 22 million viewers.

In June 1998, Starrett had the surgery. The relief from his pain was almost immediate, and he was back working at the barre by August. With an NBC camera crew following him around, there was enormous pressure to get back into the leotards. And on February 5, 1999, Starrett famously danced as Prince Charming in Cinderella for

William Starett consults with lighting designer Barry Sparks

Photo by Sarah Kobos

Photo by Sarah Kobos

Above + Page Right: Photos by Sarah Kobos

both local and worldwide television audiences. "The Dateline performance was just seven months after my surgery," Starrett recalls. "It was really too early. I was much stronger a full year later." Nonetheless, the surgery added four more years to Starrett's performing career, and he retired from dance again, on his own terms, in 2003.

Always innovative and young at heart, qualities that have cultivated the freshness and creative excellence of CCB productions, Starrett also understands the pragmatic realities of running a business that depends heavily on the generosity of strangers and friends alike. Starrett constantly must make "the uncomfortable ask," he says. "Every day, my mission is to bring money in the door. I make 30-40 phone calls a day asking people for money. It's just necessary."

So does Starrett tire of the requisite after-hours schmoozing? After all, it's not always easy to smile and converse after an intense 14-hour day. "I enjoy relationships with people, and I enjoy learning. That is why I enjoy going to cocktail parties and things like that," Starrett says. "I learn from the community leaders who are my bosses each year. I learn their style and how they think. It's an amazing education. It can be a challenge to inspire people to give continuously over time."

It seems, too, that Starrett has a gift for left-brain/right-brain multitasking. This creative savant – known for his dapper wardrobe that includes the occasional metallic gold slacks, a colorful assortment of bowties, and to-die-for purple wing-tip shoes – actually enjoys crunching the numbers and tweaking budgets. "I love the numbers. You can be incredibly creative in the way you think about a budget and how you present it," he says. "A lot of directors won't get involved in the budget, but I believe the company's leadership must be financially sound and savvy. ... The boundaries of our budget really invoke creativity."

During his tenure with CCB, Starrett has accomplished much. "In the early days, the main struggle was professionalism," he explains, "They were split between two companies, and they did not embrace an economic development strategy. Many professional companies exclude children. My thinking was to institute a professional dance company and make sure that children were included in appropriate roles." A new culture of inclusion became an unspoken mantra, particularly with regard to recruiting African-American and minority dancers. "We need dancers who reflect the community," he adds.

Starrett is particularly proud of the CCB Educational Outreach Program, which he started in 1988. Every year, the program takes to the road, performing single-act ballets geared toward young people. Since its inception, Starrett says, the program has reached more than 500,000 children across the Southeast.

Marketing the CCB is second nature to Starrett, and one effective medium has turned out to be television. Every week for the past two years, Starrett has hosted "Arts WACH with William," which airs Thursday mornings on WACH FOX News (Channel 57). It was an idea for which Starrett doggedly pounded the pavement to find a home. "I had built relationships with TV stations because of our ad buys. So I developed a proposal for the show and approached all the stations," he says. "And FOX jumped on it."

The show is a ton of work, which Starrett does for free but admits, "Selfishly, I wanted to make sure that CCB was covered a lot. ... I just love the media; it helps satisfy the performing part of missing the stage. And I have a broader appreciation for all the incredible arts that we have. And the community could see that I was sincerely interested in all of the arts."

Of course, Starrett misses dancing, particularly performing with Mariclare Miranda, his longtime dance partner with whom he now co-owns the Columbia Conservatory of Dance. The school provides ballet training and often feeds into the professional company. "What I miss most about dancing is the feeling of the movement and transporting into the other characters. I miss the feeling of (physical) suspension," he says. "And I miss the magic that Mariclare and I had on stage. We each knew how the other thought. That communication is really rare. It just came together."

And what does Starrett not miss about those days? "I don't miss always trying to be perfect." That drive, he says, pushes many dancers to ignore pain to the exclusion of their best interests. These days, Starrett keeps in shape by running three miles a day and lifting weights at Gold's Gym. "I think a balance is really important. I work really hard all year, but I get more free time in the off-season. But from Labor Day to Christmas, I don't get a single day off," Starrett says. "So at 9:30 at night, I turn my phone off. Most problems can wait until the next day. I have to recharge."

Under Starrett's tutelage, CCB today is truly a professional company with 32 paid contract dancers and nearly 2,000 paying season members. "We are the largest employer of artists in the state of South Carolina, and I am incredibly proud. They are not paid nearly enough, but hopefully it will get better," Starrett says. "It's about the funding. If we get more money, I want my dancers to have it." Above all goals, Starrett would like to see CCB achieve national prominence.

The classics are important, and Starrett is vigilant about keeping even the classics fresh. Using video, he reviews performance tapes, keeping what works and discarding what does not. In addition, "I watch every single performance and always sit in the audience, because I want to feel the audience's response. I am constantly refining and fine-tuning to keep it interesting," he says. "I try to stay current with pop culture; it's important for recruiting new audiences."

A heightened interest in fairy tales is reflected in the CCB lineup, but Starrett is working hard to "un-Disney" the productions and give them an unexpected edge. "Everyone loves a fairy tale and a happy ending," he observes, adding that this season's *Snow White* is going to be completely different. "The fairy tales are working, but I don't want to be known as that person who always does Disney."

In times like these, with an economic recession hanging on like Velcro and war and gun violence, Starrett contends, people need the positive messages of *The Little Prince* more than ever. The simplicity of the story is part of its beauty, he says, "It returns you to the simple things in life and what's important in life. The message is very poignant." He adds that CCB's production will be unlike anything it has staged before, and the end will leave audiences thinking.

Starrett initially struggled to find just the right music to bring the production to life. "It has to be up to the level of the story and the action and my vision," he says. "I was constantly listening to music. The book is by a French author. As proud as the French are, they would never go for an English composer, so I turned to French composers. In the end, I decided on Jules Massenet. It was a spiritual experience. I actually broke down. ...

"If I achieve even a percentage of my vision, I think this could be really special. I would like to see it bring us global attention. It has an international message. What a universal way to reach so many people."

DANNY JENKINS

BY KYLE PETERSEN

Danny Jenkins is not what you would expect. A warm, youthful gay man whose enthusiasm for music and warm sense of humor suggesting everybody's favorite band director, (he briefly served as an assistant band director at North Hardin High School in Kentucky before going to grad school), he does not seem an especially likely candidate to be an Assistant Professor of Music Theory specializing in the 20th century composer Arthur Schoenberg (he is), or to be a gender-bending countertenor singer who can leave audiences speechless.

You see, to be a countertenor, in other words, is to sing in the higher registers of the feminine alto or mezzo soprano (often referred to as a falsetto voice). Popularized in the baroque period of the 18th century, there is a long tradition of men using their "head" voice to sing in a range more typical of a female singer (even composers in the Elizabethan era, such as John Dowland, composed music for the countertenor voice). The popularity of countertenors has waxed and waned over the years, and it's only recently come back into popularity in contemporary music, starting with Benjamin Brittan's decision to write the character of Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream as a countertenor in 1960.

How Jenkins came to be such a singer, though, is a bit unconventional. After a few rewarding years as an assistant band director, the young musician returned to grad school for intellectual stimulation rather than to focus on performing. He began his music career as a percussionist and naturally gravitated towards 20th century composers who took the concert percussion seriously.

"I didn't sing [seriously] until I went to do my Ph.D. at Rochester," Jenkins recalls. "I volunteered to be a guinea pig for a vocal pedagogy course and told the professor that I was interested in working on the countertenor [range]." His inspiration for this, he says, comes from a "nerdy musician party" where everyone would gather around the piano and take turns singing songs. "Somebody said, 'hey, can you do 'Climb Every Mountain' (from Sound of Music) in falsetto? And I just kept going higher and higher," he says.

As it turns out, the professor working on the pedagogy course had written his dissertation on the countertenor, and under his tutelage Jenkins quickly blossomed as a singer. "I don't really perform as a percussionist anymore, but as a countertenor," he admits. He also cites an interest in the "cultural phenomena of the female voice/male body" that countertenors inspire. This becomes even more interesting, Jenkins points out, when you take into account modern reactions to countertenors compared with their reception in the heyday of the voice.

What popularized the range was, of course, the castrati, a group of men whose prepubescent castration allowed them to keep their higher vocal ranges (puberty causes physiological effects to the larynx that enlarges the vocal cords). The practice reached its prominence in Italy during the Baroque period, during the first half of the 18th century, although the practice was always rather limited, making castrato singers particularly valuable for some time afterward. "Many of them were kind of rock stars of that time period," Jenkins enthuses. "[They] were very desired by women, and some were actually famous for their romantic prowess." As it turns out, contrary to popular perception, castration only requires a partial cut to prevent the effects of puberty, so castrati singers could

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Photo by Thomas Hammond

still be very much sexually active, although with a weakened sex drive and an inability to reproduce.

Of course, this reputation was inverted when countertenors became re-popularized in the second half of the 20th century. "There are a lot of countertenor blogs and things like that where people always seem to be interested in, a) are there genitalia [on these singers]? and b) what about their sexuality? There's this assumption that if you are even interested in this, you must be a homosexual," Jenkins explains. The singer admits to being bemused by the fact that "people often feel a need to defend countertenors against these [assumptions], as if being homosexual is always a negative thing."

As it turns out, "every man has the ability to do this, to talk or sing up here," Jenkins says, jumping up a few registers to demonstrate. While the size of the chest cavity and vocal cords can often affect how low a particular person can sing or talk, how high one can sing is really just a matter of control. Singing higher just means less contact in the vocal cords and singing in one's "head voice" rather than using the chest. Of course, this physical restriction means that many countertenors do not have particularly strong ranges or loud voices, which may have been the main motivation for creating the castrati in the first place, since it allowed them to combine the large chest cavities with high vocal ranges, an unlikely "natural" combination.

