

JASPER



Columbia Museum of Art



Summer Camps at the CMA

This summer, the CMA is offering a variety of unique summer camps to capture the interest of any young artist. Having your child participate in our summer camps is a great way for them to think creatively, practice problem-solving skills, and have fun! All CMA summer camps are instructed by professional arts educators. These week-long camps are offered for ages 4 - 18. Check out all 27 camps on our website.



Community Awards Celebration

Saturday, June 4 | 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Join us on Boyd Plaza to kick off the summer with a community thank-you event featuring Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin! Our recognition with the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for the Arts and the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the highest honors from both our state and our nation, is as much about the generosity and spirit of South Carolina as it is about the CMA. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you with a family-friendly celebration featuring hands-on art activities, gallery tours, and more! Plus, enjoy free admission all day (10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.). Free.



ArtBreak: Gullah Culture with Teaching Artist Ramona LaRoche

Tuesday, June 7 | Café at 10:30 a.m. | Lecture at 11:00 a.m.

Begin the morning at the museum with pastries and coffee sold at The Wired Goat pop-up café. In honor of *Daufuskie Memories*, Ramona LaRoche explores the cultural heritage of the Gullah-Geechee Nation. Free with membership or admission.



Artist Salon with Kathleen Robbins

Friday, June 17 | Noon

South Carolina Artist Kathleen Robbins discusses her photography in the CMA Community Gallery exhibition, *DESCENT: Mississippi Delta Photographs, 1999-2014*. Free with admission or membership.



Soda City Story Slam: Memory Reframed

Thursday, June 23 | Doors at 6:00 p.m. | Program at 7:00 p.m.

Based on the popular podcast, *The Moth*, the CMA hosts a Story Slam. Local storytellers share brief autobiographical stories on the theme of "memory" in celebration of our *Daufuskie Memories* exhibition. Prizes will be awarded by a panel of judges: filmmaker Roni Nicole Henderson, Seth Gadsden of the Nickelodeon, and Betsy Newman from SCETV. The evening is hosted by Shannon Ivey, MFA, a professional actor, activist, and lover of a good tale. Recommended for all ages. \$10 / \$8 for members.

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



WRITTEN BY ANNIE BAKER
DIRECTED BY DEWEY SCOTT-WILEY
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THE FLICK

MAY 20 - JUNE 4



 TICKETS

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Dear Friends,

When Jasper publishes the next issue of *Fall Lines – a literary convergence* this summer we will celebrate our 5th full year of bringing Columbia artists and arts lovers the most in-depth coverage of Midlands area art that we can muster. Six times per year for the past five years we've done our best to faithfully share our pride and excitement about the most impressive film, theatre, dance, music, literature, and visual arts that Columbia, SC has to offer.

As most of you know, Jasper is not an advertorial publication—you can't buy a story in Jasper, nor does buying an ad guarantee you a story. Our circulation isn't huge. We don't target high income households and use direct mailing to make sure the *right people* see our magazine. The people—all artists—who work to create and maintain Jasper do it for the sheer pleasure of doing so and as a way of helping to create the type of community we want to live in. To that end, 100% of our funding has come from the generosity of the members of the Jasper Guild (page 06) and our few and devoted advertising partners. We have very little overhead because

we mostly work from home after our day jobs are done, and usually in the wee hours of the night. No, this is not the way you make much money in publishing and people who know our business plan often cringe.

But it's never been about turning a profit, and it never will be.

Starting with the September issue of Jasper the publication of the magazine will be conducted under the auspices of The Jasper Project, a new non-profit arts organization with the goal of facilitating multi-disciplinary arts projects among emerging and established artists. You'll learn more about The Jasper Project in the September issue of the magazine when we write about our first project, *Marked by the Water*, a multidisciplinary commemoration of the first anniversary of the South Carolina thousand year flood. (*Mark your calendars for October 4th to attend the book release and opening exhibition at Tapp's!*)

There will be other changes, and we think all are for the better.

In addition to *Fall Lines*, which is published every summer, Jasper will now be coming out twice per year, in September and March, in a new perfect bound, archival

format. There will be almost twice as many pages, but otherwise you'll still see the same quality of writing, photography, and design that you've seen for years. Our advertisers will now be our sponsors, and our Guild members will be able to deduct their donations.

Most importantly, Jasper will still be free. But only with your help.

In addition to availing ourselves of institutional funding opportunities, this summer, we'll be asking for your help in conducting our first ever Keep Jasper Free campaign. We believe the combination of your generosity with other funding and the continued support of the advertising sponsors who have been with us from the beginning—The Columbia Museum of Art, Harbison Theatre, Trustus Theatre, Columbia City Ballet, The Whig, Tapp's Arts Center, Indie Grits, Historic Columbia, Workshop Theatre, South Carolina Philharmonic, Cellar on Greene, Ed's Editions, Ramco, and more—will allow us to continue to make our contribution to creating the kind of community we all want to live in by publishing Jasper Magazine, the continuing word on Columbia arts.

Take care,



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

MAY/JUN 2016 / VOLUME 005 / ISSUE 005

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ISN'T IT TIME THAT YOU JOIN THE

JASPER GUILD

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

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

There's Good News for Jasper Guild Members!

New Guild Memberships and Renewals are Now

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Please consider becoming a part of the Jasper Team at one of the following levels:

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1 year delivery of Jasper to your home your name listed in
Jasper Magazine for 1 year - \$50

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The above + your name in LARGE LETTERS - \$100

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The above + free admission to the November 2016 JAY ceremony - \$250

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The above + your name or dedication printed on the centerfold - \$500

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The above + a Columbia Arts Scene Bonus Pack with tickets,
passes, books, & more! - \$1000

ARTIST PEER

Practicing artists are invited to join the Jasper Guild and see
your name in Jasper Magazine - \$25

*above the cost of a subscription (\$40) to the new (September 2016) perfect bound, archival Jasper Magazine – if you prefer to donate the full cost of membership by not receiving Jasper in your mailbox in September, March, and July, please indicate so upon joining, or contact Annie@Jaspercolumbia.com

Becoming an Artist

Khris Coolidge and the Arts Journey

BY CINDI BOITER



“My art is about people going through their days and trying to make sense of things. My starting point with a new piece is compassion and curiosity, which is also my starting point in counseling.”

– Khris Coolidge



Khris Coolidge has taken something of a circuitous route to becoming the practicing artist he is today.

After graduating from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio in 1985, Coolidge taught school in Japan, Ohio, and South Carolina. He transitioned from education to social work in 1997, earning his MSW from USC in 1999 and, two years later, beginning work as a clinical social worker providing counseling to individuals, couples, and families. Today, the artist serves as Coordinator of Social Work Training for the USC Counseling Center.

But that's just his day job.

To know Khris Coolidge as an artist you have to go back at least 20 years to the end of his undergraduate education, a time when he was experimenting with the possibility of art as a career. After taking several courses he approached a respected instructor and asked the teacher's opinion on whether Khris should consider art as a career. When the instructor replied that he liked the student's drawings, "but other people wouldn't cross the street to look at them," Coolidge says he

"dropped that idea as soon as I walked out." Words can be powerful. But the need to create and the sense that one's creations can make a contribution to culture are greater still.

Luckily Coolidge found even more powerful words decades later when participating in a clinical seminar with Deanna Leamon, an associate professor at USC at the time, which required the participants to create a sketch. Leamon's positive and affirming reaction to his work re-energized Coolidge. Since then, he has taken 14 courses taught by local artists including Mike Dwyer, Dawn Hunter, Grant Jackson, Blake Morgan, Brian Rego, and Khaldoune Bencheikh. Today, Coolidge says he "sees his arts journey as a story of relationships with people who encouraged me, helped me develop skills in various art forms, and in ways that gave me permission to take up some space artistically."

Jasper spent some time with Coolidge and asked him about where he, how he got here, and where he's going.





JASPER: I see a lot of Columbia-based artist Brian Rego in your work. Has he been an influence? Who else has influenced your work and how?

COOLIDGE: Brian's beautiful painting "Airstream" hangs in my house and reminds me of the excellence I'm shooting for. I took a painting class with Brian in 2008, and then took four more with him over the next few years. I found Brian to be just what I needed as a beginning painter. Aside from teaching me the basics and demonstrating how to approach a painting, Brian offered enthusiasm and encouragement, which gave me the permission to think of myself as an artist, even at that early stage in my development.

As far as artists, living or dead, whom I keep coming back to, they are: Marlene Dumas because she seems courageous in what she represents and expresses; Romare Bearden because he demonstrates such compassion and respect for the people in his work; Peter Doig because he imbues his figures in simple settings doing simple things with intrigue and significance; Picasso for his versatility; and Willem De Kooning because he said "I don't paint with ideas of art in mind. I see something that excites me. It becomes my content." That strikes me as a straight forward way to proceed.

