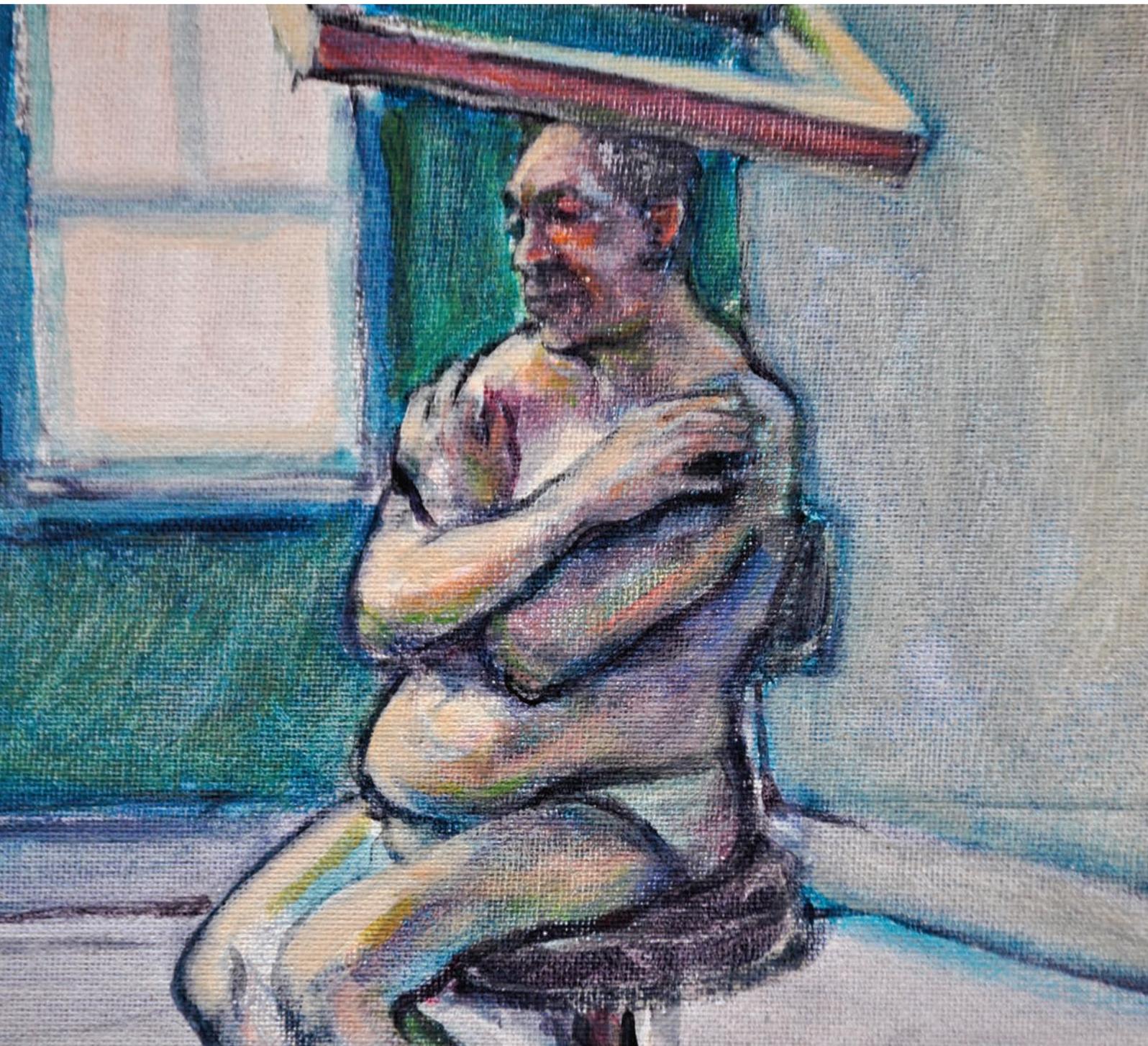


# jasper

THE WORD ON COLUMBIA ARTS

SEPT // OCT 2011

VOL. 001 NO. 001



# Artist Salon Series

at the Columbia Museum of Art

These intimate gallery talks with local artists are about personal connections to work in the exhibitions as well as experiences as a working artist – some of it controversial, some of it funny, all of it inspiring.

**Friday, September 23**

noon

**Tarleton Blackwell** discusses *An Artist's Eye*

**Friday, October 14**

noon

**Kathleen Robbins** discusses *Michael Kenna: Venezia*

**Friday, October 21**

noon

**Jeff Donovan** discusses *An Artist's Eye*

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**ON THE COVER**  
David Yaghjian's "Pool for Art II"  
2005



**019 JASPER DANCES**  
Terrance Henderson and the  
Power to Evolve



**026 GUEST EDITORIAL**  
Ken May reflects on the politics of  
South Carolina arts.

## JASPER IS

Cynthia Boiter // editor  
W. Heyward Sims // design editor  
Kristine Hartvigsen // associate editor  
Michael Miller // associate editor  
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Kyle Petersen // music editor  
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# A MESSAGE FROM JASPER

## Dear Friends,

Building a local arts magazine from the ground up must be something akin to building a guest house. You know what you want it to look like, and you hold dear the message you want to convey to your friends – you are welcome here, the door is always open, we want you to feel as if this is a place where you can come to be nurtured, to enjoy yourself, to reflect and grow.

But it would take a fool to try to undertake either endeavor as a solo effort. As much as the carpenter needs the brick mason, electrician, and plumber, the writer needs the photographer, the graphic designer, and businessperson. And she needs writers – many, many writers, their strong and experienced hands armed with the hammer and words that are essential to building a publication that will stand up to the test of time and shelter many storms.

It has been my great pleasure to work with such a team of impassioned artists and technical experts over the past, well, a little less than two months really, as we have designed and crafted your new arts publication, Jasper Magazine – The Word on Columbia Arts. These artisans have shared and improved my vision, implemented ideas only after translating them from my insufficient lay-person's language into the jargon of their fields of expertise, and contributed hand-hewn hunks of mortar to the project in the form of God-containing details that will impart lasting personality on our final product. They have given generously, not just of their abilities, but of the greater gifts of honesty, support, and counsel, as well.

It is my great honor to formally introduce the family and staff of Jasper Magazine.

Graphic designer, W. Heyward Sims, creates the framework on which our writers and photographers can build their stories and illustrations. On the editorial side of the table, Ed Madden, Kristine Hartvigsen, Kyle Petersen, and Michael Miller, give voice to the varying people and pockets of talent we find in the Columbia arts community, and photography editor, Mark Green, gives our stories a visual life. Lenza Jolley is our web maven and liaison with the cyberworld; Margey Bolen helps with PR; and Karina Salehi convinces our clients they should believe in us and buy an advertisement. And, Bob Jolley, in addition to being my long-time traveling partner, publishes Jasper as a division of Muddy Ford Press. Helping out this time were the talented pens and lenses of Bonnie Boiter-Jolley, Jeffrey Day, August Krickle, Kaitlin Ohlinger, Jonathan Sharpe, and Thomas Hammond.

On behalf of everyone, welcome to our humble abode. We invite you to make yourselves at home, put your feet up, and stay a while. We made this place for you.

**All the best,**

*Cindi*

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

Jasper Magazine – [www.jaspercolumbia.com](http://www.jaspercolumbia.com) – is dedicated to the promotion and support of Columbia, SC artists and arts lovers. Jasper Magazine is copyrighted and may not be reproduced in any manner without the publisher's written consent. Jasper Magazine is a division of Muddy Ford Press, 1009 Muddy Ford Road, Chapin, SC 29036.

## Dear Jasper,

Already everybody wants to know what you're thinking about the Columbia arts scene. The word on Columbia arts? Well, say it; we're listening.

I'm sure I speak on behalf of lots of Columbia artists and art aficionados when I say Jasper has a cool voice. Not gushy, not afraid of a slightly different viewpoint, not like anything else, really. Kind of like sitting next to a friend who's good with words, educated about what's going on and pretty darned friendly. With more heads than the Hydra, Jasper seems to find all the most happening events in music, dance, visual art, theatre and writing – and Jasper, you're an astute observer. A quick glance at "Who is Jasper?" reveals the reason. The editors individually are a remarkable lot, and together they're downright impressive. Kudos to Ms. Boiter for assembling such a dream team.

We're all rooting for you, and are eagerly anticipating the advent of your first hard copy. Pull up a chair, Jasper, and offer us one of those beers!

*Cheers!*  
**Paul Kaufmann**

## Dear Jasper,

Thank you for existing! The arts scene in the Midlands is booming, and having a stellar publication such as Jasper will further fuel the growth of our fantastic progressive culture.

Hooray!

*Love and kisses,*  
**Tracie Broom**

## Dear Jasper,

"As one gets older one sees many more paths that could be taken." -Jasper Johns

May I join with the Greater Columbia Arts Community in welcoming its newest literary flower. The beauty of a flower garden evolves from the diversity of its flowers and the beauty of our arts community evolves in part from the diversity of its media. Our creative arts community is blessed with the formation of a new arts magazine, Jasper Magazine – The Word on Columbia Arts. May Jasper take root in the arts garden of Columbia and flourish.

*Blessings,*  
**Al Black**

## Dear Jasper,

From my casual observation of the political landscape, it seems to me there is a coordinated assault from the fringe right wing on several important institutions in America. They include, but are not limited to, Planned Parenthood, Unions, Reproductive Rights, and Public Education. These attacks are obviously being coordinated by think tanks with talking points, and are funded by multi-billionaires who are out to subjugate the middle class. But, to me, the most curious attack of all is the attack on the Arts.

Our governor, who does not appear to be capable of thinking up a course of action on her own, recently launched an attack on funding for the Arts and educational television.

Is it possible that Jasper Magazine might try to peel back the layers of this onion and find out what is really going on here? Certainly our governor does not actually hate ETV, given that she tried to cut a deal to fund it but make it look as if she was actually cutting it out.

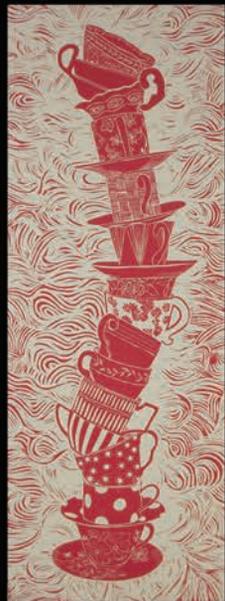


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So, please try to find out who is actually thinking these things up and why these people appear to be afraid of artistic creativity. What is it they are so afraid of, and who is behind this wave of attacks on the American middle class?

**Thank you,**  
**R. Bentz Kirby, Sr.**

*(Note from Jasper – we are happy to start the peeling process, Mr. Kirby, but in the meantime, please turn to our guest editorial by Ken May for more on South Carolina and the battle to protect the arts.)*

## Dear Jasper,

Welcome to the neighborhood! We are all so excited and looking forward to all of the fabulous things that you will be doing in and for the arts!

**Warmly,**  
**Bonnie Goldberg**

## Dear Jasper,

Welcome to Columbia...or should I say to the "new" Columbia?

Columbia is exploding with talent in many different forms of art (some traditional and some not). You've arrived at just the right time! It is amazing to see the change in the Capitol City. Fifteen years ago there was nothing going on; today we've got two or three events happening in the same night.

Now is the time for you to bring it all together, to showcase the brilliant artists who make up the Columbia scene, to connect the passionate creations of the local artists and the community of people who appreciate them, to tell us all about the arts culture filled with the new energy that is driving the development of art in all of its mediums and forms.

You are here to capture the face of the "new" Columbia and to show it to the world. The world is waiting for Columbia and we have arrived.

**Mark Plessinger**

**Call for submissions //** Jasper wants to know what's on your mind when it comes to the Columbia-area arts scene. What do you want more or less of? What is your next great idea? What amazing art have you seen that you want to share with the rest of us?

Send your letters to [DearJasper@jaspercolumbia.com](mailto:DearJasper@jaspercolumbia.com). We hope to hear from you soon.

Featuring art  
exhibitions from  
local artists each  
month as part of  
First Thursdays on Main!

## Businesses that Double as Art Galleries

Let's face it, blank walls and tired art are, at best, boring, and at worst, depressing.

Jasper loves businesses that double as galleries by offering work by local artists to their patrons. Take Nonnah's, for example, at 930 Gervais Street in the Vista. The only thing better than devouring a slice of Nonnah's Peach Amaretto Cake or Chocolate Espresso Torte is doing so while gazing at Bonnie Goldberg's beautifully water-colored women or Alicia Leek's luscious landscapes.