Jenkins' interest in the cultural and social dimensions of, as he puts it, "a man singing in a female voice," actually fit in large part with some of his interests in Schoenberg. The composer was not only famous for his musical creations and contributions, but also for his extensive musical and social commentary. As one of the chief progenitors of atonal or serial music, a radical democratization that abolished the tradition of giving certain notes or tones dominance at the expense of others, Schoenberg "questions this assumption that underlies hundreds of years of music," Jenkins explains. "He called it the "music of the angels," because major keys were often thought of as male and minor keys female, making a music where all tones were [treated equally] genderless."

Schoenberg, surprisingly, also wrote some vocal compositions early on in his career, which became the basis of Jenkins' dissertation at Rochester. The newly minted Ph.D. continued to grow as a performer after

coming to USC, of course, even as he admits to being in the shadow of David Daniels, widely considered the greatest living countertenor, who grew up in Spartanburg, SC. Most of Jenkins' recitals also feature some sort of lectures, an aspect which took the forefront at a recent conference at USC which crystallized the sort of questions he was interested in introducing through his performances.

"The Woman and Gender Studies program had a conference called Gender, Cultural Production, and Activism. So, in conjunction with this conference, I did a lecture recital called 'The Countertenor Voice: A Gendered Cultural Production,'" Jenkins explains. In a combination of lecturing and singing, the singer/academic gave a cultural history of the countertenor while playing with the idea of "who is doing the speaking," often juxtaposing composers of different genders and time periods, with very different notions of love and what they mean. "And when you add the layer of me, singing this, the question of who exactly is doing the speaking is complicated, when a man sings these [songs] in a female voice," he says. "I don't come up with any answers, but it presents these questions to the audience."

Jenkins' approach to his recitals also has the added advantage of stirring interest and accessibility into a form of contemporary music that is increasingly marginalized in our culture. One of his favorite recitals, he says, is a short performance he gave as Newberry College a few years back. The professor friend who put it together advertised that it would be "less than an hour," and, due to a college-wide requirement that all students attend a certain number of cultural events in their four years at school, the place was packed. "And it was packed with jocks," Jenkins says gleefully. After a short talk, he started with a classic aria for countertenor, originally written for a castrato, and the audience was perturbed. "You could see on their faces, and you could hear some snickers – it just made people uncomfortable because it doesn't conform to the expectations of what I'm supposed to sound like," he says. "But once they got over [that], they settled in and we had a very nice performance."

While Jenkins is very much a scholar first (his latest monograph, Schoenberg: Program Notes & Analyses, is coming out from Oxford University Press), his recitals point to one of the many ways having a University town strengthens and broadens the arts life of our city. The upcoming event the singer was most excited about during our interview was actually the performance of an angst-filled Schoenberg melodrama called Pirrot Lunaire that the Southern Exposure and Chamber Innovista is presenting on October 26th, during which he is providing an "intraconcert lecture." Of course, there is also the fact that he is singing as an alto soloist (a part originally written for a famous actress and singer) in Handel's Messiah with the Charlotte Symphony in December, too.

For Jenkins, though, it all mixes together. He sees everything as connected – music theory, high school band, countertenor singing. He follows Schoenberg's approach to contemporary music: "There will probably always be a smaller audience for contemporary music, but for those people who might have a penchant for it, they should be converted as soon as possible."

CURTAIN UP

WITH AUGUST KRICKEL

Over the next eight weeks, 24 unique theatrical productions will open in the Midlands. This means one could see a show every weekend and still not make it to everything. Thanks to some weeknight, late-night, and matinee performances, however, you may be able to have it all. This year offers the good, the risky, and the clever, from classics by Albee, Williams, Simon, and Wilde to darker, unproven adaptations to frisky hits direct from New York. A clever new experiment this year involves presenting shows in alternate and under-used venues, as well as continuing to expand quality theatre into the suburbs.

There are still a few more nights to make it to the ***University of South Carolina*** to see a special performance of James Still's *Looking Over the President's Shoulder*, a one-man play based on the true story of an African-American butler who served Presidents Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. Visiting actor Lawrence Hamilton will perform at Drayton Hall through September 15. USC's season then starts in earnest – literally – on October 5, as Oscar Wilde's classic comedy of manners, The *Importance of Being Earnest*, opens at Longstreet Theatre and runs through October 13. Two proper Victorian ladies are being pursued by two rakish London bachelors, both using the name Ernest. The rest of USC's main stage season includes Jeffrey Hatcher's *Compleat Female Stage Beauty,* Mark Camoletti's *Boeing Boeing*, and the Shakespearian tragedy, *King Lear*. USC also offers smaller shows in its Lab Theatre. Running October 11-14 is *August Snow* by North Carolina playwright Reynolds Price. The story follows a Depression-era small town family confronting timeless issues of love, commitment, and maturity. Subsequent Lab shows include *The Rose Tattoo* by Tennessee Williams, *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel, *Twelve Angry Jurors* by Reginald Rose, and *Becky Shaw* by Gina Gionfriddo. For details, call 803-777-2551.

Also running through October 15 is *OZ the Musical* by Tim Kelly and Bill Francoer, billed as "a dazzling musical that intertwines *The Wiz* and *The Wizard of OZ*." On Stage Productions is presenting this in The Watershed Theatre at The Old Mill in downtown Lexington. Featured in the cast are local favorites Debra Leopard as the Wicked Witch, and Gary Poszik as Oz. A new group on the theatrical radar, On Stage has an ambitious slate of shows scheduled, including *A Twisted Carol, Nunsense Jamboree*, and *A World of Wealth*. But first, get ready for *The Compleat Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged.)* Running the last two weekends in October, every plot and every character that the Bard ever created is brought to life by three talented young actresses, Shelby Sessler, Carolyn Chalfant, and Kelley Freeman. You may recall Sessler from her recent portrayals of the adorable tyke Pinkalicious, or a seductive German spy in *The 39 Steps*; here she coordinates the production (technically, all three performers are sharing directorial duties), stars, and is also the chief costumer. Visit www.onstagesc.com.

Another new player on the scene is ***Theatre Rowe,*** which performs at the Fine Arts Center of Forest Acres above Barnes & Noble in Richland Mall. Running now through September 22 is the timeless Tennessee Williams drama *The Glass Menagerie.* Patricia L.H. Anderson plays the introverted Laura, finagled into receiving a "Gentleman Caller" (John Dixon) by her jaded brother (Dana Tyler Bolton) as their fading Southern belle mother (Shana Sorrells) clings to memories of a genteel past. The following month, a musical revue called *A Grand Night for Singing* will be featured the weekend of October 5 and *Murdered by the Mob,* a fun-for-the family murder mystery, is scheduled to run weekends October 19 through November 10. Check www.theatrerowe.com or call 803-728-1678.

Town Theatre is the mother of all community theatres in the Midlands, and its 94th season opens with the granddaddy of all feel-good musicals, Meredith Wilson's Tony-winning *The Music Man*. A glib con artist (played by

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Mark Rothko, American (born Russia), 1903–1970, *No. 8*, 1949, oil and mixed media on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. 1986.43.147. © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

This exhibition is organized by the Arkansas Art Center, the Columbia Museum of Art, the Columbus Museum of Art and the Denver Art Museum, in conjunction with the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Presented by: First Citizens

Frank Thompson, Columbia's reigning master of charm and smarm) poses as a band leader, promising 76 trombones, 110 cornets, and, ... well, you know the rest. Will the charms of Marian the (enticing) Librarian, played by Lindsay Brasington, warm his callous heart in time? Director/Choreographer Shannon Willis Scruggs and Musical Director Andy Wells will reveal all September 14 through October 5. As in previous years, the popular classic musical is followed by a smaller, cute musical, *The Winter Wonderettes*. Also scheduled are a contemporary screwball comedy by Ken Ludwig, *The Fox on the Fairway*, the recent Broadway musical smash *9 to 5*, and the season concludes with the local premiere of *Miss Saigon*, a tragic retelling of the Madam Butterfly story, re-imagined in Saigon during the Vietnam War. This is a bold choice for any group due to its vocal and technical challenges, and Town is taking a gamble that audiences will come for the music but not expect comedy. Make no mistake. While the first four shows of the season are almost guaranteed hits, should *Miss Saigon* turn out to be a box office smash as well, Town might be inspired to venture onto more serious territory again. For ticket information, call 803-799-2510 or visit www.towntheatre.com.

Workshop Theatre took a few risks last season with some excellent productions of older and lesser-known shows but jumps back into the fray with name-brand entertainment, starting with the local premiere of *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, running September 14-29**.** Scott Blanks directs, Jonathan Eason is musical director, Joy Alexander choreographs, and, at long last, Giulia Dalbec-Matthews steps into the lead role of Elle, the blonde bombshell, after captivating audiences as vixens and temptresses in about a thousand shows in recent years. Daniel Gainey (so funny and touching in *In the Next Room* at Trustus) and Mark Zeigler (such a memorable crooner in *Grease* at Town) play the men in her life, while Shelby Sessler plays Vivienne, Elle's main competition. Another virtual guarantee of quality is Cynthia Gilliam, who directs two of Columbia's finest, Stann Gwynn and Elena Martinez-Vidal, in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* November 9-24. The season continues with Neil Simon's bittersweet *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, the inspirational musical *The Color Purple,* and *Songs for a New World*, a musical kaleidoscope chronicling the challenges of the human experience. For details, call 803-799-4876 or visit www.workshoptheatre.com.

Columbia Children's Theatre has a growing reputation for professional performances that captivate youngsters while keeping their parents entertained, too. Their new season opens with a new musical adaptation of the popular bedtime book, *Goodnight Moon,* running September 21-30. Look for many familiar faces from previous shows at CCT and elsewhere, including Kim Harne, Paul Lindley II, Elizabeth Stepp Cauthen, Hannah Mount, Lee O. Smith, and Carolyn Chalfant. CCT's season will continue with *The Christmas Elf*, *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical*, and *The Commedia Rapunzel*. Shows are performed in the upper level of Richland Mall, and most run less than an hour. For details, call 803-691-4548 or visit columbiachildrenstheatre.com.

