


the literary & arts magazine of cccc

RED CLAY REVIEW



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A watercolor illustration of a landscape. In the foreground, there are two rectangular blocks of earth or rock, one on the left and one on the right. The left block is dark and textured, while the right block is lighter and more detailed, showing a small building or structure. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a light sky. There are some thin, leafless branches and a small plant on the right side.

RCR

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S P E C I A L
t h a n k s

to the CCCC Foundation for
sponsoring the poetry, prose
& cover contests for the *Red
Clay Review* ■ to the Business
Services Department for help
in the printing of this magazine

MAGAZINE

t h e m e

Music, the universal language, is this issue's theme. Here we celebrate the musicality of language and our experiences of music. Tune in, and let your mind dance.

music

CONTEST winners

PO

JEANNE JULIAN is a member of the North Carolina Poetry Society, The Nexus Poets, Carteret Writers, and Pamlico Writers Group. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Blossom & Loss* and *Relic and Myth*, and a full-length collection which will be published by The Poetry Box Select. She and her husband live in New Bern, NC.

ET

RY

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ANNE KISSEL and her husband have been in Chatham County for over thirteen years, the longest by far either lived in any one place and both find the planting of roots a nice change. She is retired after a career working in hospice and elder service programs in several states. Taking classes in the CCCC creative writing program has provided the nudge to actually write instead of just think about writing and dare to put some of that writing out into the world.

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PR

LINDA JOHNSON is originally from Chicago where her first career was in advertising. When the cold and gray got to be too much, she and her husband packed up their dogs and horse and moved to North Carolina. She has published two novels and several short stories.

OS

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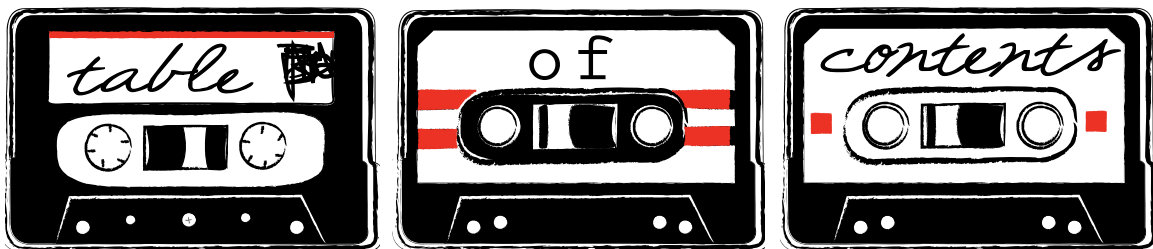
CO

SUSAN FECHO is a resident of historic Tarboro, NC, with family ties--and innumerable childhood memories of camping trips--to the Piedmont. The surrounding landscape become metaphors in her work, and she is fascinated with the natural beauty of flora and fauna.

VE

R

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C O N T R I B U T O R S

MARY BARNARD is a Chatham County poet.

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NANCY WALKER BENJAMIN worked as a writer/editor in New York and taught French and Russian in Charlottesville, Virginia. She has published 3 collections of poetry and lives in Chapel Hill with her husband, a retired pediatrician.

POETRY ■ *Messiah* in Paris, 2017 52

PATTY COLE is a poet/essayist who lives on a farm in western Chatham County with her husband, Hoyt. She is a member of the North Carolina Poetry Society and the North Carolina Writers' Network. She has received honorable mention in the Kathyrine Kennedy McIntyre Light Verse Award and honorable mention in the Poet Laureate Award through NCPS and is published in numerous journals and anthologies.

POETRY ■ Heaven's Smallest Kingdom 26

TOM DOW teaches poetry at CCCC. His work has appeared in Europe, the US and in Japan where his book *Different Gates* was published in Tokyo. He believes that poetry is a way of being present.

POETRY ■ Steam Calliope on the Natchez 38

DIANA ENGEL's poetry appears in a variety of journals and anthologies, including Asheville Poetry Review, Wild Goose Poetry Review, Flying South 2018, and fire & chocolate. Her first chapbook, *Excavating Light*, was published by Finishing Line Press in March 2019.

POETRY ■ Late in the Day 38

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GUSTAVO FERNANDEZ is a Cuban-born American citizen. He has resided in NC for more than 40 years and been involved in poetry and writing workshops for much of that time. He lives in Raleigh.