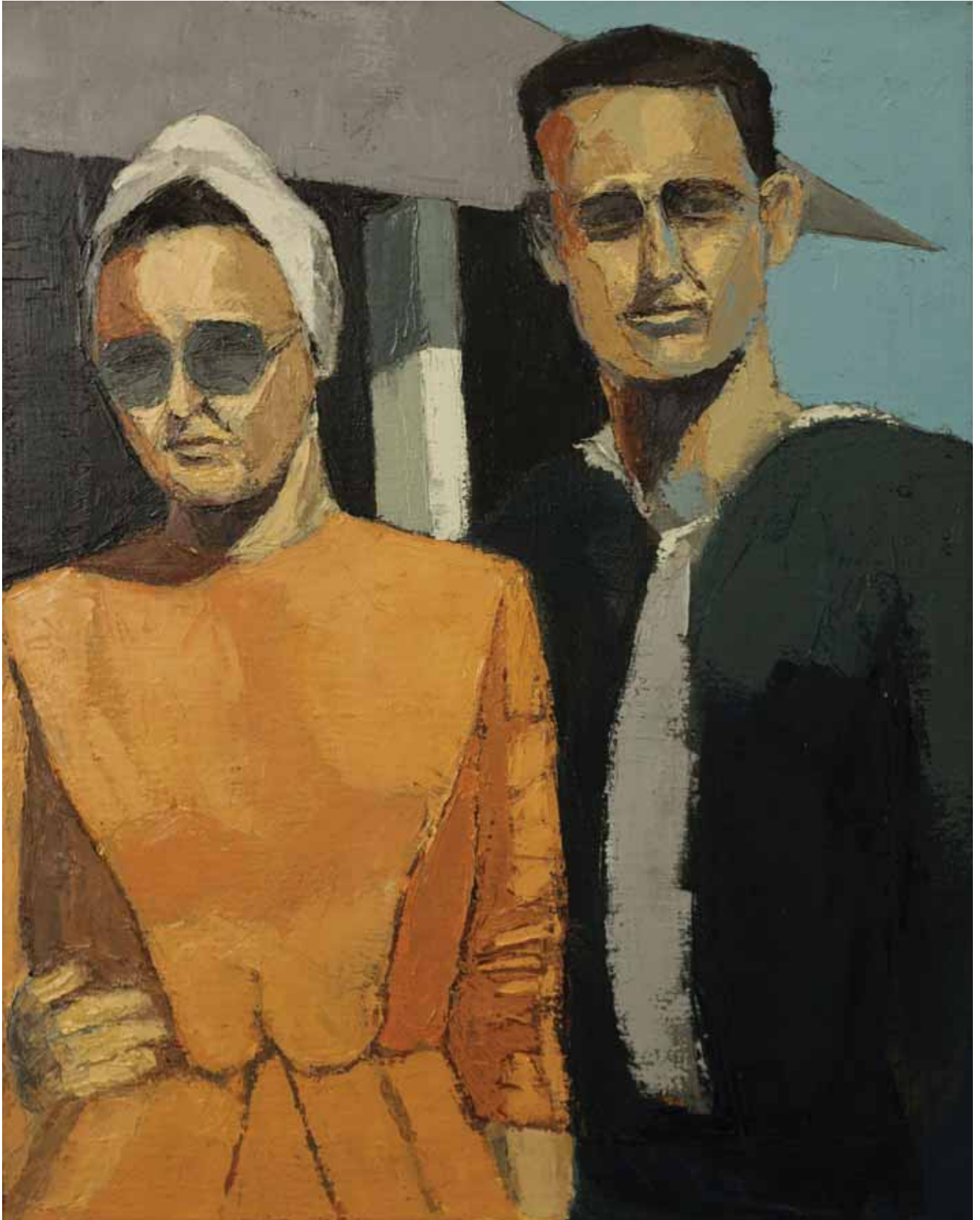
JASPER: You seem to stick to a fairly muted and organic color palette with soft and dusty hues—is this intentional and, if so, why? Can you talk about the role of color in your work?

COOLIDGE: I'm a muted guy, so in that sense, muted colors suit me. People often respond to the colors in my paintings, which surprised me early on because I don't think I made color choices in a deliberate manner. A color class with Dawn Hunter in 2010 helped me become more thoughtful and intentional in my choices. With the "Presence of Absence" paintings I made in 2013 and 2014, I chose muted colors to express some people's muted lives. These days I'm using somewhat stronger color, and I think that's me giving myself permission to discover and express those parts of me which are bolder.

JASPER: There is also something of a photographic quality to your work though it's certainly not photorealism. Do you paint from photographs or are you influenced by photography?

COOLIDGE: The "Presence of Absence" paintings were based on black and white family photographs from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. I was struck that by using these photographs I was using the vision of some now-deceased family member who snapped the shots. So, making the drawings first was a way to join with that person's vision but also develop my own, and in that sense make the images less photographic. Currently, none of my work is based on photography. The paintings and mixed media pieces I'm doing now are all done out of my head except for "Broken Record," which is based on a drawing from life I did of my wife, Leslie.





JASPER: Most artists seem to consider themselves perpetual students of their art form, whether they are visual artists or performing artists. Does this apply to you? And, if so, on a scale of 1 - 10 with 1 being a beginner and 10 being a master, where do you see yourself in your journey as an artist?

COOLIDGE: I read a good deal about different periods and styles and forms of art. I tend to prefer learning about modern and contemporary painting, but I've ventured into postcard art and Japanese Butoh dance. I've been interested in the work and personal stories of musicians like Jandek or the artist Henry Darger. Last year my wife and I visited the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park in Wilson, North Carolina and marveled at those giant contraptions and Mr. Simpson's inventiveness and mechanical know-how. My wife and I took a day trip in 2014 to Lake City to see the exhibit of Goya's "Los Caprichos," and then up to Florence to view the paintings of William H. Johnson. Talk about a day to be a student. I'm always carrying around some book containing an artist's imagery. This week I've been checking out the works of Françoise Gilot. I go to a good amount of shows in Columbia, and I view those as learning opportunities. I take long looks at David Yaghjian's paintings when he exhibits.

I began making art in 2004, so I've been plugging away for twelve years. I see myself as a beginner. I mostly see my limitations. But that's not a problem to me; it keeps me learning and working as hard as I have time to. Supposedly Picasso said it took him a lifetime to learn to paint like a child. I connect with that statement because it integrates mastery with being a beginner.

JASPER: What are some of the challenges you've met and mastered in your art and what are some that you are still working on?

COOLIDGE: When I was in eighth grade, I was small for my age, and I certainly wasn't the most talented player on my school's basketball team. But I won the "hustle award." So, over my lifetime I've learned one of the best things I can do is make effort. I haven't remotely mastered any aspect of art making, but I'm very clear that, for me, effort is key. That's what I most rely upon. That's where my confidence lies. One thing I consistently challenge myself to do is draw from life so that the way things look in some objective sense informs the way I draw and paint out of my head.

JASPER: Do you have a favorite painting of your own? Can you tell us about it?

COOLIDGE: I don't have a favorite painting, but I'll comment on one I completed in August 2015, "Broken Record." I like this one because of its layers of expression and connection and experience. Here's part of the story. In 1967, when I was eight years old, Frank and Nancy Sinatra released a song titled "Something Stupid." I recall my mom sitting on the floor of my sister's bedroom beside a portable record player playing that song over and over while she wrote down the lyrics. I waited 48 years to figure out a way to capture that impression.



I haven't remotely mastered any aspect of art making, but I'm very clear that, for me, effort is key. That's what I most rely upon. That's where my confidence lies.

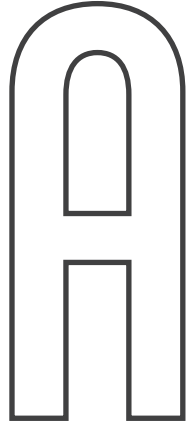




The painting also involved doing preparatory drawings of my wife posed by *her* mother's portable record player, and when I look at it now, I appreciate all the things my wife does to support my efforts, from making the frame which holds "Broken Record," to sitting for the drawing, something she doesn't always enjoy doing. And then I was able to include my friend Anna's orange cat in the window of the painting, which is my way of expressing to Anna that she's a cherished friend.

I know that viewers of the painting will have no idea about these elements. But my hope is that if I invest enough of myself in a painting, some viewers will sense that investment and intuit that something's going on in the image, and in turn, invest themselves in the work and give it their own meaning and value. When "Broken Record" was hanging in the Sixth Anniversary show at Anastasia and Friends gallery, some people commented favorably about the colors, the angles, or the cat looking out the window. I also heard a young boy say to his mother about the woman in the painting, "Something's really changed in her life." When I look at "Broken Record," I think of the three women embodied in the painting, and the boy's emotional interpretation, and I think: *not halfbad*.

Spoletto Picks



As South Carolina's own international arts festival nears its 40th anniversary, Spoleto Festival USA brings as exciting a package of performing arts as ever this year, including opera, theatre, dance, and, as usual, an emphasis on music, be it choral, jazz, chamber, symphony, folk, or Americana. Spoleto Festival was founded in Charleston in 1977 by Pulitzer Prize winning composer Gian Carlo Menotti as an American counterpart to the Festival of Two Worlds held annually in Spoleto, Italy. Two years later, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley founded the Piccolo Spoleto Festival as an outreach fringe festival to run concurrently with Spoleto, beginning the Friday after the official opening date for the larger festival—always the Thursday before Memorial Day—and ending three Sundays later. This year's Spoleto Festival runs May 27th through June 12th.

Highlighting this year's Spoleto festival is the newly re-conceived opera, *Porgy and Bess*, originally written in 1934 by George

Gershwin with a libretto written by Ira Gershwin and Debose and Dorothy Heyward. Set in Charleston and based on Heyward's novel, *Porgy*, this rendition of the classic will be realized by David Herskovitz as director, conducted by Stephan Asbury, with visual design by South Carolina artist Jonathan Green. Unfortunately, tickets to all the performances sold out almost immediately after going on sale.

Fear not, while Jasper cannot give you *Porgy and Bess* we can offer you our recommendations for what not to miss at this year's Spoleto and Piccolo Spoleto Festivals, along with previews and reviews via our blog What Jasper Said. Here are Jasper's Picks for Spoleto and Piccolo Spoleto 2016.

Spoletto

If you like the puppetry of Columbia-based artists Kimi Maeda and Lyon Hill, (and, who doesn't?), Chicago-based performance collective Manual Cinema's *Ada/Ava* is right up your alley. Using paper and projections to present the story, *Ada/Ava* tells the tale of a pair of twins who go through life together and are suddenly separated by death leaving the remaining twin to cope with her new solitariness, which she does via a traveling carnival and a mirror maze that comes to town.. Much in the same way that the term *puppetry* fails to fully represent either Maeda or Hill's art, it underrepresents this performance as well. *Ada/Ava* plays at Emmett Robinson Theatre at College of Charleston May 27th-May 30th.







In *Every Brilliant Thing*, the 40-year-old Paines Plough theatre company presents a one-person show that, despite its origin in an adult man's memory of coming up with a list of "every brilliant thing" to inspire his depressed mother as a boy, promises to leave the audience elated upon its end. *Every Brilliant Thing* comes to Spoleto after a critically acclaimed run at the Edinburgh Festival and plays at the Woolfe Street Playhouse June 8th – 11th.

Opposing Forces is more than dance, more than music, and more than a study of race and gender. Performed by five B-Boys to an original score by Waylon Dungan, aka WD4D, *Applying Forces* uses breakdancing, live beats, and hip hop to create a futuristic world of its own. The hour-long show is presented at the Memminger Auditorium on June 8th – 12th.

