

# JANUARY

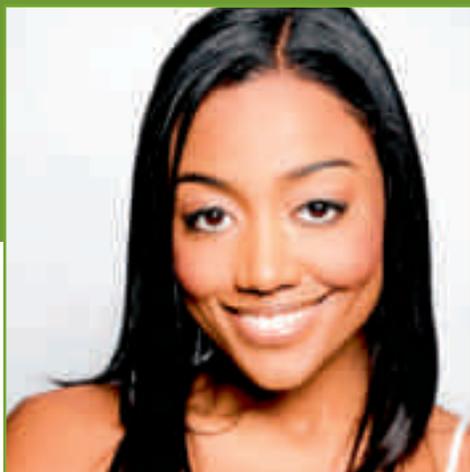
A man in a white shirt, tie, and hat is dancing with a woman in a red dress in a ballroom. The man is wearing a white shirt, a dark tie, and a light-colored hat. The woman is wearing a red dress and a red hat. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a bright, sunlit room with large windows.

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2014 JAY  
**WINNERS**  
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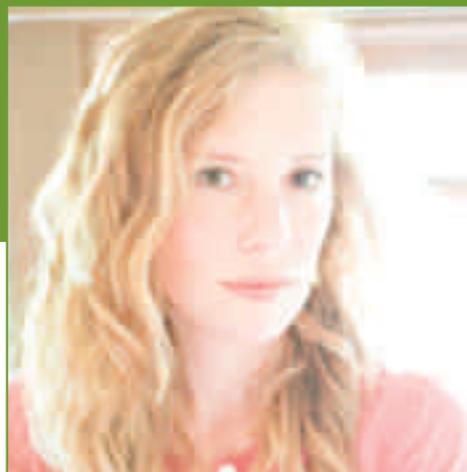
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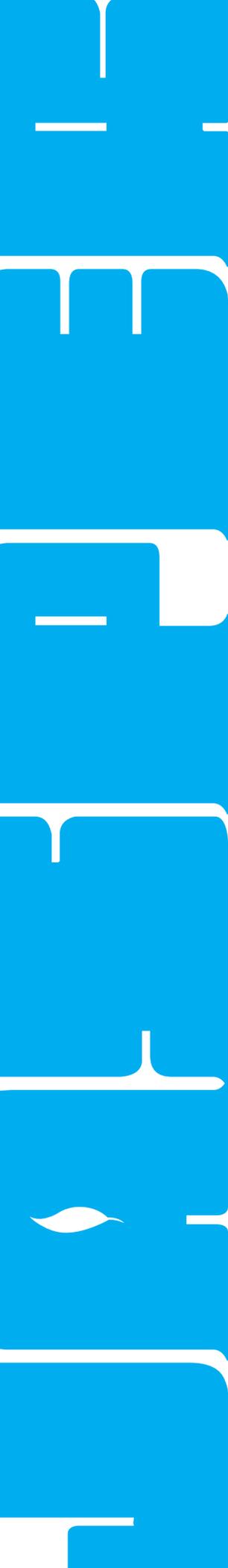


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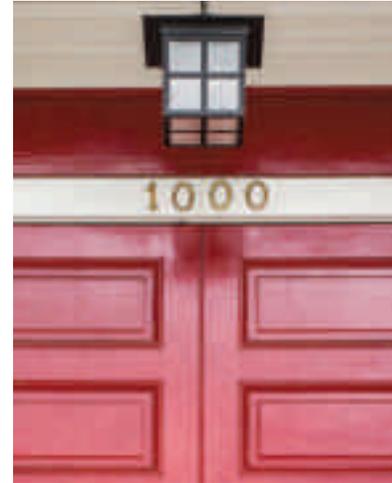
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CENTERFOLD / DURLACH + BREEDLOVE



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as in Sergeant, the Revolutionary War hero  
as in Mineral, the spotted or speckled stone  
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TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): PEYTON PRATT, ADDIE HUGGINS, TONI PARKER | BOTTOM ROW: VANESSA VAUGHN, JORDAN PENNINGTON, EMILY CATE, SUSANNA MCELVEEN | NOT PICTURED: PERRY CATE, JONATHAN SHIVER, JACOB SHIVER

## YOUNG ART ABROAD

Twelve teenagers from the AC Flora theatre department have been selected to perform for the American High School Theatre Festival (AHSTF), which runs in conjunction with the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the oldest arts festival in history, in 2015. Based on their awards, philosophies and programs, not to mention their incredible craft, they will be included among 43 other schools to travel to Scotland to perform for fourteen days in August of next year. The Fringe Festival includes over 2,000 different performances. AC Flora High School will be showcased at the AHSTF venue in Edinburgh.

This is an exceptional group of students, very deserving of this special honor. In her third year of teaching for AC Flora, director Samantha Elkins has seen the number of students participating in theater double from 90 to 180. She says, "Their love of the theatre art form amazes me every day. The work they do in rehearsals and performing is at a much higher level than the average, non-the-

atre going person would expect from this age group."

The students and Ms. Elkins are still deciding what to perform while they are there. They are leaning toward adapting a Shakespearean play with an all female cast (as the group will be mostly female). There is also talk of possibly performing *The Giver*. Elkins says, "What it comes down to is what story they are passionate about telling."

AC Flora has been given this unique opportunity to travel to Scotland's capital to share their talent and hard work. Columbia supporters of the theatre now have the opportunity to help them get there. The teenagers, who organized the International Thespian Society as an extracurricular that raises funds to benefit charities, now need some support of their own. To fund their trip to Scotland the students are putting on a production of *A Christmas Carol*. Proceeds from the show will go toward their trip.

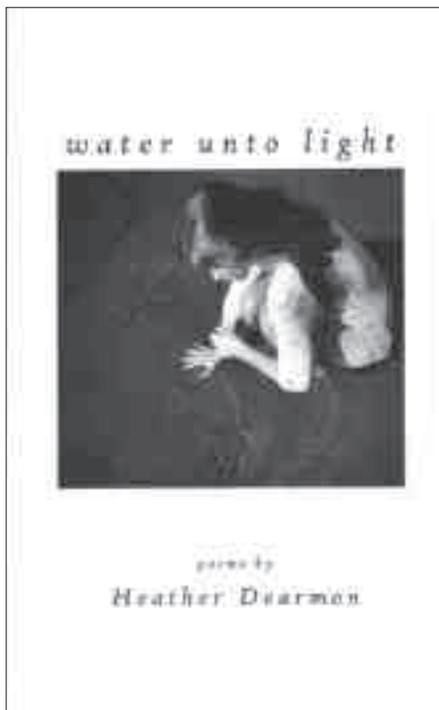
*A Christmas Carol* performances will be unlike any you've seen before. Elkins has decided to take a non-traditional route. "In

a time where if something isn't eye catching we immediately turn to our phones for entertainment; we decided to get to the crux of the story." They plan to tweak the aesthetic in the style of Tim Burton ala *A Nightmare Before Christmas*. Anticipating that there will be several other performances of *A Christmas Carol* in Columbia this year, theirs will surely stand out.

Show times are December 10, 11, 12 at 6 pm and December 13 at 3pm. Cost is \$8 for general public and \$5 for Richland One students and faculty (with ID). - *Annie Brooks*

## POEMS AND PRAYERS: 3 NEW CHAPBOOKS

D. H. Lawrence called a poem an "act of attention," and Simone Weil (among others) reminds us that "unmixed attention is prayer." The thing poems and prayers have in common is attentiveness. Attentiveness—to the world, to our own deep losses and hungers,



to the movement of language itself—drives three new chapbooks by South Carolina poets Teresa Cooper Haskew, Heather Dearmon, and Roy Seeger. Each, in its own way, offers a kind of quotidian spirituality, a recognition that grace and consolation can be found in the ordinary and the unremarkable, if we only pay attention.

The title of Teresa Haskew's *Breaking Commandments* (published by Main Street Rag of Charlotte) suggests a book centered on the old language of sin and redemption. Instead, she gives us a theology that is at once earthy and deeply ethical. "First Communion" finds something almost sacramental in a father placing a dead dove from the hunt in his small daughter's hands. In "Denver Duet," a John Denver song becomes a blessing as an aging couple (one fresh from heart surgery) drive down backroads, "heading somewhere, / anywhere not a hospital." And in "Worship at Lake Murray," the speaker lifts her Solo cup of Bloody Mary in praise.

Columbia poet Heather Dearmon's *water unto light* (Finishing Line Press) is a darker book, driven as it is by loss and grief. I am deeply moved by the precision of Dearmon's language, especially when precision is itself a very careful kind of evasion—as when a description of a fallen bird's nest in "not the matter" veers ("the disfigured nest is

my father's body") and you realize that everything has been a metaphor for what she cannot actually say, cannot describe, her father's suicide. The poet keeps reaching for forms of consolation, suggested by the repeated image of the woman healed because she touched the hem of Christ's robe. In the poem "i wash my face before going to bed," the speaker goes through her daily rituals "as though life were simple," or "as though my father were not dead." This is a stunning book.

Aiken poet Roy Seeger's *Prayer Book for the Midwestern Agnostic* (Main Street Rag) seems less biographical (though no less personal), but also quirker in its attention to the movement of language and thought. Nods to popular culture (*X-Men*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *Taxi Driver*) weave through the collection, as do poems about animals—mostly birds, as if there's a kind of wonky ornithomancy going on here, but sometimes dogs. A poem about *Scooby Doo* turns out to be a smart exploration of fear: "As the police cars take Old Man / Fletcher away, lights flash red / & blue all the way to the horizon line. // Now what we fear has no fixed shape." In the last poem, "Naptime in the House of Animals," I am not sure where (or who) we are (though we bark and howl), but Seeger concludes, "We are for now enough."

The here and now, may it be enough. That's the prayer of all these books. -EM

## CHOREOPOEMS

In January Trustus Theatre will open *In the Red and Brown Water*, the first part of a trilogy called *The Brother/Sister Plays* by playwright, poet, and theatre artist Tarell Alvin McCraney. These plays are a unique blend of story, movement, and music that has earned McCraney acclaim as a brilliant new American voice—a leader in a new generation of playwrights. Lauded American director and theatre artist Tina Landau directed these plays in repertory at Steppenwolf in Chicago, IL. In the program notes she described McCraney's unique style of storytelling as something likened to a *choreopoem*.

A choreopoem is often described as a dramatic expression that combines poetry, dance, music, and song. The term was coined



by playwright Ntozake Shange, who used it to describe her script *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*. One can see the similarity of Shange's popular work and McCraney's *In The Red and Brown Water* because the script is written in verse and the cast creates music vocally throughout the evening while also engaging in stylized movement to tell the story that takes place in "the distant present" of McCraney's fictional Louisiana bayou town of San Pere (the time and setting of all the shows in McCraney's trilogy).

The Trustus production will be directed by Co-Artistic Director Chad Henderson, who has been pursuing a production of this play ever since he saw the Steppenwolf production in 2010. "This show made a huge impact on me as a theatre artist, and I've been seeing its effects surface in my staging of other scripts since then," Henderson says. "Producing this script is a risk for Trustus because it's not a well-known title. But everyone will benefit from our production. This project is a labor of love and passion for me, and I couldn't be more thrilled to bring McCraney's voice to the Trustus stage and Columbia audiences." The theatre intends to produce the other two scripts from *The Brother/Sister Plays* in its 31<sup>st</sup> Season.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE ARTIST

## PERFORMANCE ART A LA JENNY MAE

Some know her as Jennie Mae and some as Bayou Betty. People might recognize her as the ghost of a southern belle or a mangled doll. Some might even say she has an identity crisis, but the real face behind it all, Jennifer Stephens Hill, just describes it all as her passion.

The Chapin native has undoubtedly one of the most unique careers out there--she "works" as a living statue, a character that stands stiff and silent but comes to life when approached.

Hill discovered a love of acting at a young age and took to the stage as much as she could. In her early 20s she landed a job at the Columbia Marionette Theater, where she met her now husband, Lyon Forrest Hill, artist and current creative director at the theater. Living a life surrounded by art was inevitable for the two.

After the couple traveled to Europe, she was enthralled with the living statues of Amsterdam that wandered the streets silently interacting with people and making their characters come to life. Shortly after, she discovered the famous Eight Foot Bride played by Amanda Palmer, a dead bride who walks the streets of Boston.

Hill decided Columbia needed an introduction to this unique form of art. Drawing inspiration from the Eight Foot Bride, Hill found a wedding dress, dried a bouquet of flowers and headed to the fountain in Five Points as a gloomy bride. "People were definitely confused," Hill says. "But whether they understood it or not, they were all very interested."

It has been eight years since she first stood at the fountain and her characters since then have evolved. On her own in the Vista and Five points, or at parties and events, Hill dresses as the bride, a dead southern belle named Bayou Betty, a dark and mysterious doll, or a fortune teller that hands out for-

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tunes to tipplers. "There's an element of death and darkness to all my characters," says the surprisingly cheerful personality.

Despite the gloominess of her characters, Hill says her goal is never to be scary, but intriguing. "I've always been fascinated by darkness since I was a kid," she says. "But even more, I've been fascinated by the mixture of light and dark, kind of like Tim Burton's work,"

As Columbia's only living statue, Hill says she is overwhelmed by the positive feedback she's received. "I think people like the mystery," she says. "You get to come up with your own story behind the character because I can't just tell you what that story is. The story is whatever people want it to be."

She added that kids especially love her creepy characters and are the first ones to approach her. "They treat me like I'm a Disney princess or something and not a dead bride," she jokes.

Hill's two children, Oliver, 5, and Huxley, 1, are especially receptive to their mother's interesting work. She says although Huxley is too young to understand her work, Oliver loves watching his mother turn into a statue, and has even come up with some character ideas of his own.

Between being a mother of two and continuing on as a living statue, Hill admits that her work is much more demanding than it looks. Hill stands on her feet for hours at a time, often completely still and must resist talking, or even worse, laughing. "There are always people who try to get you to laugh or break character," she says. "But I must admit I'm pretty good at keeping character. It's just nice to be in silence in public for a while. Society never usually lets you do that."

On top of her already busy schedule, Bayou Betty and the rest of the crew aren't the only characters she's creating. In her spare time, Hill runs Jennie Mae Creations, a line of dolls, sock animals, and fabric creations. "When my husband and I were first dating we loved this comic book and the main character was a sock monkey, so I decided to make one for him," she says. "That's where I got the idea that I could take a sock monkey and make it something better."

But these aren't typical dolls with button eyes and rosy cheeks. Hill has continued to stick with her love of dark meets light making voodoo dolls, dead cat dolls, creatures using various doll parts and a special adult line of "naughty nymphs."

She introduced her dolls at the Art Garage where all 12 of her creations were sold. From there her business skyrocketed and her dolls were even picked up for the movie *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium*.

