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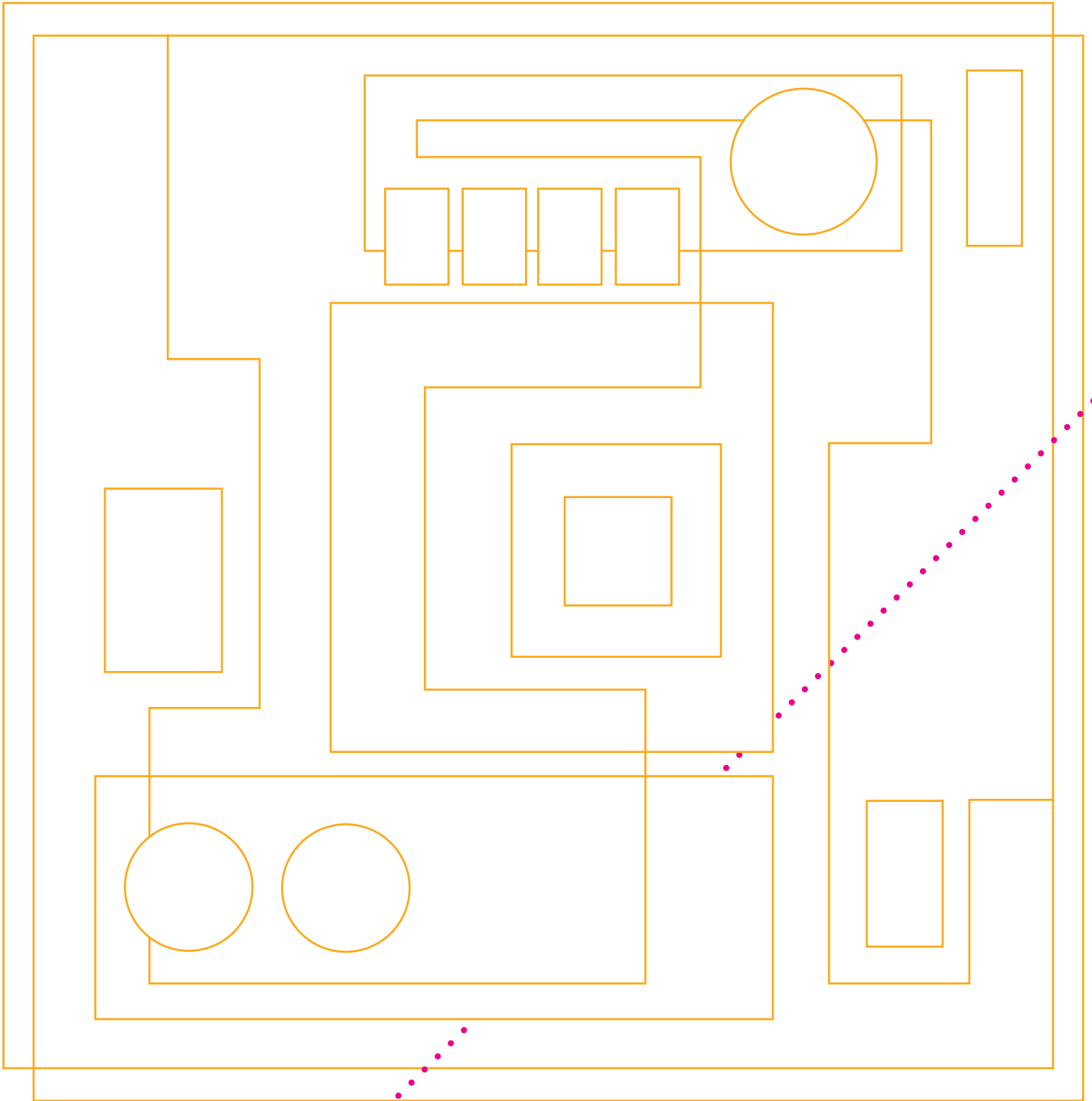
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About the Cover

Christian Thee's *Informale*, a subject's portrait with symbols as elements, is a sweeping departure from the artist's long-revered *trompe l'oeil* work - as is the once-in-a-lifetime gift replica of Max Liebermann's *Two Riders on the Beach*, created *in relief* for the famous painting's blind legitimate inheritor, all revealed in the cover story found on page 30. - RH

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CROSSING THE RIVER & FINDING ART

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Dear Friends,

There's something about this time of year here at *Jasper* that makes us, whether we're literary artists or not, think of books and the pure bliss of losing oneself in the pages of a well-written novel. Maybe it's the excitement that the SC Book Festival is right around the corner. Maybe it's the warm weather suggesting lazy summer days ahead when we might finally get back to finishing the novel we started over Christmas or, if you're like me, attacking the stacks of want-to-read books that have been growing on my nightstand, desk, and kitchen table. In any case, we're happy to focus on the literary arts again this issue by adding an extra book review or two and a few more poems than usual.

We're also happy to weigh in on an issue that should be of concern to all of us—the castigation and financial retribution leveled at two of SC's colleges which determined that gay-friendly literature and arts had a place on campus. Poet, author, and literary arts editor Ed Madden speaks not only for himself but for the entity that is *Jasper* in his essay *On Dangerous Books* on page 54 of this issue. Turn a few pages further and you'll also have the opportunity to read two of Ed's poems excerpted from his new book, *Nest*, published earlier this spring by Ireland's Salmon Poetry.

This issue also features the work of two of Columbia's arts icons and local legends,

visual artists Boyd Saunders and Christian Thee. Writer Rachel Haynie, new to *Jasper* but well-known around town as a gifted and steadfast freelancer, joins the staff of *Jasper* this issue and, straight out of the chute, takes on two fascinating feature stories. You'll find her piece on the esteemed printmaker Saunders on page 37, and you've already seen some of Thee's work on the cover of the magazine. Turn to the centerfold to read more.

But back to the literary arts—(see? It's hard to get it off our minds)—we wanted to let you know about a delightful change in *Jasper*'s summer publication plans. To start with, you won't have to wait until July to get your hands on the next issue of *Jasper* after you've read all the pages herein. Our next issue will release on June 8th with the publication of our new annual literary journal, *Fall Lines—a literary convergence*, published in partnership with the Richland Library, One Columbia, USC Press, and Muddy Ford Press. While *Fall Lines* will look familiar—it's a *Jasper* publication, after all—in many ways it will also look different. *Fall Lines* will be filled with select poetry and prose submitted from all over and judged to be worthy of printing in our inaugural issue. We're thrilled to have the likes of Josephine Humphries, Christopher Dickey, and Marjory Wentworth in its pages. *Fall Lines* will also be a bit heftier than the *Jasper* you're reading now, and its pages will be perfect bound. Given the extra oomph in the upcoming issue though, you won't necessarily find it stacked in the corners of

various bars and coffee shops around town. We're taking special care with *Fall Lines*. After the 4 pm release celebration at the Richland Library on June 8th, please look for *Fall Lines* in select locations such as the One Columbia headquarters on Taylor Street, USC Press, Jasper Studio at the Arcade, Gallery West across the river on State Street in West Columbia, and a few more choice locations listed online at JasperColumbia.com including, of course, Richland Library which will also issue the journal as an e-book.

We'll be back with bells on in September and we're already working on making that issue great. *Pssst – September promises stories on USC opera, ballet divas transitioning out of professional life, Tim McClendon, and (fingers crossed) a conversation with SC's gubernatorial candidates. Mark your calendars for our release celebration September 15th hosted at Vista Studios 80808 by Jasper 2012 visual artist of the year, Susan Lenz.*

As always, thank you for reading, thank you for your support, and thank you, Columbia arts community, for giving us so much to give back to you in the pages of *Jasper Magazine*.

Take care,



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

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THE LITTLE THEATRE THAT COULD

Performers and stage technicians who love their theatre family sometimes forget how hard it can be to break into that family at first. Charles Chavers and Michael Bailey discovered this after relocating to the Midlands in 2008 with the intention of starting a small theatre. Chavers, a retired Air Force officer, had experience with USO tours, and a background as operations officer in Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Command. Bailey, who passed away earlier this year, had worked in theatre from age 14, earned an MFA in directing, and directed over 150 plays as co-founder and artistic director of several theatre groups in his native Ohio. Sounds like the perfect team to produce plays in an area already rich in talent and appreciation for drama, right? Unfortunately, obstacle after obstacle arose. Their initial production was to have been *Naked Boys Singing*, a revue described by Bailey as “a cute little show, very popular in (big) cities (and) intended to be presented in a bar.” Local papers refused to post audition notices for such a title, even as a paid ad, and potential venues were similarly cool to the idea. After they lost their musical director, Bailey suggested a switch to the Pulitzer-winning *How I Learned to Drive*; they leased the 5th theatre space in a former multiplex across from Columbia Mall, giving the fledgling theatre company its name: Stage 5.

Still new to the area and with limited familiarity with local arts, cultural, and media resources, Bailey and Chavers contended with challenges of attracting both actors and audiences. When their landlords went into bankruptcy, Stage 5 kept the name, but became “something of a roaming theatre com-

pany,” Bailey recalled. They presented *Seussical, Jr.* at the Jewish Community Center, *An Adult Evening of Shel Silverstein* at the Tree of Life Congregation, and *Spring Awakening* in rented retail space at Dutch Square. Still outsiders to some extent, Stage 5 ruffled a few feathers with that last show, already scheduled by another group. “Both Charles and I are pretty stubborn, and don’t like to be thwarted,” said Bailey, who shared some thoughts with *Jasper* last fall in anticipation of this article. “We were in a quandary: close up and fade away, or keep going.” Finally, they had a stroke of luck, securing space at 947 S. Stadium Road in Stadium Park, a warehouse/storage area gaining visibility with the popularity of nearby Conquest Brewing. The little theatre that could had found a home, and promptly produced a full season of shows: *God of Carnage*, *The Elephant Man*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, *Bark! The Musical*, and *Macbeth*. The current season’s line-up is similarly credible and diverse: *Hamlet*, *Lombardi*, *Sordid Lives*, and *Psycho Beach Party*.

This time around, Chavers and Bailey knew they couldn’t do it all by themselves, and reached out to other performers and other groups, gradually building a theatre family of their own. Bill Boland had done shows at Workshop, Midlands Tech, and USC, where he majored in theatre. He heard about Stage 5 from a friend, and over the last year and a half, he has moved from cast member to lead actor to director (*Hamlet*) to Artistic Director, stepping in a few months before Bailey’s untimely death in January. Crystal Gleim was heavily involved in theatre in college in Pennsylvania, and performs with the Art Bar Players, but like many newcomers to Columbia, she found the audition and casting process daunting. She too was introduced to

Stage 5 by a friend, who then suggested she should audition. Like Boland, she has worked on every production since, currently serving as assistant to Boland, executive stage manager for the space, and managing producer for Side Show Productions, Stage 5’s changing roster of non-season shows. “Our goal was to bring more edgy entertainment to our main stage to fill the down times,” says Gleim, whom Boland calls “the backbone of the company.” “It was our attempt to make Stage 5 more of an arts venue, and not just a theatre.” Visiting performers have included cirque and burlesque acts (Freaksheaux to Geaux, the Festival of Doom, and Creepshow Peepshow with Sugar St. Germain), USC’s Overreactors improv group, the original play *Us Grown Men*, and assorted cabaret and music performances. Chavers continues as Producing Director, and eight company members serve as an executive board.

Gleim describes their mission as producing “quality live theatre (while offering) a home to new, as well as seasoned authors, actors, technicians, producers and directors.” “I like to think of Stage 5 as a place where everyone is welcome,” Boland adds. “I love that we have people from other theatres come in and do a show. I think it really keeps things fresh. No one wants to see the same actors in every show. I hope to continue to collaborate with all the other groups.” He anticipates everything from more Shakespeare to musicals to lesser-known works, and he and Gleim will both continue to direct. “The last thing I want to do is compete with all the other theatres. I think it’s good to give people alternatives.” For more information on Stage 5, visit <http://mbfproductions.net/>. — AK



THE SOUTHEASTERN PIANO FESTIVAL

For the last eleven years, for one week in early June, Columbia, SC hosts the Southeastern Piano Festival, and, in the process, becomes one of the premier classical music destinations in the world. It will also happen once again this June 15-22 as the festival welcomes legendary pianist Leon Fleisher as its headlining guest artist, along with a host of world-renowned talent and some of the instrument's brightest young hopefuls.

While the festival operates as both a pre-college piano training program and tense international competition (the Arthur Fraiser award winner will receive \$4000 and the opportunity to perform a complete concerto with the South Carolina Philharmonic), much of its appeal comes from the nightly concert offerings that showcase not only the musicians themselves but also the wide diversity and range of possibilities that the instrument offers. The rich array of guest performers include Alexander Korsantia, Ingrid Jacoby, and Ilana Vered, but the big draw this year is Fleisher, who at 84 has had a dramatic career punctuated by the tragic diagnosis of focal dystonia, which rendered two of his fingers on his right hand immobile at the height of his career at age 36. Although he continued to conduct and teach, it has only been recently, since 2004, that he has regained the use of his right hand through extensive medical treatment.

Also well worth mentioning is the opening night collaboration between the Phil and various festival performers, including artistic director Marina Lomazov, program director Joseph Rackers, and *Jasper* 2013 Artist of the Year finalist Phillip Bush, which is a reprisal of the 2012 smash-hit concert dubbed

a "Piano Extravaganza." Add to that the fact that the competition itself, which runs from 10am to 9:30pm on Friday, June 20th, is free and open to the public.

For additional information on the festival, including venues and ticket prices, check out sepf.musc.sc.edu. Last year all ticketed events sold out in advance, so purchase early. – *KP*

GUITAR MUSIC: DUO CORTADO

Guitarists Andy Jurik and Devin Sherman have been pulling the right strings for quite some time as individual performers. Since 2012, though, the two have united their abilities behind Duo Cortado, one of Columbia's most promising new concert performers. Jurik and Sherman, both graduate students at the University of South Carolina studying under Christopher Berg, decided to collectively pursue a greater wealth of opportunities for instruments that often seem locked into Italianate and Latin musical worlds.

The classical guitar on its own exhibits a versatility that eludes most orchestral instruments and, like keyboard instruments, can be its own accompaniment. Beyond this realm are spaces for extended techniques and dazzling interplay between instruments – realms Jurik and Sherman explore readily. Duo Cortado has performed pieces from transcriptions of keyboard works by Scarlatti and Scriabin, compositions from the standard classical canon – for instance, Rodrigo and Sor – and Latin forms, of course, ranging from tango to choro.

Listening to their performances, there is an easy repartee between the performers and blossoming warmth to their ensemble playing. Under every strum, pick, or murmuring bisbigliando there is a fervent energy and intricate sense of dialogue. And, despite



ANDY JURIK AND DEVIN SHERMAN (PHOTO COURTESY DUO CORTADO)

being only a few years old, the duo is quickly becoming well-known in the area for performances at Conundrum, USC, and other venues throughout the Midlands. Performing as a duo can also provide the opportunity to play under rare or unusual circumstances— for instance, the two are currently working on a setting of Samuel Barber's "Sure on This Shining Night," accompanying a choir, for USC's Collaborations in Contemporary Art. They are slated to perform at the Southern Guitar Festival at Columbia College, which runs June 7-8.

Perhaps what sets this new ensemble apart from others in the region is their gravitation toward new music. They have, so far, premiered three original compositions they commissioned themselves, and have a fourth premiere in the offing. Most notable of these is George Fetner's *twas but a dream of thee*. Fetner's work – indicative of the strengths of Duo Cortado – is a lyrical, dreamy composition rooted in post-minimal techniques that play with the different timbre possibilities of their instruments. The work also maximizes the textural wealth the classical guitar can offer when forcing two together in dialogue with one another. Duo Cortado has also performed works by local composers Patrick Dover, Larry Fountain, and John Fitz Rogers.