The Lexington County Arts Association opens its new season at the Village Square Theatre with *Forbidden Broadway*, the satirical revue that spoofs hit New York musicals. Directed by Tom Wood, the show runs September 21- October 7. It was quite popular when performed in downtown Columbia a few years back, and we applaud LCAA for reviving it for audiences west of the river. Debra Leopard then directs Disney's *The Little Mermaid Jr.* for those yearning to see Ariel fight Ursula once more. The show runs November 2-18. The season continues with *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*, *High School Musical Jr.*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Call 803-359-1436 or visit www.villagesquaretheatre.com.

The South Carolina Shakespeare Company kicks off its 20th anniversary season with *Cheer from Chawton: A Jane Austen Family Theatrical,* written and performed by visiting professional actress Karen Eterovich on September 27-28 at Drayton Hall. Co-sponsored by USC's Department of Theatre and Dance, this one-woman show ushers in Jon Jory's stage adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, running at Saluda Shoals Park October 5-7, then moving to Finlay Park October 17-20 and 24-27. Linda Khoury directs Christopher Cook as Mr. Darcy, Katie Mixon as Elizabeth Bennet, Scott Blanks as Mr. Collins, Tracy Steele as Charles Bingley, and Malie Heider as Lady Catherine de Bourgh in this tale of passion versus reason versus societal convention. The Shakespeare Company has diversified in recent years, performing in new venues and producing works by other authors, and this tradition continues when Khoury directs Paul Rudnick's farcical *I Hate Hamlet* in the CMFA black box in February, followed by another large show in the spring. Visit www.shakespearesc.org or call 803-787-BARD for more information

The Chapin Theatre Company is producing plays in the brand-new, state-of-the-art Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College. The 2012 season concludes with a new adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, by Jeffrey Hatcher, based on of the Robert Louis Stevenson novella. Don't expect the slick musical version but rather a crafty new psychological thriller.

George Dinsmore plays the good doctor, and Emily Meadows plays his love interest; but be forewarned. Hyde may not be or look exactly as you think. Glenn Farr directs, and the show runs October 19-November 3. For ticket information, 803-240-8544 or www.chapintheatre.org.

Stage 5 is another relative newcomer to the local theatre mix, known for mounting ambitious productions of difficult works in alternative locations. Now settled into new digs at 847 Stadium Road, Stage 5 is producing Bernard Pomerance's Tony-winning drama *The Elephant Man* for six performances only, October 31-November 9. Paul Covington directs Jeremiah Redmond as the disfigured title character. For ticket information, 803-834-1775 or www.mbfproductions.net.

Benedict College has an incredible music program, and a significant number of singers in local choirs and musicals have roots there. The Benedict Fine Arts Department also will present a special production of *The Color Purple (The Musical About Love)* in the Ponder Humanities and Fine Arts Center Theater on campus November 14-18 only. Call 803-705-4358 for more information.

As detailed in the feature on its new leaders in this issue, ***Trustus Theatre*** is getting serious about thought-provoking, edgy drama this year. *Next to Normal*, Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt's rock musical about bipolar disorder and family dysfunction (or as director Chad Henderson once jokingly said, "for those who were waiting for *August Osage County: the Musical*") runs through September 29. A winner of three Tony Awards and the Pulitzer (and precious few musicals ever win a Pulitzer), this production features a strong cast, including Vicky Saye Henderson, Paul Kaufmann, Terrance Henderson, and Elisabeth Smith Baker, with musical direction by Tom Beard. The Mainstage (recently christened in honor of founders Jim and Kay Thigpen) season continues with *Next Fall*, running October 26-November 10. Directed by Sharon Graci (visiting from Charleston's Pure Theatre), the show is described as "a witty and provocative look at faith, commitment, and unconditional love, chronicling the five-year relationship between Luke and Adam." Also on tap are *[title of show]* (yes, that actually is the title of the show), *The Motherf**ker with a Hat, Venus in Fur*, *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Not familiar with some of those? Hey, the producing group is called "Trustus," so you know what to do.

Beginning on September 14, Trustus also premieres its late-night Last Call series with a revival of the Shamrock Shape shifter production of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (now subtitled: *Live and Undead! 2.0)* adapted for the stage and directed by Shane Silman. Following the Friday and Saturday performances of *Next to Normal* through the 29th, *Plan 9* is not exactly a parody, since the original Ed Wood film was (unintentionally) a parody (or perhaps travesty) of the sci-fi and horror genre. Still, outrageous camp is guaranteed, especially given this dream cast: Larry Hembree as Bela Lugosi, Mandy Applegate as Vampira, Nathan Dawson and Catherine Hunsinger as our intrepid heroes (think Brad and Janet), Denise Pearman and Gerald Floyd as aliens, Scott Means as a zombie-fied detective, Chip Stubbs and Chad Forrister as military types, narration by Chris Bickel, and costumes by Refashionista Jillian Owens. Other offerings to follow the season's big musicals are *Burlesque* and a Kevin Bush/Tom Beard "un-Cabaret" show. Paul Kaufmann also revives his tour-de-force portrayal of a transgender woman living in the Nazi and Communist regimes of East Berlin in the Pulitzer-winning *I Am My Own Wife*, directed by Ellen Schlaefer. The one-man (sort of) show kicks off the Trustus Side Door Series and runs October 5-20 in the space off Lady Street formerly known as the Black Box. Side Door shows will run in between mainstage shows, and include *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche*, *My First Time* (featuring the return of Jim Thigpen as director) and *Fierce Love*. Trustus also expands its Off-Off Lady Series, beginning with *Red*, presented at The Columbia Museum of Art October 10-14, coinciding with an exhibition of Mark Rothko's art. Rothko is played by Harrison Saunders, Bobby Bloom is the assistant who challenges the artist's vision, Larry Hembree directs, and artist Christian Thee is designing the set. The NiA Company will collaborate with Trustus on *The Whipping Man* in the CMFA space the following spring, while *Collected Stories* will be presented in partnership with the South Carolina Book Festival. Add in a special 20th anniversary revival of "The Kathy and Mo Show: Parallel Lives," featuring Elena Martinez-Vidal and Dewey Scott-Wiley, the popular Vista Queen Pageant fund-raiser, a big band show with Dick Goodwin, and *Larry's High School Reunion,* and you are guaranteed a season that will take your breath way. Call 803-254-9732 or visit http://trustus.org.

SEX, GENDER, AND ROCK & ROLL

BY KYLE PETERSEN

As our editor-in-chief noted at the beginning of this issue, we are dedicating this magazine to the Pride movement. As somebody whose primary focus for the magazine is the local rock scene, I started thinking about the relationship between the two. It was, a bit surprisingly, a rather difficult one to figure out. While it shouldn't be surprising that it still presents quite a hurdle for public figures to be "out," particularly in a state like South Carolina, rock and roll still seems like it should be a little different.

Almost since its very beginning, rock music has been part of the counterculture, a challenge to societal norms and conventions, including gender roles. From Freddie Mercury and David Bowie to Melissa Etheridge and Michael Stipe, rock musicians have shocked (and perhaps titillated) the world in ways that were on the forefront of their times, and made their (often disputed) gender and sexual identities an intrinsic part of their artistic statements.

Of course, there does seem to be two distinct approaches to dealing with these identities artistically: one way is to fall into the activist tradition of making your music explicitly political, an aesthetic tool with the means to encourage and inspire change; the second is to play with the confusion and uncertainty such identities inspire in the general public's mind as a means for presenting a less direct but often more compelling challenge to the status quo. There are many examples of both approaches in the rock canon, as well as artists who see fit to keep these identities private or, at least, separate from who they are as performers and musicians.

Sometimes, though, keeping them separate isn't so easy. Take the case of Florida musician Laura Jane Grace (born Tommy Gabel), leader of the punk band Against Me! The singer and her band began as anarchist punks with an explicit set of politics, but their sound was largely defined by the strident vocals and the occasional spine-tingling scream of an unmistakably male voice, in a style firmly ensconced in the punk tradition.

So what happens when Grace, who has publicly admitted to struggling with gender dysphoria since childhood, comes out as transgender and begins living as a woman? There are of course some practical questions (will the hormones affect her voice? will Grace want to move away from the harsher punk sounds to a more "feminine" sound?), but what's most interesting is perhaps that the iconography of the band will have to change. All art depends on branding of some sort, but for rock musicians, how you *look* on stage has come to matter a great deal. And this, it seems to me, is where some of the unique difficulties of coming out for a popular musician arise.

Rock and roll musicians are expected to be a version of themselves on stage, even when challenging or confusing gender roles and sexual orientation. While Bowie in spandex or the Rolling Stones in drag does have a political impact, the difference between that and a transgendered person on stage seems huge, particularly when that musician has gathered a fan base before transitioning.

Grace has actually been well-received and supported by her fans in the process, and the band is currently working on a new record entitled *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* which focuses heavily on the singer's transition. But the sense of surprise and then suspense at what exactly an Against Me! show would sound and look like now points to the particular problems and questions that come from mingling questions of gender and sexuality into rock music.

So maybe rock and roll, for all its transgressiveness, needs to recognize the difficulty it presents, and its power to exclude and marginalize, just like everything else. Next time you are at a show, then, perhaps you can take a moment, pause, and allow for all of the questions, decisions, and problems that musicians are presented with about their bodies and identities before they ever take the stage.