Hill admits that she no longer has the same dreams she had in her 20s, and between her kids, the living statues and the dolls, time is tight. She continues to act in plays at Trustus Theater when she can, and knows once her kids grow older, she'll have more time to carry out her passions. "I



know I don't have a lot of time right now," Hill says. "But I'm happy with where I am. As long as I can keep creating, I'm happy." -CAITLYN MCGUIRE

## REAL ARTISTS IN HOLIDAY HOME TOURS

Steven Whetstone's interest in the arts began at a young age. He attended the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities and, while there, had the honor of one of his pieces going to hang in the White House. Whetstone then attended the University of South Carolina, graduating in 2002 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art Studio with a drawing concentration. He played pitcher on the university's baseball team from 1999 to 2002, and from there his baseball career took him to Chicago where he played for the White Sox organization. In 2004 however, Whetstone switched his focus from athletics to the arts, becoming a professional artist. He returned to his hometown of Columbia, where he lives now and keeps busy by pouring himself into his art and the arts community. He has since received many awards including first place at the South Carolina State Fair and the Viewers Choice Award for the Young Contemporaries at the Columbia Museum of Art.

While Whetstone stays busy, he still finds time to contribute to the community in other ways. He is currently teaching two classes at City Art

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STEVEN WHETSTONE - ARTIST



Gallery and is the featured artist for the Homes for the Holidays Tour, an annual event held in Shandon and Hollywood-Rose Hill, featuring a tour of seven historic homes decorated for the holiday season. The tours will take place on December 7<sup>th</sup> from 2pm until 6pm. Whetstone designed a new logo for the tours this year in addition to creating their cover art. You can also find him doing live painting outside of City Art Gallery on Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> as part of Vista Lights.

Whetstone says, "Every painting has its own life and needs different things as the process of the painting comes together. I love the chase of the next painting—deciding what the painting needs and wants." He says that every year keeps getting better for him and his art is continuously improving, especially maturing over the past year. There is more to come on the horizon.

-ABBY DAVIS



2014  
JAY  
AWARDS

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# KATHLEEN ROBBINS

Photographer and Professor Kathleen Robbins has seen a busy and productive year. *Into the Flatland*, a series of quiet photographs exploring the familial connections she shares with the verdant land of the Mississippi Delta, has traveled across the country showing in galleries and universities in Nebraska, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Charleston, SC. Besides teaching and acting as the coordinator for the photography program at USC, Robbins has given lectures and participated in panel discussions at the Columbia Museum of Art, the University of Nebraska and the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston, SC. She has been featured in numerous publications including *Oxford American Magazine*, and right here in *Jasper*. This year, Robbins has also been exhibited in *The Kids are Alright: an exhibition about family and photography* in Andover, Massachusetts; *CRITICAL MASS TOP 50: Color and Light* in Daytona Beach, Florida; *Photographers from the Permanent Collection* at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, Louisiana; and *Sense of Place: Picturing West Greenville* at Clemson University. -KG

**2014 JAY WINNER**  
Visual Arts

# JAMES BUSBY

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Winner of the 2012 701 CCA Prize, Busby's awarded solo exhibition, *Figure 8*, at CCA just closed this October. Busby is known for his sculptural, finely-crafted non-objective paintings, with precise layers of carved and sanded gesso and paint, and sleek surfaces of polished graphite. The artist lives in Chapin, but has found much success outside of the state. According to his biography from 701 Center for Contemporary Art, he has averaged a solo exhibition every year since earning his MFA in 2003, which is no small feat. Besides *Figure 8*, this year Busby has exhibited twice at Randall Scott Projects (who represents the local artist) in Washington, DC: *Smoke and Mirrors*, and *James Busby, New Paintings*. Kravets|Wehby Gallery out of New York, who also represents Busby, hosted an exhibition of his paintings entitled *Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast* in January of this year. -KG



# EILEEN BLYTH

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Eileen Blyth has been a fixture of our local Columbia arts scene for many years. A painter and sculptor, you've likely seen her most recent work installed on Main Street as part of One Columbia's and the City of Columbia's joint public art pilot program. *Hanging*, a collaborative piece between Blyth and Mark Finley is a series of hank drums meant for passersby to take a load off and bang out some rhythms while enjoying the cool, playful design of the permanent sculpture. Earlier this year, Blyth collaborated with Laura Spong on *The Big Paint* project, producing large scale paintings for an exhibition at The Goodall Gallery at Columbia College. Meant to challenge the artists' sense of scale, Blyth says of the project in a statement by the Goodall Gallery, "Having to step back and literally see the big picture of this size was new to us. It is that moment of knowing, of seeing that shape or line, of finding the composition that is the exciting thing.... It was hard physical work but it was a challenge and we were addicted." Blyth also exhibited works in *Artista Vista*, *Art Fields*, *Vista Lights*, and *Volumes II- Women Bound by Art*. -KG





# CATHERINE HUNSINGER

Catherine Hunsinger has sung and acted roles ranging from Sandy in *Grease* to the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. A veteran of some three dozen productions locally, most often musicals, Hunsinger became a new Trustus company member this fall and will be seen on the Trustus Mainstage starting November 21 as one of a five actor ensemble that brings to life Patrick Barlow's new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. Additionally at Trustus, she originated the role of Willodeane Poole in the PREMIERES production of *The Restoration's Constance*, and also performed in *FEST 24*, a 24-hour theatre festival. Other roles this year have included Eponine in *Les Miserables* at Town Theatre, and the ensemble of *Young Frankenstein* at Workshop. -AK

**2014 JAY WINNER**  
Theatre

# FRANK THOMPSON

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A native of Birmingham, AL, Frank Thompson graduated from the University of Alabama, and Samford University's Cumberland School of Law. This past year, Thompson directed the British holiday pantomime *Ho! Ho! Ho!* at Columbia Children's Theatre, and *Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story* at Town Theatre. As an actor, he distinguished himself in four different yet iconic comic roles: Thenardier in *Les Miserables*, Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*, the title character in *The Foreigner* (all at Town Theatre), and Igor in *Young Frankenstein* (at Workshop.) He also appeared in a concert performance of Stephen Sondheim's *Follies* at Town, and created, organized, directed, and performed in the *Night at the Previews*, the latest in a series of comic fundraisers and cabaret performances he has devised for Town Theatre. - AK



# ROBERT RICHMOND

---

Born in Hastings, England, Robert Richmond studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. A University of South Carolina faculty member since 2007, this year, Richmond was promoted to Associate Department Chair and Co-Artistic Director of the Department of Theatre and Dance program. In the spring, he directed *Hamlet*, transforming the Drayton Hall stage at USC into a steampunk-influenced asylum setting. Richmond also directed Randall David Cook's *Intermission* at Trustus Theatre as part of the 24-hour theatre festival FEST 24. Away from Columbia, he directed *The Tempest* at the Warehouse Theatre in Greenville, and *Richard III* at The Folger Theatre, Washington DC. In preparation for the latter, Richmond conceived and directed *Finding Richard*, a pared-down workshop performance of *Richard III* last fall at Drayton Hall, and performed by a cast comprised entirely of undergraduate women. His most recent directing project, *Julius Caesar*, is running through December 7 at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre. - AK





# DARIEN CAVANAUGH

Darien Cavanaugh has long been a fan of broadsides—letterpress printings of poems, often with original art. In 2013 he turned that love into an ambitious project involving 28 artists and writers, who together produced original collaborative works for the Columbia Broadside Project, hosted by Tapp’s Art Center in February. In October, Cavanaugh received the 2014 Arts and Humanities Award for Inspiration from the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties.

Cavanaugh is a founding co-editor of *The Frank Martin Review*, a literary journal launched this year. The first print edition will be out in January, but the journal has already developed a strong online presence. In the past year, he has also had his own poems published or accepted for publication in *Blue Earth Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Found Anew* (USC Press), *I-70 Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Sou’wester*, and elsewhere.

While some know him best, he admits, as “a bartender in North America’s greatest dive bar” (the Whig), he was “excited and surprised” to have been nominated for the award, he says, because it “reminds readers of all the work that artists in Columbia are doing.” -EM

**2014 JAY WINNER**  
Literary Arts

# JULIA ELLIOTT

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"Incredibly imaginative, sharply observed, and totally original" is what the awards committee for the Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award said of the work of Julia Elliott in 2012 when she was selected for the \$30,000 award, given annually to writers who demonstrate excellence and promise early in their careers. Her debut short story collection, *The Wilds*, was released in October to rave reviews. A review in *Publisher's Weekly* noted, "Elliott's gift of vernacular is remarkable, and her dark, modern spin on Southern Gothic creates tales that surprise, shock, and sharply depict vice and virtue."

Elliott follows up *The Wilds* with *The New and Improved Romie Futch*, her debut novel about a fictional South Carolina taxidermist, which will appear in print next year. Elliott's fiction has appeared in *Tin House*, the *Georgia Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Fence*, *Mississippi Review*, *Best American Fantasy*, *Puerto del Sol*, and other publications. Her short story "Regeneration at Mukti" won a Pushcart Prize and was published in the 2013 Pushcart anthology. -EM



# ALEXIS STRATTON

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Alexis Stratton's chapbook *Fratricide*, which won the *Bloom* chapbook prize for fiction, was published in December, the same month her short story "The Ambassador's Wife" received second prize in the *Blue Mesa Review* Fiction Contest. Stratton's debut short film *Crosswalk*, written and produced by Stratton in collaboration with cinematographer O.K. Keyes, won Audience Award at the first Second Act Film Festival in Columbia in October 2013, and a year later was selected for the 2014 Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.

Alexis was the driving force of the Imagine If project of Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, which asked us to imagine a world without violence. The project involved monthly arts workshops at Tapp's Arts Center, workshops in schools and a women's prison, and it culminated in an exhibition at Tapp's that coincided with the start of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The exhibit included work from the Imagine If workshops as well as submissions from an array of visual and literary artists of all backgrounds from South Carolina. -EM



A black and white portrait of Katie Smoak, a woman with long, light-colored hair, smiling and looking slightly to the left. She is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved top. The background is a solid, dark grey.

# KATIE SMOAK

Katie Smoak may have just retired as a principal dancer from Columbia City Ballet, but she has longevity on her side. After sixteen professional seasons and twenty-six consecutive years of performing, Smoak danced her swan song last spring in the title role of Alice in Wonderland, a role created completely on her. Smoak began her dance career as an 11-year-old and climbed through the ranks from a member of the corps de ballet, to soloist, and ultimately to principal dancer. She has the unique honor of being the longest standing company member in the history of the Columbia City Ballet. -CB

**2014 JAY WINNER**

Dance

# CAROLINE LEWIS JONES

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Caroline Lewis Jones doesn't let having a baby slow her down. This wonder woman stayed on the move for the past twelve months keeping a schedule that would make the average artist swoon. Last fall saw the contemporary dancer and instructor wrangling the undead of the Unbound Dance Company that she had previously co-founded as they performed a Zombie crawl through Columbia's historic Vista. Over the next two months the troupe performed at three different events downtown, as well as the Charleston Dance Festival. Lewis Jones traveled every weekend to a different part of the country to teach and choreograph, visiting such cities as Dallas, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Oklahoma City, Atlanta, Charlotte, Columbia, St. Louis, New York City, Kansas City, Houston, Phoenix, San Francisco, and more. Oh, and the dancer/choreographer/instructor did take a few months off from May until August bringing baby boy Crews into the world. -CB



# THADDEUS DAVIS

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With wife Tanya Wideman-Davis, Thaddeus Davis choreographed "We Hold these Truths ..." a dance commissioned by the University of South Carolina in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of SC schools. As a 2013 Map Fund Grant recipient, he also created "Ruptured Silence: Racist Symbolism and Signs" exposing and questioning the history

of the confederate flag, its current presence and representation in the southern US. CANE, a responsive environment dancework was performed by Davis's Wideman/Davis Dance and choreographed by Davis and Wideman-Davis, exploring memories of African American sharecropping. Davis was also a nominee for the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts. -CB

[ Unavailable for photography ]



# GREG STUART

Greg Stuart, no stranger to experimental music danger, is one of the nominees in the music category for the Jasper Artist of the Year. Among accolades from *The Daily Gamecock* and *The New York Times* (and quite a few publications in between), Stuart has performed numerous times at the Columbia Museum of Art and Conundrum Music Hall and has organized premieres and nontraditional concerts alike over the past year. Performing often with visual artist Nathan Halverson, New Music Workshop – Stuart’s primary experimental music outfit – put on a large-scale reboot of Cage’s final piece *Four6* and Nakatani Tatsuya’s *Nakatani Gong Orchestra* using idiosyncratic bowls and gongs, working closely with Nakatani. Stuart also recorded extensively through the past year, including the album *Dystonia Duos* with Joe Panzner and *Hoquet*, an album of percussion trio works. These albums were reviewed by Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian media outlets, and Stuart’s version of Beuger’s *sixteen stanzas on stillness and music unheard* garnered high-profile praise from the *New York Times*’ Steve Smith. *-TD*

**2014 JAY WINNER**

Music

# THE MOBROS

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There's something profoundly unfair about the existence of The Mobros. The preternatural ease with which brothers Kelly, 23, and Patrick Morris, 21, make music together feels like stacking the deck, and the power of the sound that they make together—the deep and steady-beyond-his-years blues-soul howl of Kelly combined with the impeccable harmonies from his brother, the skilled finesse of Patrick's drums, the honed eclecticism of the calypso-meets-garage blues electric leads Kelly throws down—manages to come across as both well thought out and effortlessly natural.

Since the release of their debut LP *Walking with a Different Stride* this past January, which they celebrated by playing to a packed house at New Brookland Tavern, the young duo has been hitting the road hard, building the sweat equity necessary for a little rock band with a lot of talent to make a go of it in the music world. And if you wanted to place a bet on whether a band could “make it” on the professional circuit, you could do worse than to place your money on these two Camden natives that could. -KP



# CAN'T KIDS

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“Ennu Go, down the homophonic rabbit role, c'mon!” shout Adam Cullum and Jessica Oliver on their 2014 sophomore LP *Ennu Go*. It's a brief moment, one that is more cheerleader-chant than harmony singing, and yet it so exquisitely encapsulates the dueling impulses at the heart of the band's appeal. There is, of course, the mischievous, maniacal chemistry between Cullum and Oliver on stage, but there's another element there too, one that is sadder, more keenly introspective and cynical, that appears with its own kind of beauty. There's an unaffected angst, yes, but also a furtive desire to, on a fundamental level, understand our common humanity.

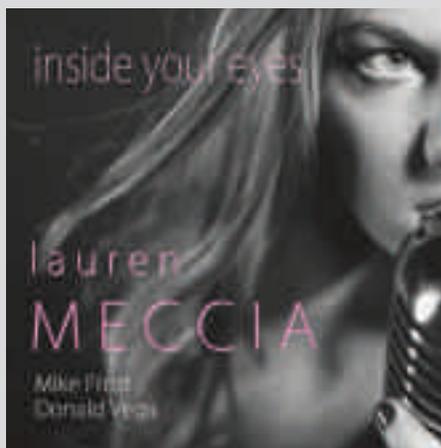
There's no denying also that the addition of bassist Henry Thomas and cellist Amy Cuthbertson transformed the group from an indie rock oddity to one capable of widescreen moments of pop-rock as well,



and that it was around the time that the band seem to cement itself in the top tier of the city's scene. While last year's *Brushes Touches Tongues* remains a powerful touchstone, the songs on *Ennu Go* prove that this is a band with some serious twists and turns to its art. -KP

Local Record

# REVIEWS



## LAUREN MECCIA

### INSIDE YOUR EYES

Lauren Meccia, a saxophonist, has set her horns aside for the moment; her voice takes the spotlight in her debut vocal album *Inside Your Eyes*. Backed by bassist Mike Frost (a regular bandmate of and collaborator with Meccia), pianist Donald Vega, and Brian Czach on percussion, this twelve-song album features primarily glossy, smooth covers of various standards, ranging from the charming to the politely off-kilter. The album

starts with a decidedly haute-couture lounge version of Herbie Hancock's "Butterfly," ends with a sleepy and rhapsodic version of "Over the Rainbow," and along the way, things stay warm and uniform: there's a soft glow around Meccia's voice but a kind of Gaussian blur in tone vis-à-vis the ensemble. Meccia's vocal tone, translucently smoky and just a touch husky, is quite lovely, but the mix flattens it a little; she wants to sparkle but doesn't quite catch the light in the mix.