POETRY ■ Conga Lies 22

JOANNE KENNEDY FRAZER is a retired peace and justice director/educator for faith-based organizations. Her poetry has appeared in several publications. Penning life's passions into poetry is the delight of her silvering years, as is meeting and writing with gifted poets in Durham, NC.

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ZAKARY GORDON

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JUNE GURALNICK has created performance projects and multi-media installations at venues including the Kennedy Center, Abrons Arts Centre/Henry Street Settlement Theatre, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theater, Burning Coal Theatre, Spirit Square, AS220, the North Carolina Museum of Art--and beamed to the Space Station! She currently is an instructor with the CCCC Creative Writing Program.

POETRY ■ Piano 28

Sound, Sound the Clarion 43

ERIKA HOFFMAN has lived in Chatham County since 1979. She taught school in Chatham County at Jordan-Matthews High School, Silk Hope School, and North Chatham. Her four children were born and raised in Siler City. Erika writes mostly non-fiction and is published regularly. Her book, *Erika's Take on Writing*, is available through Amazon.

PROSE ■ I Go Back 57

JO ANN STEGERHOFFMAN's publications include short fiction and a variety of poems in literary journals, including *The Merton Quarterly*, *Persimmon Tree*, *Pinesong*, *New Verse News*, *Ground Fresh Thursday*, and *Flying South*. She has received recent contest awards from the Carteret Writers, Pamlico Writers and the Palm Beach Poetry Festival. An Ohio native, Jo Ann and her husband live in Cary and Beaufort.

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Me, Mozart, God 29

DAVID MANNING, a California native, became a poet after a long career as a research scientist in chemistry. His most recent full-length collection, *Soledad*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2014 and a chapbook, *Singularities*, is scheduled from Finishing Line Press later this year. He credits his zest for poetry to his love of music and the outdoors and to his rambunctious colleagues of the Friday Noon Poets.

POETRY ■ Aria 21

MARILYN MCVICKER author of *Some Shimmer of You* (Finishing Line Press, 2014), and *Sauna Detoxification Therapy* (McFarland & Co., Inc., 1997), is a retired flutist and music educator.

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ASHLEY MEMORY first heard the song of the wood thrush in the woods behind her house in Pittsboro, N.C, where she lived for 8 years. She is certain that the descendants of that same bird now sing in the Uwharries of Randolph County, where she lives with her sculptor husband, Johnpaul Harris. She is honored to be a perpetual student (and workshop leader) of the Creative Writing Program.

POETRY ■ Waiting for the Wood Thrush 29

SHAMONIQUE MILES is originally from Newark, New Jersey, and now resides in North Carolina. As an artist, her objective is to simply spread wisdom, love and knowledge to foster awareness and growth in others.

POETRY ■ Untitled 34

JOSEPH MILLS is a faculty member at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and has published six collections of poetry with Press 53.

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and Other Conversations 31

CALISTA MOON has sailed the oceans blue, but she's really a small town girl loving Chatham County since her move there in 1992.

PROSE ■ Beadie and Dede 64

JON OBERMEYER is a native of Santa Barbara, CA, a former resident of San Francisco, currently living in Bethesda, outside Durham. He has published twelve books of creative work (poetry, fiction, memoir and essays), five guides for writers and two business titles. He currently teaches a "Writing About Family" writing workshop in the creative writing program at CCCC.

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ALICE OSBORN from Raleigh, North Carolina, is a poet, singer-songwriter, and editor-for-hire whose most recent CD is *Old Derelicts*; her poetry collections include *Heroes without Capes*, *After the Steaming Stops*, and *Unfinished Projects*. Alice loves writing songs about American history and plays Celtic fiddle and bluegrass banjo. Visit Alice's website at www.aliceosborn.com.

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DAVID OSTROVSKY was born in Moscow, survived growing up in Charlotte, waded through Raleigh, and finally settled down in Pittsboro. He is a hobby poet when he is not absorbed in building or fixing a house.

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ELISABETH PLATTNER is from Vienna, Austria and moved to Chatham County in 2013. She enjoys spending time with other creative explorers and has taken writing classes at the CCCC Pittsboro, introductory classes at Duke Center for Documentary studies and volunteered for SOAR in Chatham County Schools as a reading tutor.