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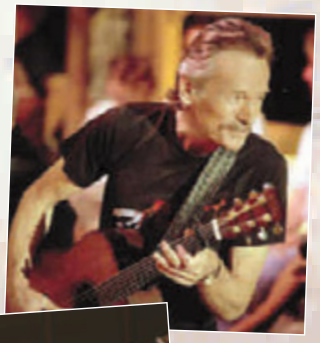

September
9/9 John, Janet and Jazz
9/13 Robert Earl Keen
9/14 Nitty Gritty Dirt Band
9/16 Jerry Butler
9/21 Maurice Williams
9/23 Tommy Emmanuel
9/24 The Royal Drummers & Dancers of Burundi
9/27 Mother's Finest
9/28 Mac McAnally
9/29 Gordon Lightfoot
9/30 Jerry Sims

October
10/6 Oktoberfest
10/7 Steve Tyrell
10/11 Preservation Hall Jazz Band
10/12 Special Evening with Edwin McCain
10/14 Deer Camp
10/17 US Air Force Academy Band
10/19 Legends: *Featuring* Rick Wade
10/21 Janis Ian & Tom Paxton *"Together at Last"*
10/22 Cindy Williams in Nunset Boulevard
10/25 Ailey II
10/30 Jo Dee Messina

November
11/8 Away in the Basement
11/9 The Hit Men
11/10 Cowboy Movies
11/16-18 Into the Woods - Newberry College
11/26 Art Reception/Exhibit - Christian Thee
11/27-28 Fiddler on the Roof

December
12/1 The Kings of Swing
12/2 Crystal Gayle
12/7 Palmetto Master Singers
12/8 Harley Davidson Toy Run
12/8 208th Army Band
12/9 A Chorus Line – *Broadway Musical*
12/10 Branson Country Christmas
12/14 Christmastime in Ireland
12/15 Christmas *with* Emile Pandolfi
12/18 A Christmas Carol
12/31 New Year's Eve

January
1/11&12 Newberry Ballet Guild – *"The Secret Garden"*
1/13 Glen Miller Orchestra
1/19 Deep River Rising
1/20 Don Williams
1/24 Swingin' Medallions
1/25 Up Yonder with Karen Morgan and Vic Henley
1/26 Steel Magnolia
1/27 Spirituality Through the Performing Arts
1/31 Barber of Seville – *Teatro Lirico D'Europa*

February
2/8 John Michael Montgomery
2/9 Cowboy Movies
2/10 The CB Smith Show of Pigeon Forge
2/11 Clint Black
2/12 Mitzi Gaynor
2/14 Women of Ireland
2/15 Mountain Heart
2/16 The Songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber
2/17 Rhythm of the Dance
2/23 James Gregory *"Funniest Man in America"*
2/24 Ralph Stanley *and* His Clinch Mountain Boys
2/26 Peking Acrobats
2/28 Karla Bonoff

March
3/2 Lorrie Morgan
3/3 The Lettermen
3/5 Helen Reddy
3/8 Delbert McClinton
3/10 Leahy
3/14 SC Storytelling Network
3/15 John Anderson
3/16 Biloxi Blues – *Montana Repertory Theatre*
3/17 Canadian Brass
3/21 Branson on the Road
3/22 Chamber Orchestra Kremlin
3/23 Ben E. King

April
4/1 Swan Lake – *Russian National Ballet Theatre*
4/5&6 Newberry College *Presents* Murder Mystery Weekend
4/7 Taming of the Shrew – *Aquilla Theatre Co.*
4/13 Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder
4/14 The Oak Ridge Boys
4/18 Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians
4/23 *Newberry College* – Student Opera Scenes
4/27 Hen Party – *Comedy*

May
5/4 The Legends of Doo Wop
5/5 Doug and Bunny
5/11 Rick Alviti
5/17 Yesterday Once More, A Tribute to the Carpenters

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A ROTHKO PRIMER

BY DR. BRADFORD R. COLLINS

On September 14th the Columbia Museum of Art will open a major exhibition of the paintings of Mark Rothko (1903-70). The artist was one of the leading members of the Abstract Expressionist movement or, more accurately, the New York School, which emerged after World War II and propelled American art to the position of leadership on the world stage.

Abstract Expressionism had two distinct branches: Gesturalism (or Action Painting) and Color Field. To the first branch belonged Jackson Pollock, and Willem de Kooning, most of whose works were, in fact, abstract (non-representational) and expressionist (a direct record of the artist's emotional state of mind at the time of the painting). The Color Field painters, including Rothko, Clyfford Still, and Barnett Newman, employed broad patches of color not to express themselves but to *create* emotional states in the viewer, which is part of the reason they objected to being called Abstract Expressionists.

Rothko also objected to the term "abstract" because it can also mean formalist, which is someone interested simply in the purely aesthetic arrangement of the formal elements of art – color, shape, texture, etc. Rothko's mature works from the 1950s and 1960s are characterized by two to four soft-edged rectangles of color stacked vertically on a monochrome ground. Because the color harmonies are so beautiful many viewers then, as now, have assumed that he was simply a formalist. A prime example of that reading and of Rothko's frustrated response is the exchange he had with the writer Selden Rodman in 1956:

> *"You might as well get one thing straight," Rothko said ... I am not an abstractionist."*
>
> *"You are an abstractionist to me," Rodman said. "You're a master of color harmonies and relationships on a monumental scale. Do you deny that?"*
>
> *"I do. I'm not interested in relationships of color or form or anything else."*
>
> *"Then what is it you're expressing?"*
>
> *"I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on – and the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I communicate those basic human emotions ...The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point."*

When Rothko said that he wanted his viewers to have a "religious experience," he did not mean a transcendent one that would bring them closer to God, as most critics and historians of his art continue to assume. He was referring, instead, to the way religious rituals, particularly those involving death, make it easier for humans to live with the knowledge that we all die. To be specific, Rothko wanted to achieve in his art what the nineteenth century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, claimed the early Greeks achieved in their theatrical tragedies: a recognition of the tragic facts of life (provided in the narratives) combined with a celebration of the blind, elemental life force (provided in the musical chorus), which he called "tragic optimism." As evident in his response to Rodman, quoted above, Rothko was convinced that in his mature Color Field paintings he was communicating that same fundamental human tension between our doomed fate (expressed in the finite shapes) and the ecstatic will to live (expressed in the color).

Rothko had read Nietzsche's essay on the subject, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, in 1939-40 and as he later said, "It left an indelible impression on my mind and has forever colored the syntax of my own reflections on the questions of art." The story of Rothko's development from that point is that of his attempts to achieve in his art what Nietzsche said that the Greeks achieved in their tragedies. It took Rothko a decade to do this. He began the process in 1940 and completed it, to his own satisfac-

Top Left: *No. 8*, 1949.
Bottom Left: *Untitled*, 1941-42.
Top Right: *Untitled*, 1949.
Images Courtesy The Columbia Museum of Art

tion, in 1949-50. That evolution is the subject of the exhibition at the Columbia Museum of Art: *Mark Rothko: The Decisive Decade, 1940 – 1950* and of the accompanying book.

The exhibition – which was conceived by the former curator, Todd Hermann and realized by the current curator, Will South – displays the various stages of that quest, beginning with his Mythic work, wherein he tried to evoke the spirit of Greek tragedies. That phase was followed by his freely invented Automatist works, grounded in the Jungian concept of the Collective Unconscious, the idea that at the deepest level of the unconscious all human minds are the same. The artist able to tap into his unconscious will therefore communicate directly with the spectator's unconscious. Under the influence of Clyfford Still, those works evolved into the Multiforms, the prelude to his mature style.

Page Left: Photo by Alexis Schwallier

Bradford R. Collins, who received his Ph. D. from Yale University, has been teaching modern and contemporary art at the University of South Carolina since 1987. He edited and contributed an essay to the book that accompanies the Rothko exhibition at the Columbia Museum of Art. In addition, Phaidon Press has just published his book, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop, 1952-1990*.

CLAY BURNETTE: INSPIRED BY NATURE

BY KRISTINE HARTVIGSEN

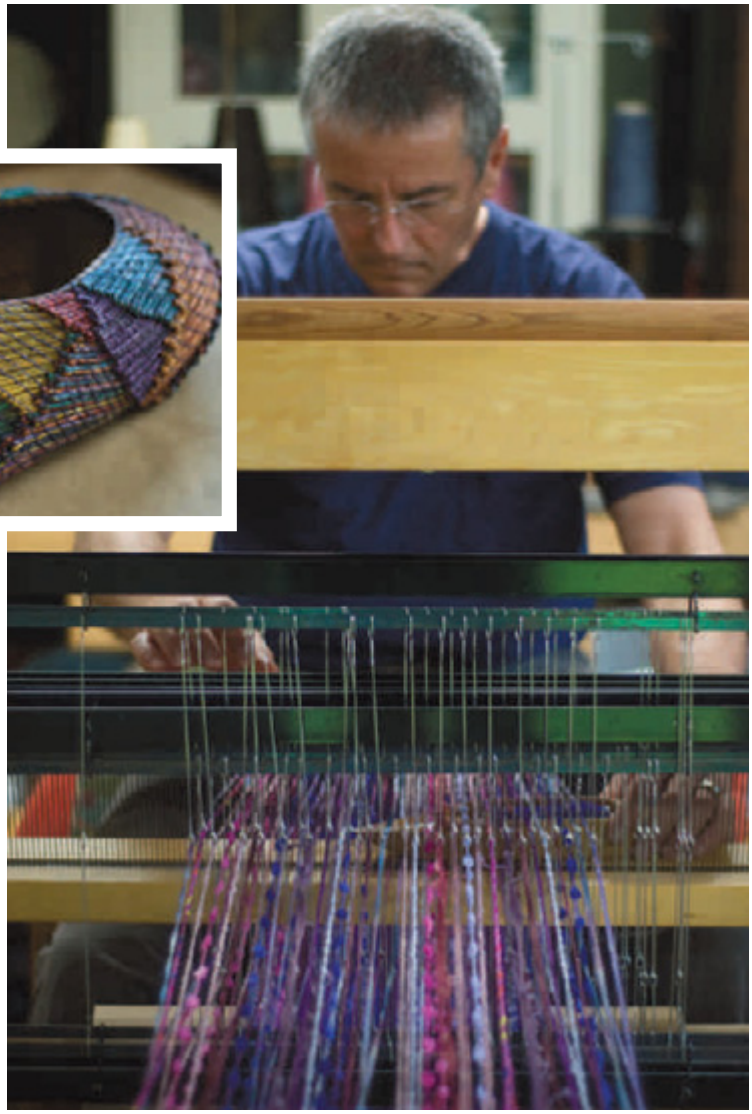
Photos by Alicia Hickey

On frequent quiet paddles down the Lower Saluda, Clay Burnette's eyes often alight on clusters of river rocks that seem to shape-shift at the whims of time, wind, and the water's constant nudging. They can inspire any number of Burnette's curvy and brooding coiled baskets made from South Carolina longleaf pine needles. "When you are kayaking, you see those boulders that have been worn with age and erosion. That is an inspiration for a lot of baskets," Burnette explains. "I also think about driftwood. It's really organic and nature-based."