Meccia and Vega co-wrote "Inside Your Eyes," the title track, a Latin-inspired track with gentle syncopations, fresh harmonic progressions, and a solid rhythm section that's evocative of Bley/Swallow collaborations. Vega's solo is successful, if understated, and Czach's drumming captures glints and glimmers of bossa nova as the tune progresses. One of the more unlikely and yet winning covers is the amiable rendition of Jobim's "One-Note Samba," cleverly interpreted by Meccia and backed up by a tight groove. Meccia occasionally picks up the saxophone throughout the album, with quite a breathy tone, particularly at the beginning of "What the World Needs Now" (another contender for "shouldn't-work-but-does" cover of the year). Gone is the gentle waltzing lilt Dionne Warwick made famous

back in '67: instead, we have a more urban, sophisticated, R&B-inspired cover. Meccia's subdued voice and the smoothed-down feel of the production work to the benefit of this rendition, though there are some cracks here and there that let Meccia's voice shine through. The tune ends in a rather strange Latin-funk, which came out of nowhere, but is made to work well by Vega's comfortable, lighthearted playing. *-TD*



## AMERICAN GUN

### PROMISED YOUTH EP

As the delightfully tongue-in-cheek spoken word intro to their new EP drily declares, "American Gun is a rock and roll band."

The ensuing five songs leave no room to doubt this assertion. With new bassist Barry Corley in tow, the band eschews their alt-country past in favor of a leaner and meaner rock and roll sound. The opening track, "Rock and Roll Won" continues lead singer Todd Mathis' lyrical explorations of the nature of the music industry. Having flirted with major label success with ex-band Boxing Day (formerly Capital), the singer mines some fertile ground. He's older and perhaps a little more jaded, but it is still the music that inspires Mathis to keep playing. And with such a crack squad of players, how could he not? Guitarist Noel Rodgers, who remains one of the most underrated guitar players in town, the aforementioned Corley, and drummer Andrew Hoose deliver a tight groove that drives much of the material. Songs like "Believe" and "Another One" are enriched through subtly orchestrated string arrangements that are welcome additions to the American Gun universe. The centerpiece of the EP, "The Archivist," has a propulsive power that epitomizes good old-fashioned rock and roll, which is what Mathis and the boys have always done best. These are not the dirty and sometimes ragged songs from their live shows, but tight and concise material. Even in his best moments, there has always been an unfinished quality to Mathis' songs, which can feel more like sketches than finished products. This is not the case with *Promised Youth*. The EP format allows the band a freedom to accomplish their agenda quickly. With a rocker here and a smoldering ballad there, the EP is a fun-sized package of five solid and fleshed out tunes. With results this good, we can only hope American Gun keep them coming. —WOODY JONES



## MARTIN & THE POSITRONICS

### APHORIA

There's something comforting in the anti-folk which makes up the new Martin & the Positronics album. The EP is a short listen coming in at under 15 minutes, but you have to admire the fact that Thomas Ray and company do and say whatever they want in each song. In the opening track "The Obligatory Breakup Song" the band throws song structure out the window as the track eventually breaks down into a full voice growl and then into a vocal delivery that could best be described as if singer Thomas Ray was doing his worst impression of Stone Temple Pilot's singer Scott Weiland.

The second track on the album "Television" is the most put together song on the EP, and one that shows the most promise in the young band. The song is built around Ray's acoustic guitar and vocals, then layered with different instruments and effects from accordion to xylophone. Prior to this, EP front-man Thomas Ray might have been best known in the local music scene for his off the wall acoustic performances that often held nothing back as his shows were both aggressive and skittishly charming. This EP captures that nature of Ray's performance in the best ways.

Martin & the Positronics don't seem to have found their sound yet as this EP is an exploration into several different musical territories, but the band is self aware of their endeavors. The EP closes out especially strong with a horn arrangement on the title track, a song that winds up slowly as a variety of instruments fill in gradually and the mood of the track becomes more manic.

The band has to be commended for taking so many chances on *Aphoria*, a lot more than most local, and national bands for that matter, seem to be taking lately. Definitely a good taste for music lovers who want more out of a song than just a catchy chorus.

—DAVID STRINGER



## WE ROLL LIKE MADMEN

### HERMETIC VOL. 1

The electronic music duo of Jordan Young and Chris Tollack doesn't like to make things easy. Aside from the pleasant ambient prelude "The Rose," there's hardly a moment on their new EP *Hermetic Vol. 1* where they aren't constantly testing the listener, and themselves, as they push up against the constraints of making electronic dance music. While their last effort saw the group adding guest MCs in an effort to stretch into the rap game, *Hermetic* feels more insular, as if the two are re-examining the fundamental building blocks of their roving and glitch brandy of emotional synth-pop. Young's trademark vocal effects are on full display, with plenty of cadence shifts, filters, and distortions that tell their own story outside of the often minimal lyric content, and as beat and melody makers, both he and Tollack seem to have put a renewed emphasis on memorable riffs that anchor their skittering and restless arrangements, giving this new batch a more Daft Punk-style rock feel than ever before. Even though a dark and druggy vibe pervades much of this material, the snide kiss-off track "Brazen Tone" benefits from one of Young's cheekiest vocal performances to-date, while "You Thought You" and "The Relief" sees the group trying on trance-style

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[Not all submissions will be considered. Selection for review is determined by quality, space, and relation to the Columbia area.]

ballads with surprisingly aplomb and feel like they could fill the quieter moments of a stadium show.

While perhaps not quite as ambitious as their effort from earlier this year, *The Kids Must Die*, this new version of the Madmen feels more self-assured and confident than ever before. Kids, for all its energy, often felt like it was trying to balance dance floor accessibility with rogue experimentation. Here, there's a powerful sense that the band doesn't see the difference anymore. **-KP**



## ANALOG

### ARROW OF GOD

It's a problem with lots of prominent players in our city's arts scene—they do so much, we can often lose the sight of how good their art is. And while I doubt many would think of the emcee Preach Jacobs as anything other than a hip-hop artist first and foremost, there's no denying that he often gets more mentions for his tireless work in putting on the excellent Cola-Con each year or as a willing DJ at various parties and events.

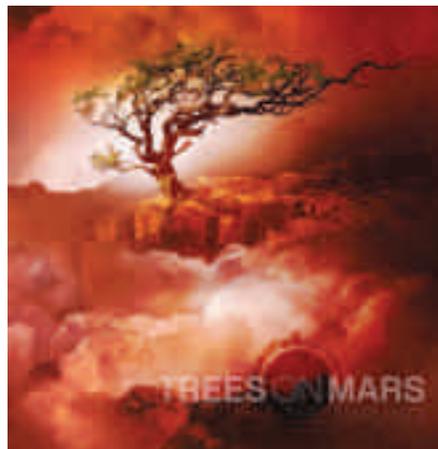
Tellingly, this year Cola-Con is on hold and Jacobs has a new album out, *Arrow of God*, his first since 2009's *Maple Street Sessions*. That's quite a gap, particularly in the fast-paced world of hip-hop where mixtape culture demands an increasingly prolific output. Jacobs gets a pass in part because he's a studied classicist, planting his themes and flow firmly in the early 90s golden era of rap when groups like A Tribe Called Quest

and De La Soul were doing groundbreaking work as they spit their astute black politics and sharp asides over jazz and soul samples with aplomb, creating a standard that, for the most part, much of contemporary hip-hop fails to live up to.

And while such a studied retro position can occasionally feel self-limiting, there's just too much to like on *Arrow of God* to dismiss it as a purely nostalgic exercise. For one thing, Jacobs' anger feels all-too-legitimate, particularly on tracks like "Bet You Didn't Know Enough" and "Black Radio," where on the latter he laments the catch-22 of being "too niggerish to be on white radio, ain't nigger enough for black radio" as he's "speaking in rap while y'all speaking in coon." Harsh words to be sure, but Jacobs wants hip-hop to show some intellectual reach, spicing his verses with references to Langston Hughes and James Baldwin and calling for a more female-friendly version of rap music via "She Knows the Words." Always an able tunesmith, Jacobs has never been ultra-flashy with his flow, but he's at his best here, deftly deploying his rhymes and shifting rhythms and meters with a long-view vision of the song rather than succumbing to cul-de-sac flashy pyrotechnics—at one point he refers to himself as a "cinematographer," and it's not far from the truth.

The production work by Dose stays true to the spirit of Jacobs' past recordings, replete with fuzzy static and old-school samples, although there are some modern touches that update the sound a bit without getting too abrasive. What he provides the rapper is consistency more than anything, giving some lesser tracks like the Kanye West-swiping "Stupid" and "Superstar" a power that might not have otherwise had. Jacobs is obviously aware of this, as he allows the title track to be a J Dilla-style instrumental that showcases the producer's talents.

And while we might not hear a Preach Jacobs rocking the airwaves anytime soon, *Arrow of God*, for all of its nostalgia and left-field subject matter, ultimately succeeds in re-establishing the rapper as one of the city's preeminent hip-hop artists after having been quiet (on record) for far too long. **-KP**



## TREES ON MARS

### SAPLING

Despite the band's name, Trees on Mars debut album *Sapling* ultimately comes across as anything but alien. The touchstones of this young proggy outfit are pretty clear, with some unlikely and occasional nods: hearing any small mix of Battles, Cinemecanica, Polvo, or *Lateralus*-era Tool should not be surprising as these elements seem to be part of the soil from which Trees on Mars grows. The clean, tailgating guitar riffs could probably easily belong to either Meshuggah or Bela Fleck. The punchy, forward mix underscores the continued tones of insistency and urgency throughout the album, though in the production gloss, I can't help but think a little edge gets pruned back.

The album is at its best when metrical play abounds and when Trees on Mars puts forth greater efforts to unwind and develop their riffs: the shifting time signatures, slips and skips in rhythms, and hints at polymeter are all, frankly, fun as hell to dig into. Counting out the meters, for an inveterate listener, is part and parcel of the experience, and the second cut, "Hey man that's not cool," offers up a proggy feast—playing with an added or removed eighth note, some additive processes in the melodic lines, and a compelling harmonic form make the tune undeniably fun listening. The piece "Birds and Squirrels" features a pretty blocky but thoughtful structure and lots of satisfying layering of rhythms and textures. Lovers of Bloc Party or Dismemberment Plan should greatly enjoy these largely short, candid, and brain-candy instrumentals.

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# Norman Rockwell

## *Behind the Camera*



*After the Prom, 1957 (Detail). Cover illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, May 25, 1957 ©1957:SEPS. Norman Rockwell Museum Collections*



*Reference photo for Norman Rockwell's 'After the Prom, 1957 (Detail). From the permanent collection of the Norman Rockwell Museum.*

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I did say largely short, though, something which is endemic to so many first offerings is untenable pacing. Whether it's a desire to remain compact, or an outgrowth of caffeination, *Trees on Mars* has a knack for the turbocharged tune. Aside from presenting material once and then moving on to the next tune (especially true of the too-short "Niacin") the album skews hegemonic until the sixth cut, "Blueberry Jam." Perhaps the slower or softer side of *Trees on Mars*, the tune begins in familiar *Explosions in the Sky* terrain, builds and swells, and recedes. Like many songs on the album, it seems truncated – like the song wants to explore a massive old-growth forest but is being forced to stay on one path. To a large extent, I get that. Typically, the biggest complaint from neophytes about progressive music is that it tends to be self-indulgent (again, familiar *Explosions in the Sky* territory of not knowing when the song is over). However, *Trees on Mars* could probably stand to be less bashful and allow their pieces – which are like seeds or sprouts now – to unfurl and create the complex canopies coded in the DNA of their music. **-TD**



## ET ANDERSON

ET TU, \_\_\_\_\_?

Almost as soon as ET Anderson announced their formation, their recording debut became one of the most anticipated local indie rock records of 2014. Frontman Tyler Morris did great work in the Pavement-esque *Calculator* prior to joining up with Raleigh's Octopus Jones, a band where his slashing guitar work and dry, terse songwriting did

wonders as a complement to the bandleader Danny Martin's funky, New Wave-inspired romps. When he split from that group and returned to Columbia earlier this year, he quickly assembled an extraordinarily talented group of players to back him for his new project, which made its first broad debut at this year's Jam Room Music Festival.

Whether this seven song recording lives up to the hype will largely depend on what you make of the band's approach, though, for *Et tu* is all about taking chances, letting instruments float at-times beautifully and at-times dissonantly in and out of the picture while testing the limits of the rhythmic pocket which most rock and roll depends on. The one-two opening punch of "It Don't Even" and "I Do Not Mind" see bassist John Fowler teasing a groove playfully rather than laying it down straight while Morris and fellow guitarist Alex McCollum alternate between twinkling guitar licks and Malkmus distortion. The only thing seemingly holding it together is drummer Michael Crawford, who throws lots of fills and stops into the mix, often providing momentum for songs that feel like they are near sinking under the weight of the rest of the band's playful experimentation.

Things only get slightly more standard from there, as Bobby Hatfield's keyboards often feel otherworldly at various points, but also provide a surprising organ-style body to many of the songs, particularly to great effect on "Acid Earlier / Love Thy Neighbor," the tune which comes closest to the charging spree of Octopus Jones.

It's the latter half of the EP that the band is at its most winsome, with ballads like "Things You'd Do," "Legs," and "It's Not the Same" capturing the warped beauty of peak-era Yo La Tengo. Like the sound pioneered by that seminal group, ET Anderson are attempting to combine noisy experimentation, pop sensibilities, and a sense of adventure in a way that defies predictable and, at times, ease of access. Also like that band, their ambition might involve a few missteps and dead-ends, but the very kinds of missteps and dead-ends which can be so fascinating and delightful precisely because the process itself is so revelatory. As much as this EP falls short in some ways, it also leaves you impatiently waiting to hear what's coming next. **-KP**



## MILTON HALL

COAT FROM JAPAN

The latest from psychedelic folk-rocker Milton Hall sheds a great deal of what might have been "folk" about his sound as the acerbic singer/songwriter brings in guitarist/multi-instrumentalist John Furr (Danielle Howle's chief collaborator in the *Tantrums*) and Stan Gardner on drums for a full-on rock and roll album. While the delightful quirk and Gordan Gano vocal style are left mostly intact, the addition of Gardner and Furr gives Hall a jolt of adrenaline and allows him to steer these songs to the kind of dizzying payoffs they had merely hinted at before. Songs like "Long Hangover" and "Perfume" feel like they were blown straight out of 80s college rock radio with their jangly power pop abandon, while the latter half of the album sees a bit more the singer/songwriter side come out of Hall, but replete with the kind of swirling range and dynamism Furr brought to the *Tantrums*. In many ways, Hall actually makes a better foil for Furr than Howle, given that his interest in melody and the gentle psychedelia of *Sparklehorse* and *Robyn Hitchcock* actually give him more to work with. Anyway, chalk this up as one of the year's best local releases from one of the scene's more underrated songwriters. **-KP**



DURLACH AND BREEDLOVE //

# PARTNERS

BY CINDI BOITER

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SHARPE

ical as their movements seem together, their meeting and the history of their relationship has a decidedly authentic quality.