POETRY	■	Piano	32
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LISA RYAN landed in Sanford after her husband, Patrick, retired from the Navy. Her four boys are her greatest treasure. Attending CCCC, she has earned an AAS in Accounting and will finish her AA this spring. This is her first published piece.

POETRY	■	Sound of Mourning	37
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DR. LYNN VEACH SADLER is a writer and an editor. She has published, in academics, 5 books and 72 articles and has edited 23 books/proceedings and 3 national journals and published 3 newspaper columns. She has 11 poetry chapbooks and 5 full-length collections, 4 novels, a novella, 5 short story collections, 2 nonfiction collections, and 41 plays (1 commissioned for The First International Robert Frost Symposium).

POETRY	■	Riffing	39
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MATT SMITH is a Licensed Professional Counselor who utilizes therapeutic photography interventions. He has facilitated workshops, classes, and individual sessions for various local community agencies, colleges, and photography clubs. Matt has presented on Therapeutic Photography at state conferences, and his photographs are featured in local and national print publications.

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JUDITH STANTON is a scholar and novelist. She has also written a poetry chapbook, *Deer Diaries*. As a professor, she edited *The Letters of Charlotte Smith*, a definitive edition that helped restore Smith's reputation as the first Romantic poet and garnered a nomination as a Distinguished Alumna at UNC-CH. She also published four historical romance novels, *Wild Indigo and His Stolen Bride*; *The Mad Marquis*; and *The Kissing Gate* and an equestrian suspense, *A Stallion to Die For*. She and her husband live on a farm in Chatham County with their retired horses and cats.

POETRY	■	Freedom's Just Another Word	41
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DANA STONE's connection to Chatham was through her friend and former resident of Chatham County, Bonnie Korta, with whom she took a few poetry classes. Like Bonnie, Dana is also from Virginia. She lives and writes in Durham and draws inspiration from William Stafford, Rumi, and, Mary Oliver.

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BRADLEY R. STRAHAN taught poetry at Georgetown Univ. and for nearly 40 years published the respected poetry journal, *Visions International*. He has 6 books of poetry & over 700 poems published worldwide and his two latest books, *This Art of Losing* and *A Parting Glass* (his book of poems written in Ireland) have been translated into French.

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DOUG STUBER awaits *Chronic Observer*, his 12th volume of poetry. He publishes *Poems from the Heron Clan* annually.

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NICK SWEET has been a freelance stage director since 1977. He has directed more than 140 productions, including the historical outdoor drama *Trail of Tears* at the Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK. He was named Senior Poet Laureate for Texas (2013) and Oklahoma (2010) by the Amy Kitchener Foundation.

POETRY	■	Blast from the Past	36
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BRANDON ALEXANDER WHITEHURST resides in the Chatham County area between Siler City and Pittsboro. He is an artist that has a few portraits being showcased in The Sweet Bee Art Gallery, an association of CFTA Pittsboro. He organizes a blog called AVProductions (<https://avproductionsblog.wordpress.com/>) in hopes of reinvigorating the world with imagination and the will to take their talents beyond the scope to Mars. You can follow him on twitter @Scope2Mars.