Beer-lovers can down a pint at Hunter-Gatherer Brewery and Ale House, at 900 Main Street, while contemplating political portraits by Thomas Crouch and others. And foodies can feast on Kafta sliders and Phoenician Fries at Mezza Lebanese Bistro and Hookah Lounge, at 701 Gervais Street, while indulging in new art by Whitney Lejeune. Lejeune graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2009 and has taken the city by storm with her paintings of beautiful young women in a vivid palette of yellows, and also shows her work at Artist At Work Studios in Lexington.

Mark and Wendy Plessinger of Frame of Mind - The Art of Eyewear, at 1520 Main Street, take the idea of adorning their walls with local art to the next level by rotating artists through their optical shop on a monthly basis, celebrating each new exhibit at the First Thursdays on Main Gallery Art Crawl. "Not everyone wears eyeglasses, so as an optical shop and art gallery we are able to get exposure to a new client base that typically doesn't know we exist," says Mark Plessinger, a native of Savannah and the founder of the FOM Series. "I'd always encourage other businesses to the do same, but I'd have to passionately assert that it should not be done exclusively to drive or increase sales," he continues. "The arts need to be supported and promoted. Provide an art venue to build community and the arts, first and foremost, and sales growth will follow."

The Plessingers opened their shop in October 2007 and staged their first gallery showing the following April. Past artists have included, among others, Claude Buckley, D.R. Granger, and Virginia Scotchie. Fall 2011 features photographer Linda Toro-Dodge in September, visual artist Shannon Purvis in October, and photographer Molly Harrell in November. // **CB**

## Small Theatre Spaces

In the theatre world, there is nothing like the intimacy of small spaces – tiny, usually black box theatres in which each individual audience member becomes an integral part of the experience just by being there. You can hear each other breathe and sigh and, sometimes, fight to hold back laughter or tears. You feel the tension in your neighbor's body as the plot builds on the stage before you. The actors are speaking directly to you, and each performance is unique because the composition of the audience changes every time.

Columbia has a small handful of black box and small space theatres, but we could certainly use more. USC has the Lab Theatre at 1400 Wheat Street, and Columbia Music Festival Association has their ArtSpace at 914 Pulaski Street, but the smallest of the small space theatres in town is Trustus Black Box Theatre at 520 Lady Street. Trustus Black Box Theatre

Photo by Mark Green



kicks off their season with a Black Box Late Night (shows are at 7:30 on Wednesdays, but at 11:15 pm on Fridays and Saturdays) production of *Third Finger, Left Hand*, a play by Columbia native and New York City playwright, Randall David Cook, and directed by Larry Hembree. "I met Randall David Cook when his play, *Sushi and Scones*, won the South Carolina Playwrights Festival about 10 years ago," says Hembree. "I ended up getting to direct a production of it, and it was awesome. Since then, we have kept up." Cook agrees, noting that Hembree "did a great job" on his winning play and that "we've wanted to work together ever since. And now it's happening."

According to Hembree, he has always been a fan of Cook's work, "because it is oddly humorous, fun to direct, and always structured in an interesting way. The beauty of his work is that he really writes for actors. The cast is loving creating the roles and I see the depth in their work as they develop their characters." *Third Finger, Left Hand* is the suspenseful story of a Beaufort, South Carolina bridal party that sports not just typical Southern dysfunctions, but intrigue and treachery as well. It features Sumner Bender, Kristine Wood Cobb, Ellen Rodillo Fowler, Dell Goodrich, Denise Pearman, and Joe Hudson on the keyboards. It runs on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, September 14th through the 24th.

The playwright will be in town for the second week of the play and also offers a chance to visit another of his works by way of a staged reading. The black comedy, *Southern Discomfort*, will be read on Tuesday, September 20th at 6 pm, at Trustus, with doors opening at 6. The event is free to the public. //CB

## Pinot Noir

The Pinot Effect is alive and well and, who do we have to thank? Miles Raymond and the filmmakers of the 2004 comedy-drama, *Sideways*. Played by Paul Giamatti, Raymond is an everyday sort of hero; a delightfully average guy who falls in love with Pinot Noir. And he's in good company.

Many a winemaker has had a tumultuous love affair with Pinot Noir. Why? Because it's difficult; it's finicky, thin-skinned, and it bruises easily. Very susceptible to sun,



Photo by Mark Green

heat and climate change, Pinot makes for a tempestuous lover. Make no mistake, these are the ones we fall for and, fall Americans did, with statistics showing a 16 percent increase in Pinot sales just three months after the film released, continuing to grow up to a 46 percent increase in sales.

So what does all this mean for us, as we're standing in a wine shop looking for a bottle of Pinot? Starting with the regions, California Pinot is probably the friendliest, easiest to get along with of the major Pinot players. There are some truly world-class spots for Pinot-growing in California, but for a good all-around player, start with Carneros. Fresh notes of ripe raspberries, red cherries, strawberries, and a subtle earthy spice should greet us as we inhale. Pinot's aromas should leap out of the glass, as it is one of the most eager to please grapes out there. Sean Minor Pinot Noir, 2009 Carneros, at \$16 a bottle, pretty much hits the nail on the head for a quality Carneros Pinot that won't make us late on our mortgage payments.

Many argue that Oregon's Willamette Valley is the only place for Pinot. With its cool, foggy climate, it has been known to coax out mind-boggling expressions of Pinot Noir. The area's mild temperatures result in natural acidity, which in turn churns out amazing purity of fruit and finesse. Nuances of balsam, mushrooms, damp forest floor, and spice are common in an Oregon Pinot Noir, as well as the traditional red and black fruits. Patricia Green Cellars, 2009 Reserve Pinot Noir leaves the buyer with not a hint of remorse at \$25. But, purchase with caution; this is a wine that will have you hooked on the Willamette region, perhaps permanently.

Other New World regions like Chile, Argentina, and New Zealand are becoming front-runners in the Pinot world, as well. It's difficult to find a better way to spend \$9 than on a bottle of the Portillo Pinot noir, 2009 Argentina. Young, vibrant and fresh, it is a crowd-pleaser, whether for grilling out, classy tailgating, or even Thursdays at around 3:30, for that matter. Fans of La Bubbly will rejoice in the recent arrival of La Pinot – a beautiful New-meets-Old-World style Pinot noir from Chile. La Wine Agency owner and all-around badass, Brad Ball, successfully marries a low-alcohol, Burgundian style with an exotic New World palate of sage, pink peppercorns, orange zest, and classic red cherry and pomegranate. Not forceful though; all the characteristics all tied prettily together in a subtle package of seduction. It, like most Pinots, makes for a great bottle of wine. // **Kaitlin Ohlinger**

## Pocket Productions

It was just another reception at the Columbia Museum of Art. Well-coifed patrons milled about chatting and sipping cocktails when, without warning, a powerful a cappella voice rang out, singing the lyrics from Sesame Street's Rainbow Connection. Immediately, several guests grabbed partners and waltzed around the room, gliding between clusters of pleasantly stunned onlookers. At the end of the song, as abruptly as they had commenced, the dancers nodded farewell to one another and blended back into the crowd.

This was but one of the flash mob-inspired performance spectacles pulled off by Artrageous, a wing of Columbia's nonprofit company Pocket Productions.



Photo Courtesy Pocket Productions

"Originally, we thought our productions would be so small that you could take them with you," founding member Aaron Pelzek explains, "The name just came about." Indeed, Pocket Productions has had an impact on the Columbia art scene since its founding in 2009 by Pelzek, a freelance lighting designer, Sherry Warren, a local performance artist, and Kimi Maeda, a scenic designer and puppeteer at Columbia Marionette Theatre.

Pocket Productions first brought Midlands art lovers "Playing After Dark," a fun-filled series of collaborative events that merge arts disciplines – from visual, performance, and music to even culinary genres – for an informal evening of creative endeavor to inspire audiences and promote the work of local artists.

The following year, Pocket Productions applied for and received a grant from the University of South Carolina's Arts Institute to launch Artrageous, a program specifically designed to bring artists' work out of the usual venues and into mainstream public settings such as shopping malls and downtown streets through seemingly impromptu pop-up performances.

Pelzek says the company has received another grant to continue Artrageous for the next year. "We are in the process of discussing between six and eight projects for Artrageous," he says. "We will decide within the next few weeks and get artists on board. One of our plans is to approach theaters that are doing musicals or operas and work with actors to take that out into the community. We want everything to be fresh and new."

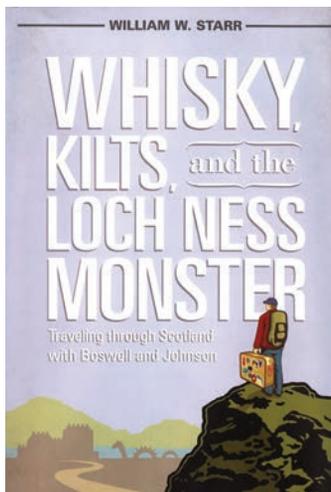
Planning for upcoming Playing After Dark events (up to four galas a year) is underway. The company hopes to go live with its newly redesigned website ([www.pocketproductions.org](http://www.pocketproductions.org)) in the next month or two, at which time a calendar of PAD events will be posted online.

"My new baby is a storytelling project," Pelzek says. "We want to have a big event at Trustus Theatre in November or December. I'm going to interview local people and find the best storytellers in town. We'll have live music and live storytelling."

Pocket Productions recently learned that the striking four-piece installation it developed and displayed on Main Street this past May to advertise local performances of "Allegria" by Cirque Du Soleil is the world's first ad campaign using the work of local artists that Cirque Du Soleil has ever embarked on. Exciting stuff.

So after a brief hiatus, Pocket Productions soon will be back on the scene, perhaps when you least expect it. "We have a wonderful year in store for the local community," Pelzek says. "I think we can all look forward to a little more art in the world, and I'm really proud that we can be one of the companies to bring it to you." // KH

## Our Old Friend, Bill Starr



Scotland in the wintertime can be a dreary place. Freezing rain, gale-force winds, and a gunmetal gray sky. Even the locals seldom venture outside, preferring to hunker around the fire and nurse a wee dram.

So why would an American writer and wanderer travel to Scotland during this most inhospitable time of year? To trace the 1773 journey of James Boswell and Samuel Johnson, of course. That's exactly what Bill Starr did in the winter of 2007. An unabashed mega-fan of the two literary giants, Starr had been pondering such an adventure for two decades. So when the timing was right, he packed his Wellies and waterproof jacket and boarded a plane for Edinburgh. For

the next 72 days, he followed the footsteps of Boswell and Johnson through the Scottish Highlands, writing down observations as he went.

His adventure is chronicled in *Whisky, Kilts, and the Loch Ness Monster*, a lively travelogue recently published by the University of South Carolina Press. The book balances historical accounts from Boswell and Johnson's journals (they both wrote about their travels) with vivid (and often hysterical) anecdotes from Starr's modern-day trek.

Starr's lighthearted, self-deprecating prose flows effortlessly, and everything from his terror-inducing confrontation with big trucks on narrow Scottish highways to his dismay at repeated references to Braveheart in the Scottish tourist trade is related with sprightly doses of wit and color.

"This book is Bill Bryson funny," said author George Singleton. "It's Sedaris funny. I don't want to judge poor Bill Starr, but at times it's as if Ziggy went on a road trip. Readers will love Bill Starr's masterpiece."

The Columbia arts community knows Starr well. For more than 30 years, he was the primary voice on the local arts scene as cultural affairs editor at The State newspaper. He wrote extensively on books and classical music, editing (and contributing to) a full page of weekly book reviews back when newspapers did such a thing. In 2003, he was awarded the Order of the Palmetto and recognized by the S.C. State Legislature for his writing about the arts. "As a longtime newspaper book editor and critic, I came to admire and respect the outstanding historians who could also write," Starr says in the book's introduction. "I did come to understand that there were not a lot of them, at least when it came to producing books accessible to a general readership."