Growing up on a farm in the tranquil Blue Ridge foothills of Dalton, Georgia, Burnette developed a love for nature early on. His father worked in the textile industry, and his mother was an accomplished quilter, though with a pragmatic emphasis on function over creative aesthetic. Never idle, he eventually began teaching himself how to make baskets with materials found in nature.

"The Native American basket-makers used materials indigenous to their environment," he says. "So did the Gullah basket-makers." Their works not only were functional but held a beauty that intrigued Burnette. The persistent tug of art eventually

led Burnette to the University of South Carolina, where he studied art studio and marketing on the way to an undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. In the Midlands, he was stunned to find an abundance of longleaf pine trees, far more than in his native Dalton. He seized on the opportunity this presented. "I never did take a basket-making class," he insists, but he did forge a relationship with an experienced local folk basket-maker, who agreed to share with him her tried-and-true techniques, particularly with coiling longleaf pine needle baskets. As he practiced the craft, and read anything available on the topic, Burnette developed his own basket-making tricks.



"Most baskets are woven, but for some reason, I am just not drawn to them," he explains. "To do a woven basket, you have to decide the size and shape in the beginning. With coiling, the ideas are totally endless. You start with a circle or oval, and the basket can assume any shape." Burnette relishes the freedom from limitations of having a pre-determined plan; he'd rather let the piece form on its own, to go where the energy leads him.

Burnette says his mentor while at USC was a fiber arts professor named Nancy Albertson, who now is based in Atlanta and is most widely recognized for her handmade papers and photography work. But while at USC, back in the early '80s, Albertson challenged Burnette to step outside his comfort zone. He hadn't even been aware that he had been limiting himself. "She pretty much was running a fiber studio with probably 20 looms and handmade paper-making equipment at USC," Burnette recalls. "She really pushed me. I was going through a very earthy stage in my life. I was working only with very neutral colors – browns and beiges. She said, 'What are your least favorite colors?' I said, 'red.' And she said, 'For the next semester, you have to only work with red.' I thought it was horrible. I had to go outside my boundaries. That is when I really ended up discovering color." Soon he was introducing unexpected pops of color, and even colored beads, into his free-form baskets.

Another strong influence was the late Ed Rossbach, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley who has been called the "father of American contemporary basketry" for his groundbreaking use of unexpected and nonconventional materials, such as plastic and newspaper, during the '70s and '80s. He not only allowed but encouraged his students to break rules, proclaiming the uncommon baskets they produced *art*. To elevate the craft by describing it as an art form at the time had a powerful impact on the discipline and its practitioners. Although Burnette never had the honor of meeting Rossbach, "he was a tremendous influence."

Burnette also has long admired the late Anni Albers. A Bauhaus-trained textile artist and printmaker who once taught at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Albers regarded fiber arts and basketry as sculpture. Like Rossbach, Albers experimented with nontraditional materials, including metallic and plastic fibers. She wrote many books on textile arts and basketry. "That is why I really learned to coil," Burnette says. "I looked at several of her books and thought, 'I can do that.'"

As it turned out, he certainly could. In 1983, Burnette's work was selected for inclusion in the first annual Smithsonian Craft Show. Only 100 artists from across the country landed a coveted spot in the show. Before then, he had been chosen to exhibit in the annual South Carolina State Fair Juried Fine Art Show and a few other venues, but the juried endorsement of the Smithsonian left no doubt about the quality and artistic significance of Burnette's work. The national recognition sparked a lot of in-

terest from gallery owners across the spectrum. He continued to exhibit at the Smithsonian Craft Show for several years. All the while, his calendar rapidly filled with bookings to show at venues all over the nation and even abroad.

There are too many to name in this space, but notable among these venues are: the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, DC (1987); the South Carolina Arts Commission's Visual Arts and Crafts Fellowship Retrospective (1990) and its Triennial Exhibition (1992); The White House Christmas Ornament Collection (1993); the Southeastern Arts & Crafts Exposition (1994, 1995); the ACC Atlanta Craft Show (1997-1999, 2003-2006); the Contemporary International Basketry Symposium in Manchester, England (2000); the South Carolina State Museum's 20th Anniversary Exhibition (2008); the six-year traveling exhibit titled "Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art" (2008-2013); Triennial Revisited at 701 Center for Contemporary Art (2011); and a three-year exhibition as part of the Art in Embassies Program at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal (2011-2013).

All the attention at one point prompted Burnette, who also creates exquisite hand-woven scarves, to sell his looms to make room and time for the baskets. During a nearly 10-year hiatus from weaving, Burnette concentrated on basket-making, all while working full time at the South Carolina Arts Commission, where he has worked since 1994, becoming its grants director in 1998. The looms were still there at the end of that hiatus, and Burnette bought them back from the woman who had purchased them a decade earlier.

The day job can be stressful at times, but Burnette's art is a peaceful refuge he visits daily to unwind and create. Located about halfway between his Arts Commission office and home, Burnette's studio near Richland Mall is a cheerful place made even more so by five colorful parrotlets who live in cages along the windows. The diminutive birds chirp and fawn over Burnette, and he opens their cage doors so they can roam the studio freely while he is there. He does not consider the discipline of studio time as a burden.

"It's never work. It's therapeutic and meditative," Burnette says. "I'm busy all day long. I am working with numbers and talking with constituents on the phone, looking at spreadsheets. When I am working on a basket, I relax all that. I just let the what-ifs happen." In fact, Burnette never sketches or begins a basket with a visual plan, preferring instead to let the fibers lead into whatever shape naturally manifests itself. "I don't do handles, and I don't do lids," he insists. "I am not interested in making utilitarian pieces. I just do objects."

It is a long, slow, painstaking process from harvesting pine needles to affixing a signature to the bottom of a finished piece. "I have never bought a pine needle, and I will never buy a pine needle. I get my own materials, and that is part of the fun," he says. "I spend my Sunday mornings in the woods. It's quiet. The real secret is getting long pine needles. The longest needles grow on the shortest trees, no more than 5 or 6 feet tall. I pick them green directly from the tree, but I do not damage the tree." Burnette never takes needles from the forest floor because, once they fall to the ground, they start to decay. He takes only fresh needles and only as many as he is certain to use.

Next, he bundles the needles and brings them to the studio, where the needles are washed and laid out to dry for about a month. Then they are rebundled for a partial dipping in a hot bath of fabric dye, then laid out side-by-side for a second drying. Selected needles will be coated individually with acrylic paint, particularly the sheaths, because they absorb color well and add texture. The needles then are soaked in water before Burnette begins the coiling process. Unpainted pine needles, he says, naturally turn a bronze color as they are exposed to sunlight. He stitches primarily with a hardy waxed linen thread but sometimes uses copper wire or telephone wire. All the prep work generally is done in Burnette's studio. The beauty of coil basket-making itself is that it can be done anywhere. "It's such a portable craft," he says. "With weaving, I am pretty much tied to a particular space, a loom. With basket-making, I can be anywhere. ... I do very little stitching on the baskets in the studio. I make the baskets at home. That is how I justify watching TV. I am a multitasker. It is just torture for me to sit and do nothing!"

When a basket is finished, Burnette coats it with beeswax to preserve it. He wants his baskets to be around for a long time. "It gives them a nice luster and fragrance," he adds.

So exactly how long does it take to complete one of his baskets? "If I knew, I wouldn't do it!" he quips. He stops and starts again where he left off as his free time allows, outside of a full work week at the Arts Commission.

Having done more than 225 shows over 35 to 40 years, Burnette does not salivate over the prospect of another show, of any size or stature. He says he would enjoy, upon retirement, teaching in craft schools. "I am not trying to prove anything," he says. "From the very beginning, I have said that I do this for myself. I don't do commissions. I am working to satisfy myself. If someone comes along, and they like it, that is wonderful. If they don't understand it, that is OK, too."

Burnette's work is included in a traveling exhibit, titled "Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art," which concludes its six-year run May 13 through August 30, 2013, at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta. For more information, visit www.clayburnette.com.

Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

LARRY HEMBREE AND DEWEY SCOTT-WILEY TRUSTUS: THE NEXT GENERATION

BY AUGUST KRICKEL

Next to Normal might be an easy way to describe the eclectic, edgy and thought-provoking plays often produced at Columbia's Trustus Theatre over the last 27 years. *Next Fall* would be a standard lead-in for an overview of the new season. Yet whether by design or coincidence, these are also titles of acclaimed shows that Trustus will present in September and October, and both symbolize that Trustus is moving into its next phase: life without its founders, Jim and Kay Thigpen. After a lifetime in local theatre, the Thigpens are happily retiring, leaving their creation in the capable hands of Dewey Scott-Wiley and Larry Hembree. Trustus: The Next Generation, if you will.

At first, audiences may see a few cosmetic changes in the theatre, and some realignment of duties. There

may be more of a defined lobby space as one enters the building. An online ticketing reservation system will enable box office manager Joe Morales to move more into office and database management, and continue to help technical director Brandon McIver with set construction. While Hembree, who has held leadership roles at both the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County and the Nickelodeon Theatre, and has acted and directed extensively in the Midlands, is taking on Kay Thigpen's role of managing director, he promises that you won't find him in the box office window every day. Instead, he hopes to get out more, and reintroduce Trustus to the theatre community, to local theatregoing audiences, and to the community at large.