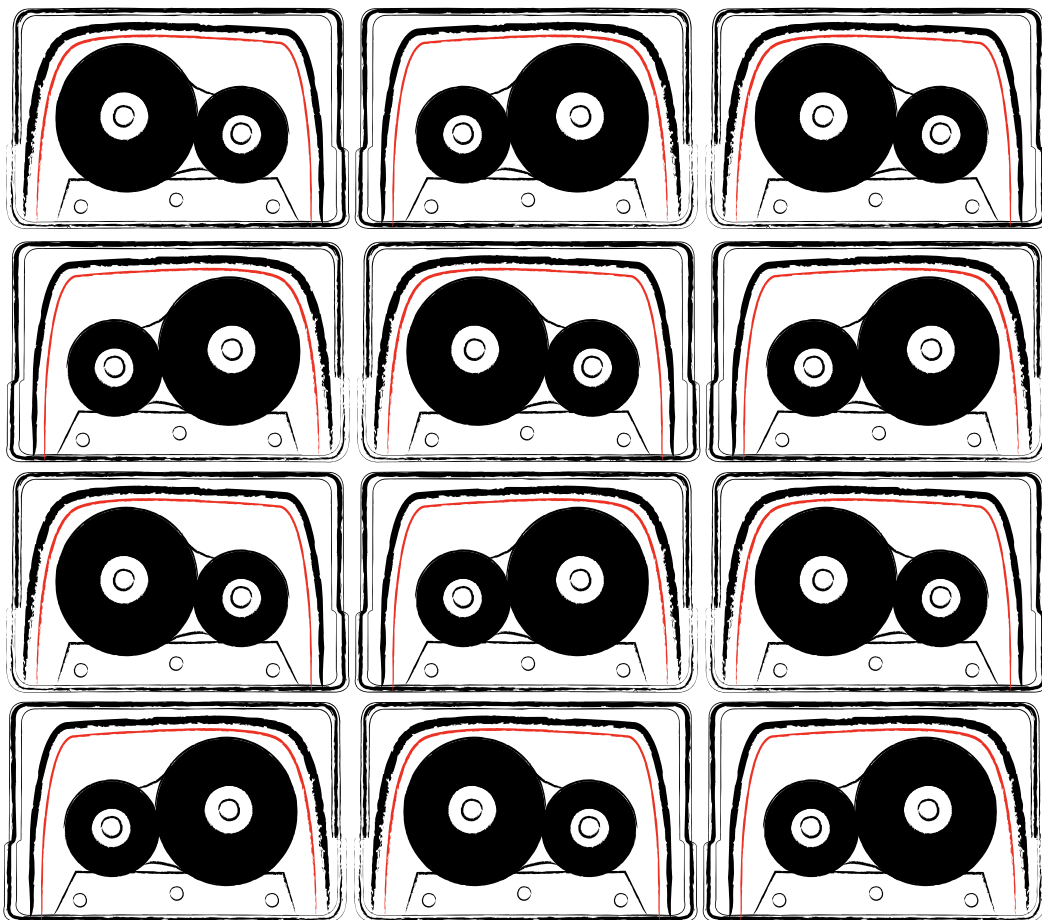
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ROBIN WHITTEN has enjoyed being a part of the Writing Program at CCC. Since taking classes, she has been published in the *Main Street Rag* and the *Sisters in Crime*. She has also published a novella, *Epona*. She next hopes to publish a novel.

PROSE	■	Little Feet Tap	74
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C. PLEASANTS YORK and her husband, Guy, have traveled to 26 countries as chaperones for EF Tours. She is former President of the North Carolina Poetry Society and San-Lee Writers and was an educator for 42 years. Presently she serves as a court advocate for Haven, a domestic violence shelter in Lee County.

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TRIBUTE in memoriam

Since our last publication, we have lost two treasured long-time contributors to *Red Clay Review*, Bonnie Korta and Donald Byrne. Their presence in the writing community will be felt for quite a long time. Included in this edition is a poem by each writer along with a tribute from one of their family members.



DONALD BYRNE, JR.

Last summer, we lost my father, Donald E. Byrne Jr. He was a frequent contributor to *Red Clay Review*. His children and his partner Pamela often helped him select poems and prepare them for submission, and we loved reading them in the contributor copies he carefully saved for us.

In the last years of his life, I visited him every Sunday. We would try out new fountain pens, watch episodes of *Star Trek*, or study huge maps of the Boundary Waters, where he used to go camping as a boy.

Once, when I was struggling with poetic structure in my novel, he got out index cards and taught me all the basics: meter, foot, line, rhyme. He was my first and best writing teacher. Even as I write this, I can hear his voice in my head: “Is *struggling* the right word there? Was that how you were really feeling? Write the truth: write only what you can write.”

When I look back on his life, I can’t believe everything he did. He taught college religion full-time, pioneered folkloric research, raised five children on a pittance, played in a bluegrass band, grew all our greens, took care of our mother when she became sick, composed albums’ worth of music, and—of course—wrote poetry every morning. He was a deeply funny, gentle, private, and stubborn man. He wanted to keep living very badly. He told me, “I just want to know what happens next!”

A year later, I can make an attempt at answering. What happens next is that we miss him very much. And yet, he is still with us, and we are still with him, and we are all together, somehow; because of the way he loved us and the way he taught us to love each other. That story has no end.

Thanks to Monica Byrne for this tribute to her father, Donald Byrne, Jr.