We can't help it. We love *Old Crow Medicine Show* and the idea of gathering under the stars at the College of Charleston Cistern Yard to listen to some of their rollicking hits and raucous live show with several hundred of our closest friends just sounds like a great way to spend a Charleston evening. Join us On May 26th and 27th at 9 pm.

In fact, choosing Jasper's Picks for Spoleto this year was no easy matter, particularly when it comes to theatrical performances. We'll be taking in *Golem*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (because – Oscar Wilde!), *A Gambler's Guide to Dying*, plus dance by *Bill T. Jones* and the *Arnie Zane Company*, not to mention singer/songwriter Brandi Carlile, Geoff Nuttall's chamber music series, and more. Keep an eye on What Jasper Said for news and reviews.

Piccolo Spoleto

It's no secret that Jasper has a special place in its heart for Columbia artists who share their talents with the larger world. And while our love of Soda City performers extends to those participating in Piccolo Spoleto it's not the only reason we chose the following performances as our Piccolo Spoleto Picks.

If you were unlucky enough to miss *The Brothers Size* at Trustus Theatre last winter, we have good news. The story of three Black men, played by Baraki Lebby, Jabar Hankins, and Christopher Jackson, who profoundly draw on a dramatic mix of their history and social reality to cope with the constraints of freedom will be reprised at PURE Theatre at 477 King Street May 28th – 31st.

Columbia native Dean Poyner's new play, together *We Are Making a Poem in Honor of Life*, is described as both "a shocking tragedy" and "an unspeakable mystery" dealing with a mother and father entangled in grief. It stars two more Columbia favorites, Alex Smith and Jennifer Moody Sanchez and is directed by Darion McCloud and, fresh off a New York City run, it comes to Gage Hall at 4 Archdale Street June 6th – 9th, and 11th.

For a special cocktail hour, join Columbia's Nikky Finney on June 10th at 6:30 pm in the Dock Street Theatre Courtyard for her contribution to the Sundown Poetry Series. We hope to hear some of our favorites from *Head Off & Split*.

Catch even more Columbians throughout the run of the festivals. Vocalists Cody Lidge and John Andrew will be members of the cast of *Porgy and Bess*. Cedric Umoja, Dogon Krigga, and Roni Nicole Henderson will present *Visual Alchemy: Afrofuturism* at the 4th Wall Gallery. Finally, among others, Alicia Leeke, and Michel McNinch will be exhibiting their work at the Piccolo Spoleto Outdoor Art Festival on Marion Square./CB

GUESSWORK

Billy Guess and GUESSWORK Studio
Make For a Wondrous Work in Progress

B Y K A R A G U N T E R





G

ver the past six months, Columbia artist, Billy Guess, has begun transforming an old 2400 square foot radiator shop into a creative hub for himself and, hopefully, the community. Guess calls his budding studio space GUESSWORK, and the sign out front sums up his philosophy and mission about the space-- the sign is made of hundreds of pieces of found objects he's scavenged from his grandfather's workshop or picked up over the years from various sources. This is a place where the discarded finds new purpose.





The studio sits on just over an acre of land at 955 Avondale Drive off of North Main. Guess, who has worked as a landscaper and horticulturalist, has planted a field of red clover around the side, and stacked the entrance of the studio with colorful pots of flowers and exotic plants. He's begun to weave cut wood into organic shapes into the chain link fence, and next to the GUESSWORK sign is a sculpture by Guess, a form he has returned to over the years, of nested river rocks in criss-crossing crepe myrtle branches.

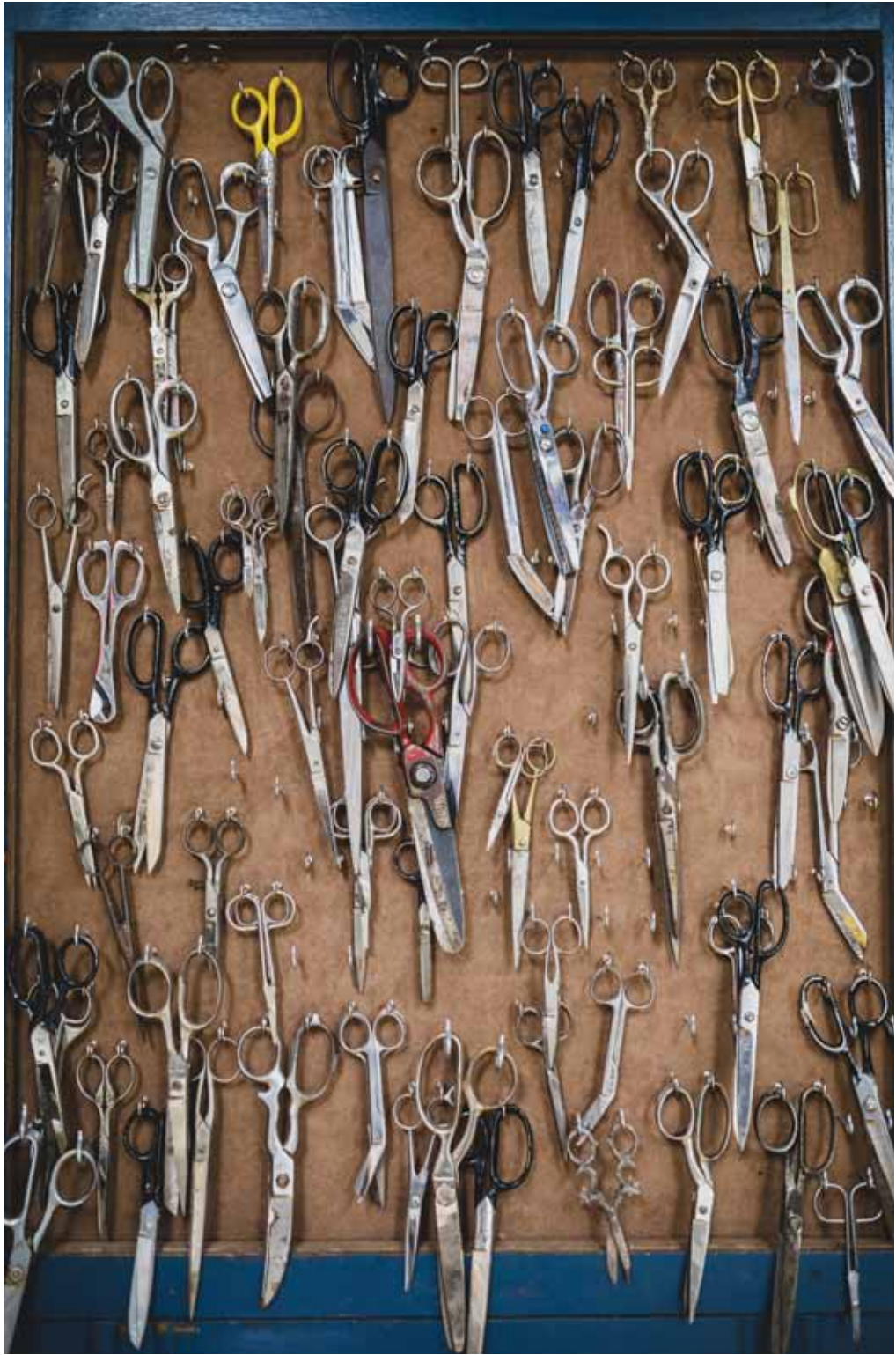
Having room to spread out is good for Guess's working style, as he likes to have several projects going at once. Scattered around his spacious work area are several projects all in progress, from rooting tiny succulent ghost plants in broken eggshells, to a jig he created just for cutting strips from plastic bottles which can be used in conjunction with a heat gun to tie off his crepe myrtle branches, to a pile of tiny scissors he's assembling into a sculpture. In the space around the building, there are a handful of temporal, ongoing installations using natural objects, but also found objects from Guess's impressive stash.

And the stash is, indeed, impressive. Guess, crow-like in his need to collect, has neatly cataloged his assortment into bins and drawers. Need a Barbie doll? There's a drawer for that. Something shiny? There's a drawer dedicated just to costume jewelry. Behind the building is a growing pile of wood and metal objects. Just the other day, a woman from the community dropped by and asked if he happened to have certain sized metal grate, and sure enough, he did. Her husband returned the favor by gifting Guess a huge EMERGENCY sign removed from the Bull Street mental hospital.





EMERG



This is what Guess hopes to achieve at GUESSWORK—a place where the artist and the non-artist can intersect, and interact with his collection. He's attracted to the idea of giving the non-artist a place and the means to be expressive, but also plans to add several more private studios for other artists to rent. Additional plans include possible concrete pads around the outside of the building to showcase temporary outdoor sculpture, an outdoor stage/theatre, and a neighborhood meeting place.

GUESSWORK is a place where Guess can realize a vision—one of personal space and expression, but also one of collaboration with the larger community. Guess is wont to sharing his time, skill, as well as his collection with enthusiasm. When asked if letting parts of his collection go was sustainable in the long term, he shrugged off the question and remarked on the abundance of discarded *stuff* in the world. To prove his point, a grizzled man from the neighborhood wandered in, intrigued by the colorful plants near the entrance. Not an artist himself, the man was charmed by the space and Guess's projects. They spoke a bit of landscaping, and almost as an afterthought, the man said, "Say, I have a large piece of cedar wood about this big," pantomiming with his hands. "Would you be interested in it?" Answering in the affirmative, Guess strolled on with the man giving him a tour of the studio's grounds, but not before he glanced back with a grin and said, "Yeah, I don't think finding more stuff is going to be a problem."

For more on Billy Guess, Guesswork, and other Columbia artists and friends, read Ed Madden's essay, "Tonight, it's a birthday party, or transformation, beauty, community" at www.Jaspercolumbia.com

Finding Scenarios

A Q&A with Pedro Lopez de Victoria

BY KYLE PETERSEN

“I’d actually prefer this to be a romantic, impressionistic story, told from the third-person, with that third-person being the guy sitting over there,” says Pedro Lopez de Victoria (LDV), a musician and performance artist around in town who by day serves as The Nickelodeon Theatre’s Program Coordinator and, on his own time, part of the free-range Scenario Collective as well.