As incoming artistic director, Scott-Wiley (profiled in *Jasper* 005), who has been a part of the Trustus family since 1993, as an actor, director, and since 2005, as associate artistic director, will manage the season's slate of productions, and act as liaison with company members and guest directors. But Jim Thigpen›s role as front man, showman, and impresario will be assumed by the never-shy Hembree, who heightened the Nickelodeon's visibility within both the local arts and business communities. Marketing director Chad Henderson will focus more on promotions and public relations for specific productions, and will continue to direct shows as well. Scott-Wiley will stay on top of the overall artistic product, and direct two shows this season, plus two more at her day job at USC-Aiken. She especially wants to make sure the company of performers is valued, committed, and involved at every level.

Hembree will also be involved in play selection, but plans to focus more on the business side of management; although he quickly notes that he is, in fact, directing one show, appearing in another, and creating the fourth installment in his Southern-Gothic family fundraisers next year. Hembree›s greatest immediate goal is "to maximize the potential of the physical space," i.e. fill as many seats on as many nights of the week as possible. "Without going crazy," he adds. "Capacity is a real challenge," he says, pointing to an intricate flow chart on the wall, detailing who is rehearsing and who is performing what, when, and where each week for the coming year. In a theatre community where five regular season productions are the norm, Hembree and Scott-Wiley ambitiously have planned an astounding 23 different productions for the upcoming year, including a number of one-time fundraising events and limited-run cabaret shows, with only eight comprising the actual mainstage season, as in years past.

Hembree wants to offer "contemporary, thought-provoking theatre" with "really rich, really deep opportunities for performers." Coming in, Hembree and Scott-Wiley assessed the Trustus mission, and asked themselves, "Is 'thought-provoking' still working?" Hembree points to the success of the Nickelodeon in recent years, and feels that Columbia audiences "can handle more than we give them credit for." What they have arrived at is a season with something running nearly every week of the year. The mainstage shows are all recent Tony, Pulitzer, Obie, and Drama Desk winners and nominees, some comic, some darker, some musicals, some a combo of all three. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, most have some edgy, subversive, mature, or controversial theme or content, in keeping with the theatre's core mission. After Sunday matinees, Hembree plans to hold panel discussions on a topic related to the performance, something that worked at the Nickelodeon. "That deepens the audience›s relationship with the theatre," Hembree says, and he hopes "to engage people in the entire process."

Smaller, sometimes naughtier productions (the type so many audiences recall from the early years of Trustus) will continue to be performed, more often as late-night shows, or in several alternate spaces. The 50-seat black box space has an official title now: The Trustus Side Door Theatre. It will be marketed as its own venue, and overseen by longtime Trustus

company member and former technical director Larry McMullen. "Our hope is that it›s an interesting space to see a show in," Hembree explains, one offering "intimacy, and a different kind of theatre experience." The Side Door will feature a Sexploration series this year, with titles like *I Am My Own Wife* and *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche*. These shows, as well as late-night offerings, will run for successive weekends to give casual, word of mouth reviews a chance to build.

Late-night productions - now dubbed the Last Call series - are cleverly scheduled after each big musical, hopefully attracting some lively audiences who will either stay late, or come back the next night for the later play after having had a good time. Site-specific performances of plays at other locations form the Off Off Lady series, including a production of *Red* at the Columbia Museum of Art in October. Doing a popular drama about Mark Rothko at a museum right as they begin a major exhibition of the artist's work "was a no-brainer," Hembree laughs. *Collected Stories*, which centers on the literary process, will be performed in collaboration with the SC Book Festival in the spring of 2013. "That's our challenge - partnerships," Hembree believes. As the co-chair of the Arts and History task force of One Columbia, he hopes to help the city to create and build a broader vision for supporting the arts and humanities, and envisions Trustus becoming the home and hub for a Midlands theatre consortium.

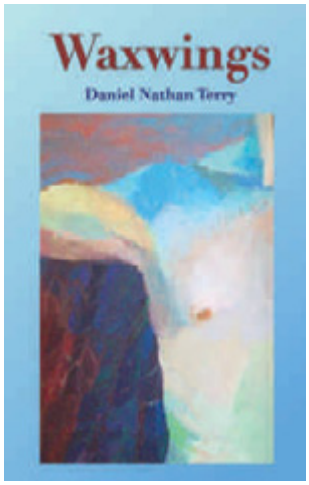
"Colleagues around the country are envious of the things we can do," Scott-Wiley observes. "Not all towns can do work like this – shows that bigger and more well-known regional theatres do." When asked how relevant the arts may be in today's tough economic and political climate, Scott-Wiley practically leaps at the opportunity to answer. Live theatre is about "exploring emotions" and "an exposure to ideas," she says. She senses that "we crave an intimate connection. We are hungry for that human connection. Art and theatre enable us to step inside someone else's shoes. [Theatre] breeds tolerance, empathy, harmony, [and] understanding, in an otherwise very polarized society." Theatre "makes us think, and challenges our belief system," she continues. In today's society, Scott-Wiley sees that "we're inundated with pure entertainment, and our brains start to turn to mush. Theatre gives us new ways to think, feel, and be challenged, in a very human way."

Hembree adds that the audience is 50% of the equation: the tone and pace of a live show can be significantly altered by the mood and receptiveness of the audience. "They can change the course of the evening - their presence really matters."

If the Thigpens were a mom and pop organization, what are Hembree and Scott-Wiley? The question catches them off guard for a moment. They pause, ponder, and then, just as Jim and Kay Thigpen often did, they look to each other for half a second, then simultaneously, both begin giggling. "We're the crazy cousins. The crazy gay cousins," both agree. Hembree realizes there are many variables and gambles involved in promoting edgier fare, dramas without immediate name recognition, and comedies that may sound provocative. *Next to Normal*, a hugely successful musical in New York, concerns bi-polar disorder; *Venus in Fur* won the 2012 Tony, but touches on issues of gender, seduction, power and domination; *The Mother****er With a Hat* speaks for itself. By offering more shows, different shows, and shows in alternative venues, Scott-Wiley and Hembree hope to attract new audiences, without burning out the existing base of supporters. "It's exciting. And frightening," Hembree admits. Heading into the 28th season, Trustus is at the cusp of its next phase of existence, and Dewey Scott-Wiley and Larry Hembree are decidedly ready to take on the challenge it presents.

REVIEW - *WAXWINGS* BY DANIEL NATHAN TERRY

BY BRYAN PENBERTHY



Beauty as an undone bow: *Waxwings,* the new poetry collection from North Carolina's Daniel Nathan Terry (born in Dillon SC), makes elegiac music by unraveling a personal history. Having sung his way outward through disasters both Civil (*Capturing the Dead,* Terry's first collection, portrayed a photographer of the War of Northern Aggression) and meteorological (his chapbook *Days of Dark Miracles* swam in the Gulf waters churned by Katrina and its aftermath), the poet now explicitly turns inward. *Waxwings* is a chronicle of longing and loss, with an eye towards what Jericho Brown styles "poems that ache after transcendence and long for revelation."

The collection's second poem, "Self-Portrait (Gay Son of a Preacher)," lays the guy-wire. Mid-sermon, the son in question "wakes suddenly, / falling, a startling sureness / of his own destruction, his little soul / trailing his body like a failed parachute." Throughout the poems of *Waxwings,* the gay son of this poem considers the relationship of self to body and how we cobble together our identities. Desire and sexuality snake through the poems, and are frank in their urges, balanced by *Waxwings'* elegiac tone. This becomes a touchstone in poems like "Wicker Man," "Lost Boy," and particularly the bruising "Snow Falls in Hartsville": "I knew none of us were good / at being anything other than we are, no matter / how much we fight ourselves, each other, God— / we all end up on our knees in ways we never dreamed." A landscaper and horticulturalist, Terry's eye tethers the large questions of identity to the living world around him. In "Scarecrow," the linguistic play and Anglo-Saxon rhythms give way, as does the poem's object, to objectified loss and query: "Like tomatoes that turn from green to glass / my red for you is missing. / How long before the snow and I / take you down?" Red takes on particular focus as color, touchstone, emotional swell—the flecked wingfeathers of the title birds, berries passed from beak to beak, tomatoes and lipstick and horses, the bloodpaths of viral tragedy and sexual trauma.

There is joy, too. The passerine birds of *Waxwing's* title poem, perched and nervous with song, bound a scene where schoolchildren are waiting for a bus. The birds pass a scarlet berry down the wire, neighbor to neighbor. Watching the community of these birds, the poet imagines the children into a musical fantasy, "joined together in a star of arms and legs / that kaleidoscopes in the blackness. Everyone smiles // as they mouth the words to a love song." The voice in these poems celebrates communion and community when they are found, and mourns their absence. Bird by bird, these poems' lyric touch slips bluntly to hard-said image: graveyard flowers, smoked glass, clapboard barns. Informed by the weight of the jigsaw-pieced portrait that emerges, in some ways these poems are best read as a collection. What becomes evident is a love for the prose in a narrative, enhanced by a lack of ornamentation. The poems are solidly crafted, and suited for solitary settings. They are not poems of easy sentiment or untroubled heart. A centerpiece poem is "Elegy Written in November," and its self indictment— "I hold it in my heart: / you needed to be loved and I failed you"— echoes throughout the collection. However, there is also a pleasing cast of light throughout the collection that dims and shines. Redemption, when it comes, is hard-won, true, and lovely, as in "After the Storm," when the poet yearns to "be the kind of man who sees this sad morning as the evidence of a blossoming," and imagines a cemetery's detritus as evidence that the dead "woke during the storm, threw back the covers, and danced in flowers and thunder until the sun came up."

A confessional poem must surprise in order to wound. Among the wounds from *Waxwings* is a question that lingers: "Where would we be now if we'd confessed?" And while these poems skip across the fluid surface of the poet's past in answering that question, this collection is not, at its best, a confession. It is a proclamation of what is unkillable by time or blood or man; a record of how we become ourselves, and what lasts.

Bryan Penberthy is a poet and teacher living in Charleston, SC. His debut collection of poetry, *Lucktown,* won the National Poetry Review Book Prize. An editor for the journal *Re:Union,* he also hosts events and workshops at Charleston's Poets House South.