All that said, there is something refreshing about Duo Cortado – like their caffeinated namesake (espresso cut with warm milk), they are a mellowed but robust foragers, full of energy, with an easiness that belies the complexity of their sonic palette. Hear samples of their work at duocortado.com, or see them during the Southern Guitar Festival this June. – *TD*

SC GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL STUDENTS PUBLISHED IN *THE ATLANTIC*

According to Scott Gould, chair of the creative writing department at the SC Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Greenville, "Writing is the fine art of getting your butt in the chair." And while he relishes leading his students into the throes of writing their hearts out, there is nothing he likes more than acknowledging when a student finds her or his voice. One such student, rising senior Cameron Messinides from just down the road in Camden, not only found his voice but displayed it for the world to see in the online pages of *The Atlantic*, the highly-respected 157 year old publication that has printed the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, W.E.B. DuBois and, of late, Richard Florida and Rebecca J. Rosen.

Fourteen students at the Governor's School responded to a call from *The Atlantic's* Deborah Fallows to write short pieces describing their experiences as students at the school. Messinides's essay, along with that of two other students, Shelley Hucks of Florence and Jackson Trice of Simpsonville, was chosen for publication. In his sensitive piece, Messinides writes about being absent from his home when a pair of feral dogs attacked his family's herd of goats. "My parents and brother arrived during the massacre. My father jumped the fence to chase the dogs and shot the slower one with a pistol. On his way back, he heard a few scattered bleats and followed the sounds. In a gully, he found two billies and the last nanny."

He goes on to write about his inability to process either the material or emotional loss his family experienced, and his own sense of loss at not being able to. "Some days I only want to be home, in the ranch-style with green siding and the stump in the front yard, which is the only remnant of the rotting oak my family cut down without me. I'd walk to the pasture with my father, take the shovel he offers me, and dig with him, shoulder-to-shoulder, a hole big enough to put all eighteen dead goats under three or four feet of orange clay. Then, we return home, and I sit in the living room next to my mother, tell her she can sleep now. Even hours into the night, after she has gone to bed, I sit, surrounded by lamplight, ... and listen to my brothers. They lie side-by-side on the hearth, birder's guidebook open before them, and take turns whispering names to each other: bobwhite, cardinal, tufted titmouse."

The maturity of Messinides's voice is not lost on Gould. "Students are here to learn their craft, to learn what it means to be a writer, to have a voice," he says. "If they learn their craft well enough, they will write pieces that disguise their age. In other words, my

goal is for students to handle material with a sensitivity and maturity that belies their ages. I think you can see that with Cameron's piece. If you didn't know he was a junior in high school, you'd think this was written by a forty year-old. There is an attention to craft and a maturity that goes far beyond his years."

For Messinides, who has moved on to being non-plussed in the few months since his essay first appeared, the future is uncertain. "I'll continue writing without a doubt," he says. "I want to play as many pick-up basketball games as possible. Those are the only two certainties in my future. College? One day I want to pursue chemistry, the next, journalism, and some days I only want to study library studies somewhere in Illinois where everyone will leave me alone with my Richard Hugo and Outkast. Job? If someone could buy me a cabin and pay me to write about the NBA and stories of crazy neighbors and good food, that'd be fantastic." - **CB**

POETRY NEWS: PHEBE DAVIDSON, QUITMAN MARSHALL, AND THE SC POETRY ARCHIVES

Introducing the 2013 South Carolina Poetry Archives Book Prize winners, Gilbert Allen writes, "[a]s I reviewed the manuscripts once again in December, I came to the conclusion that two were equally outstanding, in very different ways." Those manuscripts, selected for publication by Furman University's Ninety-Six press, are *What Holds Him to this World* by Phebe Davidson and *You Were Born One Time* by Quitman Marshall.

The poems in Phebe Davidson's *What Holds Him to this World* are not confessional, but nonetheless read like dispatches from a private discourse. It's a private discourse we all share, however, as the book orbits death as both character and concern. The desperation of the dying and anguish of the bereft find expression in Davidson's disarming language, as in "Common Plea":

Spare my mother, my father, my son, my
daughter, my sister, my brother,

my husband, my wife . . . Only let him/her
live. I will never in this lifetime sin again.

Take me.

The book juxtaposes lyrics focused on Azrael, the archangel of death, with poems about a Carolina woman's loss of both infant twin daughters and her husband. Davidson renders the angel both sympathetic and alien, an entity characterized equally by his attention to all transient beings and

by his incomprehension of them. She characterizes the angel as a creature entirely without memory, in which the command of God arises and is carried out without reflection. In "Articles of Faith," she writes:

The Archangel has no memory and no need of memory.
Knowledge
rises in him as it is required, then it disappears.

Davidson's characterization of Azrael as a creature bound by necessity is one way of making the overwhelming loss he represents a little more comprehensible, perhaps even a little more human.

The poems in Quitman Marshall's *You Were Born One Time* cover a broad tonal range: reflective, humorous, occasionally indignant, and a little melancholy, often all at the same time, these poems invite the reader into the poet's confidence in plain-seeming language. The poems are often passionate, with reverence for natural beauty and disbelief at human shortsightedness, as in "Mud":

The blue pluff mud of low tide
ought to tell those who have the view
of and damn well paid for it
that their grip on anything is weak.

Marshall's poems draw on autobiography for content, but the personal details are woven into larger histories, of nations and regions in transition. In "Religion," a group of construction workers pause to take in a co-worker's awed reaction to the televised moon landing. In "La Belle et La Bête," Marshall imagines his father walking Columbia's streets in the year of the Cocteau film from which the poem takes its title:

He is a young man about to join the army,
imagining his father's responses. Streetlights
cast a more inclusive hue. More stars
show in 1946, but are acknowledged less,
coming as they do from worlds away.
It's another hard time, but at least
a great war is over. In Paris, a place
no better to me than anywhere tonight,
a town my father will never see,
Cocteau is smoking toward the final cut
about us and history.

Here and elsewhere in *You Were Born One Time*, Marshall traces the threads of personal history through the tapestry of larger, less personal histories and cultural movements, showing us how the various strands are interwoven and asking us what we've carried forward from the past, and what we'll carry forward into the future.

Both books are available from Ninety-Six press. This is the second year for the book prize series. - **Jonathan Butler**

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

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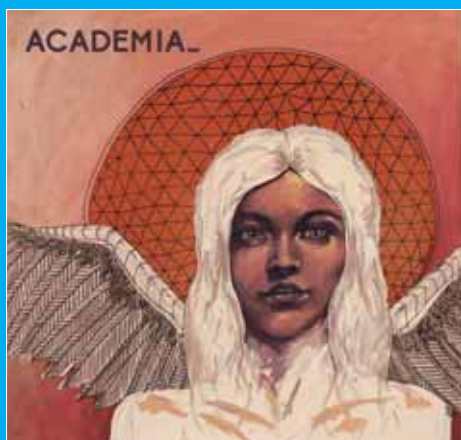
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Local Record

REVIEWS

WITH
KYLE PETERSEN



ACADEMIA_

ACADEMIA_

At this point the idea of a new chillwave act in South Carolina might seem passé, even just a few years past its heyday, but there's a sense of earnest, low-stakes enjoyment when listening to Academia_, Tyler Matthew's dreamy lo-fi electronic home recording project. While comparisons to the early

work of Washed Out and Toro y Moi are inevitable due to the reverb-laden synthesizers and mid-tempo-yet-danceable drum beats that give these tunes much of their structure, the focus on ambience and slow-shifting arrangements at the expense of the more pop-oriented appeal of the latter two acts effectively insulates him from too much disparagement. Even when Matthews takes a more straightforward vocal turn, like on "Clarity" or "Like a Dream," he always shies away from easy options, with pitched samples and murmured vocals pushed down in the mix and littered with disembodied effects. The end result both nods towards sonic experimenters like Daft Punk while also giving off a more apathetic and disenchanting vibe than either of those eminently friendly acts.

While the album ultimately suggests the possibility that Matthews could one way jettison his approach and craft an indelible chillwave record worthy of a national record deal, it's hard to imagine that Matthews wanted to make anything more than what this record is—a cozy, often-weightless album of hazy compositions meant to while away the seemingly endless days and humid nights of a South Carolina summer. -KP



CANCELLIERI

WELCOME TO MT. PLEASANT

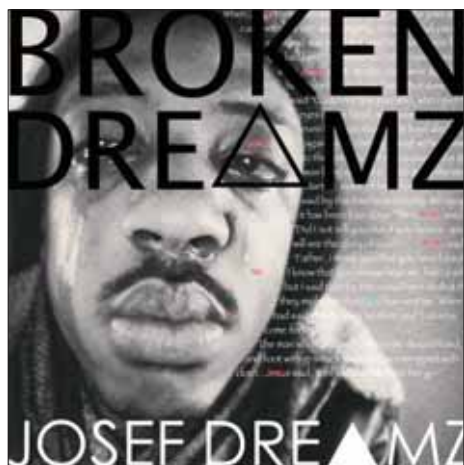
When Ryan Hutchens first started recording under the name Cancellieri, it felt like a low-key side project from his main gig playing bass in the hard-touring post-rock outfit Pan. Those early recordings were built on simple acoustic guitar strums and layered with keyboard, ambient electronics and production, with the implied intent of creating soundscapes long of atmosphere but a bit short on form, even though there were genuinely pretty melodies being crafted. In short, it felt like a budget version of Grizzly Bear.

That all changed on last year's *///EP*, where Hutchens tightened his song craft and abandoned the obscuring production techniques

of his home recordings. He also embraced the textural possibilities of his reedy-yet-soaring vocals, allowing them to take center stage as a powerful instrument that seems to evoke sunny days and lonely nights, windswept vistas and endless highways. Which was fitting, given that Hutchens simultaneously left Pan and struck out on the road solo, maintaining the grueling grind of life on the road sans his bandmates.

All of this leads to *Welcome to Mt. Pleasant*, the first full-length from Cancellieri and, coincidentally, also likely one of the best local albums that will be released this year. Again recording with Alex McCollum of Stagbriar and backed by a small group of sympathetic session musicians (Cameron Powell—bass, Michael Crawford—drums, and McCollum—lead guitar), the album embraces a full-bodied indie folk-rock sound reminiscent of Water Liars or early Band of Horses that more than fulfills the promise of Hutchen's last EP.

These songs feel like wizened travelogues that give way to moments of pure catharsis, and singer and band know just the right moment to lift off or return to ground. Credit goes both to Hutchens, who has penned his best collection of songs to-date and smartly revived a couple of his early lo-fi efforts, as well as McCollum and company, who seem to know intuitively how to alternate between a necessary sense of space and longing and the anthemic indie rock grandeur that these tunes demand. -KP

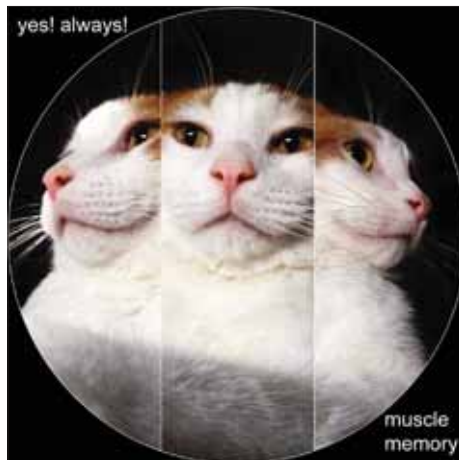


JOSEF DREAMZ

BROKEN DREAMZ

While far from a household name on the local scene, USC student and rapper Josef Dreamz—self-proclaimed as “South Carolina’s most relevant rapper”—has a large social media following and has maintained a steady output of recorded material. *Broken Dreamz* seems to consolidate the style that he’s been perfecting over the last few years though—backed by soft-hewed production

(provided by Fiyah Burns) with wandering keyboard lines, Josef alternates between a hardened and skilled flow and a lilting singing voice that feels like Antony Johnson doing his best Frank Ocean impression. It’s a beguiling combination, and the fact that Josef writes forthrightly about his struggles as a young gay black man, both implicitly and explicitly, as well as his naked ambition to succeed, makes *Broken Dreamz* a pleasant and winning collection, and Josef as an MC worth keeping an eye on. KP



MUSCLE MEMORY

YES! ALWAYS!

It’s been seven years since we’ve heard from singer/songwriter David Adedokun, who in 2007 released an excellent collection of pop-leaning alt-country under the name The Daylight Hours. That record established Adedokun as a songwriter with a gift for storytelling and a sharp lyrical eye belied by catchy choruses and silky smooth vocals. Since then, he’s mainly been seen playing around town on the covers circuit, although the occasional new song or two would surface at open mic nights.

Finally, however, we have a new collection from the songwriter, albeit under a new moniker and new modus operandi. This time the acoustic guitar is absent or buried in the mix in favor of active guitar and synth lines that keep these songs propulsive even when they seem like they might lean too far into dour territory. Elsewhere, this new approach complements the swinging motion of the lyrics, something particularly in the one-two punch of “severance pay” and “ball & chain.” While his voice and lyrics are buried a bit to his detriment, the energy on record is still nice to see after such a long absence.

Still, when we get to the acoustic weeper on the record, “holes,” it’s hard not to pine for the Adedokun of old a bit. An elegantly fingerpicked ballad with airy synthesizers and a warm keyboard line that wrap around

the singer’s voice at its most heartbreaking, he utters the line “I would trade the whole damn revolution for a kiss / None of this is right without you telling me it is” and you can almost feel the world slowing down to a crawl. KP



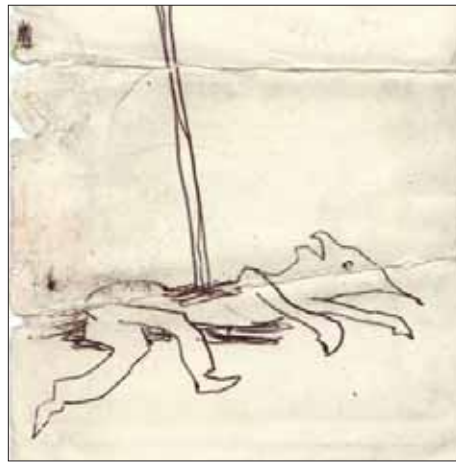
THE LOVELY FEW

THE GEMINIDS

It’s almost a shame how easily it is to pigeonhole the influence of Sufjan Stevens on Mike Mewbourne’s electro-folk-pop project The Lovely Few, given how singular of a voice Mewbourne and his wife Kate, along with Alan Davis, have crafted over a series of celestial-themed recordings. The three, along with the help of a few of the big names in the Charleston music scene (Dan McCurry, Nick Jenkins) and Columbia (Kenny McWilliams), have become adept at creating minimalist pocket symphonies for spare songs that are cryptic and allusive, distant yet warm.

While the project’s tendencies towards ambient, mid-tempo numbers and Mewbourne’s plaintive vocals can occasionally make the listening experience a bit sleepy, the conceptual power of connecting the language of the stars with interpersonal relationships, and connecting ambient electronics with the human heart that is so central to these tunes, is difficult to deny.

One of these days it might be nice to The Lovely Few rock out a bit (they get close on “Tyndarids”), but for now we should be satisfied watching them drift by slowly across the heavens. -KP



THE RUBY BRUNETTES

THE WOODSHED SESSIONS: VOLUME 1

Like most of the Ruby Brunettes' catalogue, the appeal of *Woodshed Sessions: Volume 1* lies in the vocal interplay between its members. Chris Compton (lead vocals / guitar), Catherine Allgrim (trombone), Ken Mixon (percussion) and Christ Paget (bass guitar) are all good musicians who know how to harmonize to maximum effect, but *Woodshed*, for all of its back-porch-jam, ramshackle charm, doesn't feel as fully realized as the band's self-titled debut.