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BONNIE KORTA

On March 9, 2018, Bonnie Sue (Bailey) Korta died in peace, surrounded by her loved ones. Bonnie, a resident of Pittsboro, North Carolina, grew up on her family's farm in Pleasant View, Virginia. As a child, her active participation in 4-H engendered a deep love and respect for animals and the natural world. She enjoyed vacations on the Outer Banks and found inspiration for her poetry and writing there. Her life was made rich with her love of food and cooking; all forms of visual and especially folk art; and international travel. She played the piano and held a deep appreciation of music, often attending concerts and musicals. She took great pleasure in gardens and gardening and was especially fond of her roses and German Johnson tomatoes. Community was especially important to Bonnie. She valued friendship deeply and was known for giving caring advice.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the College of William and Mary, Bonnie also studied creative writing at George Mason University, Radford University, the Hindman Settlement School, and Central Carolina Community College. She earned a Master's degree in Social Work at Catholic University and worked from 1986 to 2011 as a social worker for the Prince William County School System. She also served as a family and individual therapist at the Prince William County Hospital Counseling Center from 1993 to 2011.

Bonnie will be remembered as a generous and beloved member of the North Carolina writing community. She wrote fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and won awards for her poems from both the North Carolina Poetry Council and the Poetry Society of Virginia. She also earned the 2017 North Carolina Poetry Society Poet Laureate Award. A member of the Friday Noon Poets in Chapel Hill, she published work in many literary journals, including *Pinesong*, *Bayleaves*, *When Women Waken*, *ALCA Lines: The Journal on the Culture and Literature of Appalachia*, and *Carolina Woman Magazine*.

Thanks to Bonnie's daughter, Hillary Korta, for this tribute and photo.

I Needed You

By Donald E. Byrne, Jr.

Again: I play Anne Murray singing You Needed Me.
Even more than the words, I love the song of her voice,

as I love the low voice of a cello: lustrous as old
polished heart oak, easy as an oiled, worn saddle,

sorrowing and wise, erotic, fierce, tender, ghostly
as November wind groaning up gray steel stairwells.

I feel it playing inside me, as if my mother's low voice
were in my belly now, as I was in hers; in her womb,

I imagine my nerves, threading like hungry root hairs,
thrilled to her deep song in the first, only ground

of being I've known, my only god my goddess. My old
nerves remember, though the words she said were never clear.

I needed you then. I wonder if then I ever
heard you tell someone you needed me, and if

you were still speaking now, would you say you did? I still need you;
I listen for an answer in every woman's

song, coming down around me from around her heart. ◉

Mess of Daddy's Snaps

By Bonnie Korta

*This poem appeared in the
2013 edition of Red Clay Review.*

Snappedy snap snappety snap snap snap
Splinkety, spling, spling, spling bright green dancing
String beans, pole beans, green beans, snaps rattling in my bowl

My dead Daddy's voice, still talking snaps
In my head, after all these years, guides me on
"Don't think you'll get by, cooking them beans for an hour
No matter who says different no matter
What's written in no cookbook I'm here
To tell you, gotta cook them beans all day
All day girl, yes maam, all day long
Don't go give me no crunchy string beans
No snaps still in a strut no cook the living
Day lights out of them beans, cook 'em gentle
Cook 'em slow cook 'em long
Cook 'em with fat back, taters too cook'em
Cook them beans til there's no snap left in them

My voice chimes in here, "Til you don't even
Recognize the shape they've shifted to
Til they have no shape, til they're a mess of slick
Dark green slinking on a slow lazy river
Of lush pot likker goes down easy velvet

Nuggets of potatoes popping up surprises
Slivers of fat back shimmering pearl lagniappes
All dancing done all brightness gone
Revealing deep dark secrets of the beans
Salty sweet of fat remaining robust
Flavor coiling around taste buds tempting
Tongue with unctuousness mess of Daddy's snaps,
Cooked right." ●



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Epithalamium

By Jeanne Julian

Oh that old song.
That double pair of notes,
the first four of the Fifth,
familiar and strange as lilacs,
or lemons. Or looking down on clouds.
Or coming home. Marriage.
Why bother? We know how it ends.

But the original bedazzlement!
“When I went to put on my hat
I could not find my head,”
Beethoven’s contemporary said,
who’d heard them new,
those sounds now marmoreal,
like your vows: “I will.” “I will.”