A well-noted realization taken to heart in *Whisky, Kilts, and the Loch Ness Monster*, an historically engaging book that's also a lot of fun to read. For more, visit Starr's website at [www.williamwstarr.com](http://www.williamwstarr.com). // MM

## unearthly Delights at Saluda Shoals Park

When the season begins to turn, there's nothing better than to be outdoors to witness the breathtaking autumn transformation. Imagine the delight of discovering not



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- September 2011**  
 Sept. 15 & 18: *Zombie Prom Auditions*  
 Sept. 21-22: *Fine Arts Follies*  
 Sept. 22: Bassett Gallery Opening—Global Village Photographer Connie Houde  
 Sept. 26: Annual Meeting & Volunteer Recognition Party  
 Sept. 7: Dick Goodwin's Big Band
- October 2011**  
 Oct. 1: Columbia Children's Theatre Presents: *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*  
 Oct. 6-8: 15th Annual Carolina Downhome Blues Festival  
 Oct. 15: *Neal Clark & Friends: A Gala Evening of Song*  
 Oct. 16: Camden Community Concert Band Fall Concert  
 Oct. 22: Drive-In Movie Night—"Viewers' Choice"  
 Oct. 28: Finally Friday Halloween Concert
- November 2011**  
 Nov. 4: Bassett Gallery Opening—*The Equine Triumvirate*: Lauren Allen, Libby Bussinah & Rachel Parker  
 Nov. 4: Charles Wadsworth & Friends Chamber Music Series  
 Nov. 7: Camden Music Association Fall Choral Showcase  
 Nov. 10-13: Columbia Children's Theatre Presents: *Zombie Prom* (A Teen Production)  
 Nov. 15: *Faye Lane's Beauty Shop Stories*  
 Nov. 17: *My Favorite Monologues* (Tony Scully Monologue Class)
- December 2011**  
 Dec. 2-14: Holiday Sales Show (Preview night: Dec. 2)  
 Dec. 2: Chamber Choir of Kershaw County Christmas Concert  
 Dec. 8: Bassett Gallery Opening: Camden Art Association Members' Show  
 Dec. 8: Claire Bryant & Friends Chamber Music Series  
 Dec. 10: Columbia Children's Theatre Presents: *Junie B. Jones in Jingle Bells Batman Smells*  
 Dec. 11: Camden Community Concert Band Christmas Concert

**For event details and tickets:  
803-425-7676 • www.fineartscenter.org**



Photo Courtesy Pocket Productions

only Mother Nature's majestic vistas, but plein air exhibitions and performances all along the way. That's what's in store for folks who come out to unearth: a celebration of naturally inspired art at Saluda Shoals Park on September 24th and September 29th through October 2nd.

This unique, multi-day art extravaganza includes performances by the South Carolina Shakespeare Company, art installations, poetry readings, a competitive amateur photography exhibit, musical and dance performances, and live demonstrations by visiting artists in the open air along walking trails within listening distance of the Saluda River's tranquil murmur.

On Saturday, September 24th, Saluda Shoals Park will host critically acclaimed novelist, Arthur Phillips, as he discusses his controversial "lost" Shakespeare play, *The Most Excellent and Tragical Historie of Arthur, King of Britain*. Phillips' novel, *The Tragedy of Arthur*, is a play within a novel, within a mystery. Members of the South Carolina Shakespeare Company will perform this recently unearthed and much-debated Shakespeare work. The informal evening of fraud, forgery, and fancy is free to the public, but donations to the Nature's Theatre campaign are encouraged.

On Thursday, September 29th through Saturday, October 1st, the SC Shakespeare Company will perform *The Comedy of Errors*. Showtime is 7:30 pm daily, and admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. On Sunday, October 2nd, from 1 - 5 pm, unearth culminates with more than 40 artists displaying their work, creating new art, and performing dance and music throughout Saluda Shoals Park's natural outdoor environment. And don't miss Reserve Your Seat, a unique art installation by Columbia artist Doni Jordan and Charlotte artist Jeanette Grassi. The two have been painting and embellishing about 50 donated chairs, which will be placed all around the park.

If you hurry, you still have time to submit a photo into unearth's Amateur Photography Contest. All photos must be taken at Saluda Shoals Park and celebrate nature and people's enjoyment of the outdoors. There will be cash prizes, and winning photos will be displayed at the park's education center. The deadline is September 17th. For details and a submission form, go to [www.unearthsaluda.org](http://www.unearthsaluda.org) or call (803) 772-1228.

unearth is presented annually by the Saluda Shoals Foundation and Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission with support from Lexington Medical Center, St. Andrews Women's Club, the Musicians and Songwriters Guild and the SC Shakespeare Company. Admission to the park is free, but parking is \$5. // KH

# 2011-2012 Season

**Workshop Theatre**  
of South Carolina

*Cinderella*

July 15 - 30

*Anything Goes*

September 16 - October 1

*Dixie Swim Club*

Nov. 11 - 19, Nov. 30 - Dec. 3

*John & Jen*

January 13 - 28

*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

March 16 - 31

*Wild Party*

May 11 - 26

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# David Yaghjian and the Art of Foolery

By Kristine Hartvigsen



Six years ago, David Yaghjian took the adage “dance like no one’s watching” to heart, and he’s been cavorting – devil may care – in his underwear ever since. At 57, Yaghjian created a counterculture alter-ego of sorts that today is becoming increasingly popular in the artist’s “Everyman” series of paintings and sculptures. The impetus came in 2005 when McKissick Museum solicited works for its annual fundraiser under the theme, “Fool for Art.”

“I thought the idea would take away the pretense so many people attach to art,” Yaghjian recalls. “And I wondered, what can I do for that?”

Yaghjian looked in the mirror, and the idea formed through his reflection. “You know how when you get older and look in the mirror and you don’t recognize yourself in it? I think that’s especially so in unfamiliar mirrors, such as in hotels. Anyway, I realized I am getting old, and this belly is not going away. So I decided to make fun of myself being a fool for art,” he explains. “I was thinking of the long-suffering artist being a saint for art, the martyr for art. I was making fun of that. When you make fun of something, it’s more effective to make fun of yourself. People might resent it if you make fun of them. I pictured a guy who doesn’t know what the hell he is doing. So I essentially painted myself as a fool for art.”

He produced two small paintings for the fundraiser, both featuring a bald, middle-aged Everyman, conspicuous for appearing in nothing but his tighty-whites. One of the paintings featured Everyman in a chair with an empty frame floating over his head like a halo. Yaghjian noted that the “square halo” imagery is similar to the Buddhist concept of bodhisattva, and suggests that someone is close but has not quite yet attained full enlightenment. In ancient Christian art, the square halo also signifies that the character depicted is a living person, a mortal, with the traditional round nimbus reserved for saints.

The other of the original Everyman paintings depicted the aging figure, naked except for his underwear, holding an empty frame in each of his outstretched hands. Neither of the paintings sold at the McKissick fundraiser, and Yaghjian still displays them in his studio today. He took what began with these prototypes and ran with it, however, eventually producing hundreds of original oils of Everyman – exposed and conceivably vulnerable in his scant attire – in a variety of activities with moods ranging

from jovial, pensive, curious, playful, melancholy, wistful, lost, adventurous, and more. Many represent the wholly mundane, with Everyman sitting on a bed, playing a musical instrument, singing lustily, or wandering through trees. Several include a lawn chair, trapeze, a bull, or swimming pool. Everyman’s everyday, often whimsical, scenes are strangely enchanting.

While many see the influence of realist painter Edward Hopper in Yaghjian’s work, particularly his earlier architectural renderings, another primary influence for both the architectural works and particularly the Everyman series is actually a writer – John Updike.

“In high school, I spent a lot of time alone, and I read a lot of work by John Updike,” Yaghjian says. “I spent a lot of time in my head imagining things. I think literature is a big part of how I experience things. Updike was a powerful influence.” Updike’s Pulitzer Prize-winning fiction was distinguished by its careful attention to the most common and ordinary facets of American life. Updike himself said he strived “to give the mundane its beautiful due.”

At first, even some of Yaghjian’s most ardent fans were bewildered by the new Everyman paintings. They seemed unpretty and kind of embarrassing. A few wondered whether Yaghjian might be sabotaging his career. And while mainstream reactions were mixed, art critics almost immediately embraced the works. “The real standouts in the show are David Yaghjian’s paintings of overweight, middle-aged men. They’re both funny and sad,” wrote Jeffrey Day in The State newspaper in 2006.

In celebration of Yaghjian’s iconic Everyman, if ART Gallery recently presented an exhibit titled “Everyman Turns Six” at Gallery 80808/Vista Studios. The show ran from August 19 through September 6.

*“I think all religions  
are **intriguing.**”*



Photo Courtesy David Yaghjian // David Yaghjian in his Saluda, North Carolina, studio in the early 1980s.

Over years of developing *Everyman*, the 63-year-old Yaghjian turned inward to ponder things beyond middle age: mortality, the physical body, and the psychic and spiritual body. In later renderings, *Everyman* occasionally appears sans briefs, often with an equally naked female companion. Yaghjian acknowledges feeling pressure that many men in society feel to be the provider and family anchor – as well as the conflicts that can come with that. Yaghjian says he often thinks about the journey to achieve balance that all of us take.

"I prefer a non-specific *Everyman*, one that can be identified with," Yaghjian says in Wim Roefs' essay for the "*Everyman Turns Six*" exhibition catalog. "Rather than straight self-portraits, I want to comment on middle-aged men, using myself rather than pointing at others. I am saying that these are my foibles, and others might recognize themselves in that."

From a very early age, Yaghjian was keenly aware of his arts pedigree. Art was a Yaghjian family affair. Both of his parents, as well as his three siblings, all created art. His famous father, the late Edmund Yaghjian, chaired the Art Department at the University of South Carolina until his retirement and was a well-respected painter across the region.

"My parents met when my father was teaching art in New York. My mother came to take painting and studied with him, and they got married," Yaghjian explains. "My mother always painted, even while raising four children. They did not push art on their children though. They simply led by example."

Yaghjian's grandparents came to America fleeing political oppression in his native Armenia. That history has affected each member of the family in some way. "My grandfather came over because he was getting in trouble with the Turkish government. He was a rebel. That was before the genocide," Yaghjian says. "My grandparents came over and settled in Providence, Rhode Island. They had a grocery store, and my father would draw on the paper grocery bags. ... What I have gotten from my ancestry is a bunch of stuff. There's a negative side. When a people are persecuted, there is almost a sense of shame and guilt about it. You think, 'What is wrong with me that I would have been singled out to be done away with?' The other thing is it's an incredibly rich culture. It was the first country to proclaim it was Christian. Mostly, it's a cohesiveness of the people and this sense of persecution that says this has happened to a people. Why? It influences how you look at things.

Why are people this way? It erupts periodically. What can be done about it – politically, morally, and spiritually? Is there a solution?"

"My father had lots of different styles. He started with cityscapes," Yaghjian recalls. "When we moved to Columbia, he did a lot of paintings of the poorer sections of town and industrial areas. I think he identified with that. He was an outsider. First, he was Armenian. Second, he moved down here from the North. Third, he was an artist. ... There was something about these poor black people that he identified with. They were outsiders, too. I am not sure he did it on a conscious level. But he knew what it felt like to be persecuted."

Growing up in such a family, Yaghjian always had a sense of being different, even special. That could be a mixed blessing, however. In approaching a career in art, Yaghjian says he had a sense akin to entitlement insofar as where his talent would take him.

"In college, when I took my first life drawing class, people around me said I draw really well. But it let me relax a little too much. It made me think I don't have to work that hard at this," he says. "People would say 'you are so good' and want to buy my paintings. I had this ability. It was great, and I thought there wouldn't be any difficulties. That was the rub. It made me just a little too comfortable with what I perceived were my abilities."

Sales may come and go with the Everyman series, but Yaghjian is following his energy and painting what he is moved to paint. "I always hope to sell stuff," he says. "Aside from the very rare commission, I paint for myself. For the past six years, it has been this guy." Everyman.

What does a philosopher look like? It certainly could be this good-humored, artist in spectacles and his paint-smudged apron. Though raised in the Christian church, Yaghjian is fascinated by many cultures and theologies, all of which inform his greater world view. He maintains that these explorations are not intellectual; they are driven more strongly by emotional and sensory longings.

"Whenever I start to think too much about anything, I get confused," he says. "I read about different religions, and I get very excited about how other people saw the universe and how they described it and how they dealt with it. ...

"I just can't imagine that some power would make it very difficult for people to access it or be available only to one group and not the other. All religions talk about a separation from the source, whatever that is, and about death and

dying and how to deal with it. There are so many myths about going into the ground and coming back out. I think all religions are intriguing."

Yaghjian's earlier works, including his architectural paintings, seem to be natural extensions of his famous father's well-known streetscapes. "I think about history all the time," he says. "A lot of my imagery comes from different religions and different cosmologies."

The artist is mildly disappointed with the uninspired direction of today's mainstream urban architecture. "So much of the architecture today is really distressing in its lack of detail and any kind of depth and overall design," he says. "It's just appalling. People make a choice of how they will spend their time and money, and they just aren't spending it on architecture anymore."