Breedlove, who dropped Wanda and Gale, her first and middle names many years ago in favor of her unique and apropos surname, would never call herself romantic. Straightforward, independent, and unpretentious, yes, but there is nothing sappy in this woman's character. And while she may not be a professionally trained dancer, she is nothing if not a born entertainer. The extent of Breedlove's dance training starts with country western barn dances in dustbowl Porum, Oklahoma, population 300, (an authentic Okie from Muskogee, a la Merle Haggard), and ends with her family moving to Phoenix where the extrovert made a name for herself by becoming the unlikely winner of a dance competition in school. "I was the klutzy, slouchy kid who could hardly walk, much less dance," she recalls. "But from that time on I've loved performing."

A quick study, Breedlove finished college at 19 and promptly began teaching, self-identifying as an intellectual at a young age. A bored intellectual. Always with an eye toward adventure, she left her job teaching high school speech, drama, debate, and English to flee to Atlanta with the man who would eventually be her first husband. Two degrees later and now a reading specialist, she was recruited to South Carolina to direct a literacy program before eventually earning a Ph.D. in psychological services along with another short-lived marriage. "I wasn't really dancing during this time," Breedlove remembers, though she was an ardent traveler with always exciting trips—Myanmar, Brazil, South Korea, Guatemala, Japan—on the horizon.

It was just before one of those trips that Breedlove met the man she would dance with for the rest of her life.

The child of Yankee parents, Richard Durlach grew up in Columbia, often canoeing or sailing on the city's many lakes and

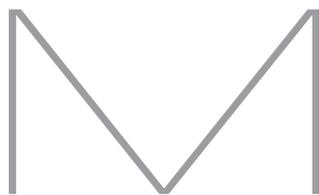
waterways. A young chemistry major who, for a time, owned a bike shop in Five Points before entering the armed forces and finally returning to USC for a degree in mechanical engineering, dance played little to no part in Durlach's early life either.

But women did.

"Like any typical young man," Durlach says, "I was always trying to figure out how to get close to women. As it happened, a fellow female employee invited me to be her partner in a shag class that she was taking, the 1980s having brought about something of a revival of the dance in the area." Durlach soon found that not only did he enjoy the proximity to the female form that dance and dance classes provided, but he also enjoyed the dance itself.

When his career took him to New York City in the late 1980s, the first place he checked out after settling in was the New York City Swing Dance Society which met on Sundays at the Cat Club. Durlach's demonstrated expertise with the Carolina Shag provided him an entrée to the group's more elite dancers and instructors and he soon found himself dancing with and learning from New York's swing dance greats, including several second generation Lindy Hop founders who had made dances like the Lindy Hop and Columbia's own Big Apple popular back in the day of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers and the Savoy Ballroom. "It was a great time to be in New York if you were interested in swing dancing," Durlach says. "Practically everyday after work we would go somewhere and dance—Café Society in midtown was one of my favorites. They let the Lindy Hoppers come in to dance and eat for free just to entertain their other customers." Durlach recalls the occasional Lindy Bob—a large Lindy Hop dance party—in Central Park, as well as being invited to Sandra Cameron's Dance Center where social dance prevailed over competitive dance styles.

In the end, Durlach's concentrated time in New York allowed him to develop



ore than being a story simply about dance or love, the story of Columbia's most well-known dance duo, Durlach and Breedlove, is a story about partnering—the often underappreciated, yet essential ingredient in making either endeavor, dance or love—successful.

Neither Durlach nor Breedlove ever planned to become the city's swing dance ambassadors—Durlach is university trained as a mechanical engineer and Breedlove was the voice of reading advocacy in the state for decades—but they wear the unofficial title well. Many has been the moonlit night when, like elves from the fog, the dapper Durlach appears, his hand extended confidently, reverently, beckoning Breedlove to follow him onto whatever impromptu dance floor he might capture and claim. From sandy sidewalks to grassy lawns, the partners move into the music as if they are orchestrated instruments themselves, cutting soft lines into space, swirling in rhythm and time. As mag-





I SEE DANCE  
AS AN ALMOST  
ZEN-LIKE  
EXPERIENCE

a proficiency in several swing dance styles, and he brought this adeptness back with him to the dance floors of Columbia when his father's cancer diagnosis required him to return home. But, like any good dancer, he continued to take class and learn from local experts like Carolina Shag instructor Wanda Holliday and Ballroom Dance teacher Peggy Morrow. And he practiced his art form by hitting the dance clubs almost every night.

It was at one of those dance clubs in 1992 that a lady in a red dress caught his eye.

The night had been packed with dances with a variety of partners, all eager to practice their steps and turns, and finally, Durlach found his way into the arms of Breedlove, the woman in red who had earlier attracted his attention. Breedlove remembers him as "very preppy and a good dancer, but I didn't expect anything to come of it."

"Because I often danced with younger women who were students of dance as well, I worked very hard to behave in a manner that would never give any appearance of being inappropriate," Durlach explains. The night had worn down and as each young woman left the venue he escorted her to her car "like a gentleman." While Durlach saw his behavior as being polite and above reproach, Breedlove observed what she suspected was an older man hitting on one young woman after another until only she and he were left in the ballroom. "I had to catch a plane the next morning for Korea, my bag was packed, and I wanted to get on that plane exhausted." So when the club closed down at 11 pm and Durlach suggested the two take their leave and find another place to dance, she happily agreed.

To say they danced the night away is in no way hyperbolic.

"Breedlove was a good dancer even back then, but what I noticed most was that she was a good follower," Durlach says. Breedlove agrees. "I learned early on that my gift as a dancer lies more in my ability to almost sense what my partner will do next. Where

that Richard is structured and analytical in his dance, I am more intuitive. I see dance as an almost Zen-like experience."

Friendship and affection grew from their first meeting and eventually the dance partners found themselves to be a couple both on the dance floor and off. "Richard is a very fascinating guy and he has a lot of interests. He has always known many musicians and wherever there is music, there is dancing," Breedlove says, recalling innumerable nights of dancing to the music of esteemed friends Dick Goodwin, and Doug and Bunny Williams, among others.

"My goal," says Durlach, "is to get people to start dancing and then to move to the side. It's instilling an ability to dance and the love of dance that matters to me, I don't care if anyone is looking at me or not. I just want them to dance."

Breedlove agrees that "Richard has a gift and love for teaching others and he promotes it as the life changing event it usually is." Durlach adds that Breedlove's "following skills are incredible."

Over time the partners grew a particular respect for the history of dance. While Breedlove, who is 67, enjoys researching vintage clothing styles to match the time periods of their various dance styles, Durlach, 67, has become an astute historian of dance, specializing in South Carolina's four claims to dance fame: the Charleston, the Big Apple, the Carolina Shag, and the Twist. Durlach often travels to demonstrate and lecture on the Big Apple dance style which originated in 1937 at the Big Apple Dance Hall on Park Street and grew to be the biggest dance craze of the era.

"Columbia is gaining a reputation as being the locus of swing dance activity once again," Durlach says, referencing the growth of the Palmetto Swing Dance Association under the leadership of Nathan Clinebelle. "They've raised the bar for dance in Columbia—they're the ones I'm trying to keep up with now!"

Both Durlach and Breedlove turn sentimental when they reflect on their last two-plus decades of dancing together. Some of Richard's favorite memories include dancing for the various milestone birthday parties for Frankie Manning, the unofficial choreographer for Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, back in the day, who was brought back into the spotlight in the 1980s as an instructor and inspiration for a new generation of swing dancers. Other highlights for both partners include receiving the President's Award from Historic Columbia in 2004 for their work at the Big Apple, a relationship that continues with a four dance per year series at the historic venue. They take turns rattling off fond memories of specific nights, dear friends, and special occasions. Their fondest memory, they both agree, was the first night they danced, preppy Richard and sexy Breedlove in that beautiful red dress.

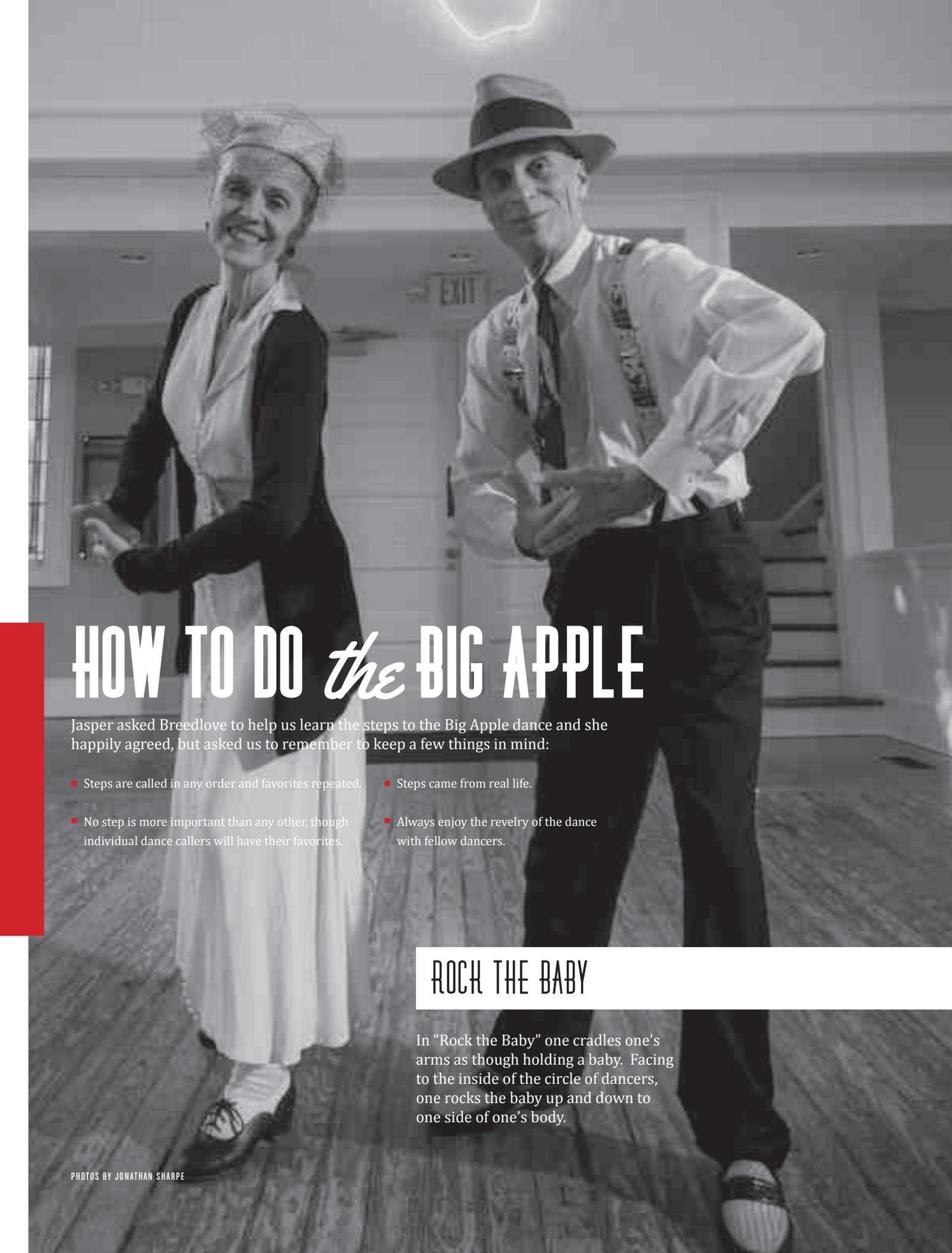
"We are no longer the best swing dancers in town," Durlach looks at Breedlove and nods, "But we love it just as much as ever."

And there's no doubt that they love each other just as much, as well, though they never made the leap to marriage. "We started out dating and then were more intimate for a while and we even did marriage counseling to see if we could get married ... to see if I could get married again," Breedlove says. But they didn't. "We have an open relationship," she says with a demure smile. "Which means I can do what I want."

Durlach laughs and joins in. "It's open for me, too, but I choose not to pay the consequences!" Breedlove laughs and hushes him good naturedly. He smiles in return and their eyes lock and hold.

Breedlove blinks and continues. "We are joined at the hip. We take care of each other and we expect it to be that way for life. We expect to die in each other's company."

Dancing with others is easy, both Durlach and Breedlove agree. But finding a partner? That's something in which you invest your life.



# HOW TO DO *the* BIG APPLE

Jasper asked Breedlove to help us learn the steps to the Big Apple dance and she happily agreed, but asked us to remember to keep a few things in mind:

- Steps are called in any order and favorites repeated.
- No step is more important than any other, though individual dance callers will have their favorites.
- Steps came from real life.
- Always enjoy the revelry of the dance with fellow dancers.

## ROCK THE BABY

In “Rock the Baby” one cradles one’s arms as though holding a baby. Facing to the inside of the circle of dancers, one rocks the baby up and down to one side of one’s body.



## PICK THE CHERRIES

“Pick the Cherries” asks the dancers to pretend they are in an orchard facing a tree of cherries, picking the cherries, and putting them in a basket. To “Pick the Cherries” the dancer pretends to face a tree of cherries and to reach up at different heights to pick them. The best part comes from collecting them in a basket or choosing to eat some with gusto.



## SPANK THE BABY

Another popular step “Spank the Baby” has more than one name. As the circle moves in a clockwise or counter clockwise direction, one pats one’s own behind. One moves forward on the forward foot in time to the music and brings the back foot forward delivering a pat to the posterior.



## SCRATCH THE FLEAS

Steps were frivolous and for fun as the names suggest. To scratch fleas, one assumes different unusual postures and proceeds to scratch in various and sundry locations. It is also permissible to scratch fleas discretely on one’s partner.



## SHINE THE APPLE

The distinctive step “Shine the Apple”, also goes by the names “Polish the Apple” and “Organ Grinder”. Moving to the music one’s partner kneels on one knee on the floor extending his hat in hand, if he happens to be wearing one. The other partner places an index finger in the center of the bare head of the kneeling partner and circles one way, and then the other when the step and reverse are called.



## SHAKE THE DUSTER

The “Shake the Duster” step originates from using aprons rather widely in an earlier era. Aprons served to hold garden produce. After shelling peas or beans the remaining hulls could be emptied but a little bit of debris clung to the apron that required shaking out more vigorously. Slightly lift up one’s skirt or slacks about mid-thigh by using one’s thumb and index finger. Move the fabric up and down between your thumbs and index fingers coordinating to the time of the music.



## FRANKENSTEIN

*Frankenstein* the movie release coincided with the Big Apple dance craze. To emulate the Frankenstein monster raise the arms in front horizontal to the floor and walk with straight legs into the center of the circle, raising and lowering the hands alternately.

*the*  
**BIG  
APPLE**

A P L A C E I N T I M E

B Y E L I Z A B E T H B R E E N





Polish immigrants who built it. The domed ceiling was crowned with a Star of David, and large, two-story windows let the waning sunlight in during evening services. An upstairs balcony was reserved as a space for women to worship separately from the men downstairs.