That quirky-yet-winsome opening is characteristic of the projects LDV has tackled since his undergraduate years at USC. He’s a tireless collaborator and event coordinator as well as a charismatic live performer and songwriter who musical projects have ranged from the rockabilly/Calypso two-piece Casio Mio to the kaleidoscopic hardcore/party band Fratmouth, in addition to his solo material and an eclectic range of side projects. He’s also written a space-rock opera and a novella, the latter of which he’s currently trying to get published.

When Jasper sat down with LDV, he had just come off a whirlwind weekend at Indie Grits that saw him getting a fake bar mitzvah at The Weekly Revue with Toby Lou and performing and serving as Master of Ceremonies of the two Waterlines performances that the festival commissioned to respond to the October flooding that ravaged our city, both of which he wrote original songs for. We asked him a few questions to find out what he was up and get a sense of what makes him tick as an artist. This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Jasper: So tell me about your family and how you got into music as a kid.

PLDV: So my family is from Puerto Rico, and that interesting thing is our generations, particularly on my mother’s side, her father was a magician, and before that the parent was an architect, and before that was a musician. It’s basically gone every-other generation there’s been a creative one, than a [more serious] one.

No music or anything in my house was particularly challenging growing up—a lot of meringue and Top 40. My sister and I just kind of broke into early internet blogs and found free downloads and stuff, really strange music. My sister started playing guitar, and that made me want to start playing guitar. Something from nothing, in a way. At the same time, my Puerto Rico background lent itself to my writing, because we traveled there a lot.

Jasper: Name five albums, songs, movies, books, works of art that influence your artistic style.

1. The heights of what’s possible and what can tickle you in certain ways I think I found in Candy Claws. They have this album *In the Dream of the Sea Life*. It was the first time something was really messy and noisy, and instead of being something I was adverse to, it scratched an itch I didn’t know I had.

2. *Transmissions from the Satellite Heart* by the Flaming Lips, just because they were forcing themselves to not be incredibly abstract and experimental, to create something that people can dance to and sing to, any-





where, with that album. I was really inspired by that, because they could have just gone weird and made civilization afraid of them, but they made something you can eat and swallow.

3. *Flash Gordon*. Just really kitchy, B-movie sci-fi stuff is one of my favorite methods of experiencing philosophical ideas, like *Star Trek* and what not. Space exploration is such a good template for that, figuring out things we faced every day. I wrote this play that takes place in space, and I want to do more stuff like that.

4. The entire career of Stardust in WWE, as a work of art, as a performer and very theatrical wrestler. I very much enjoyed him, and I still don't know where he's going.

5. This beautiful painting series called *The Course of Empire* by Thomas Cole. That's always stuck with me. They go from the primordial days to the rise of this empire to the fall of this empire, and they are all massive. It's the most epic painting series I've ever seen.

So a lot seemed to have happened for you creatively while you were an undergrad at USC. What was that?

It's the chance meeting of awfully talented, charming people that are struggling with, perhaps, where they are and what they can feel like they can do. There was a real undercurrent of energy all conglomerated in one place. So it was about really feeling that, and seeing the opportunities that you can turn into really joyous occasions with a lot of people.

It feels like Scenario Collective is kind of an outgrowth of that.

Yeah, it's mostly USC students, give or take a few people. That kind of came from this anxiety that I feel, when you see potential, or—I'll put it this way: sometimes, I will close my eyes and pretend that I'm on my death-

bed, and having all these regrets and what-ifs plaguing me. Then, open my eyes. My knees are pretty good, I'm surrounded by people are really exciting, and there's opportunities.

That anxiety of, am I doing this to my fullest? Seeing people who are really good at stuff, and want to learn other stuff--the ability to match them up, putting them in one place, allowing more, allowing people to inspire each other. An egalitarian, passion-driven space, is the solution to that anxiety. It's selfish, but it's what gets me to move.

And it's a pretty obvious approach--the naivety of everybody being their own leader and empowered is something we embrace. It's already proven to produce greatness and beautiful moments. I can give you some examples of some of the things I'm really proud of--the guy who has an idea about building a great thing, but doesn't have the tools or the people who want to help him, but gets everyone really excited. A week later, we have a thirty-foot tall blanket fort made out of bamboo stalks and donated blankets at Tapp's. That kind of thing, people who give us opportunities to just really be proud of what we've done.

How much do you think of yourself as a performance artist vs. someone who makes music--are the two things interlinked, or separate?

I think having the opportunity to have a bunch of people in a room where everyone is all willing to look in one direction, where you're designated to go and do something--it's a really precious thing. It shouldn't be taken for granted. People have the ears and the eyes and their noses and all sorts of way to spend time with those senses. Oftentimes I'll kind of blackout during a performance, I won't even remember it later. I just give myself up to it. When you're giving your corporeal vessel to the altar, or whatever, people usually enjoy that. They can get something out of that that otherwise, if you're only giving them your hands with the guitar or your voice, it's not the same. Also, I just have a

fuck-ton of energy, a stupid amount of energy that I need to dispense sometimes. I don't know if it's the el sabor latino or what. That feels like it is all one package. I like to be agile. If I'm playing guitar, it's a water gun that I can swing around and shoot at people. It's all something that needs to feel unchained.

Plus I don't get any exercise any other way.

So you had a lot of roles in Indie Grits this year.

The weekend is a complete playground, it really is. Seeing all of these things come to fruition, you just kind of want to be there, to be a helpful second-midwife to the process to everything. And it's a thing we've been working on for a year finally being realized. I really just want to be present and give my love to all these artists.

Waterlines--it would be a shame for me to imply that it was anything other than Seth Gadsden's vision and legwork. He doesn't get enough credit for how much that was his, in a lot of ways. Obviously it's commission, it's facilitation, but keeping on people, inspiring them and giving them ideas, he was a little bit in everyone's project. He's definitely the star.

I was there from the first meeting [too], bearing witness, lending ideas, and it was just genuinely exciting--although I hate to use that word, it's so overused. But it ignited me. When a bunch of artists are coming together and they have all these ideas, there's this brain hurricane going on, and it's completely thrilling to help that become a reality.

I definitely thought my place was on the performance on Friday night and Sunday afternoon. It was the first time I've ever operated a projector and played guitar at the same time. It was a lot of work, but that was kind of the beauty of it. Not only was it a big undertaking, to put on an hour and half show, but when the cast are all nonprofessional performers, that is even more amazing. The result is a much more honest, vulnerable thing.



Painting the Artists

WADE SELLERS PRESENTS SHORT FILM — 25 ARTISTS

BY HALEY SPRANKLE

What is art to those who see, to those who create? How does one truly put into words what they have made, why they made it, and what it means to them?

These are the questions that drove local filmmaker Wade Sellers, to try and capture the essence of an artist and their process in his new film *25 Artists*. Sellers selected various visual artists he admired from around the Columbia area and gave short, yet attentive, focus to what makes each of them tick creatively.

“Art to me is something that is created from an emotional or personal place that causes a genuine reaction in others,” Sellers explains. “I wanted to create a group of short films where the artists talked honestly about themselves and their passion and their process. I didn’t want to focus on their work at all, but what comes from inside of them to create that work.”

As an artist himself, Sellers has an eye for that which others might not notice at first glance. He sees the world through a different lens, captures it, and offers it to everyone else.

“I am essentially a storyteller that uses moving images to tell that story. I am always excited to get that spark of an idea and see

it come alive,” Sellers says of working on *25 Artists*. “There is usually a moment once I am completing a project where everything comes into focus and I think, ‘This thing may actually work, it may not be that bad.’ It is a feeling, a vibration, something that shoots through the body when creative ideas finally come together. And, as the artists in the film themselves point out, it can be quite addictive.”

Sellers debuted his film this past April at Artista Vista, an event which typifies the arts renaissance in the city that he is, in his own way, documenting. *25 Artists* can often feel like a who’s who of the city’s most prominent talents, with names familiar names like Susan Lenz, Michaela Pilar Brown, and Stephen Chesley all receiving prominent billing in the project.

“I think people who are driven to create things have a duty to do that, and as an extension of that belief, have a duty to show that work to others,” Sellers argues. “Showing your work, good or bad, is a binding agent for a community. It encourages so many positive things to happen that can’t be seen on paper.”

COLUMBIA'S ALIEN NATION

Trustus Theatre Takes on Green Day

BY MICHAEL SPAWN

To begin with, here's something completely obvious: The United States of America that existed at 8:45 AM on September 11th, 2001, wasn't the same country that existed less than an hour later.

W e all understand this and have our own stories about where we were and what we were doing that morning as the Towers collapsed in midtown Manhattan. The militaristic and political escapades that arose in the aftermath have been exhaustively analyzed and are not directly germane to this article, but they do provide the context for something that is. In 2004, almost three years to the day after our nation was jolted into a retaliatory and (in theory) sobered state of mind and action, Green Day released *American Idiot*. A direct rebuttal to the culture created by the Bush administration and its subsequent response to the events of that infamous day, the record was a statement unlike anything the band had made before and it sold by the metric shit-ton. *American Idiot* produced five singles, four of which lorded over radio playlists like Al Capone in gangland Chicago. It won the 2005 Grammy for Best Rock Album and was nominated for Album of the Year. It would become the band's first No. 1 in America and go on to sell over 15 million copies worldwide, which amounts roughly to 1.5 copies per census-recognized citizen of

New York City. More importantly, at least as far as this particular moment of your reading life is concerned, it gave birth to a Broadway show, something most rock records aren't exactly famous for doing. And that show is coming to Columbia's Trustus Theatre.

Though *American Idiot* is pitched as a punk rock opera, the songs are conceptually linked only by a loose narrative thread, one where characters like St. Jimmy and Whatsername appear and disappear seemingly on a whim, and whose central story is so ambiguous – and possibly nonexistent – that it throws itself on the mercy of multiple interpretations. Rather, it's *American Idiot's* themes – cultural isolation, personality crises, the loss of a meaningful American identity – that bind the tracks and keep the record on message. The Broadway production's book, written by veteran director Michael Mayer and Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, attempts to fill in the many gaps and spackle over some of the ambiguity in the original recording's narrative arc.

"The story is focused on three friends," says Trustus artistic director Chad Henderson. "They're all younger, it's post-9/11, they're living in California and they want to

get out of their suburban hell, as they see it." The three principles; Johnny, Will, and Tunny; alternately revolt against and succumb to this suburban hell, each in his own way, leading to parallel storylines concerning alienation, adulthood, and addition.