In producing his architectural pieces, Yaghjian looked for buildings that caught his eye. Older buildings, he believes, simply have more character. Even a part of a building, such as a particular doorway or window that exhibits real craftsmanship, could spark his imagination.

"Initially, the structures have to be interesting architecturally, colorful, especially if I happen to see it during the part of the day when it catches nice light," Yaghjian says. "I think about the people who passed in front of the buildings or lived in them. The paintings are sort of a meditation on the building, the color, the space, the atmosphere, and the people who had inhabited the space."

While Everyman continues to be his focus, Yaghjian says he is finished with buildings for now.

Yaghjian turned 18 in 1966, when half a million young men already were serving their country in the Vietnam War and still more were being deployed overseas. He registered with the draft board as a conscientious objector. He says he was willing to go to Vietnam as a medic but not as a combatant. Fortunately, Yaghjian never was called to serve. So he continued his education at Amherst College in Massachusetts, where he majored in studio art. The mood in the country was chaotic, and Yaghjian, like many college students in the late 1960s, experienced restlessness and dissatisfaction in the mainstream urban environment.

"Many of my contemporaries felt the politics of the time were too crazy. They were going to go back to the land," Yaghjian says. After he and others visited farm communes in western Massachusetts and southern Vermont, three of his good friends purchased their own 60-acre farm about 20 miles north of Amherst. "My friends said, 'you

should come live here.' It sounded like a good idea to me." So Yaghjian moved to the farm commune that was home to as many as 24 men and women at one time. At the commune, Yaghjian – who went by the nickname "Iago" – had a steady girlfriend. However, it was not your stereotypical 1960s free-love, sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll kind of place.

"We grew our own food and raised lots of vegetables. We had chickens and pigs and cows. Sometimes we would have sweet corn to sell and would drive down to Amherst and sell vegetables. We also grew cucumbers to sell to a nearby pickle factory, but we didn't make much money. They paid \$60 for a ton of cucumbers. It took a half-dozen of us all day long to pick enough to make a ton," Yaghjian recalls. "It wasn't a religious or political commune. We were people just trying to live a little more simply. Life outside just didn't seem sustainable. At about that time, I think, they started calling people 'consumers.' Instead of doing stuff, they bought stuff. ... We weren't 'hippies.' It was more about organic and getting back to the land. All in all, it was relatively tame."

Nevertheless, after a while, Yaghjian's enthusiasm for the lifestyle waned. "It was intense to live with that many people 24 hours a day," he says. "We had very little experience with relationships. It wasn't easy. I had some philosophical differences." He also wanted more time to paint, so Yaghjian and his girlfriend moved to West Woodstock, Vermont, where he painted and the couple raised goats and tended a large vegetable garden for two lean years before loading their goats (three of them) into the back of their car and moving to Saluda, North Carolina. In North Carolina, Yaghjian worked as a carpenter to make ends meet, secured steady gallery representation, and began to build a reputation for his work. Around that time, he also participated in several family exhibitions in South Carolina with his parents and sisters, Candy and Susy.

Through the early 1980s, Yaghjian continued to exhibit and sell his paintings in North Carolina. In 1984, he received "Best in Show" accolades for his painting *The Escort* at Tryon's Upstairs' Third Biennial Area Artists Exhibition. That summer, on a trip to Columbia, he met his wife-to-be, Ellen Emerson, and decided to move to the capitol city. Ellen's work soon took her to Atlanta, and he followed. The couple wed in 1988. Their daughter, Clare, was born in 1990. But Atlanta took a harsh toll on Yaghjian.

"My parents were artists, I was the only son – I sort of always expected some kind of coronation, having the mindset that I was anointed. But I think that when I got in

those galleries in Atlanta and nothing happened, I began to realize that something was amiss," Yaghjian told Wim Roefs for the "Everyman Turns Six" catalog essay. "Then reality set in when Clare was on the way, and I realized that we needed steady income. That's when I went to work framing full time."

For the next decade, Yaghjian continued to produce art in Atlanta – mostly urban themes, work that one critic likened to Hopper's *Nighthawks* – and to work in a frame shop. All the while, he also had periodic shows in the Carolinas. The family returned to Columbia in 2000.

In 2003, local artists Stephen Chesley, Mike Williams, and Edward Wimberly invited Yaghjian to show his work with them in their annual Winter Exhibition at Gallery 80808/Vista Studios. He happily accepted and has partnered in the wildly popular show every January since. In 2006, after Williams moved out of Vista Studios, Yaghjian leased his old space and moved in.

With the *Everyman* series still in full swing, Yaghjian's studio walls are covered with variations on that theme. In October 2009, he had a show titled "Dancing Man" presented by if ART at Gallery 80808. Reflecting Yaghjian's prolific output, the three dozen paintings in the show took *Everyman* through a wide range of fascinating activities and emotions. True to the show's title, a couple of paintings depicted *Everyman* unaffectedly shaking his middle-aged tail feathers. Yaghjian sold 20 pieces from that show. Soon, he expanded the *Everyman* concept to wood-cardboard-and-crayon sculpture with *Skateman* and *Lawnmower*. He hopes to create even larger sculptures in the near future.

Like coming full circle, the mature Yaghjian's values are returning to the simplicity that he embraced as a young adult during his "commune" days.

"Mostly what I think about is simplifying – getting rid of stuff in my life. My clothes won't fit in my dresser. I pick up lumber off the street and think I will use it. I have old stereo equipment in my attic. The stuff sort of owns you. You think, 'I need this,' but it's a burden because you have to take care of it," Yaghjian says. "I have trouble throwing things away. I don't want it to go into the landfill. Does it break down? I need to be responsible about it."

With the "Everyman Turns Six" show behind him, Yaghjian is preparing for a new show in April 2012 at the Kershaw County Fine Arts Center. Meantime, he continues to dance, often exuberantly – as if no one is watching.

# Terrance Henderson and the Power to Evolve

By **Bonnie Boiter-Jolley**

You may know him as the artistic director of Vibrations Dance Company, the founder of Dimensions Dance Festival, director of Trustus Theatre's recent production of "Smokey Joe's Café," or as teacher at Columbia Ballet School, Southeastern School of Ballet, or Logan Elementary. You may admire him for his stunningly honest choreography, intense joy of life, gravity-defying movement, or his big ideas for the arts in Columbia. But chances are, you don't know nearly enough about dance and theater artist Terrance Henderson.

Packing an impressive arsenal of awards, accolades, and accomplishments, Henderson is internationally recognized for both dance performance and choreography. A native of Newberry, Henderson moved to Columbia as a self-proclaimed Broadway-bound youngster to study theater at the University of South Carolina. It was the 19-year-old Henderson – "Tio" to friends – who donned his dancing shoes for the first time in an effort to gain an edge in his intended field of musical theater. Now 33-years-old and an active member of both the Columbia theatre and dance scenes, Henderson considers himself an artist, above all else.

A choreographer from the start, Henderson explored ways to express himself beyond the confines of the classical ballet form, a mold he says he didn't fit. Henderson credits his "bar-to-barre training" with encouraging him to persevere in the face of physical challenges. He remembers realizing the power of his stage presence after attracting crowds of onlookers while dancing in night clubs, and he chose to channel that *je ne sais quoi* into the studio. This unique energy and joy of movement, along with a tendency toward the theatrical, remain trademarks of Henderson's work.



Henderson's choreographic talents were first recognized by Evie Belton, founding director of Vibrations Dance Company, when he performed the solo "That's Life," choreographed after a section from Twyla Tharp's "Nine Sinatra Songs." Henderson went on to perform the solo at the American College Dance Festival, where he received praise from Fernando Bujones, then artistic director of Southern Ballet Theatre, now Orlando Ballet. Bujones hired the young choreographer to work with his dancers. The result would become a staple in the company's repertoire.

During his time at USC, Henderson was struck by the divisive nature of what he terms "the system" of dance and the politics that surround it. He comments on a distinct separation imposed on the students in the ballet program and those in the popular West African dance group. This hierarchical conception of dance remains an institution he strives to dismantle. He speaks incredulously of Columbia's masses of dance students whose limited exposure is confined to the classroom, stunting their understanding of the art and the many forms it may take. Henderson hopes to show students the meaning of training versus exercise, an epiphany he credits his mentor, Kris Cangelosi, with prompting. Cangelosi, founding director of Columbia Contemporary Performance Group, took Henderson to the Jazz Dance World Congress in 2002, where he received his first job offer from the great Gus Giordano, founder of Jazz Dance Chicago. Henderson elected to stay in Columbia to work with Cangelosi, saying he felt he was in the right place. From 2001 to 2003, Henderson assisted, choreographed, taught, and danced for Cangelosi's company and recalls that he was "a beast."

"Addicted" to the never-ending fascination of improvement, Cangelosi's departure motivated self-proclaimed workaholic Henderson to channel his energies into Vibrations Dance Company and his own choreography. In 2004, his work was accepted into the Leo's choreographic competition at the Jazz Dance World Congress and, in 2009, he received the Bronze Leo for Outstanding Jazz Choreography. Now with the artistic reins of VDC in hand, Henderson views the company as an outlet for people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to dance. Realistically, he notes that this comes with extra monetary and artistic challenges for the company and for him as a choreographer. However, he sees his leadership simply as "one era of Vibrations" and hopes to build a more self-sufficient company that will continue after he moves on. Henderson notes a constant evolution in the climate of dance in general. He speaks passionately about an "era of fusion" in which the new

voices of contemporary dance come from a combination of elements. To that end, the perpetual student continues to search for new experiences that will allow him to evolve and grow artistically.

Henderson's eyes light up as he speaks about "Dimensions: South Carolina Contemporary Dance Festival," a semi-annual event he founded in 2009. Henderson believes that by bringing a variety of artists and companies to Columbia, via the festival, he can provide an international base of comparison for dancers in the city and set the groundwork for the changes he hopes to see. Henderson views collaboration as a key part of the next step for the arts in Columbia. In his directorial debut with Trustus Theatre, he incorporated dancers from VDC into the production of "Smokey Joe's Café." He says he feels the decision brought the song-and-dance show to a new level. Henderson cites Alvin Ailey's quote, "I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people," as a guiding principle in his work. Henderson stresses the importance of gaining the trust of one's audience and community and delivering a product that the people can relate to. Technique is a treat, he says. VDC's annual production of "Sista Girl and the Soldier: An Urban Nutcracker," is built around an original story featuring Southern treats Henderson remembers from his childhood and illustrates the director's desire for inclusivity.

As a teacher, Henderson hopes to expose his students not only to the art itself, but to a different way of being. He is aware that living an artistic lifestyle as a young, Southern, black man is eye-opening for his students and their families. "My work has been my diary since before I even started," Henderson says. His mission, he says, is to speak through his work and to constantly evolve an idea his father instilled in him at a young age. As an adult, Henderson recognizes a new version of himself in which he can speak through all of his languages to create a fusion of disciplines that he says is both exciting and terrifying. In this vein, he is creating a new work titled "The Black Man ...Complex." The multidisciplinary work will use accounts of Henderson's own experiences to address ideas about being black as well as sticky Southern issues of sexuality, religion, and the law.

Still coming to grips with the idea of not having to ask permission, Henderson has high expectations for the capital city. "Columbia needs to grow up," he asserts. His strong belief in the power of the community is apparent as he laments the lack of recognition and respect given to the movers and shakers in Columbia's arts scene. The people are "not supposed to be so afraid," he says, "there is plenty." When it comes to Terrence Henderson and the power to evolve, there certainly is.

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Mark Green

# Jim and Kay Thigpen and the Trustus Legacy

By August Krickel

Jim and Kay Thigpen didn't set out to be Columbia icons, or even pioneers in the local arts community. They just wanted to see and be involved in some good shows.

It's hard to imagine the local cultural landscape without their creation, Trustus Theatre, Columbia's professional theatre company that specializes, and excels, in alternative and non-traditional plays. It's harder still to accept that Jim and Kay are retiring a year from now, after the end of their 27th season, and perhaps hardest to realize that they are, in fact, old enough to retire. Kay happily admits to turning 70 this year, with Jim turning 69 a few months later. They seem at least a decade younger.