By 1934, the congregation had outgrown the building and sold it, moving across town to a new synagogue. In 1936, the building's new managers, Fat Sam and Elliot Wright, cleared out the pews and hung neon moons and shooting stars next to the Star of David: the Big Apple Nightclub was born.

Located in the heart of segregated Columbia's black business district, the Big Apple became *the* dance club. Reggie Scott, a 1947 graduate of Booker T. Washington High School, remembers pressing his nose to the windows of the Big Apple as a child, watching the packed room dance and sway with the music. "There was so much joyous noise. Everyone came to see other people—to see the latest clothes and the girls. Mostly they wanted to see the girls," Scott says.

The balcony that had separated women from men during the building's time as a synagogue now separated white onlookers, mostly students from the University of South Carolina, from the black bands and dancers. Integrated dancing was illegal, but whites could stand in the balcony and watch, hoping to catch a glimpse of the best dancers in town. In fact, they were encouraged to do so: the dancers loved an audience. "The bands played to the dancers and the dancers encouraged the bands to play louder," Scott explains.

The Big Apple dance became an in-house staple that year. It was a combination of moves borrowed from other dances like the Lindy Hop and the Charleston. *The New York Times* called it "series of fancy wiggles and rhythm steps." Mostly, it was a rush just to watch. For black Columbians in the time of the Great Depression and Jim Crow, a night at the club was transporting. "Dance was an escape. People came to the Big Apple and they could dance and be someone else," Scott says.

And while the dancers of the Big Apple were traveling across the country teaching

others to dance the steps they had invented, the students and onlookers in the balcony were teaching *their* friends. "Dance is trans- portable," Historic Columbia's John Sherrer points out. A popular dance like the Big Apple wasn't going to stay a secret.

Within a year, the Big Apple dance went global. Franklin Roosevelt's son danced it at his engagement party in the White House. Winston Churchill learned it. Yugoslavia outlawed it. *Life* magazine declared 1937 to be "the year of the Big Apple."

But like all waves, the Big Apple dance craze subsided. By 1938 the Big Apple's audiences were dwindling, in part due to a new club that had opened called The Township Auditorium.

Scott, who has lived in Columbia his whole life, remembers that even as a child he knew that the dance's popularity wouldn't last much longer than a year or two. "By the time the Big Apple dance made it big, we were already doing something else."

After the Big Apple Nightclub turned off its lights, the building was, among other things, a warehouse and then a heating and cooling business. It was moved to its current location, on the corner of Hampton and Park (behind the Richland Library), in the early 1980s. The Big Apple literally and figuratively faced a new direction. In 1993, it was purchased by the Historic Columbia Foundation. In its current iteration, the Big Apple hosts wedding receptions, luncheons, and parties

Some of the original stained glass—including the Star of David—remains and the balcony where onlookers tossed coins to the dancers is still there. It's now air-conditioned: the sweltering heat that fogged the windows in the 1930s is a distant memory. The maximum capacity is clearly displayed; no pressing against the walls to let more people in these days.

In many ways, the Big Apple's transitions mirror Columbia's transformation: its changing population, the end of legal segregation and, in recent years, the emphasis on historic preservation. In the evolution of downtown Columbia, USC History Professor Bobby Donaldson explains that the persistence of the Big Apple building "is one of the only constants."

**THE FLOOR OF THE BIG APPLE** is scored with the tracks of its ninety-nine year history. The glossed wood shines from careful recent restoration, but underneath are scuff marks left by the spiritual and spirited: worshippers, singers, celebrators, and, most of all, the dancers that have leapt and spun across its surface.

Completed in 1915 as the House of Peace Jewish synagogue for the Beth Shalom congregation, the structure was originally located on the corner of Park and Lady Street. It is an example of Eastern European Jewish architecture, reflecting the Russian and

# REVEREND MICKENS SHOUTS AT THE DEVIL

## THE NEW HIGHWAY TRAVELERS AND THE STATE OF GOSPEL

BY MICHAEL SPAWN

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*"Man cannot judge it. For art sings of God, and ultimately belongs to him." - Patti Smith*

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**IT'S HIGH NOON** in Columbia. Despite the terse breeze rippling across Main Street, the weather is uncharacteristically mild for an October afternoon, even in a city that wears its continued existence in the face of sadistic humidity as a perverse badge of honor.

Reverend Matthew Mickens and the New Highway Travelers take the stage right on time, resplendent in matching suits of the deepest and darkest blue. The Travelers - Mickens' sons Justin, Colton, and Todd (electric guitar, bass guitar, and drums, respectively), and nephew Jamie (keys) - launch into the opening number. It's a high-energy appeal to heaven, and their musical chops are teeth-clenchingly tight. You can feel Todd's bass drum in your footwear and Justin's high notes mingle easily with the indecisive wind. The 2014 Jam Room Music Festival has officially begun.

The early crowd, though attentive, is relatively sparse. Lunchtime malaise be damned, Reverend Mickens and his progeny command their audience with the same enthusiasm and authority one imagines they would playing for a Sunday morning congregation packed to the scaffolding. The audience grows slowly but steadily as the set carries on, and by the last song - a smoldering cover of Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come" - a now-crowded Main Street has the palpable, electric aura of mass conversion - if not necessarily to the overt message of faith and spirituality, then at least to the Travelers themselves. It's unclear whether any souls were saved during their 50-minute set, but Reverend Mickens and the New Highway Travelers certainly earned themselves a streetload of new fans.

But they're the *New Highway Travelers* for a reason. The band's precursor, simply called the Highway Travelers, formed in 1965 in Hopkins, South Carolina and consisted of

a much younger Matthew Mickens and his twelve siblings. "It was a family group with me and my sisters and brothers," remembers Mickens. "It was actually our mama that named us the Highway Travelers. And after a few years of singing and performing, we all got a little bit older and went our separate ways." But it was in 1999 that Mickens got the bug again and set about getting the band back together. "I was singing in church as part of the choir but that wasn't letting me stretch out musically like I wanted to. What I really wanted was to get back to leading a gospel band," he says.

“  
I'M IN THE  
GOD BUSINESS  
”

So, along with one of his brothers, they started the New Highway Travelers, and after a revolving door of family members joining and leaving the group, Reverend Mickens finally found himself a solid backing band in his sons and nephew, the line-up that remains today. Together, they've released five full-length albums, including the most recent, 2012's *He Paid the Cost*, with plans for a follow-up underway.

The Reverend, 62, has a deep and soulful mint-condition singing voice, along with all of the weary charisma you'd expect from a man who draws his water turning up the temperature of crowded rooms. He's been preaching professionally since he was ordained in 1989 and couldn't fake stage fright

if you paid him—not that it matters. He mostly just concerns himself with an audience of one.

"People have different ears for different things, but what we try to do - I just want the people to know that there's another way," he says. "But God is the one. We sing and dance and have a good time, and we want other people to have a good time too, but the most important thing is getting people away from a lifestyle that might not be so good for them. The world does its thing and we do ours. I just happen to think our thing is better. I work for the Lord before anyone else."

Even for an audience that may not be religiously inclined, the Travelers have a lot to offer. They're not only proficient musicians and singers (four-part harmony is executed with harsh precision), but also highly skilled showmen. Justin and Colton are prone to breaking out a little tandem softshoe, staying in perfect step with each other while never missing a note.

Good music is good music and a great show is still just that. But while plenty of Christian artists have dined out on a record-buyer's possible ambivalence toward a higher message by downplaying the Book and pumping up the hook, gospel has no such luxury. There really is no such thing as secular gospel. Hope and peace are wrapped up in its DNA. A vision of God is burned into the genre's very marrow. But that isn't to say that gospel is some subterranean spiritual exercise only appreciated by a religious few. Aretha Franklin is recognized as one of the greatest singers of all time, and choirmaster general Kirk Franklin (no relation) is sitting on seven Grammys, so it's not exactly an island of misfit toys. Even Elton John hired a choir and scored a minor hit in 1970 with the gospel-infused "Border Song," a hymnal plea for racial equality. And gospel choirs have

popped up in background on a host of pop songs over the years, most recently on Sam Smith's smash soul ballad "Stay With Me."

But these exceptions only illuminate the larger rule. By and large, gospel just doesn't have the crossover appeal necessary to be a commercially competitive genre in an increasingly secular world. But that might be beside the point.

"It's not really about winning awards or getting into the top 40," says Colton Mickens. "It's about reaching someone, or helping someone get closer to God. I mean, you can reach a lot of people when you're sitting in the top 40, but it's not like everybody has that chance." He doesn't say this with contempt or bitterness—it's simply a statement of fact.

What's so unique and fascinating about gospel is that it's completely immune to the too-often cynical dissection that accompanies most popular music forms. The notion that the fly is doing the wall a favor doesn't matter when God is part of the conversation. The petty nuances that typically make a song, album, or performance good or bad, as anyone with at least one good ear and a stereo might understand it, are singularly un-useful when it comes to gospel. This is a wholly American genre born out of not only the sincerest joy, but also the most deeply embedded pain, and the people for whom it exists, the ones that not only like it, but love it and rely on it, aren't just collecting sweat to prove that it's hot. They consume it un-self-consciously and without judgment. A success in gospel music doesn't mean a song is 'well written' or 'catchy' or 'in need of more treble'.

Its purpose is higher.

"I'm in the God business," says Reverend Mickens. "The music business will take care of itself, but God—that's forever."



# ANDREW PASTIDES ON ACTING, HUMAN FLAWS, & THE FACT THAT THE WORLD IS A LOT BIGGER THAN HIMSELF

BY KIRBY KNOWLTON



**RAISED IN AMHERST**, educated in the Carolinas, and now working in Brooklyn, Andrew Pastides is an actor. From feature films to stage to short films full of puns and whimsy, he's done it all. His theatre credits include *Goldfish* (Magic Theatre), *The Glass Menagerie* (Two River Theatre), and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (Theatre Alliance). He appeared on the television shows *Suits* and *Law & Order*. The Napa Valley film festival named him Best Actor for his film *Hank and Asha*.

But enough italics. For Pastides, acting is more than titles to add to a résumé. Despite his exemplary training and many achievements, he is rooted and humbled in his observation of the world, and it shows in his performances. His father, Dr. Harris Pastides, president of USC, says, "he's finding his way, and he's finding joy."

**Q:** Where did you grow up and where are you settled now — do you think of Columbia or somewhere else as home?

**A:** I grew up in Western Massachusetts, in Amherst, until I was fifteen before I moved to Columbia. I only lived in Columbia for two years before I moved to Greenville for three years. I guess I consider myself a northeastern kid, but we also as a family moved around in Greece when I was young. We spent a year in Geneva, Switzerland when I was in sixth grade. It allowed me to be flexible with where my identity was and it also had something to do with me becoming an actor, sort of wanting to experience different places and different people. I live in Brooklyn now. I've been in New York City for almost ten years. I think New York is my home—I like to think of it that way, that wherever I'm living is my home. I did a lot of regional theatre right out of school. I moved around a lot for those shows. They were somewhere around two and four months each. I felt like I learned those cities too, Cleveland and Phoenix and a number of other places. I like to unpack my suitcase and think "This is my home for the next four months." I sort of feel like a wanderer in that sense.

**Q:** As a graduate of both the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities and University of North Carolina School of the Arts, what are your thoughts about arts education? Do you think you would be the same actor today if you hadn't had this training?

**A:** I certainly think that arts education especially in that age range where you're starting to take responsibility and know what you want is really good for a lot of people. There's probably a misconception that an arts program is some hippy-dippy, flowery, easy education compared to a military academy or a math and science school, but it's not. You're held to a high standard. I knew that I wanted to be an actor, but I didn't

know how to go about it. I had some amazing teachers who instilled in me the idea of taking responsibility and having something to say. I don't know who I would be if I hadn't had that training. The Governor's School is something really different. That sort of universal education in the arts is good for almost everyone at that age.

**Q:** Of stage, short films, and feature films, which medium do you have the most fun with? What medium do you see a future in?

**A:** The short film medium is interesting because you can do more. You can write and direct and collaborate on a bunch of short films every year. There's such a place now for short films in all the hundreds of different festivals around the country, so you can get your stuff seen more easily than trying to write and put on a play. Feature films are a lot more involved. You need a whole crew for the sets and makeup. There's a whole circus in the background of getting a feature film done. If I'm just cast as an actor in something, I can jump in and shoot for ten days and be in a feature film without lifting a finger in any other respect. I recently did a film [*MA*] with my wife [Celia Rowleson-Hall] who wrote and directed it. We did everything ourselves. It took a ton of energy and time and heart. I see a future in both [short and feature films]. There's certainly a huge demand for short films, a lot of comedic stuff online. Then there's the festivals where you can get into weirder, more experimental stuff. I love both and hope to do more of both.

**Q:** Which project was the hardest? Of the roles you've played, which has been your favorite?

**A:** I think the best things that I've done have

been the biggest struggles. For instance, doing *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. It's such a full, exciting, beautiful script and you struggle through the process to try to make it the best it can possibly be, to be the most alive and simple and truthful of an actor you can be. The whole time you're struggling. It never feels easy, and even before you go on every night, you feel like "I don't know if I can do this again. It's too hard to get up there and do this every night." But then you get done with it and realize it's the best thing you've ever done. On the flip side of that, the hardest projects are the ones you heart isn't in, the more commercial projects. The projects where you're doing it for the money, and not for the art of it. Those are the hard ones because you're still working a ten to twelve hour day, but you're not having fun, and you don't believe in it. And there can also be environments where the people have poisonous attitudes, where not everyone is in it with their whole heart or in a generous way. Those are the projects that are really the hard ones.

**Q:** Who are some artists that have influenced you?

**A:** In a broader sense, there's a guy named Mark Rylance who is an actor and director who I think is what I aspire to be like, or anything close to. I think he brings a sense of generosity and hope and truth to his craft, which is really exciting and inspiring. But then I also love and have worked with a lot of working-class actors in theatre who don't do it for the money. And they don't do it for the fame. They're way past their prime years. They do it because they can't imagine doing anything else. Those are the people who really inspire me to keep on going.

**Q:** What role are you dying to play?

**A:** It's always changing. I could say someone in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. I guess what I really think about is playing a character that

speaks to me, someone who uses the qualities that I have as an actor, someone with a lot of sensitivity for other people. Someone who is flawed and hypocritical as a person, so maybe someone who is ultimately caring, but has some real human flaws. I think that would be a really exciting character to play because I feel like that's who we all are. Someone who is trying to do good, but is blinded by some hardship, whether that be their history, something psychological or an addiction, or an illness. I like that dichotomy, someone who is trying to do good, but is held back.

**Q:** Favorite director?

**A:** I grew up watching Elia Kazan, the way he revolutionized theatre and film. So I'd say him in a classic way. I really love the movies that Paul Thomas Anderson makes. I don't know that there's much better than him in terms of movies.

**Q:** Favorite playwright?

Arthur Miller is, in a broad way, my favorite playwright ever. But then you can't help but mention [Eugene] O'Neill and Tennessee Williams. Maybe in a modern way, there's a guy named John Kolvenbach who I've collaborated on with a number of plays and short films now. I understand his language and the musicality of his text.

**Q:** In your film *Hank and Asha*, the two main characters communicate with each other from New York to Prague via video message. If you were to film a video Hank-and-Asha-style of Columbia or Greenville, what places would you visit and what would you say about them?