After the Storm

By Daniel Nathan Terry

Graveyard flowers litter Shipyard Boulevard—petals of plastic and silk, stems of stiff wire. As we pass over the wind's wreckage, you stare through the passenger window and say, *Sad. I wonder who picks them all up?* I would answer the obvious—inmates on work detail, a road crew, the caretakers—but you're not asking about jobs and duties. I know you; you're wondering who these men are inside, whether it grieves them to gather these tattered bits of color into black bags and toss them away as if they hadn't been picked by fingers opened by loss. As if they weren't mementos of what finally—when the last loved-one visits and we are never tended to again—becomes of us all. For you, I want to be the man who knows which garish bouquet goes where, who brakes in the middle of the street, door flung wide, stops traffic, then peels each false leaf from the asphalt, gathers them all until the last fake flower is whole again and tucked respectfully back into the smooth green blanket so carefully drawn over the dead. Or better yet: for you, I want to be the kind of man who sees this sad morning as the evidence of a blossoming, or the fallen confetti of a parade—as if the dead woke during the storm, threw back the covers, and danced in flowers and thunder until the sun came up.

From *Waxwings*
Used with permission

AN AWARD WINNING, QUASI-DYSTOPIAN VOICE – JULIA ELLIOTT

BY WILL GARLAND

Sitting across from Julia Elliott in her bare and oversized office, I would never guess that this quiet, mild-mannered person could have a voice that has the ability to overpower a room and shock you into silence. But one read of her Pushcart Prize winning short story, "Regeneration at Mutki," will make you reevaluate the gentle voice sitting across from you. Her fiction pulls your imagination into places that until that moment seemed unattainable, and then with a crisp and original voice, she carries you through this new place with care and precision. And it is with this unique voice and mastery of detail that she has elevated herself into the national literary conversation.

Elliott was first introduced to writing at a young age. Her father always spoke of writing as though it was the greatest thing ever and she was seduced by the craft by her sixth birthday. Her writing began with "a girly diary from K-Mart," and it soon advanced to what Elliott calls, "the really bad, melodramatic poetry that high school students write." With this trajectory, majoring in English at the University of South Carolina seemed like a natural move. And it was while she was at USC that Elliott made her first move towards prose. From there she went on to receive her M.F.A in creative writing from Penn State and her Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia. Since then Elliott has returned to her home state and settled back into the Columbia community with her husband and daughter, where she says she has met some of the best people she has ever known.

Creativity has never been a problem for Elliott. In addition to her writing career, Elliott is a member of the band, Grey Egg, and a professor of English and Women and Gender Studies at the University of South Carolina. In each of these endeavors she brings a flair, style, and enthusiasm that make her work stand apart from expectations.

Early in Elliot's writing career, she still reveled in the more conceptual and linguistic inclinations that often accompany young writers with a pension for creativity and experimentation. She was obsessed with language, and acknowledges now that her obsession came "at the expense of narrative and a more human connection."

Elliott has grown to embrace the idea that the narrative of fiction is what draws us in, and she focuses on that connection in her writing. "People are naturally wired into narratives," she laughs. "We will sit through stupid movies just to see what happens." Elliott then goes on to confess, "I used to not place such a high emphasis on plot." But she eventually saw the need for a shift in her style, and with that, she jokingly admits, "I have found that my publication successes have improved dramatically."

In addition to this stylistic change, the subject matter of Elliott's writing has also slowly transformed from a linguistically inclined Southern grotesque writing into what she calls "a Southern modern dystopian writing style." For the past few years Elliott has been teaching a class on dystopian literature and in preparation for that, she started reading everything she could find on the subject, and she says that move allowed for her own work to "morph into quasi-dystopian fiction."

For Elliott, "Writing is the most distracting thing that you can do that will pull you away from all of the annoying day-to-day things that you have to deal with," and through the act of writing, "you can really pull yourself into a state of pure invention." That desire is what causes her to get up each morning and work to create these new and imaginative worlds in her fiction.

But like all writers, that state of invention is not always absolute, and while Elliott doesn't constantly write about the South, much of her fiction is drawn from her relationship with the region. She grew up in the South Carolina Low Country in the small town of Hampton: an area she describes as, "a hot, bug-ridden place that was also rich and beautiful."

In this portion of her writing, Elliott works to combine the Southern

traditions with what is going on in the postmodern dystopian experimental realm. These feel more original to her. "They're still rooted in the Southern experience: the atmosphere, the heat, the grotesquery, the filth, and the festering summers," she says. And yet it also allows for her to bring in some of the tropes of more non-Southern postmodern writers. This style of writing has allowed Elliott to combine her personal experiences of growing up in the South with her academic and reading interests in a more seamless way. The combination has proven to be a successful one that has helped push Elliott's voice far past the local settings of much of her fiction.

In recounting her earliest attempts to find an audience for her work, Elliott recalls how she would send her work off to places like *The New Yorker* and wait to hear back from them. It wasn't until after she received a long string of rejection letters that she discovered that young, experimental writers rarely have any success blindly submitting their work off to these top-tier magazines and literary journals. After seeking publishing advice from her professor, Kevin Young, she started sending her work to more off-the-beaten-path journals, and over time, she began to have her fiction appear in several of these smaller journals, such as *Fence* and *3rd Bed*.

Elliott's 2006 publication in *The Georgia Review* was one of the first major steps into the higher echelons of the publishing world. From there, her work began to appear in *Tin House* and other well-known journals, such as *Conjunctions*. Soon after her first publication in *Conjunctions*, Elliott developed a close, professional relationship with the experimental journal and started appearing in it on a fairly regular basis. Elliott claims that it was this relationship that helped provide her with the type of exposure that led to the opportunity to be nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize; but it was her attuned voice and writing style that allowed for her to actually win the highly sought-after award.

Photo by Alexis Schwallier

Elliott's rise into literary stardom has not stopped there. She is also one of the recent recipients of the Rona Jaffe Award. This annual award and writing grant is given to five emerging female writers. The Rona Jaffe Foundation was established in 1995, and they take pride in being "the only national literary awards program of its kind dedicated to supporting women writers exclusively." The Foundation has awarded more than $1 million to emergent women writers. With this award, Elliott will be joining in the ranks of other nationally acclaimed female writers such as: ZZ Packer, Dana Levin, and a host of others. The Rona Jaffe Selection Committee stated that they found her work "incredibly imaginative, sharply observed, and totally original."

Elliott says that award grant will allow her to take "at least two summers off and pay for childcare so she can work on two novel projects." Elliott's first novel, *The New and Improved Romie Futch,* tells the story of a South Carolina taxidermist who, "after serving as a research subject and receiving brain downloads of 'complex humanities disciplines,' returns to his hometown to confront his failed marriage." For her, this novel was an easy way of writing about someone who went off to receive the equivalent of a Ph.D. and then returned home to South Carolina.

Her second novel project is based on her own field study of Hamadryas baboons at a zoo in North Carolina. Elliott says that this novel works toward "rethinking the role of gender in scientific research." She goes on to explain that her plan is "to write a novel narrated from the perspective of a female primatologist who is observing a troop of baboons and residing at a decadent research institute in the desert where she encounters scientists of diverse gender identifications and sexual orientations."

Elliott freely admits that she has not thought much about anything beyond these current projects, but with this type of momentum, it is difficult not to be excited about whatever that future plan may grow to become. But until then, she will continue to quietly work, and leave us to wonder how such a soft-spoken person can continue to provide us with a voice that we will all be hearing for years to come.

The Rings

By Ajit Dhillon

The *Lord of the Rings* marathon is on TNT
We all settle into the couch and watch

And Sauroman's all evil-talking to McKellen
and he's like, "You're smoking too much hobbit pipe weed,"
So we all start laughing.

But it gets me thinking
Sauroman imprisons Gandalf
but pot is legal in Middle Earth
Sir Ian even blew a boat
made out of smoke
in the opening scene.

So Sauroman's the oppressor
like the Feds busting
dispensaries
while the tan surfers
with the Buddha eyes
say all Spicoli, "You dicks!"

The outside world can't let
hobbits enjoy a toke.

Gandalf: Shire's under attack boys
Frodo: What would you ask of me?
Gandalf: Throw the power ring in a volcano
Frodo: Really? Do we have to?
(Gandalf nods, Sam's wet eyes on Frodo)
Frodo: Fine.
Sam: Can I come? Mr. Frodo?

So yeah, there's a strong argument to be made for marriage equality in addition to pot legalization because after all it's the relation between Sam and Frodo that keeps them alive, their love, their longing for each other, some may call it subtext, but when I watch them infiltrate Mordor, I think of *Gone with the Wind*, we're bearing witness to the love story of our age, and like Scarlett and Rhett, after suffering through their great war, end apart, so do Frodo and Sam, living separate Shire lives, stealing glances when they can at The Green Dragon, lifting a bitter pint in toast to a world they saved that refuses to confront the love they share, all the other hobbits in the room pretending not to notice the conditions that force their heroes to suffer silently.

Aragon asks Legolas
"What do your elf eyes see?"
But the only thing I can think of
is the repetition of
the question
The man sticking it to the elf
for being different
Unable to ask him simply
What do you see?

Ajit Dhillon is enrolled in the University of South Carolina's MFA program in Creative Writing. He writes fiction and poetry and is currently at work on a novel set against the backdrop of the 2007 financial crisis in New York.

Totem

By Holly Schullo

Already, we are memory.
You sit on my shoulder,
an eagle, and I ask this

question: Why do you come
to me? We hood, unhood
each other in solitude—

I am not a native, no one
to care for, my people
are voiceless as the day

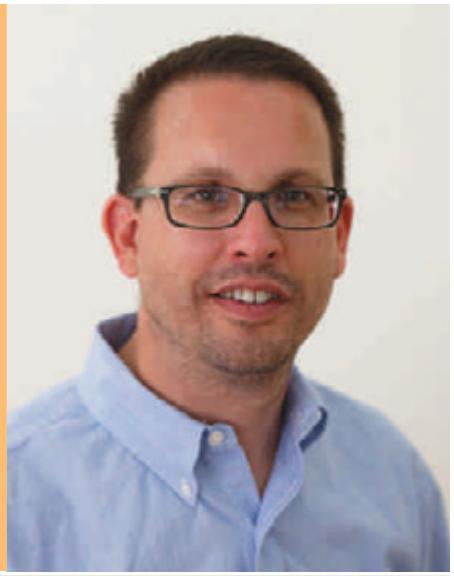
I left. We speak, arrange
to meet on Sundays, late,
after church for a matinee.