Four drops on an awning.
Waking, anticipating rain,
yet unsure which permutation
of water from the sky will come.
From that suspense the symphony travels
(the aged musician rasped in wonder)
“always from night to light.”

Now, taking in and letting out the cat,
planting basil in a pot of clay,
riding a smooth train into Manhattan,
cooking an omelet, walking the flat rocks
where you first met,
may all be night to light,
as lightly linked as two notes in a hymn. 🕒

Background Music

By Anne Kissel

In my house are an organ, piano,
bongo drums, harp, maracas,
assorted flutes, ukulele and guitar,
gong, bells, and recorder.

I can't play any of them.

Yet I hear them, part of my home's
domestic symphony of whirrs, clicks,
buzzes, beeps and creaks of old
floors and busy new appliances.

Though lacking any musical talent,
I hear music all day, everywhere.
From dawn's sweet soft birdsong
to grey whispery dusk, I am in music.

I am a virtuoso listener.
I sing only in the shower and
driving in the car, obviously.
I sing to my cat, because I can
and he knows less of music than I.

I fall asleep to my sweetheart's
night song of gentle snores and feet
seeking the cool spot under the covers.
I dream of ancient war harps and Mozart.

I hear the sun.

Was the first music I heard mother's heartbeat,
the slippery susurrus of her blood pushing mine?
Rhythm before speech, listening before breathing;
too soon words drive out the melodies born deep within us.

Music still flows in my blood.

Are we hardwired, fine tuned before birth
at a sub-cellular level to respond to music?
We don't need music to eat or run or farm, but
surely we need cellos and sopranos to fully live.

Perhaps when we die we become a unique
order of sounds that tells the stories of our lives,
a musical bar code by which we will know each other.
Perhaps what survives are our tonal vibrations, joining
others, rippling down the stars, a timeless celestial chorus.

Perhaps we are music. ◉

Bad Cactus Blues

By Alice Osborn

Every cactus craves water and sunshine,
but you'd say you don't need any
of that nonsense.

Your soil stays sandy,
a hint of dampness, but never too much.
You smell of fresh garlic,
on toast just before it burns. You sprout
wide, filling up your shrunken pot with roots
scared of color, infiltrating
all corners of your territory.

No other succulent can compete with you
since you are always right and demand others
to share in your green, scalloped perfection.

Your needles grow long and venom-tipped
when I enter the room; you can't help
comment on my fat thighs, new laugh lines
and low class friends. I try to hug you
to make your pain go away,
but you don't want my touch,
perhaps your needles will break
and then who would you be?

You say plants are easier
to raise than children and I agree. ❶

Falling Through Space

By Dana Stone

I thought of other things
Collecting clams at the beach that morning
Watching the ebb and flow of the tide,
Shopping that afternoon with my mother
For Jason's Bar Mitzvah,
The yellow satin of my prom dress,
And the gift that my boyfriend gave me
The night before the dance
Silver earrings
Now ripped from my ear and
Thrown aside,
Along with my clothes and all my pride.
The shame is all you feel.

Your soul disappears,
And you're left with just a body. ❶

Aria

By David Manning

Today I stepped out onto our deck
into a little cloud of mist rising
and from somewhere came
the lispng song of a Bluebird.
So seldom do they sing like this,
pleading for an answer
that I sang too, answering back,
oblivious to the neighbors.
Only a small made-up tune, but I felt
like Caruso singing “Una Furtiva”
at La Scala with the audience
below the footlights of the great
theater enraptured into the silence
like the while world beyond the mist
now arising all around me. 🕒

For Just One Morning

By Dana Stone

To forget the shootings in Louisiana,
the massacre in South Carolina,
the one-year anniversary of Bataclan,
teacher strikes,
and a little boy murdered by police in Ohio.

As we go down an unknown road,
throwing down our heavy stone,

basking in divine sweat,
communion in a dance studio. 🕒

Conga Lies

By Gustavo Fernandez

The heat rose in the afternoon air
like breaths from dying iguanas,
while the dark boy watched
the throng in the marketplace's sun
doing endless chores of third world despair,
motions in slow beat, of
conga lines.

The July light shone on the bright poster,
image of olive green gazing into souls,
looking for secrets hidden in the dark movements
while imparting the scorched masses, with the
correct answer.