Now, I'm aware of the inherent unfairness in that assessment. Criticizing a 4-song EP for not being as 'complete' as its full-length predecessor is like arguing that *Mona Lisa* isn't as good as *The Annunciation* because it has fewer bright colors and was painted on a smaller panel. Every work is singular and should ideally be judged within its own specific parameters. And, within the limitations that attend a short EP recorded more or less live, *Woodshed* is a solid release.

The record opens with "Family Band" and then moves forward with "Back of Beyond," both jaunty Americana numbers with a heavy debt to Appalachian folk. Vocal harmonies dominate the refrains and the songs' whimsical spirit is driven home by Allgrim's trombone and a last-minute appearance by a kazoo (which, despite all logic, is never an unwelcome addition to upbeat acoustic music) in the former, and some world-class whistling in the latter. "Lazybone" is a piece of laidback mountain pop that wags a finger at its lackadaisical protagonist, while "Lies" synthesizes all of the strengths of the preceding songs except, tragically, the kazoo.

Song for song, Woodshed will continue to live in the shadow of its big brother, but it's still a generous offering from a legitimately good band and should hold Columbia over until the Ruby Brunettes emerge with something new. —Michael Spawn

STEFANIE BANNISTER

I ADMIT I AM GLAD

There's a certain twee-pop feyness that is almost inevitable when a young twenty-something stands on stage with nothing but a baritone ukulele and some earnest tunes, but whatever hipster caricature you might want to ascribe to the music of Stefania Bannister will likely do it a disservice. Bannister, who recently relocated to Columbia from Charleston, writes with startlingly self-effacing clarity and wit in addition to passion, giving heartbroken reminiscences like "Chile Song" and "Mutual Breakup" and kiss-offs like "Liar Song" a poignancy and self-awareness that is eminently engaging. Elsewhere, she tackles diverse topics like her relationship with her parents ("Grown Up Jokes") and homesickness ("New Home") with aplomb, demonstrating a thematic range that prevents her from getting pigeonholed as a writer of romance laments.

And while her piercing singing style might easily draw comparison to Joanna Newsome or She & Him's Zoey Deschanel, she's not as esoteric as the former nor droll as the latter, but rather has a directness and energy that calls to mind latter-day Kimya Dawson more than anything. Most listeners will feel more engaged with the songs themselves, but it's worth noting how Bannister's nimble picking and turn-on-a-dime arrangements keep things moving along briskly over the 22 minute run time of the album as well, and her friends Steve Tirozzi and Nick Jenkins flesh out the tunes on electric guitar and percussion, respectively. The end result is a cozy little singer/songwriter album that manages to stand out in any number of ways, making Bannister a strong and welcome addition to the city's music scene. —KP

KARMESSIAH

DARIUS LUSHER

On the latest from local outsider rapper Karmessiah we see the young MC try on his latest persona, *Darius Lusher*, a name which marries his sardonic world view and lysergic production vibe, both of which stand opposed to the hyper-accessible and occasionally cornball country music and pop/rock superstar.

Like prior releases, there seem to be few rules that Karmessiah isn't interested in breaking as he threads production styles and lyrical voices with impunity across the album. At times he seems to be nodding directly to Kanye West with his warm, melodic beats and processed soul samples, while at other points he is decidedly off-kilter and away from the beaten path, in the vein of the weirder moments of Danny Brown or the Odd Future collective than anything else. While overall his tightest collection musically, the draw here is still the delightfully twisted rhymes and rambunctious humor that will draw listeners in, even if it won't win many converts among the wider hip-hop audience of the city. —KP



REJECTIONEERS

BETTER THIS SEASON

There's something to be said for simply following your own muse and setting aside any nagging concerns about what's "current" or hip. Take, for instance, Columbia's Rejectionneers, a group easily tagged as pop-punk

revisionists but who somehow also evince a distinct personality and a sense of rock and roll classicism that often evades other, similarly-minded bands whose record collection doesn't seem to stretch any further back than Green Day's *Dookie*. A lot of that comes down from the fact that frontman and primary songwriter Ben Walker writes in his own voice and composes sturdy, emotionally wrought (yet never over-wrought) songs that give off the feel of high school angst appropriate to the genre while maintaining a broader, more universal appeal that makes sense for a band more than a decade past their secondary school salad days.

Or it could be that, regardless of what's all the rage of the moment, there's something timeless about chunky, full-throttle guitars and hook-filled choruses that sound great blasting out of your car stereo with the windows rolled down as spring finally arrives in this Southern town. So, yeah, do that. -KP

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LOCAL ZINE STEREO FLY LEADS THE LOCAL SCENE CHARGE TO SXSW

BY KYLE PETERSEN | PHOTOS BY SEAN RAYFORD

**"I HONESTLY BELIEVE SOUTH
CAROLINA HAS ONE OF THE BEST
MUSIC SCENES IN THE COUNTRY."
— GREG SLATTERY**

There are music festivals, and then there is South by Southwest.

That might sound a bit hyperbolic, but it's also fairly accurate. Most festivals will have, at most, a couple of hundred acts spread out over a few days—SXSW, as it is usually referred to, is a week and a half behemoth that will feature a few thousand artists playing in hundreds of different venues across Austin, Texas's downtown area. It also includes

an interactive and technology conference as well as a film festival as part of its offerings, and, although it started out as a place for primarily unsigned bands to build relationships with record labels, it has become known for its extensive product placements, corporate tie-ins, and superstar surprise appearances—leading to a sense that the festival might have gotten too big, too overrun, and too full of competing interests.



DEAR BLANCA

And while all of that may be true, it still very much serves as the one place where the most music fans will gather all year, and because of that the draw for any band itching for more still stands. The only problem for most bands in South Carolina, though, is that Austin is, literally, a thousand miles away, making travel and logistics a nightmare.

That's where *Stereo*fly, the local zine and concert promotion group led by Shallow Pal-

ace's Greg Slattery, comes in. The organization was instrumental, along with the record label Post-Echo and Atlanta booking agency Vulcan Army, in getting 6 local acts to the festival in 2013, albeit far from the festival's epicenter, and this year plotted a two-day extravaganza that kicked off the festivities at Javelina's, a bar just a few blocks off the main drag, with twenty South Carolina acts represented along with a handful of other bands

from throughout the southeast.

"I had a media pass last year, and it was really neat to see the power that both official and unofficial shows had [at the festival], and I ended up feeling like the unofficial showcases were the more engaging and cooler thing to do" Slattery recalls. "The problem with the Vulcan Army showcase was that it was just too far from downtown, and that really killed it. Nobody walks [that far] to see a



show at SXSW.”

Motivated to provide a better experience than last year’s acts had in Austin, he decided early on to stage a bigger Stereofly experience that would be closer to the action and find a broader appeal. “I really wanted it to be on Rainey Street, even though it’s not one of the big streets,” he explains. “To me it’s a lot more fun, kind of like being in Elmwood or Earlewood in Columbia where there’s all these bungalow houses that got converted into really cool bars, with neat backyards and outdoor stages.”

Slattery also purposefully staged it on the first two days of the festival, before the big

music acts were scheduled and festival attendees were still getting the lay of the land. He also coaxed a broad swath of talent from Columbia, with everybody from the literary chamber-folk of The Restoration and the buzzworthy indie folk-rock Stagbriar to hip-hop artists like Fat Rat da Czar and Cole Connor, as well as heavier bands like Abacus and Zonaea, by using a massive Kickstarter campaign that paid for the rental costs of the venue and allowed each band to get paid for the gig.

And while going up against larger events funded by big labels or corporations that offered free food and booze or national head-

liners is an uphill battle, particularly when other unofficial showcases offer fierce competition, Stereofly’s SXSW foray was largely successful on its own terms. “I tried to pitch it to most bands as more of a vacation, so their expectations were more to have fun,” Slattery says. “It’s almost more important for bands to be at SXSW and see it than it is to perform. I knew that getting them a place to play and giving them a show would convince them to at least try it. And it was a really beautiful thing to see how all of the bands came together.”

And according to most accounts, the first day of primarily South Carolina bands was



actually fairly well-attended, buffered by the fact that most of the performers hung out all day for each other's sets. While the second day was not as successful, Slattery still thinks it was worth it just to get local performers out of their comfort zones, in a different scene and different environment. "Playing SXSW is all about possibility and potential [at this point]," he admits. "We'll just try and get bigger and better next year."

The bands, for the most part, were just happy for the experience. Some trips were definitely rougher than others—Emily McCollum of Starbriar had her SUV break down deep in Alabama twice on the trip, and Fat

Rat da Czar and company did the entire 16 hour drive to Austin in one night—but the level of excitement and energy gained from making the trek is palpable.

Drummer Steve Sancho, who played with The Restoration, Stagbriar, Say Brother, and Rachel Kate at the festival, calls the experience "an absolute blast" and plans to return again next year.

"I was just blown away by the sheer size of it," he explains. "Being there surrounded by all these people, all this music." As for the Stereofly showcase, Sancho thinks that Say Brother had a bigger crowd at the gig they played later in the week, but still praises the

collective effort of the South Carolina bands for being there at all. "I just feel really lucky to be associated with such talent," he says humbly.

As for Slattery, he's just glad that his vision for moving the state's music scene succeeded. "I honestly believe South Carolina has one of the best music scenes in the country," he asserts. "I just want us all to work together and see if we can make it pay off for everyone."



music in the stars

BY TOM DEMPSTER

W

hen the S.C. State Museum's expansion opens later this summer, there will be much more music in the air - especially among the stars. Matthew Whitehouse, the Museum's observatory manager, hopes to make learning about the planets, stars, and the

universe coincide with his background as not only an astronomer but also as an organist and composer.

Whitehouse, a University of South Carolina School of Music graduate, holds a PhD in Organ Performance from the University of



PHOTO BY THOMAS HAMMOND

Arizona in Tucson. The latter university is located in the arid environs of the American Southwest, is one of the premier centers for astronomy in the country. During graduate study, Whitehouse delved into as many areas of knowledge as he could, forging a truly interdisciplinary path. This approach serves him quite well at the State Museum. “This interdisciplinary idea is really in the DNA of the institution,” Whitehouse says, “and we plan to feature additional arts programs with our new facilities.” The uncommon combination of astronomy education with music will allow Whitehouse and the museum staff to create specialized outreach combining musical works with astronomical concepts.

Whitehouse has significant experience in astronomy, where he has been an affiliate scholar, researcher, and teacher with the University of Arizona, American Astronomical Society, and other organizations, making and demonstrating connections between the sciences and music. Educating children in particular has been one of Whitehouse’s most significant pursuits, with manifold experiences with camps and extension programs at the University of Arizona. The uncontainable excitement in his voice when he talks about connecting the dots of the heavens with the minds of children is rivaled only by his undeniable love of creating music. Many of his musical works owe their genesis to the awe of the universe—one such composition is his *Pleiades Visions*, based upon the eponymous star formations. Whitehouse hopes to create more works to use as guided listening for young minds. “Working with children is something that really appeals to me and is one of the core missions of the museum,” Whitehouse says, adding that sound can help demonstrate or clarify some of the unimaginable vastness and majesty of space—or at least bring it closer to home, so to speak.

“The museum already has projects like this with visual artists, especially South Carolina artists,” says Whitehouse of past and current collaborations between the sciences and the arts at the State Museum. With the opening of the expansion, the union of the stars and music will be a new realm for exploration. The long-range plans, though still coalescing like materials forming a new star, for the observatory may indeed call for the assistance of South Carolina composers as well. The State Museum, by the end of the summer, will indeed be a fresh, new place for a little *musica universalis* – if not *musica localis* – in the Vista.

THE DOWN & DIRTY OF COLUMBIA ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

BY CYNTHIA BOITER | PHOTOS BY FORREST CLONTS

In the absence of facts, people have a tendency to make up their own. But Jasper dislikes nothing more than the dissemination of erroneous information—particularly when it comes to the administration and funding of public arts organizations. That’s why, this issue, we went to two of our most prominent arts groups—One Columbia and the Cultural Council of Lexington and Richland Counties—and got down and dirty with information. We talked successes, failures, history;

we even talked money. No cheating. No evading questions. No holds barred.

Representing each organization was the respective executive director. In the case of One Columbia we went to Lee Snelgrove who has been with the organization since July 2013. For the Cultural Council it was Norree Boyd-Wicks in the hot seat and she’s been with her organization since December 2011.

There were some surprises—*while Snelgrove played the tenor sax in high school,*

Boyd-Wicks played both the alto and the bari; and there were plenty of d’oh! moments—both respondents are frustrated by the lack of support for the arts in general from the population-at-large. But some of the most interesting revelations have to do with what these organizations do with the money they’re given. Jasper is not here to editorialize on the information we gleaned, but to present it for your own interpretations. Read on to begin that process.



LEE SNELGROVE

Let's talk about the structure of your organization. What is its mission?

OC: The mission of One Columbia for Arts & History is to advise, amplify and advocate for strengthening and unifying the arts and history community. The organization was founded by a group of members of the arts community that served together originally on Mayor Benjamin's transition team. They determined that the city needed an organization that served in a similar role to that of an Office of Cultural Affairs to broadly market and connect the City's arts and culture community.

CC: The Cultural Council supports, promotes and nurtures the arts in the Midlands of SC. It does so through operating grants to major arts organizations, project grants to individual artists and small arts organizations, and through professional development and technical assistance workshops held on a variety of topics that affect the delivery of the arts in our community.

How many full and part-time staff members does your organization employ and where are you located?

OC: I am the only full-time staff member and Grace Poplin, a USC student studying art history, is our part-time intern. The office is located at 1219 Taylor Street.

CC: There are two full-time employees—myself and Teresa McWilliams who is assistant director, one part-time employee—Katilin Beckwith (web design, event planning, fundraising), and one contract employee—Ann Henry (fundraising). We are on the garden level of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce Building at 930 Richland Street.

No one likes to talk about money, but everyone wants to know about it. It's better to know the facts than to speculate about them. To that end, what is the annual budget of your organization and from where do the funds that operate your organization come? And where does it go?

OC: The organization's budget has been just under \$170,000 annually for the past two years and all of it comes from the City of Columbia's hospitality tax program. Thirty percent of our budget is spent on our office (rent, utilities) and other administrative costs. The other 70% goes to supporting our promotional activities including our comprehensive calendar of events and our four primary initiatives: Film Columbia, public art, the cultural passport program and Show & Tells. Since much of my time is spent organizing our initiatives, my salary is split among the various programming and only about 30% goes to administrative duties.

As part of our Film Columbia initiative, the funds are used to pay filmmakers to shoot footage of the various arts and culture events around the city in order to document and archive the impact that a vibrant cultural sector has on the overall health of a community. To carry out our public art initiative, we utilize the funds for an administrator of the permanent public art project and we organize temporary, interactive and community public art



NOREE BOYD-WICKS

activities throughout the year. We are converting the annual month-long celebration of the arts that was known as One Month into a cultural passport program starting this Fall in order to increase and broaden audiences for the citywide cultural season. We'll also be hosting Show & Tells for the arts community to come together and present their new work.

CC: Our annual budget is \$325,000 with the funds coming from various state and federal grants, corporate and individual donations, workplace giving, and two annual fundraising events. Forty-five percent [goes to] grants; 35% [to] administration; 20% [to] programs (professional development workshops, technical assistance, etc.* (*Some workshops are fee based or supported by project specific grants.)