**A:** Well, Hank is trying to impress Asha, to get her to fall in love with him. So I'd take her anywhere I thought was impressive. In Columbia, I'd probably take my camera through the Saint Patrick's Day festival in Five Points and show her a green beer. I'd show her the Nickelodeon. In Greenville, I'd show her the Reedy River waterfall.

## USC PRESIDENT HARRIS PASTIDES IN DAD MODE

**Q:** Both you and your wife have degrees in public health. Were you surprised when Andrew showed an interest in theatre?

**A:** Had we not been so career-focused, Patricia and I might have chosen the arts. I have always enjoyed writing and Patricia is a talented fiction writer. When we arrived at successful careers, we encouraged our children to pursue what they were passionate about. Andrew not only showed interest in theatre, but also talent.

**Q:** Once a professor and now the president of the University of South Carolina, it's safe to say you are an academic. How did you feel about Andrew choosing to attend a conservatory college instead of a traditional college?

**A:** I was totally supportive of him choosing to follow his passion. I'd wanted him to get a BA instead of a BFA, but Andrew had very good mentors and had thought things out. He was never fifty-fifty on the decision. He said, "Dad, I know what I want to do."

**Q:** What is a Sunday night dinner like in the Pastides home, when everyone is all together, that is.

**A:** A Mediterranean meal with good table wine. All the food goes on the table at the same time. Boisterous conversation. Some people might mistake the volume for arguing but it's not. We linger at the table for a long time.

**Q:** Is there anything else you'd like to add about your son?

**A:** Sometimes people feel like those who pursue the arts have only that dimension. But growing up, Andrew was always very good at sports. I coached him. He's always been very into music, listening to it, that is. We still go to concerts together. He's very connected to the world. He perseveres in his successes and near-successes. He's 30 now. A lesser person might have left the path by now, started their 'back up plan,' but he's finding his way and finding joy. - **KK**

# Crafting **the** Festival

Exploring Debi Schadel's Crafty Feast

BY HALEY SPRANKLE





PHOTO BY FORREST CLONTS

**FLOATING ALONG** in the great sea of creativity, off the shores of simple crafting and not so far from the world of fine art, dwells an island of artisanal crafting where everything is designed with an eye toward individuality, lovingly constructed with a gentle and often whimsical hand, and finished with a unique kind of quality that sets the product apart from its mass-produced neighbors. Columbia businesswoman Debi Schadel found that island and made it her home. Now she invites everyone to visit her there when she stages the Crafty Feast indie artisan festival, coming up once again this holiday season.

The first Crafty Feast fair was held on May 30, 2009 in conjunction with the Eau Claire Ribs and Renaissance festival. "At the time, Etsy was brand new, and the thought of young people crafting again was just coming to Columbia. I had recently been to Chicago and had seen their Renegade Craft Fair and I was like, 'Why not here?'" Schadel says. "The first one was super successful and demanded that we keep doing it annually. We did it twice a year for a couple of years and then shifted to December only in 2013, to help build anticipation among the public for our vendors."

Five years after its inception, Crafty Feast became the largest juried, independent craft fair in the midlands. This one-day festival features 100% handmade crafts and gifts made by the top 120 crafters in the Southeast chosen by a jury of people working within the indie craft movement.

"We usually get about 300 applications before our closing date at the end of August, partly because it's free to apply. We wanted to take the financial barrier out of our application process so that everyday crafters could apply as well as the more established vendors," Schadel says. "For judging, the jury meets for a full 5 hours to review each vendor submission and rate them on a scale

of 1 – 10 for originality, craftsmanship, and variety. We then take the top 120 and go from there."

One of this year's chosen vendors is Audrey Laine, an artisan based out of Asheville, North Carolina, who is returning after participating in the festival back in 2011. "I am primarily a metalsmith, working with sterling silver, copper, and brass and playing with combinations of metal and wood, embroidery thread, fabric, leather, and found objects," Laine says. "I hand construct shadowboxes, and on the front I hand cut a delicate silhouette of some creature. I also cast wax carvings and found objects such as bugs and bird bones that I incorporate in my designs ... In my mind the word Collection encompasses this concept of capturing something natural for the purpose of observing it. Of course, as a jewelry artist, I also hope my patrons will curate their own collections of my work."

Diversity in product is the key to Crafty Feast. "What we like are uncommon things," Schadel says, still noting that "there are some common categories though. Jewelry is a big one. We strive to find jewelers who make a lot of their products on their own. Blowing their own beads, hammering their own metals, creating their own molds. The more unique, the better. We also get a lot of giftware being close to Christmas: kitchen towels, etched glassware, magnets, wall art, baby gifts, quirky plush dolls, and ceramics are all hits."

Preparing for such an eclectic festival is no easy feat. With over one hundred different artisans featured in the fair, Schadel not only has to find a venue large enough to house them, but large enough to accommodate the customers, as well. "We love working with the Convention Center, but right now they are one of only two spaces that can handle one hundred - plus vendors. We do try to 'indie' up the space by having DJ Scott Padgett

spin alt culture tunes from across the decades, by decorating the hang-out area with thrift store treasures, and by serving craft beers," Schadel says.

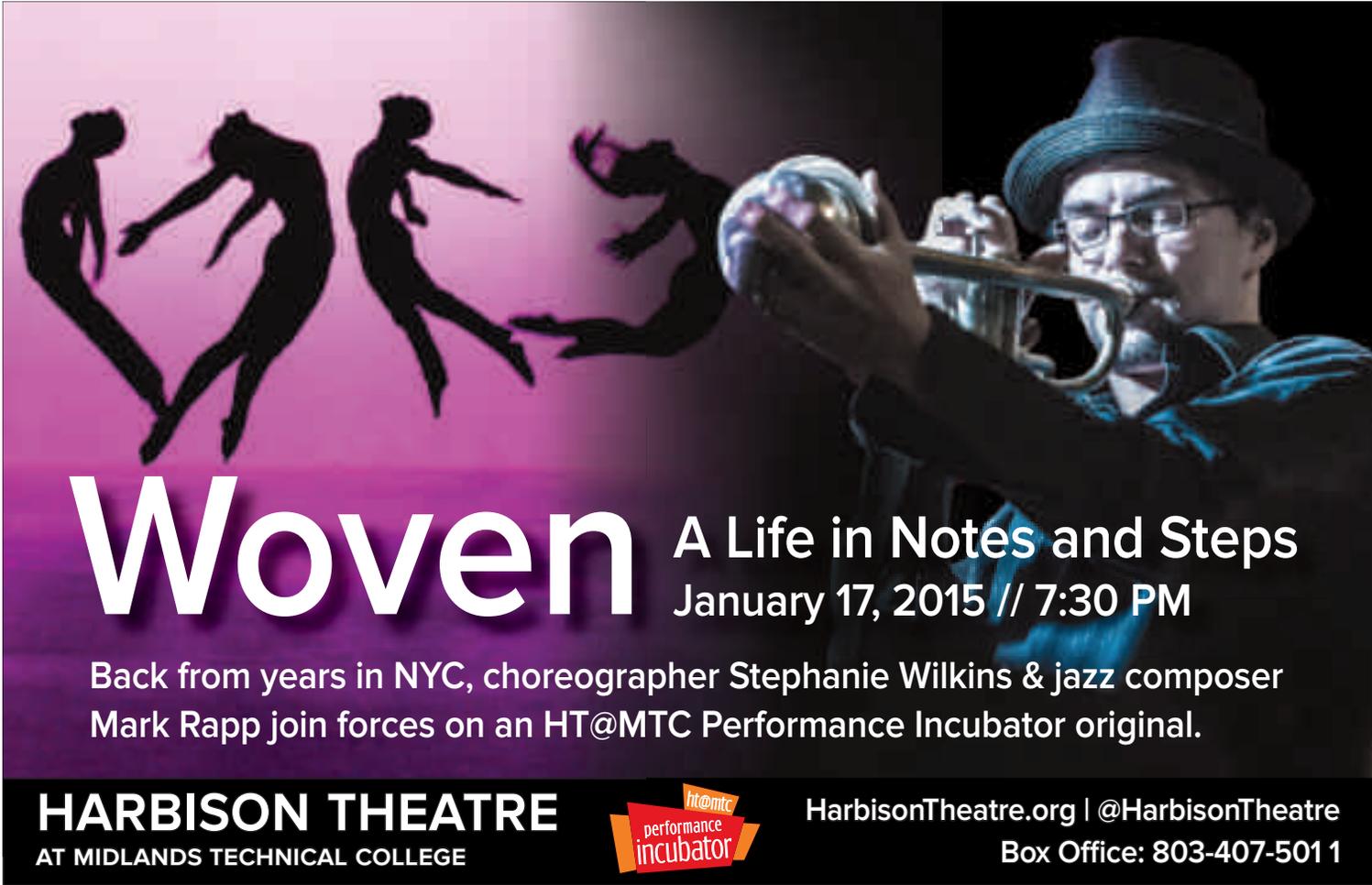
Artisans themselves also have to prepare for such a large festival. With only a \$75 fee for their 10x10 vendor space, the artisans have more time to focus on preparing their products. "Crafty Feast has a really affordable booth fee, which is great for out of town artists like me who also have travel and hotel expenses," Laine says. "For any show, my preparations are generally to produce as much product as possible in a range of price points and styles, as well as tailor my booth setup to the event space—this show gives each artist a large space to work with."

Once the vendors are set up, the festival is ready for customers to seek out their favorite gift or handmade treasure. "Seeing a shopper united with a beloved new handmade prod-

uct makes us pretty happy. Hearing from the vendors that they love this show, and therefore love Columbia, is also important to us. It helps put our city on the map as a great place to hang out. Vendors come from all over the U.S., so it's great that we can give them an opportunity to see how awesome Columbia is," Schadel says.

Crafty Feast is one day only, December 14, at the Columbia Convention Center from 12 to 6 p.m. Don't miss an opportunity to support regional artisans and find a unique gift for yourself or others this holiday season. "Crafty Feast offers a unique event for the general public to come see what crafters and artists are doing around the region," Schadel says. "It shows people that good art is hard to do, and that it is worth paying for. It shows that when you're shopping for a Christmas gift, it doesn't have to come from a department store, but can have a story behind it."

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# PUBLIC ART TAKES CENTER STAGE IN SODA CITY

BY SUSAN LEVI WALLACH

Some people see a sidewalk and see, well, a sidewalk. For others, a sidewalk—or a wall or vacant lot—is a platform for a piece of sculpture or a mural or interactive art. Columbia has long had art on display in a variety of venues: the public art directory on the One Columbia website lists more than 170 pieces. The current public art initiative aims to add a framework for the vetting of artists, commission of work for a permanent municipal collection on public property. In the coming years, the city's empty, and not-so-empty, spaces are going to get a lot more interesting.

According to artist and Public Art administrator Mary Bentz Gilkerson, it was One Columbia that developed the idea for the formal initiative, with individual pieces sponsored by private and corporate donors. "Back in 2006, I worked with Robin Waites at Historic Columbia and a group of other people about temporary public art on Main Street. It was called Accessibility Columbia, modeled on what was being done in Sumter, where there was a history of doing public art projects. Several years later, City Center Partnership did a survey of Main Street, identified spaces that were appropriate for public art, and developed the skeleton of a process. One Columbia brought that back up as a way to look at visual arts." Thus far, the project extends from the 1200 block of Main Street through the 1700 block and includes 19 sites.

The first installation, titled "Hanging," consists of five metal hand drums with attached seats. Put on display in mid-September 2014, it was commissioned by Sean McCrossin and installed in front of his coffee shop, Drip, at 1441 Main Street. The artists are Eileen Blyth and Mark Finley.

"Drip is a big meeting place and Lee [Snelgrove, director of One Columbia for Arts and History] is there a lot," Gilkerson explained. "We both are. We've gotten to know the



owner. Lee talked to him about the project. He jumped on it. He donated the money and gave general guidelines and approved the design quickly. He was intrigued by the solution."

Once funding for the piece was in place, along with the donor's guidelines, a request for proposal went out to three of the artists already accepted for the initiative's database. "They came back with their proposals," Gilkerson said. "The committee met and reviewed those proposals and selected this one. Sean approved it and we went into production in June."

The second, a 14-foot-tall sculpture by Tom Stanley and Shaun Cassidy, will go in front of Agape, at 1614 Main. Snelgrove was hoping to have that piece installed by the end of October. That didn't happen, due, he said, to "some unexpected issues with the installation details. It won't create major delays, but we haven't been able to set a date for unveiling just yet."

Another piece on the One Columbia schedule is a gong to honor long-time arts advocate and city booster Marvin Chernoff.

"We're planning to install it on the corner of Lincoln and Senate," Snelgrove said. "That piece will have a large group of donors."

Which, said Gilkerson, makes it unusual. "Usually the funding comes from the business that is adjacent to the public space. Marvin's piece is different in that we're accepting donations from anyone who wants to recognize Marvin's contributions to the city. It's on fast track. We just looked at the plans and those have approved and are going forward. Our deadline is as fast as the two artists"—Clark Ellefson and Matt Kramer—"can complete." Lee Ann Kornegay is coordinating donations. (Ellefson also is designing the lighting for Marv's: The Cabaret at Trustus, scheduled to open at the theatre in January.)

Also past the request-for-proposal stage is a mural for one of the city's parking garages.

Of the more than 100 artists in the One Columbia database, said Gilkerson, about 25 have been approved for the public art initiative. All are visual artists.

Artists who are not considered eligible for permanent public art projects are eligible for temporary public art projects. "You can be



PHOTO BY THOMAS HAMMOND

a fabulous artist but not yet have the skills to pull off installation of a three-ton hunk of steel on a city sidewalk,” said Gilkerson. “It’s more than design skills. It’s having the functional skills as well and the budgeting skills. You have to know how much it’s going to cost to do something and work within a budget and work collaboratively with groups of people. You don’t have one client—you have 35 or 40, including the selection committee, Lee, me, the donor, and city engineers who have to make sure it is stable and won’t fall and kill someone.” The new temporary mural at the corner of Main and Taylor streets falls into neither category: it is a separate and ongoing effort sponsored by One Columbia along with the Indie Grits Festival and Tapp’s Arts Center; artist Seth Gadsden, however, is in the city’s public art database.

Though both Gilkerson and Snelgrove would like to see the initiative gain ground in the coming year, any additional installations will depend on “who we can get to donate funds and what locations make sense,” said Snelgrove. Added Gilkerson, “We’re working on moving into Five Points and Eau Claire. With the gong piece we’ll be in the Vista. We’d like to see public art throughout the city.”

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# CATCHING UP WITH OSAMU KOBAYASHI

**THE LAST TIME** Jasper met up with 30-year-old Columbia native Osamu Kobayashi (Jasper vol. 2, no. 5) he had just been honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters to be one of thirty-four artists included in the Academy's Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts. As part of the Academy's Art Purchase Program, his painting

*Frozen Ghosts, Black Hole* was one of only seventeen paintings selected for purchase in 2013, becoming a part of the Columbia Museum of Art's permanent collection in 2014.

Kobayashi is back in town, much to his brother Shige's delight, and will open an exhibit of select work during the month of December at Vista Stu-

dios Gallery 80808 on Lady Street.