The latter struggle is particularly real for Johnny, whose descent into substance abuse unleashes St. Jimmy, the physical manifestation of his own drug-fueled id. "He's kind of the Brad Pitt to Johnny's Ed Norton," explains actor Michael Hazin, who will be playing St. Jimmy throughout the Trustus shows. "He's a figment of his psyche and/or just a different version of him." The character is notable for having been played by Armstrong himself on occasion during the show's original Broadway run, where he delivered the nihilistic mission-statement "St. Jimmy," just as he did on the *American Idiot* album.

But to many, the decision to turn its record into a Broadway show is just the most recent in a laundry list of un-punk moves Green Day has made throughout its career. It's not much of a pressing issue for most right-thinking, God-fearing Americans – and certainly not on par with "Why did George Bush choose to invade Iraq instead of the actual home-

RYAN MORRIS, THE FRONTMAN FOR LOCAL PUNK BAND FK MT



MICHAEL HAZIN IN COSTUME AS ST. JIMMY

“

It's kind of like what *Hair* was to the disenfranchised youth of the '60s and what *Rent* was to a lot of people in their 20s in the '90s. I feel like this is that show for my generation.

”

base country of the terrorists who attacked the nation, in defense of the very people that never really elected him to defend them in the first place?" – but for the rest of us lowlife heathens it can be a subject worthy of scrutiny. How can a band like Green Day make its bones shilling punk rock ethos to an audience comprised mainly of people who think "London Calling" is a British escort service and then have the stones to allow the most simultaneously anti-authority and financially lucrative musical statement of its entire career wind up as a filthy ticket stub in a Manhattan drainage ditch?

Put more simply – can punk really go Broadway?

To peck away at some reasonable answer to this, we have to first look at Green Day's career up to *American Idiot's* release. I'll try to make it quick.

Green Day was formed as a punk rock trio in Berkeley, California in 1986, right around the time many of its future fans were covered in natal tissue and screaming to be returned to the wombs from whence they came. The band released two independent studio albums that are beloved only by the diehards and still widely available at Hot Topic stores everywhere. They then signed a deal with Reprise Records and in 1994 a little album called *Dookie* came along and turned three west coast stoners into America's post-Cobain teenage mutant ninja rock stars. They traded weed for speed and released the frantic *Insomniac* a year later, scored a prom hit in '97, and then in 2000 put out *Warning*, a

masterpiece of drunken gypsy rock so legitimately awesome the band barely seems to remember it. But *Warning* sold poorly, at least compared to the gargantuan dollars accrued from most previous efforts, and Green Day more or less fell off America's radar of relevance. It looked like the end. But then came *American Idiot* and if you don't remember how that one panned out, please see above.

For Ryan Morris, frontman for local grunge-punk trio f.k. mt., the answer to that question doesn't take much deliberation. "Green Day hasn't been punk rock for a long time," he says, but this downbeat assessment doesn't seem to extend to *American Idiot* itself, though. "I got the album when I was 11 I thought it was f*cking cool! 'Jesus of Suburbia' was a concept song, was like five tracks, and I thought that was really unique at the time." But he expresses tempered enthusiasm over the show, saying, "I think it's pretty cool, honestly, that they made a play out of their music. I just wish it was, in my opinion, one of their earlier, better albums. But I get that they would pick *American Idiot* because of the stories in it and stuff." Asked when, in his estimation Green Day stopped being a punk band, he answers, "I guess when they started selling their CDs at Wal-Mart."

On it's face, Morris' comment could easily be taken as garden-variety elitism, but he raises a good point. For years, many Green Day records couldn't be found on Wal-Mart's music shelves because the band, citing the freedom to say whatever it pleased in its music, refused to offer cleaned-up versions per

the mega-retailer's standards regarding profanity and questionable language. Then in 2012, seemingly out of the blue, Green Day reversed its stance completely, going so far as to not only offer Wal-Mart edited versions of its back catalogue but to actually re-record certain songs to replace words or phrases the chain deemed offensive.

But as of this writing, nobody has reached much of a consensus on what punk really is and, regardless of whether it passes any punk rock litmus tests, Trustus' decision to make *American Idiot* its summer production in the thick of an election year, particularly one so un beholden to any conventional script regarding how these things are supposed to go, isn't the least bit coincidental.

"I like us to be talking about 'now,'" says Henderson. "And while the show sort of comments on the recent past, I think it's very important right now because we're about to make an important decision in this country. And what this asks us to consider is the fact that we're not so far away from 9/11...it still constructs a lot of our being right now. We're seeing it every day...I think the show does a great job of addressing that while also telling a very human story about people who are lost in that ether, trying to figure out what their obligations are to the world and to themselves are. It's kind of like what *Hair* was to the disenfranchised youth of the '60s and what *Rent* was to a lot of people in their 20s in the '90s. I feel like this is that show for my generation."

What's in a Tax?

The Question of One Columbia

BY KYLE PETERSEN

The recent scuffle over the funding of One Columbia is an interesting one, not in the least because it centers on the oft-discussed but often misunderstood hospitality tax, or H-tax for short. The City of Columbia first began collecting the H-tax revenue in 2003, nearly a decade before the One Columbia for Arts and History organization would come into existence. It's a 2% surcharge on prepared food and beverages sold in the city that is allowed under state law as a way of generating revenue for the exclusive purposes of attracting tourism to the city or county levying the tax. Pretty simple right?

Well, not really. The South Carolina Code of Laws spells out six very specific purposes for the funds, most of which relate to new buildings and construction concerns. Of those six, only one, "advertisements and promotions related to tourism development," will sound like what most Columbians think of when it comes to the H-tax. Baseball stadiums aside.

The curious thing about the controversy over funding One Columbia isn't in the letter of the law—it clearly spells out that salaried positions are not to be covered by the tax, for whatever reason—but in the limited manner

it attacks the problem of spurring on economic growth. While increasing tourism is a worthwhile and important goal, what H-tax more often seems to do is foster a more vibrant and creative community, making Columbia the kind of place that draws rather than loses young people, creative professionals, and new businesses—arguably a more important goal and certainly more important to the city's long-term economic interests.

At this point, it hardly seems worth debating whether or not the arts can be an engine for economic development—there are plenty of studies out there, including a recent report from USC economist Douglas Woodward commissioned by the South Carolina Arts Commission that "provides a comprehensive summary of the creative economic footprint" of the state. Woodward also namechecks Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*, a 2002 bestseller that draws explicit connections between a city with a thriving arts and cultural community and the attraction and retention of highly-sought knowledge-economy businesses, as part of the report.

It's that concept that makes One Columbia so important to this city, because it fosters the notion of an arts scene with a center, a heartbeat, rather than a siloed set of institutions disconnected from one another

and the larger community as a whole. What if that central idea was given more shrift by city government? One Columbia probably wouldn't be necessary because we would already have an Office of Cultural Affairs that would do much of the work that the non-profit is doing now. Executive director Lee Snelgrove has in fact argued for this as a possible alternative to One Columbia citing examples in other cities. But, as it is, One Columbia fills that need, and in that sense lives up the larger goals of the H-tax even if it sidesteps some of the shortsightedness of the original rules.

That's not to say that there shouldn't be oversight or that some waste or inefficiencies exist in how H-tax funds are distributed—those are discussions that both government and community members need to continue to have, because the practical functioning of an arts and culture scene is inherently messy and unpredictable. But One Columbia can serve, and is serving, as a pillar, a clearinghouse, a springboard, a megaphone—so many of the things that an occasionally haphazard distribution of city funds hardly guarantees otherwise.

And that, far more than a minor league baseball stadium or a few more chain stores opening up on Bull Street, is what's going to move our city forward.

“One Columbia has given artists great opportunities to grow as well as be compensated for their creative efforts. One Columbia knows what organizations in much larger cities know, which is, the Creative Class drives growth and prosperity and, in turn, energizes and stimulates development and investment.”

CEDRIC UMOJA, INDEPENDENT ARTIST

“One Columbia was a driving force behind the creation of the city’s poet laureate position, and Lee Snelgrove and One Columbia have been essential in helping me do the work I’ve wanted to do.”

ED MADDEN, COLUMBIA POET LAUREATE

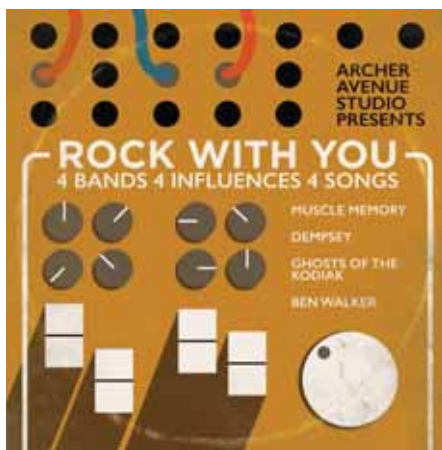
“I attended ArtLine last year. One Columbia directly reignited my passion for art by sponsoring that single event. Since then I’ve produced well over 30 paintings and been able to participate in 3 fundraisers in our community.”

RYAN MCEWEN, INDEPENDENT ARTIST

“One Columbia was the catalyst for recognizing our long established art district as a Formal Cultural District.”

ROSIE CRAIG - FORMER PRESIDENT AND CEO OF M CRAIG COMPANY,
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVIST FOR 30 YEARS

Local Record Reviews



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rock With You

No matter what musical direction a band or artist decides to take, everyone shares the same ground zero. Cover songs are more than a rite of passage, they're an indispensable part of honing one's craft. But the real fun starts when cover songs go from necessity to luxury, when artists can bring their own distinct personalities and skills to bear on something they wish they'd written themselves, and that sense of adventurous tribute is all over *Rock With You*.

It doesn't become clear until you hear it, but Ghosts of the Kodiak are particularly well suited to re-interpret the Postal Service. Low-key as it was, *Give Up* was a record riddled with emotional drama, and

few Columbia acts know emotional drama like GotK. The band's take on "The District Sleeps Alone Tonight" remains faithful to the original's wistful melancholy, but what was once a gloomy little electro-pop tune is now a real-deal rocker, bigger and louder, with sweeping vocals that make the lyrical self-loathing all the more believable.