Now, let's talk about the impact of your organization on the greater Columbia arts community. Can you give us some examples of how your organization's expenditures, policies, and initiatives directly affect Columbia artists?

OC: We have tried to design initiatives that will directly impact artists and arts groups by

promoting what they're doing and providing resources for them to spread their message even further than their regular audiences. Our calendar of events regularly lists approximately 150 active events and we have over 4,000 visitors per month to our website. Our weekly email is reaching about 10,000 people. We're still building an audience and I think more and more people are seeing our calendar as a way to discover what's happening in our cultural community. For example, an email subscriber once reached out to let me know that his out-of-town guests had thought they'd have to drive to another city to find entertaining things to do. But they saw our list of events and discovered there were so many activities for them right here in Columbia

We are giving artists more opportunities to share their work through our public art initiatives, and this isn't limited to just visual artists. We're planning innovative and interactive public art activities that cross over into other genres, such as literature and the performing arts. This is on top of the effort we're putting into developing a formal process for identifying and installing new, site-specific, City-owned permanent public art pieces throughout Columbia. It's my belief that public art provides daily inspiration that's

integral to a creative community and we've tried to create a multi-pronged initiative that will offer many different ways to engage with public art.

We're conducting the Film Columbia initiative to create a repository of high quality video footage for use by the arts organizations, artists, the visitors' bureaus, City government and anyone else who wants to share the message that Columbia is a vibrant cultural hub. To do so, we're hiring local filmmakers to shoot footage of cultural events then edit short promotional videos. The short edited videos are available on our Vimeo page (<http://vimeo.com/OneColumbia>) to anyone that wishes to use them on their website, for traditional media and for social media. The archive of raw footage for producing other promotional videos is freely available as well by simply contacting us.

As a group, we believe that artists should be paid for what they produce and we encourage other groups around town to understand this, as well. We believe that it's important to try and change the culture away from asking for donations of time and talent from people that are making a career from their creativity.

CC: There are very few grant opportunities

that provide operating funds for organizations. Most grant funds are project specific. Our policies have allowed use of our funds for operating so organizations can use other resources to build and expand their programs. When the Cultural Council was first established in 1984, there were fewer than 30 arts organizations in the Midlands. There are now over 130. This is largely due to the success of the Cultural Council over its 30 year history in bringing awareness to the community at large about the importance of a thriving arts community in economic development, business attraction and liveable communities.

Midlands artists and small arts organizations can access Cultural Council grants for specific projects such as professional development opportunities, performances, staged readings of plays, etc.

In your estimation, what is your organization's most successful endeavor or greatest strength?

OC: I believe our greatest strength as an organization is our focus on inspiring new partnerships while also supporting existing ones. Because of our relationships with so many arts organizations and the diverse representation of interests in the arts community on our board, we've been able to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration. For example, it was during a board meeting that it was suggested that the Township Foundation could assist the One Book committee to host the Pat Conroy author event at the Township Auditorium. Because of their assistance and the financial support of other sponsors, the venue was big enough to house the audience of over 1,650 this past February.

CC: We have a 30-year history of providing services to artists and arts organizations in the Midlands. Our ability to adapt to situations and respond quickly to the changing environment has allowed us to develop programs and services to meet the needs of the arts community. Our newest initiative of Arts at the Airport that provides 2D and 3D visual artists an opportunity to exhibit their work to the traveling public has the potential of great impact with minimal cost other than time. It is a great example of a working partnership (Cultural Council and Airport Commission) in promoting the arts to the greater public.

Nothing is perfect. Are there aspects of your organization's operations that you would like to see improved upon? How so?

OC: We need to be able to move faster as an organization on creating and implementing

projects that respond to the community's needs. We're trying to start a small program to assist in identifying talented board members for non-profit arts groups, but we've been slow to get this off the ground largely because of the time it takes to find people and establish the necessary networks. I think that building a pool of talent could be really important in bringing in fresh ideas and taking some of the pressure off of the people that are invaluable to the arts community but of whom so much is asked.

Similarly, there have been a lot of separate pieces to put together to get our permanent public art process into action which has taken more time than I think anyone ever expected. But, in order for us to establish a public art process for the City that is adaptable and transparent, it has involved a lot of different participants. I do expect to have the first pieces installed within a few months and we are already thinking about expansion to all parts of the City. I believe that once we get over this hurdle of going through everything the first time, future projects will be much smoother.

CC: We are limited by lack of time, human, and space resources. I would like us to be able to provide year round professional development opportunities, exhibition and rehearsal space, and office space for small organizations.

In your estimation, Other than money, what are the greatest challenges facing the greater Columbia arts community and what is your organization doing about them?

OC: Columbia has a growing number of arts organizations and artists, and I think it's a challenge that audiences aren't necessarily growing at the same rate. The good news is that according to the Urban Land Institute and Midlands Reality Check, we can expect the Midlands to add 450,000 more residents over the next 25 years. To capture those already in Columbia who aren't participating and those who will be coming into the area, we're going to do whatever we can to let them know. It's going to take a combination of traditional marketing efforts as well as building the networks of people to spread information by word of mouth. We're also trying new approaches like the forthcoming cultural passport initiative. I also believe that having more opportunities for communities to interact with art on a daily basis will reinforce the message that Columbia is an exciting and creative place to live.

CC: The greatest challenge is the greater public's realization of the importance of the

arts in creating the community in which we all want to live and work. Artists are professionals in every sense of the word and have spent most of their lives honing their craft. The Cultural Council uses every opportunity such as, but not limited to op-eds and speaking engagements, to promote the arts community as a necessity of the quality of life we have come to enjoy and expect.

From a purely personal perspective, what do you hope to accomplish from your tenure with your organization?

OC: I really want the arts to be a part of the daily lives of Columbians. I hope that the citizens of Columbia have a sense of excitement and pride about all the interesting stuff that's happening here and that Columbia can be recognized nationally as a place for innovative arts and culture.

CC: The Midlands is home to many excellent artists and arts organizations. I want to pass on the experience I have gathered throughout my years as an artist and arts administrator to provide opportunities to the arts community in capacity building and program development. Dot Ryall created a strong foundation as the first director of the Cultural Council. Over the years, the Council has adapted to the changing environment, building on opportunities and the leadership of the board and executive director. My strengths are in capacity building and program development.

How are you doing so far?

OC: I'm happy with the progress that's been made since I took this position. I think the organization is gaining momentum and that our initiatives will result in a positive impact for the community. I'm looking forward to expanding public art to all parts of the city and the passport initiative is going to be fun to implement. There is a lot more I'd like to do and I'm lucky that I get to spend every day working with Columbia's most creative people.

CC: I have developed programs I am very proud of such as Arts at the Airport and Arts Administrators Institute. I am looking forward to developing programs around Arts in Healing that will provide artists training in using their skills in medical surroundings enhancing the healing process. I have many ideas – just too little time and money! But I am working on better time management and finding resources – both human and financial – that will allow me to realize my goals for the Cultural Council.



CURTAIN UP

w/ August Krickel

School is almost out, and children across the Midlands can look forward to *Snow White* and *Cinderella*, *Ariel* and *Fiona*, *Tinker Bell* and *Tiger Lilly*, as late spring and summer stages are ruled by Disney princesses. And reanimated corpses. Wait... what? Yep, not one but two long-anticipated cult musicals that parody horror films join the cavalcade of fairy-tale favorites. We're excited that one or more new shows open almost every weekend over the next three months, including premieres of a number of original works. Curtain Up!

Scott Step has played plenty of big brutes in his day, including the gorilla Kerchak in last summer's *Tarzan*, while Sirena Dib has played princesses both real (as Workshop's *Cinderella*) and metaphorical (as Myrtle Mae in *Harvey* and Martie in *Grease*, both at Town) so it's only natural for them to take center stage as Shrek and Fiona in *Shrek the Musical*, running through Saturday, May 24 at **Town Theatre**. Director Jamie Carr Harrington, choreographer Tracy Steele, and music director Chris Cockrell lead their cast (including Paul Lindley II as Lord Farquaad and Matt Wright as Donkey) through fantastical misadventures based on the popular animated film. Shannon Willis Scruggs then directs and choreographs the perennial family favorite *Peter Pan*, running July 18 through August 3. Kristina Kusa will take flight in the title role, enlisting the aid of the Darling children in the fight against villainous Captain Hook (Frank Thompson) and faithful Smee (Jamie Carr Harrington.) For information, call 803-799-2510, or visit towntheatre.com.

Workshop Theatre is preparing for next season's relocation to 701 Whaley, but there's still time to catch one more production at the familiar site downtown, as *Young Frankenstein*, adapted by Mel Brooks from his wacky film, also runs through May 24. Chad Henderson directs Kyle Collins as the good doctor, Vicky Saye Henderson as fiancée Elizabeth (who discovers the sweet mystery of life), Frank Thompson as Igor, Jason Kinsey as the creature, Courtney Selwyn as Inga, Chad Forrister as Kemp, Hunter Boyle as both the Hermit and grandfather Victor, and Elena Martinez-Vidal as Frau Blucher. (Ne-e-e-i-gh!) A strong ensemble includes Chase Nelson, Mark Ziegler, Patrick Dodds, Haley Sprankle, Catherine Hunsinger, Elisabeth Baker, Linda Collins, Laurel Posey, Katie Hilliger, with choreography by Mandy Applegate, and music direction by Tom Beard. E.G. Engle will then direct Ashlyn Combs as Ariel in Disney's *The Little Mermaid, Jr.*, with multiple performances running one weekend only, June 27-28. Katie Hilliger choreographs, with Jordan Harper as music director; at press time, this production was set to be performed at the A.C. auditorium, where many memorable Workshop shows have been produced in years past. Also, don't miss "One Last Hurrah," a final celebration at the corner of Bull and Gervais, on Friday, June 6. For information, call 803-799-4876, or visit workshoptheatre.com.

Director Robin Gottlieb's production of John Guare's *The House of Blue Leaves*, continues through May 24 on the **Thigpen Main Stage at Trustus Theatre**. NYC actress and former company member Monica Wyche joins Scott Herr, Sumner Bender, Becky Hunter, Rachel Kuhnle, and Erin Huiett in a comedy promised to include JFK, pianos, the Pope, and beer-drinking, leap-frogging nuns. Then a spoof of the "ultimate experience in grueling terror," *Evil Dead, The Musical*, runs June 20- July 26. College students Sam Raimi, Bruce Campbell, and their friends shot the original film thriller on a shoestring budget, and its often unintentional campiness made it an instant cult classic. 20 years later, the over-the-top tale of demonic possession and zombies vs. chainsaws was set to music, and features songs like "Do the Necronomicon" and "All the Men in My Life Keep Getting Killed by Kandarian Demons." Chad Henderson's cast includes Patrick Dodds, Michael Hazin, Elisabeth Baker, Jodi Cain Smith, and Matthew DeGuire, with musical direction by Randy Moore. Warning: we hear the first few rows may be a designated Splatter Zone, where stage blood will flow freely.

Dewey Scott-Wiley will then direct the world premiere of Deborah Brevoort's *The Velvet Weapon*, running August 8-16. Winner of the 2013 Trustus Playwrights' Festival, this allegorical farce was inspired by the peaceful transition of power in Czechoslovakia at the end of the Cold War, but is set amidst backstage shenanigans at a European national theatre. The Trustus season will conclude with a week featuring a new one-man show by dancer/choreographer/vocalist Terrance Henderson, and a performance by the rock band The Restoration; dates are August 20-23. Meanwhile the Off-Off-Lady series of off-site productions continues, with a revival of *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, the touching and often hilarious reflection by Nora and Delia Ephron on the passages in women's lives. Larry Hembree's production quickly sold out last January, but returns for three nights only, May 22-24, at Saluda Shoals Park, with the original Trustus cast intact: Caroline Jones Weidner, Amy Brower, Emily Deck Harrill, Tiffany James and Jodie Cain Smith. For information on this show, call 213-2025, or visit <http://www.icrc.net/love-loss-and-what-i-wore-2014-05-22>, and for information on all other Trustus productions above, call 803-254-9732.

Philip Rowe and Pam Godfrey enjoy *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*, Richard Alfieri's warm account of a lonely Baptist minister's wife who hires a flamboyantly acerbic dance instructor to enliven her golden years in a retirement community. Running through May 24 in **Theatre Rowe's expanded space in Richland Mall**, this gentle comedy is neither a dinner theatre production nor a murder mystery, but Rowe's traveling troupe, the Southeastern Theatrical Arts Bandits (S.T.A.B.) continues with those at changing venues around the Midlands. For information on upcoming events and locations, call 803-200-2012, or visit <http://scdinnertheatre.com>.

An enjoyable summer tradition over the last five years has been the premiere each June at **Columbia Children's Theatre** of a new rendition of a familiar fairy tale, done in the *commedia dell'arte* style. Author/director Jerry Stevenson reunites some of our favorite Spaghetti and Meatball Players, including Elizabeth Stepp, Paul Lindley II, Lee O. Smith and Beth DeHart, for a rollicking new *Commedia Snow White*, running June 13 - 22. CCT's YouTheatre company will then present *The Little*

Mermaid Jr., running August 1-10. For information, call 803-691-4548, or visit <http://columbiachildrenstheatre.com>.

West Columbia's **On Stage Productions** is likewise producing an original work, *Simple Cindy*, a reworking of Cinderella written by Robert Harrelson, directed by Ryan Rogers, and featuring songs written by 13-year-old Sydney Porth. (!!) Run dates are June 13-22; for information, call 407-319-2596, or visit www.onstagesc.com/.

Stage 5 Theatre (profiled on page 6 of this issue) will present *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, running in repertory June 20-29. Directed by Bill Boland, these works were created by playwright Moises Kaufman and members of his Tectonic Theatre Project group, and focus on community reaction to the hate crime/murder of Matthew Shepard, a young student in Laramie, Wyoming, targeted for being gay. For information, call 803-834-1775, or visit www.mbfproductions.net.

Chapin Theatre Company has found success with heart-warming, down-home

comedies, and few playwrights do it better than the team of Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten, authors of *The Hallelujah Girls*. Jessica Fichter's production centers around "the feisty females of Eden Falls, GA, who decide there is no time like the present to pursue unfulfilled dreams." Tiffany Dinsmore, Meesh Hays, Debi Young, Sandy Steffen, Tracy Rice, and Gayle Stewart are included in the cast, and the show runs June 27- July 13 at the Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College. Dinsmore then directs the Chapin Junior Company in the musical *The Magical Land of Oz*, running August 1-10 at the Old Chapin Firehouse, located at 102 Old Lexington Road. For information, call 803-240-8544, or visit www.chapintheatre.org/.

Debra Leopard has been a mainstay of the **Lexington County Arts Association** for decades. This summer, she directs her original work *Little Red Riding Hood and the (not so) Big Bad Wolf*, a workshop production featuring three different casts, totaling 120 children, and running July 29 - August 2 at the Village Square Theatre. For information, call 803-359-1436, or visit www.villagesquaretheatre.com.

Animal Instinct

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Above: Shelley Reed, *Tiger (after Landseer and Thiele)* (detail), 2007, oil on canvas, 72 x 56 in. James Robert Granville Exley (English, 1878-1967), *Discretion Is the Better Part of Valor* (detail), 1907, Etching on paper, mat: 16 x 20 in, Museum Purchase in 1988.

Seeing & Selecting

By Chris Robinson



Visual art is everywhere, not just paintings on the wall of a museum, but everything from the way we organize our homes to the way we look at others, take and look at photographs, watch movies, or even imagine and envision the scene in a book. It infuses and enriches our lives and everything we do.