Sitting in the darkened Trustus house while a hot summer afternoon blazes outside, the couple is a study in contrasts. Ask them about their early careers, and Jim (ever the showman) takes the lead, launching into an eloquent and often passionate recollection of an earlier era, or a moment in time, which leads to an example, then a funny vignette, then an observation relevant to today, followed by a wisecrack and a lesson learned. Kay then adds a few succinct details to the original question. They're not unlike the silver-tongued dreamer and his more practical love interest from shows such as *The Woolgatherer* and *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune*, roles they have portrayed together on stage. They are not so much a mom and pop (as they are often described), nor grandparents (a role they have relished in recent years), but perhaps a beloved and slightly wacky, bohemian aunt and uncle.

Their story has become almost legendary: two high school drama teachers took out a second mortgage on their home to start up an alternative theatre on a shoestring budget. Jim laughs as he recalls the niche they quickly established: "We're the theatre that curses and does nude shows." (He quickly adds that it's never anything gratuitous.) Kay had begun her career in teaching after moving to Columbia in the '50s, when her father, Lou Kaplan, opened the House

of Fabrics. Jim came for graduate school in the '70s, and stayed to teach, first at A.C. Flora, then later at Spring Valley. Kay's parents were active at Town Theatre and Workshop Theatre, and she met Jim when they were cast in a production of *Desire Under the Elms* at Workshop. Kay's mother, Hazel, didn't care for Jim at first, he recalls: "She said he's a sick man; he's a drunk. ... Oh, and he's probably gay." His eyes twinkle, and he adds, "So, she got two out of three right; that's not bad," pointing out that the third was actually a compliment, because she first saw him believably portraying a gay character on stage.

The Thigpens married in 1979. By the mid-'80s Kay was working with her father, and Jim received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to study contemporary theatre in New York City, where he saw dozens of new, cutting-edge shows. Kay drove up to bring him back, and together they attended performances of *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* and *A...My Name Is Alice*, both introduced to Columbia in the first season of Trustus. It was during "that long 14-hour drive home" that they began discussing how new works like this were never seen locally, but how the Midlands certainly had the talent and resources to do small-cast, one-set shows.

Back in the 1970s, during his tenure as president of Workshop Theatre, Jim had been convinced by then-City Councilman Kirkman Finlay Jr. of the importance of the arts to the downtown area. They found an upstairs space on Assembly Street, surrounded then as now by pawn shops. Patrons of the previous tenant, a dance club called *The Beat*, had trashed the place on its last night of business, so their very first production, *Luv*, was staged in 1985 at Spring Valley High School while repairs and cleanup commenced downtown. There was no shortage of community theatres in the area, each with a specific mission and core audience, but lesser-known plays, newer plays, and especially plays with mature language or themes rarely were produced. Jim notes that "actors will go anywhere for a role," and word quickly spread.

Actress Libby Campbell recalls that the late actor/director Jim E. Quick made her go to auditions for the second show, *Extremities*, which were held at House of Fabrics. "I was amazed that I was cast as Marjorie! Putting that first show up was just an incredible experience. We alternated rehearsing and painting and hammering and sanding. ... We all felt that we were involved in something that was





Photo courtesy of Trustus Theatre

really and truly going to have a lasting impact.” Actor Bill Arvey, who has worked as business manager for Town Theatre and later did marketing for USC’s theatre program, was house manager for opening night. “About 30 minutes before the house opened, a street person appeared at the first floor doorway and had a brief conversation with me as I stood at the top of the stairs. He then relieved himself just inside the doorway and proceeded on down Assembly Street. Jim Thigpen, totally in control, brought down the mop, bucket, and disinfectant and restored the entrance to pristine opening night condition. So much for the glamour of show business!”

Extremities was controversial enough on its own, with themes of violence and vengeance, but the drama wasn’t limited to the stage. As Campbell recalls, “We were well into the show, Charlie (Peterson) was tied up and in the fireplace, and I was downstage right doing a monologue. I was vaguely aware of a squawking sound somewhere in the background. Jim walked up to the stage, patted his hand on the proscenium, and said ‘Hey guys, excuse me, ...’ My immediate reaction was ‘Oh God, am I so awful that he has to stop the show?’ Then he made the announcement that the building had to be evacuated; someone had called in a bomb threat. I realized only then that the squawking sound I’d heard was the chatter on the police officers’ radios. We filed out, with the audience going out front onto Assembly Street. The cast went down the back stairs

into the tiny fenced lot directly behind the theatre. We’d been there for quite some time when someone finally realized that Charlie was still tied up in the fireplace! When the building was finally cleared, every audience member came back in, we picked up where we left off, and Trustus has been rolling ever since.”

From the outset, the Thigpens wanted to be accessible and audience-friendly. “We asked, what do you hate most about going to the theatre?” Jim remembers. “You have to put on your Sunday suit, there are those uncomfortable seats, and you can’t drink a beer. We wanted to take away those excuses. Plus, in those days you could smoke in our theatre, just like in a bar.” Instead of traditional seats, Trustus featured 50 large, stuffed, floral-print chairs, with tables for drinks and popcorn. There was room for 20 to 25 more audience members on bleachers, with those spaces going for a mere five dollars. There was a bar in the back, and Kay beams when reminded that they may have been the first to introduce Columbians to Rolling Rock Beer.

In the beginning, Jim and Kay comprised the theatre’s full-time staff of two, paying themselves a whopping \$250 a week. Jim was the artistic director, and Kay was the managing director, handling the box office. The name, “Trustus,” originally seemed far more exotic than its very practical roots. Knowing that theatre-goers wanted a good experience but might hesitate to purchase tickets for something they’d never heard of, Kay wanted the message to be clear: just trust us – you’ll enjoy the show.

The Congaree Vista as it’s seen today barely existed in 1988, when Trustus moved to its current location at 520 Lady Street, a former electrical motor warehouse that literally had been moved all the way from Pickens County decades before. The earliest galleries and showrooms, Carol Saunders and Charlton Hall, had opened on Gervais Street closer to the Capitol, and a few artists and craftsmen, like Lewis & Clark and Michael Craig, had established workshops nearby. But by and large, the area was uncharted territory for the arts. In the ensuing 20-plus years, the Vista has grown down Lady and Gervais streets to meet Trustus, and the city always has touted the location of a professional theatre in the heart of downtown as a major selling point for tourism and economic development.

As a result of a capital funds drive, Trustus now occupies its entire building and, over the years, has transformed it into a true entertainment complex, with office space, room for set construction and storage, a separate rehearsal space, a library, and an intimate 50-seat black box theatre. The old stuffed chairs eventually were replaced, and the new seats increased capacity from 96 to 134.



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

Along the way, Jim and Kay have never hesitated to experiment, and with good results. Their acclaimed Playwrights' Festival, started in 1989, creates exposure for new authors with a full professional production of their work. The Apprentice Company is an ensemble of teen actors who work on shows, take classes, and perform. A need to find actors to fill African-American roles led to the creation of the African-American Acting Workshop, which grew into a Multi-Ethnic Acting Workshop, and created the spin-off group, the NiA Company.

This sort of outreach and inclusion has always been important. Jim recalls, for example, that "the gay community historically has been a big part of Trustus," going back to 1987's production of *Last Summer* at Bluefish Cove, which attracted an audience from Traxx, a nearby gay bar, who then became regular attendees. "Especially then," Jim remembers, "it was hard to find a place to go with your partner, where you could hold hands in public and be comfortable." Similarly, *IPWIC – I Pay What I Can – Sunday matinees* stemmed from Jim and Kay hating the thought that someone might want to see a show but not be able to afford a ticket.

Not surprisingly, the couple's fondest memories are of sharing special experiences with their audiences, including a production of *Sideman* from the 2000-2001 season, when the house was filled with professional musicians. They listened intently to "five minutes of nothing but a song being played, and it was a magical moment," Jim recalls. Doug William's dramatization of the Doolittle Raiders, *Into the Yonder Zone*, from 1992,

was also gratifying. A number of the actual Raiders were in attendance, and they loved the show. When asked about favorite roles, Kay immediately thinks of Frankie and Johnny, the mismatched lovers whom Jim and Kay portrayed twice. "I got to slap the shit out of him every night on stage," she says with a grin. Jim is also particularly proud of his performance as Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, because "I really understood that man and where he was coming from." He fears, however, that his work as an actor might have been handicapped by his role as theatre proprietor. "I kept breaking my concentration, thinking that the AC or the lights weren't working properly." Twenty-seven seasons seem like both a lifetime and an instant, but for Jim and Kay Thigpen, the time has come to pass the reins to that next generation, whom they have been cultivating all along. "As much as I love it, I'm tired," Kay explains. She had always thought that she would emulate her father, who was active in local theatre into his late 80s and passed away just last year at 95. "You'd think it would get easier, doing it all these years, but it didn't," she says. "The last few years ... have been hard!"

As if on cue, box office manager Joe Morales appears, whispering to Kay that a caller is on the phone, letting them know that the rights are now available to a big-name musical they had planned to do this past season. When a touring company of the show scheduled a swing through the Southeast, rights had been yanked, leaving Jim and Kay to scramble to find a replacement. Are they interested? A glance of perhaps half a second is exchanged to make certain they are on the same page, and then both declare that Trustus is no longer interested. The new season is

already set, and the replacement show, Smoky Joe's Cafe, worked out just fine. Jim adds a defiant gesture in the general direction of the telephone, and there's no question that the two are the same energetic, mirthful, creative couple they've always been.

Both Jim and Kay stress that audiences will see no difference when they leave the helm. Leadership will remain in the hands of the current staff, with assistant artistic director Dewey Scott-Wiley dropping the word "assistant." She and marketing/public relations director Chad Henderson will continue to direct and act in shows, as they have for many years now; Morales and technical director Brandon McIver will also remain. "So it's still Trustus," Jim says, with the same core family running things as always. His last official directorial effort will be this fall, with the Trustus premiere of the Tony/Pulitzer-winning August: Osage County. Jim's brother, Ron Hale, now retired from a successful career in soap operas, will make a return appearance. Libby Campbell is in the cast as well and says, "I was in the first Trustus production Jim directed, and I'm in the last Trustus production he's directing. Full circle."

Campbell says that, "Trustus raised the bar for all of the theatres in town. It proved that Columbia audiences weren't as unsophisticated as had been believed ... It has been an honor and a privilege to have been involved with this theatre from the beginning." Actor Elena Martinez-Vidal agrees. "Jim Thigpen is a truly gifted director, and when he is at the top of his game, he is amazing. Jim and Kay have created a legacy."

Kay doesn't rule out a return to the stage some day, especially if it's a smaller role. She can even see herself helping out for a few hours each week in the box office. Most of all, she looks forward to having more time to spend as a doting grandparent. Jim also expects to act again at some point, as well as to direct. "Or I could just sit in front of the TV and get fat," he laughingly offers as an alternative scenario. "No, you wouldn't do that honey," Kay says softly, patting his hand. "I wouldn't let you." And there, however fleetingly, one sees the genuine affection that these two so clearly have for each other. Frankie and Johnny, their alter-egos on stage, did live happily ever after, after all, creating a thriving professional theatre that enriched Columbia's cultural life immeasurably. And for that, a grateful audience applauds them.

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Photo by Mark Green

## Michael Krajewski and Being Exposed

By Cynthia Boiter

In the world of autodidacts, it isn't difficult to find visual artists. While pedagogy is essential to dancers and musicians, no matter what their natural talents and inclinations, some visual artists are naturals in the true sense of the word. They pick up a paintbrush or a piece of chalk, or sink their hands into a ball of clay, and almost mystically, something profound or beautiful appears. Michael Krajewski is one of these artists.

Though he started drawing in the fourth grade – “strange characters and weird shit,” he says – Krajewski felt no desire to go to college after high school to further his education in art. Instead, he traveled to Athens with friends who were attending the University of Georgia, where he both painted

and partied a lot, bussed tables, and paid \$50 a month to rent half a room in a shared apartment. Tiring of the bar scene, he moved to Atlanta where there would be fewer distractions from his art. Converting his dining area into a studio, the young artist painted on anything he could find, from cardboard to wood, and began experimenting with his work. “I had no clue what a solidified piece was,” he says of his art at the time. “I was testing my skills to see what I had. It was a lot more controlled than my work looks now. But when I look back, I can see that, even though I was just playing, it felt really good.”

Looking back also allows the artist to comment on how much harder it is now to control his brush and his stroke. “I don't want that slick stroke anymore – that stroke that comes too easy,” he says. “I watch little kids painting and think: ‘If I could just have the stroke of a child and have it come as easily to me as it comes to them, that would be perfect.’”

Krajewski's time in Atlanta, crammed into a tiny studio apartment with dozens and dozens of finished paintings stacked up, one against another, proved to be both perfect and suffocating at the same time. “I would have to go into

the bathroom and sit on the edge of the tub just to get away from all the painting sometimes," he remembers. At other times he would prop his paintings on the curb by the road, with loose change and a note taped to the back, asking any takers to call him; just to see what would happen – just to find out what people thought of his art. "One guy called me, and we went out for a beer," he says. "It was pretty cool."