The dark boy's mind heard the cadenza
in the voice of the Maximum Leader,
echoes of tropical solitude,
soothing sound of bongos and marimbas, in
verdant heat.

He heard the didactic diphthongs,
emblems of pedagogical dictatorships,
hollow rumbles of dialectic materialism,
empty rustles of bullying imperialism,
obscure contradictions.

But the dark boy knew only of sleepless dreams,
hot beaches of pulsating sand,
warm shores of blue mantels,
where noon always came unseen, after the
canary's song.

The Maximum Leader looked on from above,
immune to fishmongers and beggars,
real in perpetual slogan,
his omnipresent gaze stopping,
at the dark boy's
swollen belly. ◉

Fall Creek Cascades

By Diana Engel

Primeval voice singing
before choirs of birds began,
thundering whisper of
icy spray
finger painting
limestone and quartz
the way a skilled pianist
with Tchaikovsky soft
makes evening waltz
in a dark café.
Trill fortissimo fast
as you careen onto
mountain ledges,
diminuendo into trembling stream,
liquid lace that carves
the land,
meandering through
verdant valleys of chestnut oaks and yellow birches,
driving into metamorphic layers:
the geologic ages,
rushing song of the Southern Highlands,
continuing to Atlantic
and Gulf of Mexico.
Now rain falls,
light maracas accompanying
the lyrical cascade. 🎵

Rhythm of Twilight

By C. Pleasants York

Spanish leather boots
propped on the weathered deck railing
fingers – jade and gold ring glinting – strum, grasp the darkness
tortoise shell guitar pick slides along the strings –
 wrapped round tension tight
thumb - to one side – pats the fretboard
 budum budum
 budum budum

deer – one, then another, moonlight search,
approach eyes wide, earspricked earstwitching
rustle of footsteps in the leaves, hooves lift,
rummage, nudge corn, crunch, swallow journey

melodies float into the darkness
drift, flicker like fireflies
listen, listen 🕒

Wind Instruments

By Brandon Alexander Whitehurst

Seeking for a long time, how to express my unrest.
Speaking for a long time, while pumping my chest.
 Rhythms building from a fire,
 Tempos determined to carry us higher.
Harps carried in our pockets to keep us quiet.
 Wind instruments used as pacifiers.
 After the radio molests the ears,
 There is a place in the woods,
 The hills of Carolina,
 where you can hear all day,
sounds we've almost allowed to only be found,
 When we place our ears
 To the ground. 🕒

Duet

By Marilyn McVicker

It is evening
You sit at your piano
Fauré's music rolling out
From under your fingertips
Enchanted melodies gently flowing
Through the thick summer heat

The musty sweet dampness
Of newly born evening settles in
Night bugs echo your song
With their own warbling

A full round moon
Solitary as a coastal lighthouse
Towers above the mingling
strains beneath

Yearning as full and round
As this pale golden beacon
Looms in my vision
Solitary and simple
As the melody
You now play

Yearning for how it felt
To be a child
Carried away
To nursery lands of misty dreams
On the spell of that music
Which you now play

I long to feel like that
Supple and safe
Trusting as your keyboard
My own soundboard vibrating the
ecstasy
Of childhood, love, and full moons

We have had such glory
When our music has come together
In the splendor of an eclipse
Our singleness overshadowed
By the radiance of what we have
created
Our eyes locked in crescendo
For the moments it takes

To complete a phrase
Or bend an appoggiatura

Through my flute
I have poured the moonlit tapestries
Of my lost self

The strains of our music
Have blended together
In a harmony so full and rich

Producing sympathetic vibrations
That have reverberated
In the air around us

In our lives
And in our bones ◐

Heaven's Smallest Kingdom

By Patty Cole

Mickey and I are 10 when we escape a summer's day
by sliding through a thicket of honeysuckle and kudzu
that shades the banks of a shallow, rocky stream.

We land on our backsides in a sanctuary of green vines and clear water.

Goose bumps cover our arms and legs, and my stomach sucks in with excitement.
Our eyes grow larger than silver dollars and sparkle like diamonds.
We yell, Alright!