But I wonder if this ubiquity, once more rare and informing, is good for us, or good for the discipline? Is there so much that we have lost our ability to select, evaluate, or even see? Has art become the pervasive, expected, assured detritus so common we no longer bother to notice, take a real look, or see? Like fast food on the strip, stop lights at the intersection, and so much trash on the side of the road, always there, but not necessarily consciously noted, expected but not really seen or appreciated. The joke used to be people purchased works of art to match their sofas, now we hang multiple artworks on the wall,

leaving no space for a rest, not trusting one image to maintain our interest, or perhaps the middle class greed that if one is good, many must be better.

Seeing is one of the most important things an artist does. It is the very heart and brain of the visual world. Whether it be our eyes, our conscious brain, or even our mute and feeling limbic brain, seeing helps us navigate, differentiate, understand, and trust. Can you smell a flower, hear a baby cry without conjuring up and envisioning related thoughts and images, think of an atom bomb without seeing a mushroom cloud in your mind's eye, think of Einstein without seeing those sad eyes and unruly mop, hear a Janice Joplin song without seeing her cradle the microphone, Jimmy Hendrix without seeing tie dye or thinking things psychedelic? My memory is rich with images.

Artists throughout history have developed successful reputations by focusing on a particular theme, establishing a style, a recognizable signature look. We can see that here in Columbia, many artists have distinctive styles that assure us they know both their method and their subject, making rich works of art, pursuing a theme that at first glance may appear to be more of the same, but in reality is just a process of determined refinement.

Artists are encouraged to exhibit, get their work out, reluctantly finish the process by accepting the lay public's evaluation, often measured in sales, or risking the sharp tongue of the critic. Only being ignored could be worse. The artist becomes the first viewer. But, is it possible to be oversubscribed or over exposed, show too often, give too much attention to that, and just be more of the same? We have lost that sense of discovery, revelation, and excitement in seeing the new. Do we look, but no longer see?

Another of the important things an artist does is choose, from what subject or content one may select and how it is composed to the medium or method employed. I also fear we have lost the ability to evaluate and select. As an educator I see so many artists who have skills, know how to problem solve and do a variety of good work, but have no clear focus and cannot understand why their reputations stall or galleries express no interest. Have we been so inundated with things called art, that even when we see something good, we miss it because there is so much we

no longer see? We are peppered with many forms of visual images, from the daily news to our own visual thoughts, images rushing by at the speed of light.

As a university professor, I am encouraged and obliged to generate new information, exhibit my work, write papers, and speak at conferences, and it seems no matter how much I do this year, next year it must be more. Recent data show that more academic papers are being generated, but less new information is being noted. Is the same true of the visual arts? The most prestigious institutions have the courage to support a scholar through years of research, knowing that real creative activity may only come if nourished by the opportunity to think, pause, and reflect. I long for the days when we experienced the shock of the new. Have we become so inured, so homogenized that we fail to seek the heart of the creative process, experiment, and take risks, real risks, and would others appreciate it if we did?

I encourage you to think about these questions, what art is, what it can do for society and culture, and what your role may be as viewer or maker. There is plenty to see, often in places we don't expect. We are very lucky at the university to have world-class speakers, experts in their fields, on campus every day. I attend many of these talks and, to be honest, most are a waste of time. So why do I go? I go because those few that resonate are so powerful it makes the others fade away, and it is hard to predict which will be which. The same is true of the arts. You have to get out there and wade through a lot to see what is worth your time. There is also plenty to be done, nothing holding the visual arts back but our own intransience. Can we nurture and support, recognize and appreciate genuine innovation when it occurs? Do we really care?

I hope you took time to see some of the Department of Art's Master of Fine Art thesis exhibitions – cutting edge, new, unusual, and innovative work; toured and participated in ArtFields – a broad sweep of art from throughout the southeast; or viewed the murals in the Greek Temple – interesting art where you may not expect it. Art is everywhere, some is good, some isn't, but every once in a while you see something really great and it changes your life. Seek that, participate in that, make that; only you can decide.

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CHRISTIAN THEE'S ARTFELT GESTURE

BY RACHEL HAYNIE

CENTERFOLD PHOTO BY JONATHAN SHARPE





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rinking breakfast tea and reading the *New York Times* is much like playing solitaire for Christian Thee. An artist's process is generally solitary anyway. And since the loss of his long-time partner Bruce Bahr three springs ago, Thee has read silently, shared the paper's sections with no one, painted without benefit of immediate feedback, much less continuous encouragement. So, reading the *Times* takes him back to their days, their years of living, painting, entertaining and being entertained in New York City.

"I feel transported when I read the *Times*, especially the art section," admits Thee, who designed theatre sets and created other large art applications in for several decades in New York.

Unaccompanied on a crisp Fall morning, he came across an article that was likely grabbing the attention of artists, art patrons and art professionals at breakfast tables around the world. The New York paper credited the German newsweekly *der Spiegel Magazine* with breaking the story of a colossal art discovery made in a mundane Munich apartment.

According to the report Thee was reading, German authorities—police, customs and tax agents—executed a search warrant at the non-descript residence of Cornelius Gurlitt on suspicion of tax evasion some months after the 81-year old German behaved nervously when asked to show his papers to custom agents on a train returning from Zurich. His demeanor raised officials' eyebrows—and when they checked up on him later, they found he was living off the grid: no bank account, and no pension coming in because he did not appear to have held a job—ever. Then officials learned Gurlitt's father had been an art dealer for the Nazis.

What Thee read that morning regarded the contents found in Gurlitt's 1,076 square foot apartment: priceless works of art: 121 framed pieces, 1,285 unframed works by Picasso, Matisse, Renoir, Chagall, Max Liebermann, Otto Dix, Franz Marc, Emil Nolde, Oskar Kokoschka, Ernst Kirchner, Delacroix, Daumier, and Courbet. Add in the Durer and Canaletto and the collection had to be worth well over a billion dollars.





“I JUST FELT
I HAD TO DO
SOMETHING.”

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TO DO
HING.”

After keeping the astonishing discovery of Gurlitt's stockpile a state secret for nearly two more years, Germany's hand finally had been forced when a story broke in *Focus Magazine* detailing what already was being called the Nazi art trove. International pressure was on to show, via international media, at least a representation of the found pieces. One of the token pieces shown to the world was *Two Riders on the Beach*, painted in 1901 by German Expressionist Max Liebermann.

For the New York paper's report, an art editor had located and interviewed a local connection. Retired Manhattan intellectual property attorney David Toren was the inheritor. The Liebermann painting had been stolen from his great-uncle David Friedmann in 1939.

"The article was long," Thee recalled, "but it was such a compelling story I read to the very end. Thank goodness I did! The quote that got me said: 'Unfortunately, even if Mr. Toren gets his painting back, he will not be able to see it. He lost his vision—to shingles—six years ago.'"

Thee's tea went cold. The other sections of the paper were pushed aside. The artist re-read parts of the article again, touched his own eyes, knowing if he lost his vision, he would not be able to make art.

Empathy enveloped him. Thee knew what loss felt like. He felt a connection with Toren through loss and also because the German native resided in Manhattan. And it was clear from the first article that Toren had a special affinity for that Liebermann painting; the 88-year old retired attorney had told the reporter the piece was hanging on the wall where he had been sitting, as a boy of 13, the day the Gestapo came and took his father away.

"I just felt I had to do something," Thee recalled. "It took me a while to figure out what. Finally, I thought if I could replicate that painting - *in relief* - Mr. Toren would be able to feel his painting - since he would never see it again."

The first two approaches for this art-felt gesture did not satisfy the artist noted for precision and perfection. "Once I hit upon a technique that worked well, the painting developed quickly." Working alone in his lake-side studio, Thee decided the integrity of the painting deserved pigment "even though I knew the owner would not be able to see the colors Liebermann used. I matched my colors as best I could to the copy of the painting I down-loaded from the Internet."

Once a few others found out about the ini-

tiative, Thee was alone no more.

"As friends heard about the project, they stepped in to help," Thee said. "First, I was concerned: what if Mr. Toren wouldn't accept the painting," Thee recalled. "The gentleman has been through a lot, emotionally, in his life, has lost his vision, and now to find out his painting was an ocean away and he couldn't have it. I wondered if a stranger contacting him would be jarring."

Thee's friend Susan Levi Wallach, whom he calls Zan, suggested asking Peter Chametzky, chair of the USC Art department to make the first contact. "Like Zan, Peter is part of the da Vinci Society, an informal group that meets at my home monthly to network and cultivate friendships," Thee said. He and the Masons - Pat and Leyla - formed the loose-knit group two years ago.

"Peter's position gave the overture legitimacy, and he got an acknowledgement back quickly saying Mr. Toren would respond within a day or two. Within one day, he called, said he had someone Google me and describe my work to him and that, yes, he would be grateful to accept the painting. The next question was when and how to get the piece to New York."

Weather interfered again and again. In ongoing communications with Toren, it became clear the inheritor felt any publicity emanating from the gesture would help keep the pressure on Germany to release the Liebermann painting to him - and put the others into rightful hands as well.

Pat McNeeley, who taught at USC's School of Journalism for many years, sat down with this writer, another helper on the project. We anticipated appropriate responses to any media that might take an interest in the gift and its story. Pat suggested that I speak with Rick Peterson, who teaches at the journalism school during the week and covers MSNBC's assignment desk in Charlotte on weekends. Rick shared a great understanding of the importance of timing and other logistical considerations, and pitched a story about the gesture to his supervisor up the channel - who was very interested in covering the gift transfer.

Knowing the painting would be leaving Columbia as soon as the weather broke, local photographer Russell Jeffcoat went over and took an official still photograph documenting the piece while it was still in Thee's studio. Joe Daniels and Joey Vasquez filmed Thee putting final touches on the piece. Pat and Leyla Mason, who publish *Carolina Living*

Magazine and *Carolina Living.com*, helped look for affordable flights and accommodations.

But more snow fell, if not in South Carolina, in New York.

Thee wrote to Toren, expressing his empathy and his anticipation of the transfer. Toren understood; he knew flights were grounded because snow was blanketing Manhattan.

A few weeks and a few snow predictions later, Thee learned, in conversations aimed at working out an eventual schedule for a visit with Toren, the British Broadcast Company (BBC) and two other international news crews were coming in March to interview the inheritor of the original Liebermann painting.

By that time *der Spiegel* had done a lengthy interview on the intended recipient of my painting, and he had been interviewed and re-interviewed by *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*, among others. I did not want more interviewers to arrive and not be able to see Mr. Toren's gift, but I couldn't break away at the moment. I decided to ship the painting, still fully intending to meet the gentleman in person as soon as I could get to New York.

The package was delivered just as this writer was set to arrive—to document Toren's first responses. "Before he removed the bubble wrap and brown paper, I asked him to describe what he recalled of the Liebermann piece. After 75 years, he remembered every detail. Then he opened my package and felt the very same details he had just recalled. He nailed it!

Toren's nurse and housekeeper took down a favorite piece of art and hung the new painting in its place. Two days later *The State* ran a report of the gift transfer. And a few days later, *The State's* story had been picked up by other papers as close by as Miami Beach and as far away as the Czech Republic. *der Spiegel.com* published a follow-up story on Toren's receipt of the gift "Peter stepped back in, this time to translate the article from German into English," Thee said.

Toren told the *der Spiegel* reporter that receiving Thee's replica gave him hope.

Besides an affinity for art and New York, Thee and Toren share something else. "When Mr. Toren's fingers traced the raised images of the horses in the painting, he said he was deeply moved by the gift. I am deeply moved by the friends and da Vinci Society members who stepped in to help carry out this gesture. For this initiative art-felt worked both ways."



"Unbridled" (Soyuzphs)

3/16



Boyd Saunders

Stalked by Faulkner

By Rachel Haynie

Photos of Saunders by Russell Jeffcoat

Art Photography by Keith McGraw

To say Boyd Saunders was stalked by William Faulkner throughout much of the artist/professor's creative tenure would be fanciful, an abuse of poetic license. Wouldn't it be more literary, more fitting to say that Saunders has been *Stalked by Faulkner*. A newly-minted spelling, for this telling only, softens slightly the intrinsic ways the author has made his presence known in Saunders' working life, insinuating himself, his lore and characters into countless iconic images pressed indelibly into cotton-infused paper by the lauded printmaker.

For Faulkner to have imprinted his tales and imagery so irreversibly into Saunders' Southern consciousness, the author had to start with narratives easily visualized. So Faulkner's books – novels, a novella – formed the genesis of Saunders' ambition to enliven the revered words with shadings that sculpted dimension into shapes, pigment that added depth to quintessential Southern folk and scenarios.

Before picking up Southern literature to read, perhaps on days when it was too wet to plow, Saunders' reading selections – and visual stimulation – may have been seed catalogs, brought by a rural mailman on one of winter's short days. "As a child I drew all the time," Saunders said, "My inspiration was the art that surrounded me."

In his formative days, his world was a Rossville, Tennessee farm just outside Memphis. "A piece of me belongs to that piece of land," Saunders said, neither bragging nor complaining about being tethered in such an emotional way. "The qualities of our past and our present have made me anxious to use art as a way of expressing the history I grew up taking for granted, to chart remnants like an archeologist for posterity."

Saunders has called the people he grew up among as quietly educated, saying among them "you will find farmers who can quote Shakespeare, chapter and verse" as astutely as if they are turning pages before your very eyes, careful not to soil the bard's words with their toil-leathered fingers. So, reading Southern literature, for pleasure, was not an anomaly. Whether Faulkner was one of the books on the family shelves is unimportant; the Pulitzer Prize-winning author had not yet infiltrated Saunders' image bank.







"The Bear-Plate ⑥" (lith.)

19/25



As Saunders made his way through undergraduate studies at Memphis State University, his literature professors included Southern authors in their lectures and assignments. But then by choosing the University of Mississippi for his terminal art degree, Saunders played himself wide open to Faulkner's influence. He certainly never counted on meeting the man in the flesh. The immersion of Faulknerian imagery into Saunders' consciousness began with a chance encounter when youthful artist and greying author settled into a conversation in the middle of some woods outside Oxford city limits.

Saunders was out walking, clearing his mind, reconnecting with the earth as he often did, in woods not far from campus when he happened upon a farmer. The two spoke, began to talk then, realizing they had some things in common, things worth discussing, used a fallen tree for a bench and continued the chat - about weather, crops and other things. Only when unfinished chores bade them to wrap up the talking did they rise, dust dried bark off their britches, extend hands and introduce themselves. That's when Saunders learned the farmer was William Faulkner.

Before they went their separate ways, they agreed to meet again at that same spot for further discussions. A few meetings later, an agreement was reached. Saunders would make lithographs to illustrate Faulkner's fabled short story, *The Bear*.

As the improbability of such an encounter sank in with Saunders, he made good on his commitment and began working on the lithographs to illustrate Faulkner's narrative. "This was to be my Master's thesis." Before the printmaker completed the suite, Faulkner died. "I was stunned. But I felt he would have wanted me to follow through, so I did. I published that suite myself," he recalled.

Like fine moonshine, Faulkner went on fermenting in Saunders' mind and has made periodic come-backs into the artist's visual concepts. But the author took his sweet time doing so.

The artist hung his framed M.F.A. diploma on an office wall first at (now) Texas State University where he began his professional career as an art instructor, then moved it to Columbia in 1965 when he accepted Edmund Yaghjian's invitation to join the faculty at the University of South Carolina. "I liked Texas, but I was not getting to do printmaking there." Saunders' USC mandate? To establish and develop a printmaking program.

Art students soaked up Saunders' youthful vigor and passion for printmaking like it was spring rain. Saunders' colleague (the late) Jim Cromer has described those days in the



print studio at USC as “electric with vitality and enthusiasm at almost any time of day or evening”, wrote Cromer in a commentary for Saunders’ Southern Cross Trilogy. “Students swarm everywhere, grinding huge lithograph stones, inking acid-etched plates or readying the presses to print their own work. Prevailing over the excitement – but very often up to the elbows in ink with the students – is Boyd Saunders.”