The exhibition is titled "Watch Paint" and will run from December 11 through 30 with an opening reception on Thursday, December 11th from 6 - 9pm.

We caught up with Kobayashi and had time for three quick questions. Here's what went down.

**J: Where, in your career arc, do you see yourself now?**

K: I define my career by how much I hope to grow as an artist. In this respect, I am still at the beginning.

**J: What brought you back to Columbia?**

K: I see my paintings largely as a by-product of my background. Having been born and raised here, Columbia has influenced my work in conscious and, I believe, subconscious ways. It's a privilege to come back and share that with everyone.

**J: What's up next?**

K: I'm currently preparing for group exhibitions at Ventana244 Gallery in Brooklyn, NY and the Mindy Solomon Gallery's booth at the Art Miami fair in Miami, Fl. I'm also looking forward to my second solo exhibition with AplusB Contemporary Art in Italy next year.



FROZEN GHOSTS, BLACK HOLE, 2010, OIL ON CANVAS, 72" X 66"



## Columbia Children's Theatre

Theatre for Young Audiences Where Adults Also Belong

By August Krickel \ Photos by Rob Sprankle

**DREAMS COME TRUE** at Columbia Children's Theatre (CCT) - for young audience members, seeing their favorite books and fairy tales come to life on stage only a few feet away from them, and for young performers who experience the thrill of a live audience for the first time. Artistic Director Jerry Stevenson and Managing Director Jim Litzinger have similarly realized the fulfillment of their own dreams, founding and leading a professional theatre company now in its 10th season. Their mission is threefold: to do professional theatre for young audiences (TYA) as a mainstage season with paid adult actors, to offer classes and training, and then to offer a place for students to practice those skills in CCT's popular YouTheatre productions, featuring actors under age 18. "There's not another model out there like it," Stevenson says, "a professional TYA that also runs a really successful youth theatre pro-

gram. It's usually one or the other." Yet the path to success has come not only through talent and hard work, but also via seemingly random coincidences and unexpected opportunities. "The whole thing is one big accident," Stevenson cheerfully admits.

Growing up in Camden, "I was a big music/band geek," Stevenson recalls, and played tuba and trombone. "I was the Drum Major for the Camden High Marching Scarlet Regiment," he says with pride, and the only person in the school to take four years of Latin. He headed to USC as a music major, "but I couldn't just cut it. I did Carolina Band for two years, and didn't get Drum Major, and I thought 'OK - that's it. We're going to go pre-law or something.'" On a lark, he accompanied a friend to an audition on campus; Bernard Addison spotted him, and asked "Do you want to read? We're short some guys." Stevenson remembers thinking "OK,

whatever. So I read, just to be nice. And they posted the cast list ... and I'd gotten the lead! I thought 'I don't have band practice in the afternoons anymore, so let's do this.' "

The discipline of the rehearsal process required Stevenson to get serious about his new craft quickly; theatre professor Russell Green told him, "Kid, I don't know where you came from, or how you got here, but I've got a list of MFAs who want to replace you, so you better get it together."

"So I just shut my mouth and watched, and I did that for a long, long time," he laughs. "I'm still doing that."

Immediately following graduation, Stevenson began auditioning, doing everything from *The Lost Colony* to touring with Southeastern Productions and the Patchwork Players, where he gained valuable experience with shows for children. That led to a teaching job in Blythewood, and a year of



graduate school in Theatre, but by then he had met Litzinger.

"We would not have done this if we had not met each other," they both concede. "I couldn't have done it on my own," Stevenson explains, "and he would have had no inkling whatsoever," inspiring laughter from Litzinger, whose own early experiences on stage were less than auspicious. A self-described "choral geek and show choir kid" at Dreher High, Litzinger did only two stage plays as a youth, both directed by Bette Herring at Workshop Theatre. "Tell the story," Stevenson prompts him. As an eighth grader with a small part in *Snow White* (the teenage Kristin Davis was playing the lead) he ate some bad fried chicken and proceeded "to projectile-vomit all over the downstairs dressing room, the shop, and the alley." Four years later, his senior English teacher Gerald Floyd knew that he could sing, and suggested that he try out for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, which featured Floyd, Jim E. Quick, Steve Strickland, and Bradelynn Helps Dendy in the cast. In a climactic

chase scene, Litzinger fell, causing Dendy to trip over him and dislocate her knee. "That's when I decided I was best not on stage, because I was such a klutz," he says, although as a French major at USC he did act in several French-language productions. "I was all set to go to graduate school to do something with linguistics - translation or teaching English as a second language - until we decided to put five cities in a hat and see where we ended up, just to try something different. And we ended up in Chicago!"

The move wasn't entirely random - a friend who had performed with Stevenson in *The Lost Colony* was already there, providing an opportunity for networking with the Chicago theatre community. The three began a small theatre company called Pot Luck Productions, adapting a number of L. Frank Baum books into musicals commissioned for a *Wizard of Oz* festival in Indiana, and scoring good reviews for their original show, *I Was a Teenage Judy Garland Fan*. Litzinger became proficient with MIDI software, enabling him to orchestrate musicals, leading to gigs with

other theatre companies around town.

Still, for a long time, they both worked temp jobs by day. "Singing waiter!" Stevenson gives as an example, but he also went through three levels of Second City improv classes with Tina Fey as a classmate, and eventually got a job teaching theatre with the local park district. From there he began working with Emerald City, a professional TYA, where Litzinger soon joined him, working on costumes. Assorted day jobs afforded Litzinger opportunity for exposure to customer service, sponsorship marketing, direct mail, computer software, and graphic design, all of which he feels prepared him for the theatrical career he now enjoys. After nine years away from Columbia, the duo moved back home, wanting to be closer to family. Stevenson took a teaching position at Eau Claire High School and, in his first year, took his drama students to win a state championship. He became lead theatre instructor for Richland District One, and continued to perform in shows, including one which rehearsed at the Sarah Nance Cultural Arts

Center, where Meg Richards, a friend from Camden, was developing an arts incubation program sponsored by the city of Columbia. A chance meeting with Richards led to an offer to produce a children's show, which they did in May of 2005. "The joke is that she meant a show *with* children, and we in fact brought her a TYA piece, but it was successful. But it was a total accident - we just happened to run into each other," Stevenson recounts. "We were only planning on doing that one show," Litzinger adds, "but people seemed to like it, so why don't we try a season?"

Columbia Children's Theatre was set up as a non-profit from day one. Their first season included productions they had done in Chicago, as well as the original *Puss in Boots*, written by Stevenson. In their second year of operation, they added classes and summer camps, in response to regular attendees

who were eager to learn more. Their performance space was not optimal, however, located in an aging former school cafeteria off West Beltline, and in their fifth year fate - and theatre connections - stepped in. CCT moved into the site of the former Limited Express at Richland Fashion Mall. More room led to expanded offerings, including a full season of YouTheatre shows. As audiences have grown, CCT has expanded into a second space next door, a cavernous combination of costume shop, green room, dressing room and storage facility. Seasons regularly include name-brand children's favorites like *Pinkalicious* and *Charlotte's Web*, as well as original scripts from Stevenson, often done in the improvised *commedia dell'arte* style, where children enjoy outrageous slapstick and grown-ups understand sly double entendres and topical references. CCT has recently added "late night date nights for Mom

and Dad," where improvisation can take on a decidedly adult tone.

The opportunity for paid professional work was appealing to Elizabeth Stepp, a mainstay of CCT in recent years. A veteran of community theatre shows as a child, Stepp developed her performance skills through acting and dance classes with Dedra Mount's Broadway Bound company, and voice lessons with Shirley Goins. Stepp won an award for her acting debut at USC Upstate, but found herself back in Columbia, and auditioned for CCT. In recent years she has played the title roles in *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel*, and *Snow White*, played character roles in more than a dozen other shows, made her directorial debut with *Junie B. Jones*, and often doubles as stage manager and/or choreographer. While she still has a day job in her family's business, a flexible schedule allows her to participate in three or more CCT shows each



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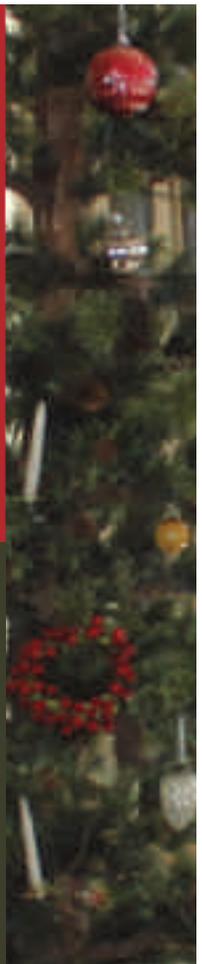
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## Next Up for CCT

Columbia Children's Theatre will present the world premiere production of *Jack Frost*, an original musical, this holiday season. The show features a young Jack Frost, whose rebellious behavior interferes with the weather and turns the seasons upside down. His parents, The Snow Queen and Frost King, attempt to straighten him out by making him spend time with the hardworking Kringle family. When Jack trades places with the Kringles' daughter Crystal, adventures and predicaments ensue.

The Columbia locals who comprise the show's creative team are actively involved with every level of the process. Writer/lyricist Crystal-Alisa Aldamuy will also choreograph the movement, and composer and musical director Paul Lindley II will play the title role, with Jerry Stevenson directing. According to Aldamuy, "Jerry pretty much knew what he wanted [for the upcoming season] but had a hole in the winter slot and was struggling on making a final decision because nothing was really grabbing him. So I suggested that we write a show. He asked what could we write, and I googled 'Winter Tales' on my phone and found 'Jack Frost.' Jerry was intrigued, so I went backstage to the dressing room and asked Paul if he would be willing to compose. He was in."

Lindley reveals that the project has been both exciting and challenging for him because of his limited composition experience. He says, "My creative process is a mixture of interpretation and experimentation. Crystal would write a poem, I'd read it, see what I could use and how I would put it to music, and then try a few things before settling on something and composing around that idea." Aldamuy raves about working with Lindley. "As a choreographer and stage manager I tend to see the big picture, fluid transitions and movement. Paul, as an actor and composer, sees detail and hears moments. Together we end up with something really amazing."

*Jack Frost* runs December 5-14; visit [columbiachildrentheatre.com](http://columbiachildrentheatre.com) for more information. -RACHEL ARLING



season. "If you're in a show and do every performance," she says, "you can basically pay your bills for the month," although conceding that's if you're a twenty-something with minimal expenses.

Most often her partner on stage is Paul Lindley II, a recent USC graduate and newlywed who fell into acting and children's theatre by accident. Like Litzinger and Stevenson, Lindley came from a background of school choirs and bands, and majored in music with the intention of teaching high school. Performing in musicals on campus led to an audition for a CCT show in which he was cast as the lead, and in the ensuing three years he has acted in twelve shows and worked as music director for nine. While many college students were busing tables or flipping burgers, Lindley worked steadily on stage, growing as a performer. "Sometimes it feels like a full time job, but a fun one like video game tester or ski patrol," he says. Through contacts made at CCT, Lindley is now working with the Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands to develop theatre curricula. "Down the road, I would love to be a full-time elementary drama teacher, which is something high-school-senior-me would have never thought to be a potential career path."

The numbers add up quickly for the company. Last year CCT served more than 26,000 visitors. In the past nine years they have produced more than 50 mainstage shows, some 30 YouTheatre productions, plus taken shows on the road to Camden, Sumter, Manning, Mauldin, Batesburg, and this year to the Richland Library. Their annual budget is just over \$200,000, including Litzinger and Ste-

venson as full-time staff, part-time costumer Donna Harvey, Lindley doubling and tripling in multiple capacities, and their changing roster of actors and backstage personnel.

They estimate they have provided over 2000 acting opportunities for children since 2009. In addition to performances, CCT offers two levels of classes for home-schooled students, and after-school "Theatre Boot Camp" and musical theatre classes, usually taught by Stevenson, Lindley, and USC's Cathy Brookshire. In the summer, 13 weeks of summer camp programming in four cities take place over eight weeks. While Litzinger and Stevenson would love to perform in a "real" theatre some day with fly space, they recognize challenges of having to fill both seats and a full-sized stage. In the meantime, their more immediate goals are "the usual sound system and AC unit upgrades," LED lighting to reduce the heat on stage, and raked seating for improved visibility, and they joke that one day they will launch a "see your kids' feet campaign." Halfway into their tenth season, CCT has plenty of alumni who as young adults are now beginning to get professional roles in New York and in regional theatres, while some of their younger students are just old enough now to join the casts of mainstage CCT shows. However accidental their fortune may have been, Stevenson and Litzinger have embraced where it has led them, to that rarest of attainments, the chance to work professionally in theatre in their home town, and to provide educational and career opportunities for the next generation.

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# FABLE

Poem by Ruth Nicholson

It began with the sun rising slowly in the west;  
with moths, even the luna, seeking abandoned cocoons;  
with hummingbirds perching statue-still. No one noticed.

When snowflakes levitated whole from frozen fields  
and the snowshoe hare, uncamouflaged, was spotted  
by the fox and eaten, no one noticed.

In spring, when crocuses bloomed later than roses  
and tree frogs forgot to pipe their songs at dusk  
and green leaves turned copper, no one noticed.

Children who played outside thought it odd  
that birds were whistling hymns in four-part harmony,  
that clouds were spelling questions in the sky.

---

Ruth Nicholson grew up in Pennsylvania but has lived in South Carolina for 35 years. She retired from Richland Library. Her poems have been published locally in *Portfolio*, *Illuminations*, *Point and its anthology*, *You, Year*. Other work has appeared in *The Cresset* and *Passages North*.

# MY FATHER'S CHEST

Poem by Jared Coffin

carries two scars      long      pink mounds  
like someone pressed  
all their bubblegum  
beneath his left breast

On the beach      I discover myself thinking  
a small fish      has attached itself to my father  
who parades the shoreline      chest thrown back  
stiffer than a car's hood

This is Attention:  
arms merging with his sides  
face unflinching      as a reptile  
The memory pursues him      even here      the gull's yowl melding  
with the gook's  
tinny battle shriek  
flushed from the mouth      appearing before my father  
a photo thrust      too close to his face      bobbing and looming  
and grimacing that squint-eyed grimace  
from his muddy  
Kewpie doll face  
my father lock-jawed      and staring through  
the grimace like a fog  
rifles grown indistinguishable      knocking  
bayonets jiving to unseal flesh      somewhere here      the rug burn of steel  
blood's hot  
rush      and forty years  
later the pink mounds      and forty years later me  
this poem  
you <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Except my father never went to Vietnam:

There was no hot-breath scuffle beside the Mangrove's gray ribs  
There was no Kewpie-faced gook drained and lying in the mud  
his eyes lacquered like a deer's

The scars were an accident on my grandmother's farm  
two boys jousting with silver shears in the barn's warm dark

[Or there was no farm – only the fresh plastic smell of a license  
and later two cars smashed and smoking in an intersection

(Or there was no accident and not even any scars  
Only this poem, you, me – that irretrievable war)]

---

Jared Coffin is a third-year MFA candidate at the University of South Carolina where he tries to avoid encouraging poeticism in freshman essays. His poetry has appeared in *The Connecticut Review*, *Consequence Magazine*, *Menacing Hedge*, and elsewhere. In the spring of 2012, Jared had the pleasure of reading his work at universities across Connecticut, after being named a Connecticut Student Poet. During his time at USC, he plans to research the role of literature in national memory while pursuing his hobby of piloting small aircraft.