We guard the egg of secret—
in this, I cannot protest.
Things are moved in this

house, but no one accounts.
I know whatever city we circle
above, a hunger in both of us.

I sit on your forearm, complete
possession, mana, a thunderbolt,
your eyes never wanting sleep.

Holly Schullo received an MFA from University of South Carolina and is still a Palmetto girl at heart. She was awarded the Louisiana Literature Poetry Prize (2007) and a Vermont Studio fellowship (2006). First published in *Yemassee*, she has work in *Literary Mama*, *Louisiana Review*, and others. Schullo earned a Ph.D. at University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is now moving to Wyoming to teach English and pursue her own writing.



"I JUST WRITE ABOUT GAY DESIGNERS AND GAY DISCOS AND GAY CHEFS AND GAY ROCK STARS AND GAY PHOTOGRAPHERS AND GAY MODELS AND GAY CELEBRITIES AND GAY EVERYTHING. I JUST DON'T CALL THEM GAY. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH FOR DOING MY BIT?"

"NO–I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO BE."

FROM *THE NORMAL HEART*
BY LARRY KRAMER (1985)

Above: Photo by Forrest Clonts

THE END OF THE RAINBOW (OR WHY WE CANCELLED THE GAY ISSUE OF *JASPER*)

BY ED MADDEN

I thought it was a good idea. Still do.

Last March, when we were working on a special "pink" issue of *Jasper*, which was devoted to women artists, editor Cindi Boiter suggested maybe doing a "rainbow" issue – on the lesbian and gay artists of the Midlands. I wondered aloud, at the time, if we would find enough good and *out* lesbian or gay artists who would be willing to be part of the project, especially since a few of the immediate suspects were off the list because they had just appeared in recent issues. But Cindi and others assured me that we could do it, and it would be groundbreaking.

As it turned out, however, even though some artists in this issue are openly lesbian or gay, we had to abandon the idea of a rainbow issue.

When we started planning the issue, I was excited. The issue was planned in part to coincide with the state lesbian and gay pride festival (October 20, Main Street). Also, just as March has been designated women's history month in order to draw attention to the hidden, unrecognized, or ignored contributions of women, October is lesbian and gay history month, to draw attention to the historical figures and events not included in history books – or those figures included but not recognized as gay, another form of invisibility.

Pride is grounded in the politics of visibility, in the idea that people who know gay and lesbian people are more likely to support them, that visibility gives hope and options to young people growing up in oppressive cultures and families, that only visibility can destroy the myths and stereotypes that ground discrimination, that shame and stigma and silence will only be destroyed through visibility.

I remembered working on South Carolina Pride years ago, before there was the kind of cultural sanction now extended to the event via grants and politicians and rainbow flags down Main Street. In an attempt to reach out to the broader culture, we had thought to take out an ad in *Columbia Metropolitan*, which, at the time, billed itself as the primary lifestyle and community magazine for the area. It seemed the best way to reach out to a broader demographic interested in cultural events.

The ad submitted, prepared by a local lesbian graphic design professional, had a rainbow stripe and that year's theme, "We the people includes everyone!" The word *gay* did not appear in the ad. Just the rainbow, the logo, South Carolina Pride 2006, the day and the place. Pretty tame. But

the magazine's ad rep called us back to let us know the publisher refused the ad. The publisher reserved the right, in the advertising agreement, to refuse any advertisement deemed "unacceptable for publication."

Unacceptable for whom? Ironically, the magazine that year was filled with ads from gay-owned businesses and had even included an openly gay man (not named as such, of course) on one cover.

I thought of the textbooks I was taught from and those I used when I first starting teaching at USC. The anthology of modern poetry that mentions Hart Crane's sexuality alongside his alcoholism and suicide, as well as A. E. Houseman's (theme of suicide) and Oscar Wilde's (prosecuted). Walt Whitman? Oh, he had "a series of sentimental friendships with young working-class men." Gertrude Stein? A "lifelong attachment" to Alice Toklas. The editors called W.H. Auden the foremost religious poet of his age and a great English love poet, but they didn't bother to mention that he was also gay. So the college textbook names homosexuality if repressed, tortured, alcoholic, suicidal, criminalized and prosecuted, but erases the sexuality of a man who was a great poet of Christian faith and romantic love.

I remembered the letters I sent to the editorial board of the *South Carolina Encyclopedia* in 2001 and 2002, asking that the tome include an entry on the state's lesbian and gay history and culture. After all, the book was advertised as an attempt to "catalog in unprecedented detail the diversity of people and experiences that have made South Carolina the unique and engaging place that it is today." At first the board found "no compelling reason" to include lesbian and gay history.

Eventually, after more correspondence, and the creation of a document summarizing gay and lesbian history in the state, the board agreed to include us. So by 2006, when the *Encyclopedia* appeared – the same year the state saw a constitutional amendment prohibiting any recognition of gay couples and their families, the same year *Columbia Metropolitan* deemed us "unacceptable for publication" – we were part of the official history, right there on page 550, just before the lettered olive, the state seashell.

Given the insistent cultural politics of exclusion and invisibility, intentional or not, I was excited about an issue of *Jasper* that would not only explicitly *include* lesbian, gay, or queer artists as part of the thriving arts community and the cultural diversity of our region, but would also *make visible* our presence in the culture.

But we weren't able to do it.

Some artists simply said no. Several expressed hesitation. Emails and Facebook messages went unanswered. One artist said no then yes, another yes yes yes then no.

One artist said yes, but insisted that the story should be about his art, not his sexuality. When he said this, all I could think was: we're an arts magazine, not a gossip magazine. I don't remember people's personal lives ever being included in a story unless it is part of the story they tell – as in a recent profile that explained that an artist moved across the country to marry a long distance sweetheart he had met in internet chat. Simple, factual, part of the story he told.

One artist said that she would rather be chosen for the work than for being lesbian or gay. The work *was* our primary criteria of selection. We didn't solicit artists *because* they were lesbian or gay, but good artists, visible and active in the culture, who were also lesbian or gay.

Another artist stated, rather eloquently, that what he creates, 99.99 percent of the time, "is not influenced by my sexual orientation," adding, "On the 'pie chart' of my life, I have always felt that my sexual orientation is a small (but important) part of my life, not anything to hide but not *the* identifier of who I am." He went on to say that everyone knows, that we could put his photo in with a caption saying, *he's gay* – but that he didn't want to be included in the magazine as a gay artist.

It's a comment that raises a number of issues. Are we just talking about the biography of the artist or also about the content of the art? And isn't there more to say about the complex relation of sexuality to art than a simple focus on biography or content?

At a poetry festival once I heard a poet (who writes about his relationships) quibble over the description "gay poet." "I am not a gay poet," he said, "I'm a poet who happens to be gay." His comment seems to me to indicate a concern about perception and reception – a fear, perhaps, that the very codes of identity politics might reduce or distort our understanding of the art.

In the guest editorial in the "pink" issue in March, USC ceramic artist Virginia Scotchie talked about the status and role of women artists and focused on three things:

- the need to recognize and promote women artists, "who have historically been ignored or overlooked" – the need, that is, to make visible what is too often invisible, not because of artistic value but because of social prejudice,

- the importance of a community of women artists supporting and respecting one another as women artists (especially given the competitive, challenging, and sometimes expensive nature of the profession)—the importance, that is, of collaborating and supporting one another,

the importance of leadership, of the visibility of women as leaders in the local arts community, as heads of boards and as owners and directors of galleries and museums – the importance, that is, of visible leadership.

I had originally planned to use her editorial as a model for mine for this issue: the need to make visible despite social prejudice, the need to build communities of support (that at the very least recognize social prejudice and at best resist prejudice through visibility and inclusion and mutual support), and the need to be visible in places that matter.

I'd hoped to connect the special issue to the recent *Hide/Seek* art show at the National Portrait Gallery in DC, to the politics of visibility that show raised and its radical but obvious claim that gay and lesbian artists had a profound influence on American modernism, a fact that has until recently been suppressed and ignored. Or to the groundbreaking 2010 *Ars Homo Erotica* art show at the National Museum of Art in Poland, which thematically juxtaposed historical treasures with contemporary art in order to draw attention to the queer elements (biographies, contents, themes) of the museum's national collection, despite political and religious opposition.

I'd also planned to invoke a monologue from Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* (a play I discuss elsewhere in this issue) – a monologue that is ahistorical and anachronistic, but it still knocks me over with its bold proclamation of a gay culture: "I belong to a culture that includes Proust, Henry James, Tchaikovsky, Cole Porter, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Marlowe, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Tennessee Williams, Byron, E. M. Forster, Lorca, Auden, Francis Bacon, James Baldwin, Harry Stack Sullivan, John Maynard Keynes, Dag Hammarskjold... These are not invisible men."

Kramer goes on, talking to a closeted friend: "Did you know that it was an openly gay Englishman who was responsible as any man for winning the Second World War? His name was Alan Turing and he cracked the Germans' Enigma code so the Allies knew in advance what the Nazis were going to do – and when the war was over he committed suicide he was so hounded for being gay. Why don't they teach any of this in the schools? If they did, maybe he wouldn't have killed himself and maybe you wouldn't be terrified of who you are. . . . It's all there – all through history we've been there; but we have to claim it, and identify who was in it, and articulate what's in our minds and hearts and all our creative contributions to this earth."

Including and making visible lesbian and gay artists and art is a politics of possibility, creating space and opportunity. Not just for artists who might be afraid to come out or for artists who need just that permission to explore issues in their own work, but simply to make space for the possibility of lesbian and gay experience within the fabric of human experience that is art.

A rainbow issue of *Jasper*? I still think it's a good idea.

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