Cromer said playing the role of the lonely artist never suited Saunders. “In the same way his work describes social context, his personal impetus was to spread the word about fine art prints through teaching and bringing young artists along.” For this teacher the proverbial blank canvas was an aluminum plate – or a student. In both he saw

potential and was gently relentless about getting the most out of either, both.

“Half of my work has been to create a climate of believability and acceptance.” Saunders has vouched for the medium for which he is most celebrated – although he draws, paints sculpts with comparable finesse – by taking his work to the public, getting in proximity of prospective converts in his continual thrust to make the tradition respectable and accessible.

Not accidentally that thrust carried over into his teaching. When the university conducted a survey of graduates from each department, asking which faculty member had exerted the most influence during their years at USC, Boyd Saunders’ name showed up, even on forms filled out by students from

other majors who only took one art class – printmaking. His effectiveness as teacher earned him academic upgrades, leading to full professorship. USC named him Professor of the Year.

That the print emphasis existed in the Art department, even flourished in a time of academic budget cuts and frenzy for the sciences, is a tribute to Saunders’ perseverance. Giving the medium its due, the multi-medium artist said the time may have come for prints to be fully recognized as art because essentially “printmaking is a populist medium, a democratic medium.”

In 1972, Saunders rallied all the printmakers he could think of, including his USC colleague and ultimately department chair (the late) John O’Neil, to meet at the annual



convention of the Southeastern College Art Conference with the intention of founding Southeastern Graphics Council (SGC). Saunders served as first president.

A few years later when the group changed its name to Southern Graphics Council, Saunders' influence was notable as the first Printmaker Emeritus award went to South Carolinian Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. In a twist of fate, Saunders was recipient of the 2002 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award Individual in Arts Education. That same year SGC named him Printmaker Emeritus. By 2010, the organization reflected its growth and global expansion of membership, surpassing 2,000. It now is known as SGC International. Saunders has not missed an annual conference in these 42 years since the council was first or-

ganized, including this year's meeting in San Francisco.

Last summer the *Faulkner Stalking* came nearly full circle. Saunders was invited to celebrate Faulkner by showing a selection of etchings and works on paper at Southside Gallery in Oxford while the annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference was in session. These works represented a significant proportion of the artist's creative output over a career spanning five decades.

For the discernment of scholars meandering about the gallery during one of the conference's off-site events was a series of eight original etchings illustrating Faulkner's 1929 novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, a suite on which Saunders labored intensely for many years.

There also were loose page proofs and an original serigraph illustration from the 1931 novella, *Spotted Horses*, a limited edition book the University of South Carolina Press published in 1989, four years after Saunders began his process of hand-etching multiple layers to achieve dimensions of color before hand-pulling the images.

Also shown was Saunders' stone lithograph portrait of Faulkner, which he first created as an ink-wash drawing. "I liked it," he recalled, so later he drew the famous face onto a lithograph stone and printed its as a complete addition, with text from Faulkner's 1949 Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

"Faulkner has by no means been my only area of visual inquiry" Saunders said. "And whether he is done with me, whether I am done with him remains to be seen."

TIME

IS OF THE ESSENCE

FOR FILMMAKER SIMON TARR

B y K a r a G u n t e r

P h o t o b y F o r r e s t C l o n t s



Balancing working life with family life is hard enough for anyone, but the artists' work life is often multi-faceted with day-job responsibilities and the call of one's own creative work. We recently sat down with filmmaker and USC professor, Simon Tarr, to talk about this juggling act. Tarr is a busy guy: he's the owner of a production company, he teaches full time, makes his own work, and still finds time to remain an engaged family man. Earlier this year, he wrapped up a collaboration with composer, Dan Visconti, in which the pair performed live in front of an audience at Carnegie Hall. How does he manage to do it all?

Jasper: You say you don't feel like a paragon of work/life balance, but you've got more than a few film titles to your name; you own a studio production company called Quark Nova; in 2010 you won a teaching award; and you support your son's Pokémon passion by accompanying him to conventions where he regularly competes. You must be doing something right. How do you prioritize?

Simon Tarr: *The balance in anyone's life is or should be the pre-eminent question. Decisions about what to spend time and attention on are probably the most important questions anyone can ask about themselves. Every minute of my life costs the same and lasts the same duration. So, decisions of how to spend time, and maybe more importantly how to spend attention, are the most important decisions I make as a person, and that my family makes as a group. That's all kind of fancy-sounding, but it's the beginning question of every step: am I sure this is what I want to be spending attention on, and if I'm not sure, is what I am sacrificing for ultimately worth it?*

Practically speaking, my system is adapted from David Allen's book Getting Things Done. I use some simple software to collect and review things that I have to do at various altitudes of focus. My day-to-day calendar is pretty rigid, which allows me to be more free-formed in my month-to-month/year-to-year calendars. My phone is pretty well-heel'd at keeping me straight and letting me always put the right piece of information in the right bucket to look at later.

And the big secret is the teamwork thing. I'm lucky that Jen (my wife) and I work together very well, and that Caspar (our son) is turning out to be a pretty reliable guy.

J: You teach a variety of courses at USC: a digital art fundamentals course, animation, media performance, and game design. This semester you're teaching a course in comedy filmmaking. Obviously, you spend a lot of

time in the classroom, working closely with students. How does teaching inform your own work?

ST: *I find there's no better way to really grasp something than to have to articulate it to someone who is new to the field. And the extra challenge for media arts is that the field implodes and remakes itself very rapidly. So, students often bring up new things that I hadn't considered, and those often work their way into new pieces, particularly for my shorter works and performances.*

J: Teaching and engaging with students in a substantive way takes time, and energy. Does it ever overtake your own art-making? What does staying active in your own work offer your students?

ST: *That's the weird thing about working in academia. Though the most visible part of the week is the part in the classroom, professors have a segmented job. One is (obviously) teaching, preparing for teaching, grading, helping outside of courses... The second is the business of the discipline, doing the work that makes universities and programs operate, working in professional organizations, being of service. The third is research and (in the case of artists) creative activity. All of those are critically important for higher education to work. You have to be a good teacher, or what's the point of students coming to study? You have to give everything you can to make the place run according to how our disciplines demand it, otherwise it'll just be another disconnected corporation. And we have to be not just functionally ok, but continually outstanding at what we do, or else the whole mission of a university is called into question, right? If the professors aren't out there pushing the envelope in current practice, then what business do we have professing to the next wave?*

But the funny thing is that the longer you do academics, if you're decent at it, you sort of have an obligation to carry more of the service load. Ethically, you can't let that mess up your teaching, so the time pretty much comes straight out of doing your own research and creative work.

J: A 7-minute movie, if one doesn't know the process, may seem as though it would not take long to produce. I'm sure it varies, but how long would you say it takes you to produce a short film?

ST: *My own process for making art doesn't seem like typical filmmaking. I don't write scripts, I don't storyboard. I write and sketch as a daily process, but they are just disjointed thoughts and images to get out of my head. When I go out to film, it's never to "get a shot" or to "do a scene." It's a process of looking and gathering. I'm a hunter-gatherer. Sometimes I have a general idea of what I want to film, but I'm almost always wrong, and I end up bringing back something else. I never have a list to check off, like "I need a shot of workers leaving*

a factory." I do have some rules of thumb that are always running, mostly as instinct.

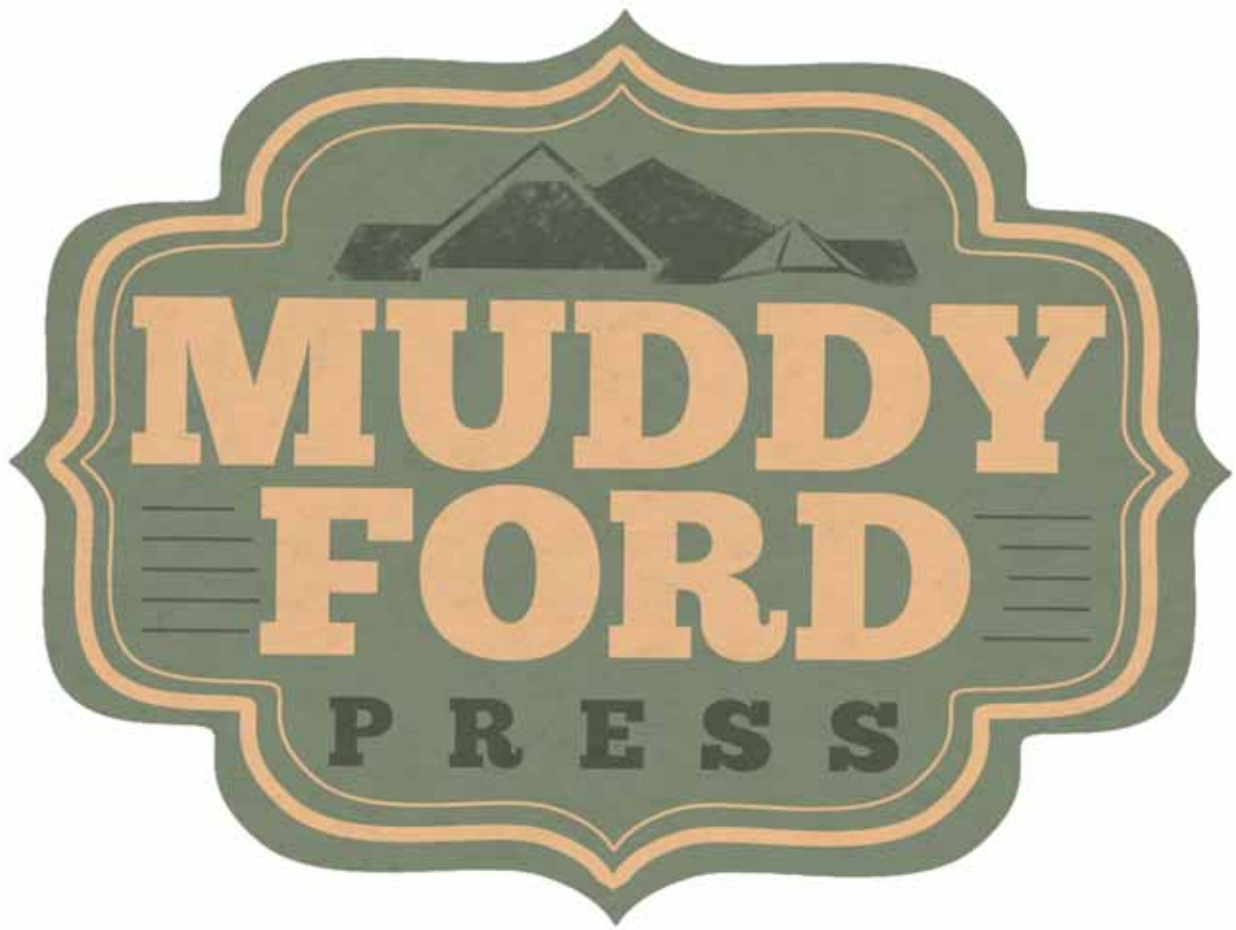
There is a switch that I feel flip inside me when I am looking, and it says "THIS." That tells me to stop and shoot. When I collect source material, I work unconsciously (or maybe hyper-consciously/beyond conscious?). Most of the hours of material I have on tapes and drives in my studio were collected without really knowing why. Most of it will probably never see the light of day.

But that's not how I arrive at my decisions when I compose on the computer. My gut reactions are involved there as well, but in a different way. I almost never know how a piece is going to turn out once I start, I just start looking at things and listening and thinking. Days and weeks pass and nothing happens. I'll pursue an image in my head that I'm trying to convey. Then, usually when doing something completely unrelated like taking a shower or a walk, a notion hits me that I realize serves as a framework to hang parts of the piece on. When that happens, the piece is done relatively soon thereafter. Sometimes that process might just take a few weeks. Other times it takes years. For me, how long a film is has very little bearing on how long it takes to make. I'm working on my third feature-length film right now, and there's no way that I could tell you how much time went into it, because I was sketching out parts of its structure a dozen years ago.

J: Earlier this year, you performed a live piece at Carnegie Hall in collaboration with composer, Dan Visconti. It seems as though this would be a very different experience, in that when you make a film, you can typically go back and watch it. *Glitchscape*, the name of this performance, was very temporal, existing only at that time and in that space. Tell us about the experience.

ST: *I started getting into performance about ten years ago, when I started becoming disillusioned with the experience of making films and then exhibiting them. Somehow it felt dead to me, I wished that the experience of showing a finished film had the kind of electricity and unpredictability that music performance had for me in the past.*

I branched into media performance and started building pieces that required me to perform the video off my computer—the overall structure was determined, but in the performances I had the ability to read the audiences reactions and change my performance. It's exciting, but it's way harder than filmmaking. This eventually led to me collaborating with folks in the University's theater program, and I got to spend a good long time in New York City doing live visuals for a couple of plays that pretty much changed how I think about everything (New Islands Archipelago with The Talking Band Theater Company at 3LD Art and Technology Center, and Hieronymous directed by Nic Ularu at La MaMa).



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Nest

Poems by ED MADDEN

Ed Madden's third book of poetry, *Nest*, is a book about home. In these elegant, conflicted, and deeply human poems, he explores troubling questions about family, love, regret, and belonging—the homes we leave and the homes we must learn to make for ourselves. These are poems of place, from poems grounded in the faith culture of the rural American South, through poems of dislocation and longing in Ireland and elsewhere. The book is about the rituals and practices we carry with us, the ones that sustain us. Vulnerable and precise, these poems are ever alert to “the distance that remains // between what we know / now, and what we were told.”

“In Ed Madden’s beautiful third book, Nest, the joy of playful language consoles when “red wasps / [throb] like bunched explosives just above / our heads” and it is clear that “Time doesn’t heal.” Madden’s deployment of received forms complicates moments of rebellion against fathers both biological and literary. Home, for Madden, is not the rice field he grew up in. It is honesty with himself and with the world, wherever he finds himself—the American South, Ireland, or elsewhere. Romantic love is fraught but possible. Despite the necessary sacrifices, love can last, indeed remain extraordinary, through the magic of close attention—to the beloved, to the everyday, to the natural world.

Greg Alan Brownderville
author of *Gust*

ISBN 978-1-908836-63-2 | 84pp | COVER IMAGE: *Cardinal's Nest, Late Autumn* by Mitchell Lonas

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In all the films I've made, there's almost never music. I never want music to be an add-on or a crutch that I've contracted to fill holes; it has to be as much a part of the experience as any other part. For it to work for me, I either have to be totally in control of it, or it has to be a true collaboration.

*I met composer Dan Visconti through a different film project I was working on. I immediately got hooked on his music, and we quickly found that we work well together and like each others' artistic sensibilities. Dan asked me to collaborate with him on new piece with the American Composers Orchestra. We called it *Glitchscape*, and we decided it was going to explore information, obsolescence, humanity and destruction. Each of us would sketch out ideas and send them to each other, he'd sing parts of it to me over the phone, I'd send him clips of experiments I'd made. We got together twice in person, once to try out some complex ideas with the orchestra, and then during the week leading up to the show. We were both set up on a table on stage at Carnegie Hall, right next to the harpist. On his side of the table was a bunch of hacked up electronic toys, *Speak-and-Spells*, little keyboards all frankensteined with new parts dangling off of them. On my side there was just my laptop and an iPad that I used control and trigger parts of the visuals. It was by far the most difficult and most rewarding thing I've ever done.*

I'm really happy with the reception that my work has had among contemporary music and theater aficionados. One difficulty with filmmaking is that it comes with a lot of baggage. If you make a film outside of narrative or documentary expectations, you get lumped into this experimental/other non-category in exhibitions and in people's minds. There are dozens upon dozens of kinds of films outside general viewing in that terrible “experimental” margin, but there is a rigid orthodoxy and pecking order in the kinds of experimental films that have a most-favored status. It's silly. But in the contemporary orchestral music and theater worlds, there is a refreshing openness and willingness among viewers to meet a piece of art on its own terms, try to negotiate its nuances, and make meaning without nearly as much pretention.