Let's face it – covering Radiohead can be dicey. Because of the aura of untouchability that seems to surround the band, Ben Walker deserves all the credit in the world just for showing up and trying. Something always rings false whenever someone other than Thom Yorke sings a Radiohead tune because the singer usually tries, on some level, to sound like Yorke, which is, of course, insane. Wisely though, Walker makes zero attempt at an impersonation in his performance of "Fake Plastic Trees." He hits Yorke's extraterrestrial notes flawlessly while still sounding like himself. The cover succeeds because it's rooted in a truth that a lot of us seem to have forgotten: There was a time, not that long ago, when the bulk of Radiohead's output was absolutely stellar rock songs, and Walker brings that spirit to "Fake Plastic Trees" with no pretense of reinvention.

The specter of Ben Gibbard makes its second appearance on *Rock With You* via Dempsey's version of Death Cab for Cutie's "Transatlanticism." Here, Dempsey pulls off a small miracle by actually improving upon the original without making any major alterations. I never really warmed to Gibbard's singing, and "Transatlanticism" is

a much more pleasurable experience with Zack Santiago at the mic. Also, the band was smart to cut some of the fat. The original recording runs at an indulgent eight minutes and Dempsey chops it down to a manageable six, resulting in a leaner – and overall better – version.

If you're going to cover Michael Jackson, you'd better be damn sure you know what you're doing. Thankfully, Muscle Memory absolutely does, pretty much blowing the roof off the record with a joyous take on "Rock With You." David Adedokun nails the vocal delivery and the whole track is a sexy, funk-up celebration that is somehow more danceable than MJ's original classic. If "Rock With You" is this good, I'd like to hear Muscle Memory take a stab at "Dirty Diana." Just a suggestion. -MS

HUSBAND

Implements EP

For anyone who's been keeping score, it's no secret that Adam Corbett is a man who wears many hats. He's probably best known as the bassist and occasional lead vocalist for history buff raconteurs the Restoration, but with the 2014 release of *A & B Are So Far Apart*, he announced himself as a popsmith worthy of individual attention; and now, in his latest role as one half of Husband – along with wife/collaborator/co-conspirator Re-



bekah Rice – Corbett has released *Kite Flyer*, a four-song EP that could well be a second cousin to *A & B*. Both records emphasize atmosphere and mood, but *Kite Flyer*'s electronic bent is decidedly more pronounced and more or less takes center stage.

The EP begins with “Groove,” which is about as expository as song titles get. “You can groove if you want to,” Rice sings dreamily over a basic but pulsing trip-hop beat. “Just sit down and do it next to me.” This is followed by the title track, which plays like a mash-up of the Postal Service and video game battle music, and Corbett deserves a high five for pulling off the line, “All the kids are just jealous of your nice/and of the way you make the wind your bitch.” These first two tracks are densely layered and interesting, but it’s the EP’s second half that really cooks. “Moss Drum” begins inconspicuously enough, mostly just a beat floating through space, until about a minute and a half in, when a soaring pop guitar line cuts through the fog, elevating both the song and the record as a whole. The Faint-indebted “She Waits,” with its linear groove and drill bit guitars, is almost more electro-rock than –pop,

and Rice’s alleycat-cool vocal delivery brings *Kite Flyer* to a satisfying finish.

As a project, *Husband* seems like a logical and proper progression for Corbett, and he and Rice work well as musical partners. *Kite Flyer* is definitely too short, but Corbett’s creative reservoir seems to run pretty deep, so it’s probably a safe bet that there’s more *Husband* to come. –MS



BARNWELL

Motel Art

It’s now been two years since Barnwell bounded into Columbia’s musical consciousness with its debut *The First Ghost*, an echo-heavy slab of unfussy power chord dirges with an alt-country twang; but as satisfying as *Ghost* was in songwriting quality, it lacked a certain performative confidence, as though writer/leader Tyler Gordon wasn’t quite sure if *this* was the direction he wanted to take his music. As it turns out, urgent contraprofessionals built within standard pop archi-

tecture are indeed Gordon’s thruway to creative catharsis. Doubts are gone and he’s now cannonballing into what he knows he does best. It hardly matters that Barnwell’s latest, *Motel Art*, doesn’t denote a drastic change in approach. It’s a unique kind of follow-up – it simultaneously expands upon and taunts what came before, like the schoolyard bully belittling the intellect of the same kid whose homework he copies.

But Tyler Gordon is no bully. His songwriting reveals a man beholden to his own doubts concerning some of art’s oldest themes – faith, loneliness, a dependable sense of self, and, of course, women. The old cliché about the sophomore slump is working in reverse here; *Motel Art* challenges its predecessor to perform in retrospect. But the two records are companions, to be sure. You could trade a track or two on an uninitiated listener and he probably wouldn’t know the difference. The major improvements are in the lead guitar and vocal delivery. Gordon is singing better than he ever has, and that’s saying a lot. And where the guitars on *Ghost* had a plasticine polish, the lines on *Motel Art* absolutely *sing*, right in time and along with Gordon’s voice, running parallel and never hitting a false note. *Motel Art* is by no means the culmination of Barnwell’s promise. It’s only another step, one that leaves much to look forward to. –MS

[MORE REVIEWS](#)





PRETTIER THAN MATT

Better Left Said

Prettier Than Matt's latest, *Better Left Said*, is unequivocally the most top 40-sounding record of Columbia's local music output. This is a Nashville A&R man's million-dollar wet dream.

And the duo of Jessica Skinner and Jeff Pitts know the type of magic they're working. In the starchy "La La Song," Skinner sings about a broken heart that could make a lot of money as a one hit wonder and dares you to scrape the chorus out of your noggin. But

you're helpless to be happy, as it is with most of these songs.

The shiny glaze on these tunes is due to slick production and songcraft firmed up with barebones honesty. The songs imagine sunny days and Nicholas Sparks scenes. The main ingredient is the down-home, every-woman voice of Skinner. She has the classic pipes of a deeper Alison Krauss that really soar on songs like "No More Tears," as well as the heart-snatching ballads "Girl," and "Nowhere to Be Found," where her charming voice sings "If only there was love without hurt."

This stuff's straight out of radioland, which is the album's biggest strength but also, at least in the first half, its most limiting vice. Their focused songwriting doesn't allow some of the songs to explode as emotionally as they might otherwise. Nearly every one eerily ends around the three minute mark, the perfect radio time. As such, the depths of a slow dancer like "Goodbye Love" can't properly break your heart. This curtailed quality is made up for by deeper numbers like the aforementioned "Girl." The violins and melancholy chorus could quiet any noisy bar.

All around *Better Left Said* is a populist-appealing record for summertime in the South. It'd make a great present for mother and daughter duos who habitually sing at high volumes in the car. -David Travis Bland

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

2016 SC Sampler

The SceneSC 2016 Sampler is a broad survey of all things indie in the Palmetto state. The collection of songs is oxymoronic in many ways, at once sweeping but keenly focus on the indistinct distinguisher that is *indie*. This is a strength of the compilation and also a written testament by David Stringer, SceneSC's chief, to the raw talent of SC's bands and musicians.

The collection starts with some roots-anchored indie-rock. The fire branding honesty

of Dear Blanca and Susto handle this rustic onset as well as the late '60s harmony of Johnny Delaware's "Angel 42." It descends from there into more modern approaches with the contemporary beach sounds of Del Sur and latter portion of Small Sanctions' "Dog Devotion."

Some folk and Americana tinged numbers are scattered throughout, like that of the utterly Tom Petty-sounding "Dirty Little Town" by the High Divers and the elegant and smartly crafted "Lessons from Mother" by She Returns to War, featuring some Shins-inspired harmonies. Haley Shaw's "Burn as Bright" is a gem that sits between the tender sincerity of Jenny Lewis and Emmylou Harris. There's more synth and trigger-heavy electronic-leaning affairs as well, along with some weird cousins - in a good way - wiith ET Anderson's "Jazz June" and Art Contest's "Tokyo Megaplex."

This is not a carpet bombing of SC's musical landscape. You won't find any of the state's metal or punk derivatives. No hip-hop or straightforward roots music make any sort of showing, either, so the 2016 Sampler might be a bit misleading to those unfamiliar with the brand. But like Pitchfork or EARMILK, SceneSC is well curated. That the 2016 Sampler finds such diversity and joyful grooves while digging in one crate makes it a compilation worthy of spinning well beyond this year. *-David Travis Bland*

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

BEYOND THE TRIPLE THREAT

It Takes Experience to Teach an Artist How to Make It on Broadway

BY CINDI BOITER



When Gillian Albrecht first appeared in *A Chorus Line* on Broadway in 1975, she had that magic, that unidentifiable quality that says, *not only am I a triple threat* – I can sing, dance, and act – *I'm more!* She had that spark of energy, that mysterious amalgam that fills in the gaps between those three most coveted abilities and creates the real deal. A Broadway star.

Albrecht's career took her further on Broadway via such plays as Jerome Kern's *Very Good Eddie*, which led to her touring with Marvin Hamlisch, performing with Hal David, and playing lead roles in national tours of *Damn Yankees*, *Gypsy*, *Cabaret*, featured roles in *Hair*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*, *Chicago*, and more, before moving to Europe in 1979 to star as Anita in Leonard Bernstein's Production of *West Side Story* with the Hamburg Ballet. Following

an extended European career, a whirlwind of television, galas, and nightclubs, Albrecht married, started a family, and eventually made her way to Columbia, SC where she soon became an integral parts of the arts community, particularly when it came to behind-the-scenes fundraising.