It was on a visit to see his parents in Columbia about six years ago, Krajewski remembers, that he went into a bar in Five Points with a friend who noticed a sign saying that a gallery called Artists' Basement was opening beside Goatfeathers on Devine Street. His friend urged him to send in a disc with his work on it. He followed through and was shocked to have his work put in a group show and even more astounded when several of his pieces sold. A solo show in the same gallery followed, at which he sold 23 out of 78 pieces. "I was terrified," he admits, shaking his head and shrugging to himself. "I now know that I priced everything too low, but I had no idea what I was doing. I just wanted people to see my work." People did, and, before he knew it, they started following him and asking for more. After he moved back to Columbia, gallery owners Sonia and David Dunn asked him to do another solo show. "I was so crazy," he recalls. "They asked me for my bio, so I wrote out individual copies of it on all these little papers," he says. "I actually think people liked that."

Ever the advocate for artists donating their works for charitable causes, Krajewski recognized early on the value of the exposure that charity shows can offer to young artists in return for their donations. It was at one such show that he first spoke with an admirer who had been following his work – who actually had bought a painting – who eventually would become his mentor and advocate: Alice Perritt, owner of HoFP Gallery. "Alice took me outside, and she told me that she liked my work; it surprised me," he recalls. "And then she started asking me questions, like whether I drank a lot or not. I felt some kind of energy from her, and I thought, 'she's serious.' I guess she was making sure that I wouldn't go down deep into some hole or something. But I told her, 'yeah, I love to drink and party,' which was the truth. She looked at my work and critiqued it, and I got this intense feeling from her. I mean, I love her now, but she was intimidating at first."

"I was struck by how fresh his work was," Perritt recalls. She had previously purchased Krajewski's painting *101 Birds* and felt it offered "such an interesting point of view. The painting shows a woman, but only her skirt and her feet, and there are all these little birds flying around everywhere. It was just so very different." *101 Birds* was the first piece Perritt had discovered by the artist, but today she owns

more than half a dozen of his pieces, all of which were purchased before the friends entered into their professional relationship. Perritt now represents Krajewski's work at her gallery on Devine Street and has overseen the most recent portion of his maturation as an artist.

"I think Michael is as much a personality as an artist," she explains. "His connection with the public goes a long way in promoting his art. He is a kind person, and he collects friends like they are charms."

Though self-taught, Krajewski admits to learning much from friends and artists with whom he has collaborated over the years. First and foremost among those artists is videographer Jason Stroud. "I love his videography, and I love his style," Krajewski says. "He likes to keep pushing himself and I love that in a person, whether it's an artist or a friend." Stroud and Krajewski have collaborated on a number of short films and installation projects.

That said, the still young artist, (Krajewski is 28, but he doesn't like for people to know his age), is hesitant to comment on whose work he likes in town or who he likens his own work to. But when confronted with the similarity of his style to that of the neo-expressionist/graffiti artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, he admits that he can see the likeness. He also understands that some people see hints of Marc Chagall in his work, particularly his color palette.

At such a young age, it isn't surprising that Krajewski has had an emotional year, with highs and lows that left the kind of scars he'll likely cherish one day. The death of a grandparent almost devastated him – "my mind went so numb; I was in shock," he says – and the opportunity to teach for the first time at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities summer program – "I don't know if I have ever been so inspired," he admits – have left the artist keenly aware of life's bitter-sweet peculiarities. "I'm not really sure of what I want out of life now," he says. "I enjoy where I'm at, at this exact moment in time, and I like what's in front of me. I don't want to worry about what happens – that makes the happening less sweet."

But the recent ups and downs have influenced Krajewski's work, of that, his friend and representative, Alice Perritt, acknowledges. "Michael's work is so autobiographical," she says. "He is writing the story of his life on the canvasses he creates."

Let's hope, for Krajewski's sake and the many followers who enjoy both his art and his friendship, that it's a slow-winding odyssey, with numerous chapters, and many, many canvasses long.

# Josh Roberts and Unhinging Southern Rock

By Kyle Petersen

Halfway through our winding conversation, singer/songwriter/guitarist Josh Roberts unconsciously paraphrases the legendary slide guitarist Duane Allman in concluding that “all rock is Southern.” We are sitting in a (temporarily) sweltering thrift shop in Lexington that’s owned and run by his wife and bandmate, Leslie Branham.

It’s a fitting moment for a couple of reasons, not the least of which is that the skinny, bearded, and long-haired Roberts often can come across as a modern-day Duane Allman himself. Like Allman, Roberts is humble and friendly off-stage, but on-stage he leads a taut live band capable of improvisational flights of fancy and roots-oriented rock songs that sample liberally from country, blues, and gospel traditions. Of course his band, Josh Roberts and the Hinges, also specializes in Neil Young-style guitar epics and Pink Floyd-esque psychedelic romps. And Allman’s fluid slide guitar lines owe a bit more directly to the blues than do Roberts’, so it isn’t a one-for-one comparison. Nonetheless, the two share an adventurous musical spirit and an awe-inspiring sense of transcendence when they lead their fellow musicians mid-song into uncharted territory.

As it turns out, both also share an ambivalence towards the term “Southern rock.” Both guitar players’ feelings stem more from the musical baggage of the term than any sort of rejection of regional identity. “Yeah we are from the South and we rock,” Roberts says, “and in itself, that phrase works, but not with the meaning it’s been given now. I’m not going on about ‘my neck has always been red and my collar’s still blue’ or anything. But I love Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers Band, people like that.”

Still, when people ask what sort of music he plays exactly, Roberts typically resorts to the simple answer: “I usually say rock and roll. And then they say, ‘well what kind exactly,’” he laughs. “So I just say ‘rock and roll with the roots showing.’ I figure if you say that and you live by that credo, you aren’t

afraid of any of the roots of the music or anything. And we’re not afraid of country music; we’re not afraid of blues music. So that’s about right, really.”

All of this probably comes as no surprise to Roberts’ growing fan base, which is well-versed in his familiarity with the pantheon of rock and roll legends, both through his guitar-playing and his impassioned covers, but his musical beginnings are a bit surprising for somebody who has become a local guitar god. “I was a singer first,” he explains. “I grew up singing in school plays and church choirs. I didn’t start playing the guitar until I was 15 or 16 years old.”

It was right around that time that Roberts first met Ryan Monroe, the gifted singer and keyboard player who formed Captain Easy with Roberts after high school and who would tour with him throughout the Southeast for about five years. They met, believe it or not, when both were performing in a production of *Grease* at the newly opened Dutch Fork High School. “I was Danny Zuko, and he was Kenickie,” Roberts remembers with a smile. “That’s really where I learned how to be in a band – it was like going to college.”

Captain Easy featured songs by both Monroe and Roberts and had a jam-friendly, anything-goes sort of vibe that made it a popular live act, particularly when Roberts’ already substantial guitar skills were put in the mix with Monroe’s active keyboard parts and ear for clever, elaborate arrangements.

When Captain Easy split up after a New Years Eve show in 2004 (Ryan Monroe would go on to join the acclaimed Band of Horses and tour around the world), Roberts began playing a few dates as lead guitarist for Danielle Howle and started forming a new band. The first member of the Hinges was rhythm guitarist, Robert Walker, whose band Man at Arms broke up the same day as Captain Easy and who had previously worked at a local deli with Roberts. From there, the band went through a series of changes before settling into their current line-up, which coalesced not long after the group put out its debut record, 2005’s *The Sugarbird Test*. Leslie Branham was brought in to play guitar and banjo and sing back-up vocals (before the two became romantically involved) and, after original bassist Jim Taylor left, Corey Stephens from Milledgeville, Georgia, joined the band.



*“Recording is an entirely different **art form**”*



Photo by Thomas Hammond

"I just called him up after Jim had to leave," Roberts recalls. "We knew each other from when Captain Easy use to play Milledgeville – he had sat in with us on bass before. At the time, I lived in a farmhouse out in Irmo, which was great because we were set out far enough away from anybody that we could play all night." When Stephens came up to practice for the first time, "We just played and played and played, and it worked immediately," he recounts fondly. "He's been driving three hours every time to play with us ever since."

Burns Out Bright drummer Chris Shirah joined the Hinges right around the same time as Stephens and helped the band make *My War Cry Is Amor* (2007) – which still stands as their crowning musical statement on record – but he ended up leaving to pursue other projects. The band eventually settled on Dennis Ware, who had played in The Mountain Express and King Hippo and also had a bizarre connection to Roberts. "He was actually the first drummer I ever played with, back when I was trying to be just a singer," Roberts says. "[It was so long ago] that we didn't even recognize each other until later."

Between the two accomplished, full-length albums and a tour schedule that quickly came to match Captain Easy's, Josh Roberts and the Hinges quickly joined the top echelon of regional bands, opening for Robert Randolph, Drive-By Truckers, and Band of Horses, among others. A solo EP of more singer/songwriter-oriented material followed, and the band has spent the past few years hard at work on a follow-up.

Roberts speaks of his band's musical success with obvious pride. "We have a great rapport," he says. "Every fifth song or so [live], we'll dive off a cliff and see where it takes us." These moments, where band members drift away from the song structure and feel each other out for where they are going next, are some of the most chill-inducing moments you will find in live music.

The power of the band's live show is so great that it convinced sound engineer and producer Alan Moon to join the Hinges team as producer and band promoter. He inspires super fans like Joel Hudson to tape many of the band's shows and upload them to the Live Music Archive, an online database primarily geared towards jam band tape culture.

To Roberts and company though, it's business as usual. "It's all about listening to each other and taking a chance when it comes to you," he explains. "As long as you are listening to each other, taking a chance is easy to do once you decide to do it." The other metaphor he uses is "just riding. You can't plan ahead, because that's when you get in trouble. You just got to follow the road and watch for the turns."

It's not just instrumental prowess that makes Roberts great – he is also a top-notch songwriter and singer who can get by just as often with nothing but an acoustic guitar and his voice. He'll be the first to admit that his musical heroes

are "all those guys from the '60s and '70s – Dylan, Neil Young, Led Zeppelin – that's what I wanted to be like [when I was growing up]." But Roberts also has a surprising interest in pre-war musical forms in both blues and folk traditions. "In high school, I went through a huge phase where I listened to nothing but blues, ... especially the Delta blues, Robert Johnson, Son House, but also the electric stuff. Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker, in particular," Robert reminisces. He also talks a lot about discovering the Harry Smith anthology of pre-war folk music, which had a formative impact on his songwriting right around the writing and recording of *My War Cry Is Amor*.

"I loved how they just sang syllables – so a lot of them ended up on the album," he says. "I also write lyrics phonetically sometimes. I know Kurt Cobain did that, and all those death metal guys do it. I like trying to fit good images or meanings into something you've already mumbled or yelled in the first place. It's a good challenge."

Roberts also talks about taking lines from television shows or films as a basis for writing songs but demurs when assigning specific meanings or stories to individual songs. "Things develop new meanings over time," he says. "And even at my most directly autobiographical, it's only about 30-50 percent."

As a vocalist, Roberts has one of those voices that critics like to call "whiskey soaked." It's a weathered, expressive instrument that lingers in one's mind, somehow conveying a sense of gravity or wisdom even when he is "just muttering syllables." Of course, he has always had the support of some wonderful harmony singers as well.

"I can't take any credit for that," he readily admits. "I can say 'how about some harmonies here,' but I can't sing them. It's the biggest hole in my [musicianship]. Ryan Monroe, Leslie [Branham], Corey [Stephens] – they sing anything, all sorts of notes and parts. I'm just blessed to have always worked with such great singers."

Roberts says he can train himself to sing simple harmonies though, and, despite his difficulties, he has some other impressive talents to make up for it. "I can play lead and sing at the same time, no problem," he says, crediting muscle memory and a strategy of "not thinking about either of them" as he does it. He's also been stretching himself in the studio for the new record, employing some Jimmy Page-style guitar harmonies in lieu of traditional guitar chords.

"Literally nine guitars are playing the chords, with no rhythm guitar," he explains excitedly. "It sounds really cool, kind of like an electric piano." This attention to detail speaks to Roberts' different approach in the studio this time around. "Recording is a different art form entirely, at least it feels like that to me," he admits. "With the Hinges, it's always been 'let's go in and rock it out,' and then it's mostly done, with a minimum of overdubs. This time has been much different."