Find more information
about Simon Tarr
and his work at
QuarkNova.com.



Marina Lomazov, Artistic Director • Joseph Rackers, Program Director

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rising star: **tyson**

Tues., June 17 • 7:30 p.m.

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Wed., June 18

7:30 p.m.

Artist Showcase

Ingrid Jacoby, winner, Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition

Thurs., June 19 4:30 p.m.

Marian Stanley Tucker Guest Lecture Series

"Piano Conversations" with **Leon Fleisher**

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7:30 p.m.

Artist Showcase

Alexander Korsantia

Columbia Museum of Art



lecture: **fleisher**

Fri., June 20

10 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

Arthur Fraser International Concerto Competition

breaks from noon to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

International jury panel:
Alexander Korsantia, chair,
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Ilana Vered

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with **Ilana Vered**

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Master Class

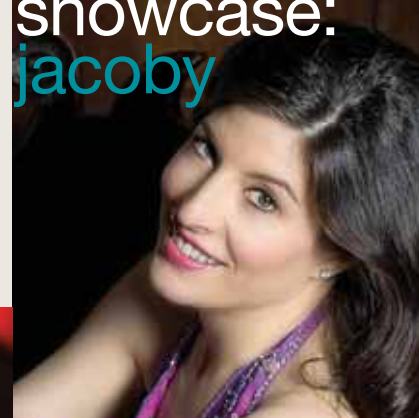
with **Alexander Korsantia**

Free

7:30 p.m.

Arthur Fraser International Competition Winners' Concert and Closing Reception

showcase: **jacoby**



southeasternpianofestival.com



Crossing the River & Finding Art

By Dolly Patton

Photos by Forrest Clonts

Finally, it's Spring! Every day there are more and more people outside walking and enjoying the warmer weather. Dining outdoors, biking and kayaking on the river—its evident, we are all ready to be out in the fresh air and discover all the outdoors can offer.

Columbia is blessed to have a wide variety of indoor and outdoor art opportunities. Numerous art galleries and outdoor spaces showcase paintings and sculptures; theaters feature dramas, comedies and musicals; dance companies offer creative new performances as well as timeless classics; and venues throughout the city host a variety of music performances from opera to rock. These amazingly talented artists, musicians, dancers, and actors have raised the bar and set a high standard. All have one thing in common—most are located near the heart of the Capitol.

Here's an idea—combine our gorgeous weather with fabulous art in a serene and beautiful outdoor setting where nature is the gallery and stage. At Saluda Shoals Park, art and the outdoors go together, naturally. Since 1997, the Park has welcomed more than 4 million visi-





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tors and is now the second most visited attraction in the Midlands. More importantly, the Park has been connecting people to nature by providing cultural activities and programs. Visual art in outdoor galleries, literary workshops under the trees, and theatrical, musical or dance performances down by the river are a few of the delightful offerings.

Stroll along winding trails to find Mike William's fish sculptures "swimming" in the trees, steel "Angel Rocks" forged by Greg Fitzpatrick, a spectacular Bob Doster fish which incorporates children's art as the fish scales, and a 4-ft. acorn sculpture created from clay by Susan Tondreau-Dwyer. See paintings, fiber arts and, coming soon, a collection of Audubon prints. Join us for special performances from the SC Shakespeare Company and local children's theater. If you are a music lover, bring a picnic and enjoy the sounds of classical music, country-rock bands or blue grass pickers.

At Saluda Shoals Park, we envision taking the performing arts to the next level by building an outdoor performance space unlike anything in our state. Nature's Theater will be a unique performing arts center offering superb cultural experiences for everyone to enjoy.

Conceived as an outdoor stage in a casual setting, Nature's Theater will be a place where the cultural diversity of our community and its artists can be celebrated; an opportunity for renowned artists and performers to share their talents

with others; and a unique theater which expands our horizons and enriches our creative imaginations.

Built on a sloping hill nestled in a forest landscape, Nature's Theater is deliberately designed to allow performing artists to embrace not only the audience, but all of nature as well. Visualize a covered stage and seating both surrounded by an area under the trees creating the perfect spot for a blanket and picnic with your family and friends.

The Park is a mere twelve miles from downtown Columbia; across the dam from Lexington; next door to Irmo; and just downstream from Lake Murray. It is a riverfront landscape only minutes from the State Capital and the anchor of the proposed Lower Saluda River Greenway, a trail that will connect Lake Murray to Columbia.

Building Nature's Theater at Saluda Shoals Park is about enriching the lives of the people who live in our community. Imagine . . . an outdoor stage that will touch our hearts as we listen to music, watch dancers and become enthralled in the drama of a play.

So come on over across the river, connect to art, explore nature and be part of building a theater that will provide uplifting artistic experiences, stimulate imaginations and enrich all of our lives!

Dolly Patton is an arts aficionado and the executive director of the Saluda Shoals Foundation



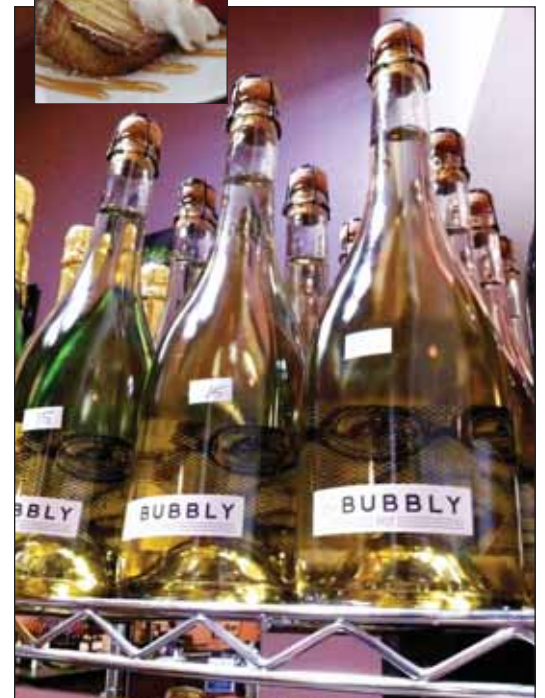
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Essay / ON DANGEROUS BOOKS

By Ed Madden

One wonders how deeply into the curriculum our legislators want to meddle, how far such Comstockery may extend, and how serious they are about wresting educational decisions away from educators.



What I remember most is how hot it was that summer, a heat wave that scorched the soybean fields all around us. Ronald Reagan was nominated for president, Donna Summer was born again. It was the summer of Boys State and church camp—and drum major camp, a week of sweaty marching around a football field and “Hot Stuff” blaring in the dorm. The Arkansas Governor’s School for gifted kids debuted that summer, a five-week residential program for rising seniors on a college campus. It has since become a school, institutional, but that first year the pilot program was like an exciting new summer camp for geeks like me. I was in Language Arts. We read a novel about the Holocaust, a short story about Africa. We discussed existentialism. A girl I thought was really cool (where are you now Kathy?) tried to teach me how to foxtrot on a campus roof one night. I discovered Dungeons and Dragons. In my dorm, during animated conversations about minor differences between various churches, I found there was one other fundamentalist kid (my roommate) who turned out to be even more judgmental than me. One day, Hillary Clinton gave a guest lecture on feminism and public policy. I called home, horrified. One night, I saw two boys from theatre arts kissing. I never told anyone.

My only souvenir of that summer is a book: a copy of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, a play I regularly teach in my Irish lit classes. It’s marked up, my mother having gone through everything I read that summer at the Governor’s School, circling and underlining bad words and bad things. Some pages still bear the imprint of the paper clips with which she marked the most offensive pages. I wonder what my mother was thinking as she read through Beckett and Sartre and Solzhenitsyn, underlining curse words, and putting a star beside Vladimir and Estragon’s conversation about the two thieves on the cross, a moment I now linger on in my own classes. My mother recognized the challenge these lines offered. She knew: books can be dangerous.

I think of this as one of my own books has become fodder in a dustup about dangerous books in South Carolina. Earlier this spring, Rep. Garry Smith, an Upstate Republican, led a charge to cut funding and thus “punish” two state universities for assigning gay-themed books. The College of Charleston assigned as a first-year reading *Fun Home*, a graphic novel about a lesbian coming of age, and USC Upstate assigned to first-year writing classes *Out Loud*, a book of essays about being lesbian and gay in South Carolina that I co-edited with Candace Chellew-Hodge. Upstate Senators Lee Bright and Mike Fair inevitably piled on, calling for further cuts in state funding to USC Upstate over a small queer studies conference scheduled in April and demanding the cancellation of “How to Be a Lesbian in 10 Days or Less,” a satirical solo performance by Leigh Hendrix included in the conference. (Irony-impaired Fair said the play was an attempt to “recruit” lesbians.) This is the second time Hendrix’s work has been cancelled in South Carolina, a performance scheduled at Coastal Carolina University cancelled in 2011. Hendrix is a native of Myrtle Beach and the theatre piece is based, at least in part, on her experiences coming out at Coastal Carolina. Like *Out Loud*, this is art based in the culture of this state.

Smith described *Fun Home* as “pornographic” and the use of *Out Loud* as “promotion of a lifestyle with no academic debate.” He explained, “Critical thinking allows for both sides to be freely debated.” In a fundraising letter Smith sent out in March, he called both books “pornographic propaganda without any alternative or counter-balancing view.” A discussion of sexual difference is not “balanced,” that is, unless you have someone calling gay people sick and sinful, or as Fair insisted, criminal. Also, either these guys haven’t read the books—likely, as no one would call *Out Loud* pornographic (it opens with an essay by a 14-year-old boy about the experience of having a gay uncle). Or they think the mere mention of homosexuality, the simple visibility of lesbian and gay Carolinians, the very fact of our existence, is pornographic.

I pick up *Waiting for Godot*. “Get up till I embrace you,” Vladimir tells Estragon on the first page. Yep, that’s marked by my mom’s blue pen, as if there’s already something wrong here. I try to read through her eyes, though I know it’s not possible, try to get a clear sense of the danger in this book for a college-bound kid from an Arkansas farm, that hot summer of Reagan and drum major camp and two boys kissing outside a campus theatre and my father’s soybeans withering in the fields. These things are complex, difficult. “That’s how it is on this bitch of an earth,” to quote Pozzo from Beckett, another line my mother underscored in the text.

One wonders how deeply into the curriculum our legislators want to meddle, how far such Comstockery may extend, and how serious they are about wresting educational decisions away from *educators*. I wonder what effect these attacks will have on the reputation of public higher education in the state. Even if the state senate doesn’t uphold the budget cuts (pending at the time of this writing), I am sure these attacks will have a chilling if not paralyzing effect on future curricular decisions. I can’t imagine any first year book selection committee in this state will make adventurous—or deeply useful—selections in the wake of this controversy.

I served on the University of South Carolina’s First Year Reading book selection committee for several years, so I am very aware of the difficult discussions that lead to book selection. At USC, we developed formal selection criteria, some obvious (availability, programming potential), but some more about the purpose of these first-year reading programs: civil and sustained intellectual discourse. Is the book engaging? Does it have potential for use across a variety of courses? Is it relevant? For *relevance* we would ask further: relevant to students, to the local community, to university initiatives, to current society? Sometimes we chose fiction, a novel about autism connecting to disability issues and campus services, sometimes non-fiction, like a book about medical work in the developing world. Often there was a multicultural emphasis, an exploration of cultural difference—for example, a novel on the internment of Japanese Americans.

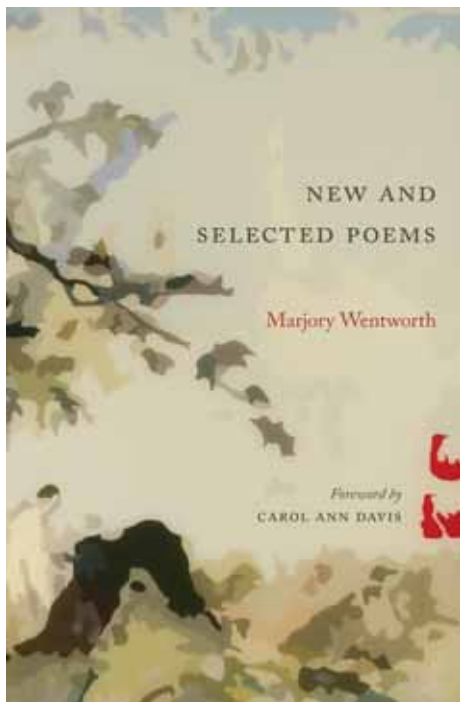
By choosing readings that were *relevant* in some way, we wanted to make it clear that what happens in the classroom matters beyond the classroom, that a college education is about becoming an engaged citizen. More than anything else, we believed that the first year reading experience (not just the reading itself but related campus and curricular programming) is an important introduction to civil and intellectual discourse. Whatever the issue, in a diverse world, we have to learn to talk with reason and empathy about difficult things, not reduce complex issues to simplistic statements and reactionary dismissals. As the blather of Smith and the ironically named Bright and Fair make all too clear, homosexuality is something that is still difficult to discuss, with reason and empathy, in South Carolina.

I admire both universities for their choices. I think both books braver than anything we’ve ever chosen for the first-year reading at the Columbia campus. They were *relevant*. A book about a young woman coming to terms with her sexual identity in college. A collection of essays by South Carolinians on coming out, religious faith, bullying, familial rejection, community understanding. (Almost a third of the pieces in *Out Loud* were written by SC college students.) The works under attack by Smith and his ilk are works that could address the very bigotry they display.

In the scene my mother starred in Beckett, the exchange about the two thieves on the cross, Didi tells Gogo that even though there are four versions of the story, everyone believes only one version. Why? “It’s the only version they know.” Books help us to imagine what someone else’s experience might be like, other versions, other ways of living and knowing. As my niece Mahayla wrote in the final paper for her first-year composition class this spring: reading helps us to understand people who are different from us, it helps us to develop our imagination and our empathy. Books can be dangerous, yes, if you want to keep worldviews narrow, horizons limited, minds closed, bigotry unchallenged, and difference at bay. Books are dangerous, that is, if you want your version of the world to be the only one that matters.

Review: Marjory Wentworth's *New and Selected Poems*

By Betsy Breen



retreating courses of the stars, Wentworth is interested in what's cast out and what comes back. "Absence/is the thing that calls us back/to places emptied/everything but remembrance," Wentworth writes in "Family Reunion." She does well to lace her descriptions with hints of darkness. In "What If" she questions the nature of coincidence. What if "the car stopped before the patch of black ice/the fire never spread through the house[?]" Here and throughout, there's texture to the things that return in Wentworth's poems—one part sweet and one part bitter.

As her fans are well aware, one of Wentworth's greatest strengths as a poet is her ability to render domestic scenes with pointed precision. They'll be pleased to find poems like "What Passes" and "What Remains," which deliver quick currents of spot-on images. Flashes like "the shy widower watering roses in the dark" and a "white string/tied to a baby's wrist" come in such rapid succession that it feels like watching a river after a heavy storm. Meanwhile, poems like "In Gaza's Berry Fields" look at the effects of global politics and violence on a personal scale: brothers lose their lives playing marbles near strawberry fields. At its very best, *New and Selected Poems* is a study of the domestic undertow: the pull of time and "the weight that grounds us/through the swirling hours of each day."