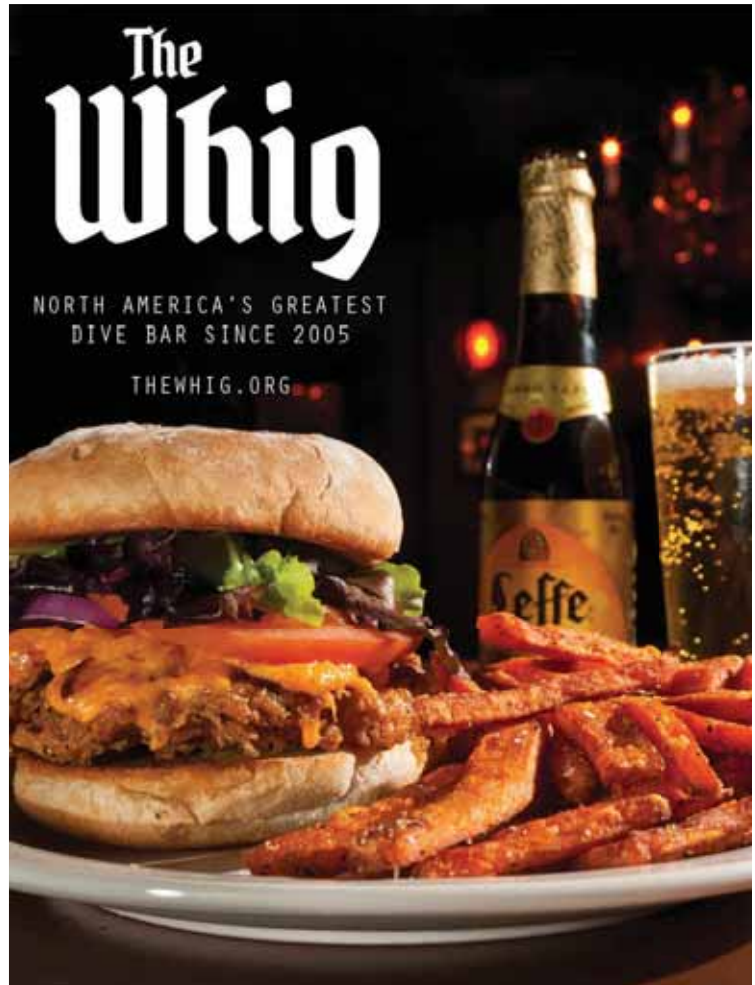
This summer, however, Albrecht is revisiting her days on the great white way and sharing a bit of the magic of what it takes to get there with some Columbia kids. Broadway

at USC is a musical theatre workshop taking the stage from July 30th through August 6th for Broadway hopefuls between the ages of 12 and 20. "I want our Broadway students to not only see their bodies as instruments, but to learn how to train and maintain their instruments," Albrecht says.

This is the second summer for the Broadway at USC Musical Theatre Workshop and Albrecht, who is the founding director of the program, credits the impressive faculty she brings in for its success. Renowned director Robert Richmond returns this year and will be joined by Steven Gross, Janet Hopkins, Stan Brown, and Stephanie Gibson among other faculty members specializing in dance, theatre, and music. Richmond is Associate Professor in Theatre at USC and Director of Undergraduate Studies/Performance, as well as former Associate Director of the Aquila Theatre Company. Fulbright Scholar Steven Gross earned his Ph.D. in music and conducting from Yale and has worked extensively on Broadway and London's West End while Stephanie Gibson's Broadway credits include *Spamalot*, *the Addams Family*, and *Cinderella*. In addition to faculty positions at USC, mezzo soprano Stephanie Gibson is a 16-year veteran of the New York Metropolitan Opera and Stan Brown is an award-winning actor, voice specialist, and veteran of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Albrecht's faculty demonstrates the importance of multidisciplinary training and the leg up it can offer, particularly to performing artists. "The concept is that even as a dancer, for example, you can learn from watching other kinds of performers," Albrecht says. "Are actors going to 'park and bark,' as they say, or are they going to use all of their facilities to move their audiences to tears?"

An in-studio final performance on August 6th will demonstrate the results of the young hopefuls' studies. For more information on how to apply visit artsandsciences.sc.edu. Albrecht notes that scholarships are available.



*Jasper's on Instagram.
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SPIT AND IMAGE

B Y M A Y A M A R S H A L L

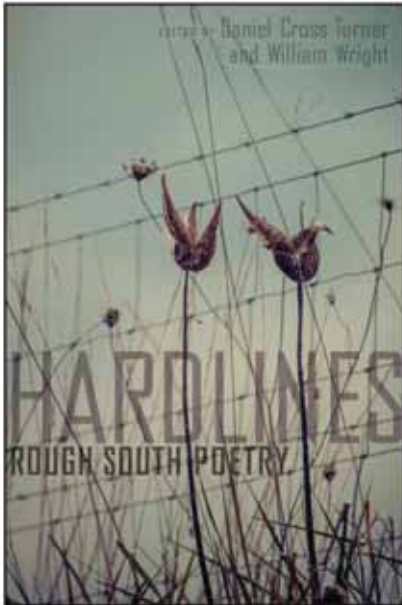
Would it please
You if I stripped
My moon face,
Oak colored skin?
Would it suit you
To believe I bloomed
Inside your womb:
Girl by God himself.
Can you see me
Without my father's face?
See my fingers without
Tasting his.

Maya Marshall, an MFA Candidate at USC, is a Cave Canem fellow and an alumna of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. Her writing has appeared in or is forthcoming in *The Volta*, *Fjords*, *RHINO*, and other publications, and her chapbook, *Secondhand*, is scheduled for release in Fall 2016.

Verse of Brutal Grace
Hard Lines: Rough South Poetry

DANIEL CROSS TURNER AND WILLIAM WRIGHT, EDITORS

BY KYLE PETERSEN



Eight years ago the University of South Carolina Press published *Grit Lit: A Rough South Reader*, an anthology of short stories and non-fiction prose designed to showcase contemporary Southern storytellers who were telling tales from the darker and dirtier side of a region which now balances tourism meccas and suburban living with its more primordial and agrarian roots. The idea of a “rough South” genre was far from new then, but the collection helped crystallize the sensibility of the genre in addition to establishing its pillars and introducing exciting new voices.

Hard Lines: Rough South Poetry serves as a sort of tandem text, at least according to co-editor William Wright, who also credits

poets G.C. Waldrep and John Lane for inspiring him to collaborate with Daniel Cross Turner, an associate professor at Coastal Carolina University, to compile the collection. Just as *Grit Lit* made clear the stunning power and vitality of contemporary Southern prose, so does *Hard Lines* in celebrating poets with a distinct regional sensibility and a flare for cutting to the bare, brutal marrow of experience. In each of their introductions, both Wright and Turner show a nuanced and riveting awareness of the sensibilities that govern their curating. Wright champions these poems’ shared sense of “harsh, sometimes brutal grace, tragic hints and downright screams, the strange, conflicted, essential beauty that blooms from the South’s potent ground.” Perhaps even more telling, Turner uses a Charles Wright poem to note the “peculiar commingling of a visceral, gut-level realism on the one side and a lofty, ascetic high-mindedness on the other.”

Both editors have a predictable tendency to wax poetically, but this collection more than lives up to their exalting praise. Featuring over 70 poets with between one and four poems a piece, there’s a breadth in style, representation, and temperament here that makes for a compelling rollercoaster of a read, particularly for a collection of poetry. This kind of “rough South” yarn-spinning that the book celebrates has often been considered primarily the province of hyper-masculine, blue-collar white Southerners whose connection to land and physical labor still gave them access to their ancestral legacy, but that’s clearly a stereotype Wright and

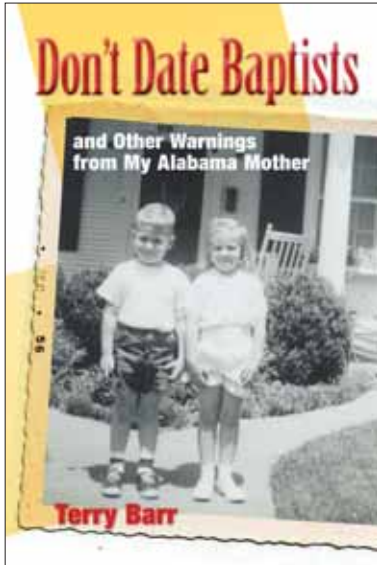
Turner are keen to reject. While raucous and bawdy poems from white men still predominate, we also get the gritty and unmistakably feminine voices of Kathryn Stripling Byer, Kelly Cherry, and Kate Daniels, among others, here, as well as a broader representation of poets of color and the undeniably rough relationship they have with the region in the work of Kwames Dawes, Terrance Hayes, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Natasha Trethewey.

What shortcomings the book might have are readily acknowledged by the editors—while towering figures such as James Dickey, Fred Chappell, and Charles Wright are present, absent are luminaries as Robert Penn Warren, A.R. Ammons, and South Carolina’s own Nikky Finney. In their defense, this appears to be more about the convoluted scramble for publishing rights and less a matter of pointed omission. It also, it should be pointed out, makes room for some lesser-known and emerging talents, including Ray McManus, John Lane, Tara Powell, and Ed Madden (our own literary arts editor), all of whom hail from the Palmetto State and whose work fits elegantly and assuredly alongside their contemporaries.

Ultimately, just like the *Grit Lit* reader, *Hard Lines* manages to provide not only a tightly-wound snapshot of a contemporary Southern literary culture and a valuable tool for college and (hopefully) some high school literature classrooms, but also a wonderful and engaging read for a general audience. This is a collection that rewards short dives and deep ones, engaged study or logophile wonder.

Terry Barr's *Don't Date Baptists and Other Warnings from My Alabama Mother*

BY JONATHAN BUTLER



Terry Barr's essay collection *Don't Date Baptists* (Red Dirt Press) describes his coming of age in Bessemer, Alabama, and the long process of coming to terms with the things he witnessed and the place where they occurred. The title might lead you to expect humorous essays, and you'd be partially right—the collection is very funny. But it also paints a complex picture of his hometown during the turbulent integration years of the 1960s, when discrimination and prejudice were as much a part of the landscape as the public schools where several of his stories take place. It's not as if Barr goes out of his

way to talk about race in *Don't Date Baptists*; he'd have to go out of his way to not talk about it.

Barr's Bessemer is a stratified and surprising place, full of contradictions. With his talent for sketching characters, some of them damaged or displaced, Barr shows that the world of 1960s Bessemer is more complex than its façade of polite conformity suggests. Racism, religious discrimination, and issues of sexuality and gender identity were part of this small town of the Deep South, even if it wasn't polite to talk about them. In the case of sexuality and gender identity, the vocabulary for talking about these issues seems to be just coming into being; one essay quotes Bessemer's mayor lamenting the presence of an openly gay speaker at the Democratic Party's 1972 convention to *TIME* magazine. Much of Barr's work is to trace out and excavate sections of these narratives that have gone unspoken, narratives that, as his essays show, are inextricably intertwined with his own.