Roberts is looking to release his new, as yet untitled record sometime early next year. In the meantime, expect him to be on stage, in front of crowds all across the Southeast, keeping the rock and roll spirit of possibility and wonder alive. Thank God.

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## Jeffrey Day and Looking Ahead

By Jeffrey Day

Another year, another art season. The biggest news for this season may be that the Nickelodeon Theatre should be opening the doors to its new home in a former movie theatre on Main Street by the end of the year. The Nick, an independent movie theatre featuring art house films, is one of the great gems of Columbia, and its opening will only make the city better.

Also on Main Street, small galleries and businesses that have been showing art on the First Thursday of every month have really revitalized the area. The shows and level of activity recently have taken a leap in quality and quantity. Of particular note is the transformation of the Tapp's Arts Center. When renovations are completed this fall, the building will have 30 studios as well as exhibition spaces.

During the past few years, Columbia has become a real hotbed of new music ranging from classical contemporary, exemplified best by the Southern Exposure new music series at USC, to more improvisational jazz and just plain-old-wacky sounds served up by several local organizers. The latter concerts have been nomadic creatures, but with the opening of Conundrum Music Hall in West Columbia this summer, they now have a home.

Some great news on the visual art front is that the 701 Center for Contemporary Art is stepping up to fill the gap left by the demise of the Triennial exhibition of contemporary art in South Carolina with a two-part Biennial. While these are just a few noteworthy happenings, there's much more on its way. Here's a guide to what's happening in the coming year.

### Music

Not only is it a good time for contemporary music in Columbia, it's also a good time for classical music, which in the hands of a few local folks, is getting more contemporary all the time. After a year of more traditional



Vadim Gluzman // Soloist for the First USC Symphony Concert

works, the South Carolina Philharmonic is back with some new music scattered throughout the season: Popcorn Superhet Receiver by Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead, Rusty Air in Carolina by Mason Bates, Under An Indigo Sky by Charleston-based and USC-trained composer Edward Hart, and a concerto with elements of jazz and rock, written by Friedrich Gulda. This is not to ignore the time-tested works – and there are some great ones scheduled: a whole night of Mozart, Beethoven's No. 9 and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique). And no one will fall asleep listening to Martina Filjak playing the Rach 3.

Another exciting development comes as the Philharmonic joins forces with the Columbia Museum of Art chamber music series. Series director Edward Arron, a cellist, and chamber regular Yosuke Kawaski, violin, will perform Brahms Double Concerto with the orchestra, and another frequent chamber guest, Jennifer Frautschi, is soloist for the Korngold Violin Concerto. Arron has more than kept up the quality of the chamber series concert since founder Charles Wadsworth left the stage, but he hasn't strayed much from the more conservative programming. Count on music by Dvorak, Liszt, Faure, Schumann, Beethoven, and Mozart performed by some of the best chamber



Edward Arron // Host and Performer of the Columbia Museum of Art Chamber Music Series

For those who need something a bit more innovative, check out Conundrum Music Hall. Playing there this fall are Jeff Kimmel, a Chicago-based bass clarinetist, improviser, and composer, guitarist Michael Pisaro, percussionist Gregg Stewart, and the multi-instrumental group, Causing a Tiger.

## Visual Arts

Big changes – at least on the personnel front – recently took place at the Columbia Museum of Art. Chief curator Todd Herman left to run a museum in Arkansas, and development director, Scott Nolan, has headed to North Carolina to run a public radio station. Both are very talented guys who did a lot for the museum. But even bigger news is a big show about big views of a big country. Nature and the Grand American Vision: Masterpieces of the Hudson River School Painters is made up of 45 paintings by Albert Bierstadt, Martin Johnson Heade, Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and others. The exhibition will include works done in the Northeast – especially the mountain regions

musicians in the world. And, for a little change-up this season, Brooklyn Rider, a group that's bringing new life to older music and commissioning new music like crazy, will perform.

The city's other orchestra – the USC Symphony – also has scheduled its most exciting season in years. The concert opens with guest violinist Vadim Gluzman, who has been performing with the orchestra for a decade. Michael Ludwig, will be back to play John Corigliano's *The Red Violin* – something he did with the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra in Russia this summer. Columbia-based pianist, Phillip Bush, will make his first appearance with the orchestra this fall as well.

The season ends with an extraordinary production the likes of which has rarely been seen in a city the size of Columbia. The multi-media concert/drama *Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezin* tells the story of Jewish concentration camp prisoners who formed a chorus to perform Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*. This is only the thirteenth time the piece has been performed and the first time in the American South. The Southern Exposure series at USC has, as usual, an outstanding lineup starting with the American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME), a group dedicated to 20th and 21st century masterworks with an emphasis on American composers. The series also includes the Calder String Quartet and the Imani Winds.

*The Course of Empire* // part of a Hudson River School exhibition at the Columbia Museum of Art.



of New York – as well as the West, South America, and Italy. The show-stopper should be Cole's five-painting cycle, *The Course of Empire*, which would make for an incredible show on its own.

The McKissick Museum, which underwent traumatic transformations a few years ago with a loss of gallery space

and a broader mission, has a new leader. Jane Przybysz, who worked at the museum as curator of research and folklife in the 1990s, returned early this year as director. While away, she ran and established a new home for the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles. Przybysz has an intriguing educational background for a museum person: a bachelor's degree in English, a master's degree in theater directing, and a Ph.D. in performance studies, so we wait, with anticipation, to see how this influences what she has in mind for the McKissick. For the next nine months, however, the museum has no art shows scheduled.

The South Carolina State Museum has had a much lower art profile in recent years. But always one to come up with historically relevant and visually interesting exhibitions, art curator Paul Matheny is organizing an exhibition of South Carolina abstract art from the past 50 years. Of course you'll find art exhibits at various other venues, including HoFP, City Art, Anastasia & Friends, and if Art, to name a few on what is admittedly a short list of commercial outlets, Vista Studios/Gallery 80808, and the art galleries at USC and Benedict College.



## Theater

This year marks the passing of an era as Trustus Theater founders Jim and Kay Thigpen prepare to retire at the end of the season. They, and the many actors, directors, designers, and bartenders at Trustus, changed the face of theater in Columbia. Many have already moved on and are as missed as Jim and Kay will be. Founding directors are a tough act to follow, but we're looking forward to some bright lights providing a bright future for Trustus.

In the meantime, the season opens with a rerun of *The Great American Trailer Park Musical*. That is, thank goodness, followed by the Pulitzer Prize-winning *August: Osage County*, Jim Thigpen's directorial swansong at Trustus; the popular and critically-acclaimed *Spring Awakening*; and August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, one of the few Wilson plays Trustus hasn't done. Also on the bill are *Passing Strange*, *Avenue Q*, and a full lineup of black-box shows.

Workshop Theatre finally has a new executive director. Jeni McCaughan already had served as interim director several times and done great work holding things together. The theater is fortunate to have talked her into coming on full-time. It's good to know that McCaughan is on board to help the theater move, before long, to Elmwood Avenue.

The Workshop year gets off to a classy and upbeat start with Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*, followed by *The Dixie Swim Club*, which is about five women who were on a college swim team together and are meeting for ladies-only time at the beach. In Andrew Lipka's *Wild Party*, a vaudeville couple breaks up with a party attended by a semi-reformed prostitute, a prizefighter, the flamboyant and incestuous brothers, a theater producer, a lesbian madam, and a mute dancer. For a different kind of party, in honor of the 100th anniversary of Tennessee Williams' birth, the theater is doing *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Looking for a bigger birthday party for Tennessee? Head to Theatre South Carolina at USC. The theater will perform *A Streetcar Named Desire*, followed by a "Tennessee Williams Festival: Evening of One-Act Plays" which will include *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, *Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, and *This Property is Condemned*. On the main stage, you'll also find *Polaroid Stories*, a reworking of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* into a play about homeless kids, *Macbeth*, and *Present Laughter*. Still, some of the more intriguing works at USC take place at the Lab Theatre.

Town Theatre is also mounting several tried-and-true musicals – *South Pacific*, *Forever Plaid*, and *Grease*, as well as newer plays *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and one big surprise, the recent theatrical adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*.



"Drac" is back at Columbia City Ballet.

## Dance

You can find nearly all of Columbia's dance companies and others from around the state in one place for The South Carolina Festival of Dance in October. Organized by the dance program at USC, the centerpiece is a night of performances by the Columbia City Ballet, Columbia Classical Ballet, Carolina Ballet Theatre, Dance FX, and Unbound. That will be followed by a showcase of pre-professional companies and groups.

Last year the Columbia City Ballet had its 50th birthday, and this year the Columbia Classical Ballet is celebrating its 20th anniversary with its first full productions of two classical masterworks – Swan Lake and Le Corsaire. The company's "LifeChance: International Gala of Stars" gathers great dancers from throughout the country for a big night of dance from classical to modern.

Columbia City Ballet is offering an interesting mix, bringing back its *Off the Wall* and *Onto the Stage*, inspired by the painting of South Carolina artist, Jonathan Green, and the campy fun of *Dracula*, along with the classical ballet works *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Dance at USC won't just be showcasing others at the festival. The company will have a night of classical and contemporary dance, "Architects of Dance," including Twyla Tharp's early masterpiece, *Eight Jelly Rolls*, along with Petipa's grand ballet, *Paquita*, and a pas de trois from guest choreographer, Luc de Laresse. Great dancers from the New York City Ballet will again join the student dancers in the spring. Also, Wideman/Davis Dance is still in residence at USC and no doubt will unveil several compelling works.

So, don't  
say there's  
nothing to do  
Columbia –

**this list is only  
scratching the  
surface.**

# Husked

**By Teresa Haskew**

At just thirteen,  
Tommy Lett,  
in his pegged-leg jeans,  
called her beautiful,  
pulled her behind the kitchen door,  
face so close his freckles blurred.  
Breath nearly left  
when she smelled him,  
unfamiliar and urgent,  
her heart flooding with blood –  
a diastolic drowning –  
as his tongue went into her mouth.

Something fancy fluttered alive  
in the bottom of her belly  
and she wondered wildly  
if a kiss like this could make a baby.  
Though she knew her mother  
would disapprove, she drank him in,  
watering a husked seed  
sprouting naked, hungry – unprepared  
for the price she'd pay to keep it fed.

*Teresa Haskew's poems have appeared in Press 53 Open Awards, Atlanta Review, The Main Street Rag, Emrys Journal, and others. She has a poem forthcoming in Pearl, and a short story in the anthology, Altered States, edited by Amy Locklin and published by Mint Hill Books. She lives in Greenville, SC.*

# A Certain Stretch of Road

**By Ivan Young**

I held the V of a slingshot the length  
of the band, forearm tensed, eye closed.

It seemed like all day I stood wondering  
about death, whether I could trust instinct,

or had I failed already; in the ecstasy of release,  
I knew the truth. I set the stone tumbling,

became an awkward periphery - the feathered body  
half in shadow, my boyish arms still stretched

as if beseeching for something I couldn't  
tell you even now. The rock alive between

us, out of control, unknown, turning  
in some inevitable physical law. The ending

was subdued: a hollow thump, the way down  
stuck to the blood on my hands as I traced

the wound on the sparrow's side. Even  
as I pushed the glistening intestines in place.

The wings quivered in my palm, the yard  
as empty as it would ever be, and I dropped

the dying bird into jimson weed before I turned  
and kicked a stone up the road, the stretch

where weeds sang dirges, where dust and honeysuckle  
masked the horse manure hanging in the air.

*Ivan Young was born in Columbia, SC and lived there for 32 years before moving to Pennsylvania and then Maryland. He received his M. F. A. in Creative Writing from the University of South Carolina. Author of A Shape in the Waves and a 2011 winner of a Maryland Individual Artist Award, his work has most recently been published in Crab Orchard Review, Barnwood, The London Magazine, and Blue Mesa Review.*

# Green Revolver

**By Worthy Evans**

Four weeks ago Matthew moved  
some bones from the back yard  
to the front yard. Three weeks ago he  
helped his mom around the house,  
picking up laundry, throwing loose paper  
away. She gave him two dollars.  
Two weeks ago I took him  
to a dollar store. Matthew walked back  
to the wall of dime toys and found  
a green revolver, little gray blackjack  
and gold handcuffs, shrink-wrapped against  
an upbeat cardboard law-enforcement sign.  
One week ago he climbed into the truck  
with his revolver that he constantly  
clicked. He left it there when I pushed him  
out for school, and it sits here right now,  
on the seat. Every person talking about work  
on the walking trail, every mocking bird,  
every passing car, click, click, click.