Wentworth's language in the last section of the book is some of her strongest. The water of the earlier scenes rushes outward to cover new ground and she pays particular attention to light. In the book's 28 new poems, Wentworth's perspective broadens from the South Carolina coast and includes, among

other things, the birth of her sons. The lovely "Counting Scars" is a three-part meditation on motherhood that demonstrates Wentworth's ability to be both delicate and muscular. She describes her son as a "small offering/drenched in water and blood" and "my fragile/bundle of woven bones/and wonder."

One of the best poems of the last section—and of the whole book—is the extraordinary "Manacles," which manages to tackle both the innocence of discovery and the heavy weight of Southern history. The speaker watches as her sons, excited after a visit to the pirate museum, dig through their backyard on Sullivan's Island in search of gold. The things they turn up—a door, a broken plate, an animal skeleton—are reminiscent of the history that has washed up throughout Wentworth's work. Finally, the youngest boy delivers a pair of muddy, rusted manacles. The speaker struggles to convince him that slavery "could have ever happened." Ultimately, this is a poem of reconciliation between the island and its history. "The island where we live," Wentworth writes, "the place/where slaves were kept by the thousands before they were sold/or buried, here in the backyard of the gatehouse still standing on the island where we live."

New and Selected Poems is a comprehensive balance between Wentworth's old work and new. Still, the book ends on an open note: the last stanza begins "I am walking down the middle." There's a sense that this may just be a halfway point on the way to somewhere else (word is that Wentworth, South Carolina's Poet Laureate, is working on two new books of poetry) but what a wonderful place to stop and take in the view.

Marjory Wentworth's latest book, *New and Selected Poems*, contains eleven years of poetry and encompasses powerful mediations on family, place, and the riptide of time that tugs at both. The volume's first three sections revisit the poet's earlier work and thematically they're tied together by an interest in the idea of return. The first poem, "In the Dream of the Sea," describes "sand/pulled back/into the body." From waves that roll over the shore "steady [as] distant breaths" to the advancing and

A Sense
of the
Midlands

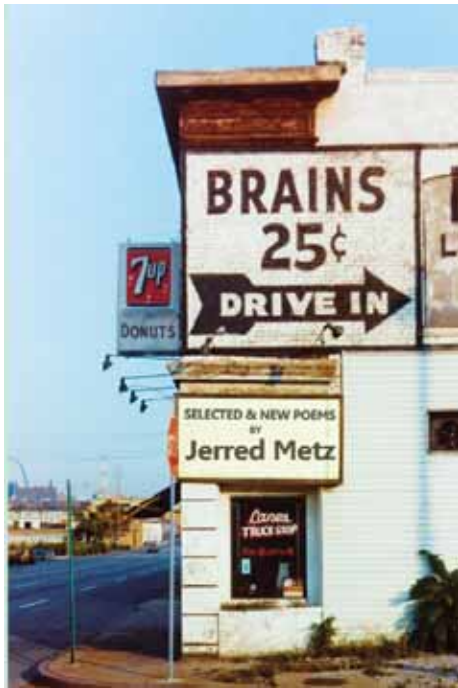


Edited by Cynthia Boiter
Poetry editor ~ Ed Madden

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Review: Jerred Metz's *Brains 25 Cents, Drive In* – Songs of Air and Dirt

By Jonathan Butler



Jerred Metz's fifth book of poems, *Brains 25 Cents, Drive In*, new this spring from Aldrich Press, collects new and selected older poems, giving a sense of both Metz's faith in the power of poetry to serve as a revelatory, even prophetic discourse, and the lively, experimental style that accommodates the different facets of his vision. The Columbia poet's voice is often elliptical and oracular, as in "Dicing":

Six men old as ever men were
old, one at each corner of the
world, above and below it as well
 mountain rich spices on a rug
which pictures six infants
tossing red and gold dice
inside a mountain.

But Metz can also be shrewdly observant, funny, and understated, as in this poem:

Our Quietest Meals

are when
we eat
fish.

Not that
fish makes us

more serious,
just
more
careful.

The poems in *Brains 25 Cents, Drive In* partake of both Metz's visionary or surrealist impulses and his dedication to plain, understated and evocative language. There's little apparent biographical content in these poems, but instead descriptions in which the objects of nature take on mythical resonance. This is the case even in a poem like "Below Lafayette Ridge" that presumably has some basis in the poet's lived experience:

Blanketed against the cold, we sat beside the river
watching the moon rise over the mountain's spine.
Quickly the earth turned showing first a
faint gleam, then light, then moon
full in October free above the ridge.
From the cold river you offered water
to the moon's parched oceans.
The moon broke into shimmering
points and slivers in the pool of your hands.

This poem's demonstration of how the physical world might take on mythical or allegorical significance seems very close to the heart of Metz's collection.

Metz's language is lean but descriptive, reminiscent of William Carlos Williams in both its vividness and economy. Like Williams, Metz favors the objects of the tangible world for the weight they lend to language. His poem "Even a Vision" could serve as his *ars poetica* with its assertion that

Even a vision needs
a stick to lean on when
it climbs down through the sky.

Metz has a preference for imagery that simultaneously evokes the natural world and suggests itself as metaphorically or allegorically significant, so that the vividly described scenes in his poems shimmer with suggestiveness. The "iron chair with wings" in the poem of the same name could serve as a metaphor for Metz's own blending of the concrete and ethereal:

I bend like a prayer bone shaken in the hand,
my head plunged in the earth like a plow,
and ask the deep and the high
for an iron chair with wings.

This sense of allegorical or metaphorical possibility invests the objects of Metz's poems with life; it's a kind of a poetic animism that allows rocks to become characters with language and aspirations in "The Secret Road to Wealth":

The river bends here
so the water can gaze
at six pliable stones
perched like birds
on a boulder.
Three wear hats
and three muzzles.
They speak the language of dice.
When the seasons turn they scan
the sky searching for the
secret road to wealth.

Metz sticks close to the nature imagery of myths and scripture: rocks, trees, water; and, in a couple of poems, angels, although even in these poems Metz turns our attention to the wonder of our own world and existence, so that the wonder is not the existence of angels, but our capacity, in "St. Brendan with the Birds" to see the birds as such.

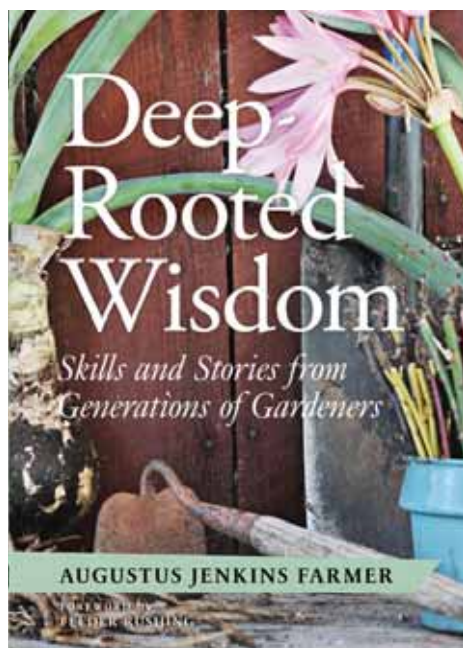
The collection also includes a tender elegy for John Berryman, in which we find an expression of what Metz values in poetry, "The singer made song out of air and dirt, / bony words, resurrection." Metz, too, seems to want to make poems of "air and dirt" that give a kind of "resurrection" to the objects of the senses by investing them with metaphorical possibility, but Metz also knows well enough to avoid the dogmatic or didactic, leaving his poems open, sometimes puzzling, but rewarding in the unexpectedness of their associations.

Jerred Metz clearly believes in the power of poetry to be visionary, and this alone should make his vision welcome. That he pursues this capacity of his art without sacrificing accessibility or losing a sense of humor makes the best poems of this collection very welcome indeed.

Review: Augustus Jenkins Farmer's

Deep-Rooted Wisdom: Skills and Stories from Generations of Gardeners

By Cindi Boiter



In the opening of his new book, *Deep-Rooted Wisdom*, Columbia gardening guru Jenks Farmer tells us that he became a gardener in the third grade when his parents set him up in the “paradise” of an old farm that was as full of rocks and pieces of scrap metal as it was of crinum and red spider lilies. “I was free to dig, transplant, and make little walkways and rooms in any way I wanted,” he writes. But over the next two hundred plus pages of memories, musings, and the combination of science and folklore, we learn that Farmer is as much an anthropologist and historian as he is a gardener, and it is his respect and admiration for the time-tested ways of people who truly love the land they tend that makes him excel at all three endeavors.

Given the bounty of information, from empirical data to folkways and traditions, that Farmer has accumulated in the almost forty years since he started that third grade gar-

den, organizing this body of knowledge into a digestible arrangement had to have been challenging. But he has done so admirably, dividing each chapter into three sections. First he plucks a tried and true concept from the annals of gardening culture; think “watering in” or home rooting. Then he introduces his reader to specific mentors, teachers, family members, and old family friends and the lessons they taught him pertinent to the topic at hand. Finally, Farmer delicately weaves new age science with old ways sensibility, more often than not proving that the old ways of gardening persisted primarily because they were successful—and now we have the science to explain how and why.

But there’s more. Interspersed amidst the home-grown wisdom and research results, Farmer enlightens the reader with fascinating tidbits that support the philosophy of simplicity and environmental integrity he promotes throughout the book. (Did you know, for example, that scientists now blame the collapse of the Mayan civilization on a very mild water shortage? Had the ancient Mayans hand-watered their crops, like Farmer recommends, we might be reading the author’s book in hieroglyphics.)

While practicality has its place in *Deep-Rooted Wisdom*—especially when addressing issues like seed saving, pass-along plants, and the holistic control of pests and weeds—there is still almost always the thread of an underlying philosophy that is ambitious, but still accessible and beautiful in its simplicity. One person’s old wife’s tale is another person’s noble truth. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the chapter on handmade structures in which the author addresses vines and the trellises and structures on which they entwine. “Americans seem to like structure and solidity in their gardens, from little vine supports to pergolas, arbors, or trellises,” he writes. “It’s not entirely clear why this is, but I think it’s because we want things solidly defined. We want to see the difference between a trellis and a bunch of

sticks tied together. ... The appreciation of the rustic and the rickety requires a considerably more relaxed aesthetic.” He goes on to write about store-bought structures, “so enticingly trim and tidy in a shirt-tucked-in sort of way.” But counters with another option. “Instead, I make vine supports out of sticks and wires, but with an attention to detail that makes them artful.” And here is where Farmer rejoins the ideological path persistent throughout the book. “From a design perspective, handmade structures become visual tributes to the people who made them. From an environmental perspective, it is essential that we make the most out of the things we have in our yards and nearby in order to reduce the environmental demands of shipping materials around the globe.” But he returns once again to his pristine perception of practicality, noting that, “...what we’re often seeking in our yards and gardens—shade and support—can be accomplished with just a simple stick in the ground.”

It’s in the last chapter, however, that Farmer, or Jenks, as he is known to family and friends, head-on embraces his over-arching philosophy of both life and gardening. Inspired as much by the tenets of Buddhism as it is by the (often Southern) wisdom passed down through the ages and across the miles, the ideology of *Deep-Rooted Wisdom* is simply that of respect. Respect for creativity, respect for history, respect for truth. “Gardens are the story of two things: culture and biology. Gardeners are the storytellers.”

In reminiscing about his boyhood garden, Jenks writes that, “Through my little garden, I’d sow seeds I found in parks, cut flowers, and try to figure out how the people who’d gardened before me might have used arrowheads, china shards, or plow parts that I unearthed. I even left little caches of toys and coins for those who’d come after me.” Now Jenks Farmer has left a cache of wisdom—written and deep rooted.

CHOICE FOR INCLUSION

Poem by Matt Stark

The bird can be left in its cage
or let to die in the wild.
The bird can eat flightless

bugs, can eat bugs that burrow
off sheets of acrylic,
can drink water

with sugar from a shallow dish.
The smaller the cage,
the easier it is for the bird

especially the larger one
to hear itself chirp.
Bird muted in straw,

bird in a jewelry box
shown to a child,
bird bathing in Tupperware,

bird noticed in shifting
backgrounds of leaves
like an idea, where

any single event
changed into a bird
falls into a group.

Matt Stark is an MFA Poetry candidate at USC Columbia. He wrote his first poem while shoveling snow back home in Monument, Colorado.

AT THE LAST REUNION

Poem by Ray McManus

This is
Charlie Daniels.

This is
fire on the mountain.

This is
a jar emptied
as our stomachs
on the sand.

This is
the ghost
of a pipeline,
the rust
on the fan.

This is Todd
on the hood
of my car.

He's dead now.

Ray McManus is the author of four books of poetry: *Punch*. (Hub City Press, forthcoming) *Red Dirt Jesus* (Marick Press, 2011), *Left Behind* (Steeping Stones Press, 2008), and *Driving through the country before you are born* (USC Press, 2007). His poetry has appeared most recently in *Blue Collar Review*, *Barely South*, *The Pinch*, *Hayden's Ferry*, and *moonShine Review*. Ray is an assistant professor of English in the Division of Arts and Letters at University of South Carolina Sumter where he teaches creative writing, Irish literature, and Southern literature.

AN OLD PEW

Poem by Ed Madden

for Ray

He wanted the God of the flannelgraph, God of the box of crayons, God of grape kool-aid and stale cookies, God of the paper tabernacle, God of the quiz bowl, God of the gold star, God of Aunt Maxine and Uncle Doug.

He got God of the tent meeting, the gospel revival, God of the cold immersion, God of the burning cross, God of Must the Young Die Too?, God of Brother Wyatt, God of the funeral flowers, God of the last verse, sung once again, for the lost, for the sinners, for the unsaved that remain out there—yes, you know who you are.

He wanted a song of the pitchpipe, song of the Rich Old King, song of the red and yellow black and white, song of clap your hands, song of stomp your feet, song of the happy shout, the song sung in rounds.

He heard the altar call song, the invitation song, the revival song, song about a fount of blood, song of the roll call and the last trumpet, song of being blind, song of sinking deep, song of the deep stain, song of the worm.

*

Let there be a song for the man who doesn't sing.

Let there be a song for the man who walks away, song of the dark hand, song of the wandering feet, song of the unsung.

Let there be a god of the night bloom, god of the guestroom, god of the quince and winter wheat, god of last call and first guess, god of the frozen drink, god of the hairy chest, god of the road trip, god of the home-grown, god of the homeward and homely, god of the shared home, a repurposed god, god of the unsaid, god of the old pew at the foot of the bed.

NEST

Poem by Ed Madden

for Forrest

Dark wings flickered at the eaves,
wasps circled the barn, dirt-daubers'
knobbed nests like clods chunked and lodged

along the beams, eggs packed inside,
nestled beside tiny spiders, stung,
paralyzed. Time doesn't heal. No

emotion is the final one. The yellow jackets
sabotaged the toolbox, the unhooked plow,
the diesel tank, the gate, their paper nests

like pale morels hung to dry, and red wasps
throbbled like bunched explosives just above
our heads—the barn seethed with the sound,

we felt it like static on our skin, their nests
I-dare-you's for any boy. Black daubers flashed
and dabbled at the field's last puddles,

the fish-gasping ditch, chewing bits of mud.
Once again, we assumed the adults around us
knew what they were doing, the wasps sealing

their young up with the spiders, stung,
paralyzed, ready to be eaten alive.

An associate professor of English at USC, Ed Madden is the literary arts editor for *Jasper*. The poems included here are from his third book of poetry, *Nest*, released earlier this spring by Salmon Poetry (Ireland).

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