But Barr's essays encompass concerns that aren't exclusive to Bessemer, Alabama; these are largely about universal matters of love and death. Early crushes, family secrets, and the weird intrigues and local legends of a small town provide much of the colorful nuances in these narratives. Some of these details could even be called "southern gothic," like the gruesome death of a schoolmate by train or the short, sad life of a hydrocephalic

infant born to the youth minister and his wife. This subject matter might seem exploitative were it not for Barr's sympathetic, self-implicating tone, and the fact that the book's overarching concern is how to be at home in a region that regards you as an outsider, even when you're a native. Barr approaches this topic from the difficult perspective of a born Southerner who nevertheless occupies an outsider's position because of his father's Jewishness and his own cultural identification with his father's ethnicity.

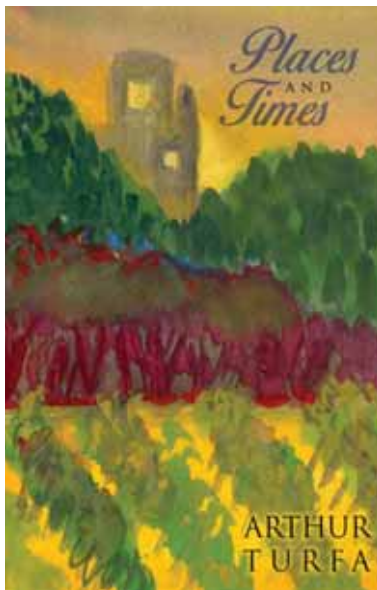
Barr's book also challenges stereotypes about the South in part by embracing some areas of Southern culture. Take, for instance, Barr's description of Southern barbeque: "More importantly, though I feel politically incorrect and ask for mercy from my liberal-Jewish gods, I once again eat pork. Pork cooked over hickory wood fires. Pork smothered in fiery red sauce. And, since I'm really only half-Jewish but all Southern, I no longer feel alien in the region I call home" (22).

Don't Date Baptists is less an indictment of the region than a demonstration that it was always more complex, more multicultural, and home to a greater variety of experiences and dreams than either its worst detractors or most prejudiced defenders usually acknowledge. In this regard, as Barr's appetizing descriptions of barbeque illustrate, *Don't Date Baptists* is not just about surviving in the South, but thriving, relishing the comforts while never forgetting the dangers.

Memories and Visions

Arthur Turfa's *Places and Times*

BY JONATHAN BUTLER



As its title suggests, Arthur Turfa's *Places and Times* (eLectio 2015) crosses nations and leaps across years, often in the same poem. These poems describe scenes from Hungary, Italy, Greece, Germany (there are even a couple of poems in German), and various regions of the United States in a sort of world-tour of recollection. Although Turfa repeatedly reassures us, beginning in the collection's first poem, that he has "set the horse to pasture" and is content to "sit sheltered by the tall pine trees" basking in memories, the frequency of these assertions in *Places*

and *Times* suggest the opposite: a restless searching, turned inward to memory and backwards in time.

In this regard, Turfa's poems dramatize a deep yearning for something like a homecoming, mingled with an understanding that, as Heraclitus tells us in the poem "Mundane Splendors," "You cannot step into the same waters / twice (it's too late, baby)". This temporal tension gives shape to the book's poems, many of which begin as recollections, then leap into the present in the final stanza. As Turfa writes in the coda to his "New Dunciad" "More yesterdays have I than tomorrows / but not more memories than visions" (52).

The first stanza of the book's first poem, "At Times I Want to Ride," establishes a recurring theme:

At times I want to ride a chestnut horse
over wide, undulating, endless steppes,
with hooves pounding out a staccato beat,
our heads lowered to enhance speed,
pointing toward the elusive white stag
ever within our sight, ever out of reach,
leading to verdant valley far away.

Places and Times is saturated with images of the "ever within our sight, ever out of

reach," including memories, countries and continents, even Emma Thompson, who appears for a fleeting instant on a train, meeting the speaker's eyes for a moment, but ultimately vanishing back into the crowd, leaving the poet to wonder whether the vision was merely a "mirage." *Places and Times* is full of these fleeting visions.

The personal history that informs Turfa's work also includes a lot of reading history—we catch glimpses of poets from Pope to Frost—so it shouldn't be a surprise that Turfa sometimes sounds most conversational in verse, as in the previously mentioned "Thinking I saw Emma Thompson on the Number 1 Line" or the Pope-inspired "New Dunciad," which begins with heroic couplets: "First, my apologies need to be made / To him who showed us how the game is played."

Perhaps half-jokingly, David Kirby once suggested Dante Alighieri as a "household god" befitting contemporary southern poets. The exiled Florentine seems an apt choice in Turfa's case, since he is similarly a poet in exile, although Turfa's nation of exile is the past. Many of these poems rehearse some scene of memory then return, in the final stanza, to the present, often with the poet assuring us that he's content to watch memory's shadow play from a distance. Fortunately, these assurances ring a little hollow, since it's the sense of longing that breathes life into this compelling collection



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About a Song – Due East’s “Darla”

BY KYLE PETERSEN



This wasn't the column I originally set out to write. I had a couple of broad concepts I was kicking around, all of them painting with broad strokes about arts engagement and its important role in our society.

But then, I got a chance to talk to Tim Darcy, the frontman for Ought, a Canadian post-punk band that has received a great deal of critical fame mostly incommensurate with their commercial success. I wanted to talk about that reality, what it was like to have so much written about his music and how he felt about the state of music criticism in general. He was relatively good-natured about the inquiry and about criticism in general, but the one thing he didn't like about it stuck with me. He said, and I think I agree, that we can so often get caught up in the context of a record—who made it, who influenced it, what other people are saying about it, what it says about the larger culture—that we forget

to talk about what it actually sounds like.

When he said that, I was struck by how much time I spend at a keyboard writing about music in ways that work around, rather than directly address, what I'm hearing. That's not to say that context isn't important, or that it can't tell us important things about the world around or deepen our understanding of art, but that a corrective is probably needed, a balancing of the experiential with the conceptual way of critically approaching art.

In that spirit, I plucked out one of my favorite songs from an older local record from 2007 that I don't get to write about much anymore even though the band, Due East, and its songwriter, Zach Seibert, are still kicking around Columbia.

"Darla" begins with an acoustic guitar strum and a fragile electric lead that is met by what's either a pedal steel line or a slide guitar part masquerading as one. The three instruments play an intro that feels like a brief ballet as the drums come in with a gentle throb that carries on for about thirty seconds before the song begins driving more insistently into the first verse. Seibert has one of those weary and weathered voices that many Americana singers try on, but his feels distinct—it's warm and open, full of romance even at its most resigned.

The first verse is a vague tale that seems to chronicle the beginning and end of a relationship in one fell swoop. The tale itself is impressionistic but gains poignancy as Seibert wrings out the emotion in the words in ways that feel singular. In a line like "newly divorced, and lonely as hell," he doesn't punch the last word with anger but rather spends just a split second longer than he

technically should on the vowel in "lonely," elongating the space in the word, and the feeling, in a way that just tugs at you.

The song doesn't really have a chorus, and the second verse pulls the song back to the slower, more spacious throb of the introduction. Seibert's strums get a bit more rhythmic as every other instrument becomes more restrained, with a quietly chiming electric guitar providing just enough strength for the confessional words that follow. "The hurt is gone all except for the pain," Seibert admits. "I know it's gonna get easier, it's just a road I'm on/Maybe if I say an extra prayer it'll be all right."

There's one final pause, a bit shorter than the rest, and Seibert spits out these final words: "Loneliness is a drug for the weary and believe me Darla I'm shooting it plenty and/God knows I'm just trying so hard just to be a man."

The song then swings back into uptempo mode with a biting yet somehow nostalgic guitar solo from Jeremy Dearmon that feels like someone gingerly slicing through a heart. It turns from feverish to plaintive near the end, as Seibert comes back to croon the first verse again, more tenderly, more contemplative.

The song's subject matter, and even the words themselves, are strikingly common and familiar. It's the music that makes it strange, that makes it new to us, each time. I don't want to forget that part of why I love really *listening* to music.

If you would like to hear "Darla," go to jaspercolumbia.com/blog for a link to the song.

NOMINATIONS FOR JASPER ARTISTS OF THE YEAR 2016

IN DANCE, MUSIC, THEATRE, LITERATURE, & VISUAL ARTS
WILL BE ACCEPTED FROM SUNDAY, JULY 31ST THRU FRIDAY, AUGUST 26TH
FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 31, 2015 – JULY 31, 2016

Individual Artists, 18 and older, working in the greater Columbia arts community are eligible for the title *based upon their artistic accomplishments during the period from July 31, 2015 through July 31, 2016.*

Nominations should be sent to editor@Jaspercolumbia.com with the subject heading “Artist of the Year” and should be accompanied by a numbered **list of works or accomplishments** produced or performed during the designated time period

Nominations must be received online by midnight Friday, August 26th. Results will be announced in the September issue of **Jasper Magazine**.

Upon closing of the nomination call, a panel of judges will select the top three candidates in each field, and the public will be invited to vote online for their top choices.

The category **Dance** includes: performance, choreography, or direction of

any form of dance including, but not limited to ballet, contemporary, jazz, tap, ballroom, folk, or dance-based performance art.

The category **Theatre** includes: directing or acting in one or more local performances. The category **Music** includes: conducting, directing, writing, or performing any style of music in one or more local concerts or recordings; both individuals and groups are eligible.

The category **Visual Arts** includes: the completion and presentation of any form of non-performing or non-literary arts, such as painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, print-making, mixed-media, etc.

The category **Literary Arts** includes: the completion, publication, and/or presentation of any form of prose, poetry, or non-fiction writing, as well as playwriting and the writing of executed screenplays.

*Only individual artists may be considered for nomination. While arts groups, such as musical groups or arts troupes, are no longer eligible for consideration, individuals within those groups may be nominated. The purpose of the awards is to recognize artistic achievements accomplished within a calendar year. There is no fee to enter. Artists **may** nominate themselves. Artists should be made aware of their nomination **before their official nomination** and agree to participate in the competition.*