*Excerpted from the book, Green Revolver,  
University of South Carolina Press, 2010.*

# The Madman's Divining Time

**By Worthy Evans**

After the rain, we walked out onto the patio. The air was still wet and the bark of the fat pine tree was streaked with hits and misses. I've never seen our backyard so green and liquid. Mona checked her plants to see if the passing shower gave them anything at all. She worked her thumbs into the pots of petunias, pansies, marigolds whatever they were, a wild palate of color mixed and matched by a madman. "He has a plan for us," Mona said. "With each shower he carves us up into little pieces and shows us colors we never knew we were." I looked down at the thin puddle on the porch. In the twilight I was a muddle of ruddy bumps and sandy dribbles of gray hair. Mona, of course, showed herself in blues and oranges, ochre, velvety red, peach jasmine and touches of deep purple where the setting sun steals the other colors away. Maybe, if I worked the dirt up under my fingernails, there would be hope for me. Mona had already left the deck and soared off into the leftover sunshine to dance with that fiend.

*Excerpted from the book, Green Revolver,  
University of South Carolina Press, 2010.*

## The Domino that Refused to Fall

By Ken May

During recent months, the South Carolina Arts Commission has received national media attention. Of course, our state is no stranger to the national spotlight, but the light is usually shining on someone doing something wrong or embarrassing and attracting the attention of late-night TV comedians. This time, however, South Carolina and our state arts agency were in the spotlight because of something good and rather unexpected, and the coverage appeared in reputable national publications such as the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. The root of all this attention was something negative – something potentially very damaging for our state’s students, communities and reputation.

In January 2011, in her inaugural address, Gov. Nikki Haley proposed cutting all state funding for the S.C. Arts Commission and “privatizing” the agency. This proposal was one of several such plans offered by governors around the country, and so South Carolina was pulled into the national debate about whether government should invest in the arts.

The Kansas Arts Commission did not survive the battle. In numerous national articles, Kansas was cited as the “first” state to close its state arts agency, implying that a second and third state might soon follow in a domino effect. South Carolina was mentioned as potentially the next state arts agency on the chopping block and was widely considered the most vulnerable state after Kansas.

So, why did the Arts Commission survive, when many regional and national observers thought all was lost?

The Arts Commission was saved by strong, coordinated advocacy for the arts and legislators who listened to their constituents. Arts supporters, teachers, artists, parents, community leaders, business executives – a myriad of folks around the state -- spoke up loudly and often in favor of public funding for an agency mandated to serve all of South Carolina. Throughout the legislative budget process, both the S.C. House of Representatives and Senate showed



Photo by Mark Green

strong, bi-partisan support for the arts and, when the Governor vetoed the entire Arts Commission budget, they overwhelmingly overrode that veto.

*“The quality, diversity, and sophistication of the arts in our state have the potential to present a very **positive image to the nation and the world.**”*

Those watching the debate outside our state did not know what we knew – that 92 percent of South Carolinians support state government funding for the arts (fall 2009 statewide poll by the USC Institute for Public Service and Policy Research). Our citizens understand that, for a tiny per-capita investment of their state tax dollars (42 cents per person for the current fiscal year), the state is able to secure federal and local matching funds for the arts, which, combined with state funds, support access to the arts for all citizens statewide. This is a good deal for our state and also the right thing to do in a democratic society—to ensure that all citizens and all communities have the opportunity to benefit from the arts.

The alternative to public arts investment at the state level – so called “privatization” – simply will not work. Yes, private, philanthropic investment is very important to the arts, but that investment is almost exclusively, and appropriately, local. Not only would a privatized state arts agency lose federal funds that require a state match, it would also be forced to compete with its own constituents for private funds – the same funds that our grants now help to leverage. Even if such an effort were successful (and that is doubtful), why should we pay the transaction costs to take money out of the local pool in order to turn around and put it right back in? It makes no sense.

But, really, how much does this matter? Are the arts really that important to our state?

According to a recent study by researchers at the Moore School of Business at USC, creative industries in South Carolina contribute more than \$9.2 billion to the state’s economy annually, support more than 78,000 jobs, and return more than \$570 million in tax revenues to the state each year. That’s approximately 3 percent of the total state economy. An industry of this magnitude is worthy of consistent, focused attention and investment at the state level.

The arts help attract other high-value industries by offering the vibrant cultural life sought by the well-educated, creative workers employed by these industries. These workers, along with our citizens and visitors, want to enjoy the quality of life available in cities and towns with lively and culturally rich urban centers. The arts frequently are catalysts for neighborhood and downtown revival, and there are many good examples in our state: the Congaree Vista and Main Street in Columbia; downtown Charleston, downtown Newberry, Main Street and the West End in Greenville, and many others. In addition, quality arts education – the goal of our state’s nationally recognized Arts in Basic Curriculum initiative (supported by Arts Commission funding) – helps students develop the creativity, problem-solving, self-discipline, and collaborative skills that they will need to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

The quality, diversity, and sophistication of the arts in our state have the potential to present a very positive image to the nation and the world. In the last several months, South Carolinians have made it clear that the image they want to see projected is that of a state that understands the value of the arts for everyone.

*Ken May is the executive director  
of the South Carolina Arts Commission.*



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## The Columbia Blues Festival, Take 17

By Michael Miller

It might seem strange that one of the prime, late-afternoon performance slots at this year's Columbia Blues Festival has been given to a single musician with an acoustic guitar. Isn't this the festival that takes great pride in introducing local fans to red-hot bands and electric guitarists such as Joe Louis Walker, Smokin' Joe Kubek, Sonny Landreth, and Eddie Turner?

Well, this particular acoustic-guitar playing dude is not some snoozy, Saturday-afternoon strummer. He's Leo Kottke, one of the most admired fingerstyle players in the world. His name is often mentioned alongside genre-bending greats such as Michael Hedges, John Fahey, Richard Thompson, and Will Ackerman. Kottke has been at this for more than 40 years, and he's recorded more than 30 albums. So it's safe to say he's a big deal.

But you have to delve a little deeper to understand why Kottke has been awarded such an honored slot at the Columbia Blues Festival, which takes place next month on Saturday, Oct. 22. The folks who stage this annual event go by the collective name of Word of Mouth Productions, and they're a batch of unapologetic, deeply devoted music junkies. Their personal histories of gig-attendance, working in record stores, etc., go back decades, so when they see the chance to bring someone like Leo Kottke to town, they jump.

So now you're thinking these WOMP dudes must be geezers, and well, OK, it's safe to say they've seen a lot of music trends come and go. But that's the beauty of it. They know that John Lee Hooker and Jimi Hendrix influenced tons of modern bands and that Leo Kottke was influenced by Skip James and Son House, which makes him a perfect fit for the Blues Festival's vibe.

And if any musical event in Columbia has a vibe, it's the Blues Festival. This year marks the 17th edition of this gloriously laidback affair in King Park near Five Points, and given all the years it's been staged as a free show and



Photo by Mark Green

with all the extraordinary talent who've graced the stage (R.L. Burnside, David Lindley, Johnny Winter, to name a few), it's easy to see why this is one of the most under-appreciated arts events in Columbia.

Although he's played the Newberry Opera House in recent year's, Kottke's Blues Festival set will mark his first visit to Columbia since an appearance in December 1989 at Greenstreet's, a fondly remembered Five Points club. He had just released his 21st album called "My Father's Face," and he was ruminating on his 20-year career and wondering if all the hard work he was putting in would extinguish his love of music.

"But the only thing that will do that is if you take it too seriously," he said at the time. "The minute you begin to think all this means something, then it becomes labor. It becomes hard to do, and you lose interest in it."

Congratulations, Leo. Your interest has held firm for 22 years, just like the fellows who stage the Blues Festival.

By the way, fans of electric blues shouldn't fret. There will be plenty of the plugged-in stuff this year to help you shake your money-maker. And as for the Blues Festival introducing new music to Columbia, wait until you see the dude from Down Under who adds a didgeridoo to the mix. Australian blues in King Park. It's going to be a first.

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# NEWBERRY Opera House

## 2011-2012 Season of Stars



### September

9/11 John Wagner and Friends  
9/16 Jerry Butler  
9/21 "Satisfaction" Rolling Stones Tribute  
9/22 Stephen Eager "Something to Talk About"  
9/23 Jeannie Seely  
9/25 Maurice Williams  
9/28 & 29 Community Players-Always Patsy Cline  
9/30 Delbert McClinton

### October

10/1 Oktoberfest, NOH Guild Beer Garden  
10/2 Loretta Lynn  
10/5 Civil War Voices  
10/9 Asleep at the Wheel  
10/11 Art Exhibit Reception  
Nick Davenport & Thomas Thompson  
Pam Tillis  
10/16 Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians  
10/17 Lezginka, Russian Dance Co. of Daghestan  
10/21 Sam Bush  
10/21-23 NCP at The Ritz  
10/23 Wizard of Oz, The Musical  
10/28&29 College Theatre Dept. *Doubt, A Parable*  
10/28-31 NCP at The Ritz  
10/29 Family Fun Night, Memorial Park

### November

11/4 Robert Earl Keen  
11/5 Eddie Miles "Elvis & Country Legends"  
11/6 Bowen's Island Oyster Roast  
11/11 Chi of Shaolin, Tale of the Dragon  
11/13 The Grascals  
11/14 SC Storytelling Network, *Tellabration*  
11/15 Chicago Brass w/ Sally Cherrington-Beggs  
11/17 Jane Pope Cooper, *Jewelry*  
& Celena Hudgens Burnett, *Potter*  
11/19 Cowboy Movies with The Saddle Pals

### December

12/1 Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver Christmas  
12/2 Palmetto Mastersingers  
12/5 An Irish Christmas  
12/6 Christmas w/ Emile Pandolfi  
12/7 Carolina FreeStyle Holiday Show  
12/8 B J Thomas  
12/9 Vintage Christmas, *Downtown Newberry*  
12/10 208th Army Reserve Band, Charlotte  
12/10 Harley Davidson Toy Run  
12/12 An Evening w/ Chad and Jeremy  
12/13 John Tesh - *Big Band Christmas!*  
12/14 A Christmas Carol, *The Musical*  
12/18 The Lettermen  
12/31 New Years Celebration w/Dick Goodwin Big Band

### January

1/13-14 Newberry Ballet Guild, *Upon the Wind*  
1/19 Travis Tritt

### 1/20-21

1/21 NCP at The Flying Pie  
1/22 Doc Watson and David Holt  
1/28 Glenn Miller Orchestra  
1/29 Rigoletto, *Opera*  
Jake Shimabukuro

### February

2/2 Ain't Misbehavin', *The Musical*  
2/3 Hotel California "A Salute to the Eagles"  
2/4 Miss Newberry College Pageant  
2/8 The Temptations  
2/11 Abbey Simon, *Pianist*  
2/12 Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder  
2/14 Brigadoon, *The Musical*  
2/17 Ray Price  
2/18 The Four Freshmen  
2/19 Arlo Guthrie  
2/23-24 Newberry College Theatre Department  
2/25 James Gregory "The Funniest Man in America"  
2/29 Burlesque to Broadway

### March

3/2 An Acoustic Evening with The Buckingham  
3/3 Cowboy Movies with The Saddle Pals  
3/4 Lee Greenwood & Louise Mandrell  
3/15 Vienna Boys Choir  
3/16 Irish Fling  
3/22 Steep Canyon Rangers  
3/23-31 NCP at Newberry Country Club  
3/28 The Highwaymen  
*Musical Tribute, Waylon-Willie-Johnny*

### April

4/12 Jefferson Starship  
4/13 An Evening with Nanci Griffith  
4/14 The Oak Ridge Boys  
4/18 Stand by Your Man - *The Tammy Wynette Story*  
4/19 Canadian Brass  
4/20-22 NCP at Prosperity Civic Center  
4/21 Pork in the Park, *Downtown Newberry*  
4/22 Jim Brickman, "An Evening of Romance"  
4/23 Newberry College Music Dept., *Opera Scenes*  
4/29 Doug and Bunny Williams

### May

5/5 Summer Fun - *Horseshoe Tournament*  
5/11 Artie Shaw Orchestra  
5/12 Hen Party, *Comedy*  
5/12 Helena Mayfest  
5/19 Rick Alviti  
5/20 Dance Station Recital  
5/25 Mid Carolina Band Concert  
5/26 DC Danceworks Recital

### Summer

6/14 Whitmire Party in the Pines  
6/15 Taste of Newberry  
8/3 Little Mountain Reunion

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