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# The Horizon is on Fire

## The Year in South Carolina Poetry

By Ray McManus



When you consider all things one could say about South Carolina (insert any joke about progress here), it is no wonder our state produces some of the brightest poets. Perhaps it is true — misery is best

balanced with splendor. If this year's crop of new books of poetry is any indicator, perhaps we won't have to look too hard to find that splendor.

Consider poets in South Carolina who have new books this year: Al Black, Dan Albergotti, Gil Allen, Phebe Davidson, Richard Garcia, Barbara Hagerty, Ed Madden, Quitman Marshall, Jerred Metz, Susan Meyers, Rick Mulkey, Jillian Weise, Marjory Wentworth, and Will Wright.\* Go figure that recent back-to-back National Book Award winners — Nikky Finney and Terrance Hayes — are from South Carolina. Go figure that, with all the negativity and just absolute insanity that seem to plague our state on a political and social level, it is poets who go on to garner praise and awards on a national level. It is poets who, in their own way, bring a positive light to a state that almost seems hell-bent in ignoring them. Well not today, South Carolina. You can no longer ignore the fact that something is burning.

Don't believe me? Consider just some of the books published this year.

*Millennial Teeth* (Southern Illinois University Press) is Dan Albergotti's second full-length collection. Full of passion and doubt, this book makes the dark world outside quiet, and we listen. It's refreshing to see Albergotti's use of form — its subtlety and precision take to task all that we wish for and fear. From his love poem "Outside":

Out of method, futile search. Out of myths untrue. / Out of other worlds, some hope. Out of this one, you.

*Catma* (Measure Press) by Gil Allen is his sixth collection of poetry. Allen is certainly no stranger to South Carolina and to poetry. Lately I have found his work to possess a quirky, witty understanding of life's cruelties. He plays with rhyme and rhythm to create a whimsical counterbalance to the seriousness of the subject. Take for instance his reply to A.E. Houseman, "From an Athlete Dying Young," when the speaker states:

"Track or diamond, field or court, / our time there is, alas, too short," and later reveals the earth's surprise: "that Lord of Flies, that Final Buzzer / after which there is no other."

*The Other Odyssey* (Dream Horse Press) and *The Chair* (BOA Editions) by Richard Garcia are two books that I simply have not been able to put down. Of course it is also amazing to see a poet come out with two books in the same year, but two incredibly honest books, two books that make you say *damn it, I wish I wrote this?* I don't know. That's rare. Garcia's voice weaves between what seems completely impossible and what you should have known already. There is humor. There is brutal truth. In "Eyeglasses," who can read the line "Jesus did not live long enough to need eyeglasses" without laughing, only to be confronted by the weight of the man in front of a firing squad who "asked for his eyeglasses and put them on. / Then he shut his eyes." *The Chair* is book of prose poems, a form that I admit has tempted me on several occasions. Garcia's prose poems are a force, no matter the subject, that pulls a reader in and along, and when the end comes, it's best to be sitting down. From the poem "Upraised Arms":

We are embedded in the fog, said one stranger to another. It was dawn over Baghdad, but neither stranger believed in light.

*Twinzilla* (Word Works Books) is Barbara Hagerty's first full-length book of poetry. It is a striking blend of the benign and the malignant, where the body is both tangible and ethereal, common and supernatural. Where the soldier is just another passenger boarding a plane, as we all are in this book, where the connection between life and death is that of "stamen and husk, / petal and root." And the delicate — and the truthful — comes "without sentiment, without instruction."

*Ravenous* (Serving House Books) by Rick Mulkey is his fifth collection of poetry, and perhaps his finest. Mulkey eases the reader into the landscapes. He does all the digging, and what we are left with is truth — no matter how small, no matter how empty. Mulkey has the ear of a lyricist, and whereas so many poems today go for the jugular and celebrate the turbulence of the quick ascent, his poems invite us to become part of the process of discovery. In "American Love: Archeological Style," he writes:

Then, satisfied, we'll sleep, and wake / to one of those days I value most / when I brush the sleep from her eyes, / and we take all morning to unbury ourselves / from sheets and blankets. Mornings when we linger / over one another, if we're lucky, / like ruins longing to be discovered.

**Editor's note:** McManus's own new book, *Punch*, is reviewed in this issue by Susan Levi-Wallach. New books by South Carolina poets Al Black, Phebe Davidson, Quitman Marshall, Jerred Metz, and Susan Meyers were reviewed in the pages of *Jasper* earlier this year.

# Review: A “Punch” In the Gut

## Ray McManus’s New Poetry Collection Packs a Wallop

The word punch appears over and over in the poems that make up Ray McManus’s *Punch*, his third collection. There is the title poem, whose fourth stanza describes the brain’s reaction to a punch in the head. There are the punches you throw and the ones you want to throw but don’t. There is the time clock that marks your days. There is the final punching out of death. And then there are the poems that because of the way they balance subject matter and poetic conceit land their own one-two. It’s a word that here connotes violence and frustration, rather than a festive drink ladled from a crystal bowl.

Like most of the poems in his first two collections, the poems in *Punch* are largely autobiographical, focusing on lives that at first glance seem far removed from his own but in reality are as much part of his reality as the life he now leads. That life centers on poetry and a tenured position at the University of South Carolina in Sumter. It could just as easily gone another way. In “Punch,” he burrows into the ruts of his life, the ones that might have tripped him into a different life altogether.

His approach is more narrative than lyrical, a homage both to his past and the people who were part of it: the girls who were not-so-pure of heart, the guys who worked the loading dock or rode out to wherever in a crew truck, lunch boxes packed. McManus has been there—he’s talked about how, as a USC undergrad, he’d frequently go from his job to class, his clothes still sticky with tree sap. He’s the guy in “Punching In” learning to lay carpeting, the guy in “Receiving” on his way to life as a supermarket manager—until a long shot at a place in the USC MFA program paid off.

McManus reserves his most lyrical lines for the least lyrical occasions, as in the prose-poem “On the Tour at DJJ”:

---

They gather halos from the fields and drown them in buckets under the tap. The deputy gets loud and busted vandals start to sing.

---

and in “Clearing Brush off the Roof”:

---

I ask the sun to be jealous when they yell / hurry up. I wonder if the ground ever forgives.

---

Readers familiar with McManus’s earlier collections will see how his perspective on his early life has evolved. He has grown more comfortable with his stories, less inclined to overlay them with a sentimental gloss—only now and then does a hint of wistfulness come through. There is the sense here that whereas he might once have thought he had to prove himself a poet, he now knows he is one.

As befits their subject, these poems are plainspoken, unadorned, which gives them much of their power and makes them instantly accessible. The prevailing tone is matter of fact. McManus beckons the reader into the scene with visceral images cleanly and clearly wrought. When he does add a more formal structure, it is subtle, something that seems in opposition to the subject of the poem, thus increasing the tension. Even then, he’s more apt to poke holes in the tight weave of meter and form than accept its borders.

In many of the poems, the line breaks tend to be sharp and unexpected, made not in the service of meter or form but for emphasis or to preserve an unsettling staccato word flow, as in “Freshman”:

---

Lunch detention meant trash /pickup. There was a drainage / ditch behind the swing sets / and a zipper was stuck, so she / had to work hard to free it.

---

In others, his prose poems, there are no line breaks. It makes for an interesting contrast: shorts lines on one page, long break-where-they-may lines on the next: “Punching In,” with lines as tight as four stressed one-syllable words, facing the unbroken lines of “Receiving.” Both address the bleakness of jobs the doing of which provide few joys.

You could learn things from these poems, though, as in “Saturday Mornings,” they might not be things you want to know:

To break the rabbit, hold / it by its back legs and whip it / forward. My neighbor has / names for his. He tells me / it’s a myth that rabbits scream, / but I don’t believe him, /and he yawns as he tosses / a wet clump of fur on the table.

---

It takes some doing to find the poetry in moments as off-putting as this one, yet McManus does and in a way that turns a dance of death into an anapestic waltz. “Saturday Mornings” also is an example of how McManus opens up his experiences so that they become both personal and accessible: the reader comes away with a sense of having been drawn into the scene, not so much told about these people and places as introduced to them. Here, as throughout these poems, McManus keeps modifiers to a minimum. He strips his language to nouns and verbs, leaving them to make their own impression and the reader is left to paint the scene. He knows he doesn’t have to say that the clump of fur is wet with blood: we get it, and conjuring that image on our own makes it all the stronger.

The final poem, “When we stopped talking about the weather,” seems to take a stab at closure. It begins with “This country life had a limited vocabulary—/call it rural, full of foul language,” and ends:

---

It is the suit you’ll be buried in—a thicket, / a briar song, a mouth of honey and dirt, / a drift, a rattle, the damp of silence.

---

Perhaps McManus is signaling that he’s ready to move on and mine the material of the life he’s lived since.

The truth is that any soil can grow a poet—perhaps the less hospitable the better. McManus’s *Punch* is proof of that. —SUSAN LEVI WALLACH

# IN MEMORY



PHOTO COURTESY THE COLUMBIA MUSEUM OF ART

**ETHEL BRODY'S VISION** was an unbending light focused on building the content and character of the arts in her community. When she passed on the fifth of October, a Sunday, Columbia lost one of its most committed and conscientious citizens. It did not lose, however, the standard she set for selflessness, perhaps the greatest aspect of her legacy.

Ethel was born on November 23, 1923 in Middletown, New York, and raised in New York City, the art capital of America. As a young girl, she and her sister, Leona Sobel, rambled through Central Park looking for adventures. None was greater than the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The sisters, as close as two sisters could be, wandered the galleries in clouds of wonderment. Here were stories and mysteries, gods and monsters, the awe-inspiring and the unspeakably beautiful. The girls grew up knowing what the human spirit was capable of producing.

At home, Ethel's mother gave her crayons. Ethel drew with passion and gusto, as children will do. Somewhere along the line, most of us stop drawing. Ethel never did. She developed a style that was both experimental and disciplined, looking for visual

connections that would stir both heart and mind. She kept a studio in downtown Columbia and was at work on an ambitious abstraction just last month, a work left—as art is by those who are always working—unfinished.

In 1946, Ethel married Reuben Brody of Sumter and relocated to South Carolina with her husband. One imagines a bit of a cultural shift, especially at that time, between New York and Sumter. But Ethel thrived. She became involved at Temple Sinai, serving on the Temple Board and as president of the Sisterhood. She was active with the Girl Scouts, too, and was recognized by them as Woman of the Year. In 1964, her husband died and life, as it will do, changed again. Ethel and sister Leona, still the adventurers they had been as girls roaming Central Park, opened the Sign of the Salamander Gift Store in Myrtle Beach in 1972. Why Salamander? Ethel had known the salamander was the heraldic symbol of kings—it signified a brave and generous courage that the fire of affliction cannot destroy. In a bit of whimsy, it now heralded a Myrtle Beach gift shop.

In 1981, Ethel and Leona moved together to Columbia and the two instantly became integral to the cultural life of the city. The sis-

ters were enamored of all the arts—dance, music, and literature among them. But they shared a special interest in the visual arts, an interest no doubt incubated in the enormous and grand galleries of the Metropolitan years before. Paintings, sculpture and decorative art had shaped their sensibilities. Indeed, it had molded them. If art could change their lives, surely it could change the lives of others.

And so the sisters adopted the Columbia Museum of Art as a lifelong project. The museum could be, they believed, an institution of regional significance with a collection offering educational opportunities as well as purely aesthetic experiences. This, they knew, was doable. Over the years, Ethel and Leona donated over one hundred seventy-five works of art to the museum. Their tastes were sophisticated and eclectic. exquisite glass came to the museum along with contemporary painting, which wound up alongside innovative furniture, all courtesy of the sisters.

Incredibly, their material gifts were exceeded by their gift of time. Ethel gave the days of her life, a great many of them, to events and projects and to often-tedious committee work. While serving alongside museum staff, she was not one to hide an opinion, but she always shared that opinion in such a way as to nurture and to guide.

Ethel was a rare trifecta: she understood the mission of the museum; she gave her personal resources to the museum; and she inspired others to do the same. One could not dream a more ideal patron. Today and into the far future, the Columbia Museum of Art will serve as a benchmark of excellence in the community and beyond, and that service will forever echo the enthusiasm, the energy and the eyes of Ethel Brody.

Will South, PhD  
Chief Curator, Columbia Museum of Art

A hand is shown pouring a dark liquid from a small metal cup into a tall glass. The glass contains a drink with a white base, a dark layer, and a yellowish-orange layer. A lime wedge is perched on the rim. The background is dark and out of focus.

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## A MESSAGE FROM MARVIN

PHOTO BY FORREST CLOUTS



I was born and raised in Brooklyn but I grew up in Columbia.

During the 1980's I matured after I discovered the arts in Columbia. My life was in its 50's, and I now feel fortunate that there was simultaneously a sort of a renaissance of the arts in my newly adopted town.

I'll always remember the day Mayor Finlay introduced me to the warehouse district downtown and told me of his plans for its development into something called the Vista. As a result, I decided to move my business there.

Over the years, I watched the Vista blossom and bloom, the riverfront develop and Edventure happen. I was around for the birth of Trustus Theater with Jim and Kay Thigpen, the growth of great dance by the Columbia City Ballet under the direction of William Starrett and more dance with Lee Lumpkin leading the charge at Columbia Classical Ballet. The visual arts mushroomed, in part due to the influence and contributions from USC. The Columbia Museum of Art moved to a great home on Main Street and more recently, 701 Whaley happened with its Center for Contemporary Art and the South Carolina Philharmonic brought in Morihiko Nakahara to direct.

There was the start of many festivals like Vista Lights, Artista Vista, the Italian, Greek and Latino festivals and now First Thursday on Main.

Over the years, I traveled a lot and I don't remember coming across many cities around Columbia's size whose residents have the ability to choose between as many opportunities for performing arts or to enjoy the visual arts that exist here.

I find that on evenings I go out that I have to decide what I'm going to have to miss rather than what I will do.

Today, I feel the arts have matured and are supporting themselves without the same contribution they received from the business community in the past. I miss the ardor and persistence of individuals from the business community. I think of where we would be today if we had a Hootie Johnson or an Ed Sellers, a Joe Anderson or especially a Dot Ryall. If we had people like them in the business community with the wherewithal to make things happen, and if we added that to the commitment the arts community has shown, this city would even be a better model for other cities throughout the country to emulate.

*Marvin Chernoff founded Chernoff/Silver in 1974. It was later merged into Chernoff/Newman and Associates. Mr. Chernoff made the transition from one of the most successful political consultants in the country to the creative force behind one of the most respected and aggressive public relations, public affairs, and advertising agencies in the southeast. His experience in political campaigning served him well as a team builder, a generator of innovative earned media opportunities, a creator of event and sponsorship promotions, a communicator of intangible ideas and results-oriented advertising. Mr. Chernoff has been listed by Videography as one of the 12 top advertising executives in the United States in the area of television production and was designated one of the country's 10 most influential media consultants in the book, *Who Runs Washington*. The author of *Unlikely Success: How a Guy Without a Clue Built One Hell-of-a Business* (2014), Chernoff is an ardent advocate for the arts and culture, having seen many of his dreams for Columbia realized due to his own dedication to the role the arts should play in our lives.*

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