A willow pulls her raspy fingers across the stream's tempo,
sending ripples beneath a canopy of maple and sweet-gum trees,
as a privet drops her blossoms onto the water. Mickey and I sashay
gathering those blooms to throw in the air, giggle as they land in our hair.

Life sings happy melodies in lively allegros. I chirp like a little bird
and Mickey gathers handfuls of water to throw at a black snake
sitting wrapped around the limb of an oak tree, moving its tongue
in and out to my pounding chest.

Mickey slides her feet over the slick shale lining the stream's bed saying, Eww.
We pretend to be fairies dancing and playing flutes and drums
by whistling and clacking sticks, and in our imaginations
believe we are of heaven's smallest kingdom.

Trees part in a circle over our heads, and minnows skate
from pool to pool as a light rain baptizes us to the serenity
and sweet hallelujahs of a summer's day. ◀

In the Cathedral

By B.R. Strahan

Organ and choir
spread a sky of sound.
Stone flowers bloom.
Marble ivies the pillared nave.

In dim reaches
carved eyes watch,
chiseled ears listen.

From capstone and cornice
stone faces leer
at the cacophony of praise
disturbing their sleep.

Voices implore ivory saints,
the Jesus carved
in his perfect agony.

Marble leaves vibrate
but there's no response
from half open lips
stone syllables frozen there. ◀

Invocation

By Joanne Kennedy
Frazer

The lone Carolina wren
warbles an invitation
to silent disciples.

Awaiting an answer,
she repeats the call,
hears a reply,
offers a response.

Each songster
intones her hymn,
lingers, welcomes
antiphonal greetings.

The song is familiar,
the dialect unknown.

Are they embracing
only each other?

Or are they environing
the wild wider world? ▶

Piano

By June Guralnick

Homework scrawled, dishes dried,
three rambunctious girls, one barking dog, and a dead-on-her-feet mother
would circle the wagons 'round an old piano -
not a delicate Little Women spinet but a tough-as-nails Friday fight special
(Joe Louis body, gouged legs cradling loose-tongued crackling keys).

From the bowels of a sagging coffin bench
The Book* scrambled out.
Frayed flag blue binding and trampled pages lassoing
sister skirmishes and simmering civil wars -
a rally cry to our Love Oh Love Oh Careless Love family.

Such songs.
Clapping renditions of Frankie and Johnny
Oh Susanna! and Dixie trailed
pluming smoke and tuneful sorrows;
invitation to stake a claim to the Promised Land
(no matter we'd never voyaged south of Jersey or west of Spuyten Divil).

God bless our busted TV.
God bless our sleeping dog.
God bless our molten harmony.

God bless the old piano. 🕒

**A Treasury of American Songs* by Elie Siegmeister and Olin Downes (1940, 1943).

Me, Mozart, God

By Jo Ann Hoffman

Alone, near dark, driving north on the Carolina coast
before cell phones, before global positioning
and no one in the world knows precisely where

I am. Black ocean rumbles on my right
night music, loud, mine and his, streams through
the windows like ribbons, floats to the arc of sky

alight at the horizon with dull flares of lightning
from distant storms, mine and his. Light-heat-night
music-surf-solitude become one inexpressible thing –

what? what? the swelling strings tighten my throat,
the flickering dome of light wraps around
me. I am the only person in the world. Alone with

whoever, whatever I call God – that pang of knowing
that lives in the ocean, the music, the night, and me 🕒

Waiting for the Wood Thrush

By Ashley Memory

Breath of spring has sprung
vanilla petals lost to wind
Squirrels dash and bicker
frogs peep and peep again.

Cardinals preen pretty, pretty
Woodpeckers hammer until noon.
Honeybees hobnob round the plum
And crickets trill to the moon.

What we don't yet hear this spring
is the voice of the shy passerine
beguiling us from the bramble
where you nest and mate unseen.

You may raise a brood or not
but you never stay too long.
From June to August you haunt us
with your peculiar eerie song.

The descant to spring's melody
The truth we've come to rue.
Death, in a whisper: *Come to me...*
Here I am. Right near you. 🕒

Singing

By David Ostrovsky

I have the voice of an octopus,
what a puss,
that is to say
no voice at all -
an octaveless octopus.
I have the voice of a moose,
caboose at the end of the choir,
that is to say
monotone and chesty -
an octaveless octomoose.
I have the voice of an owl,
howl screeching scary
before bellowing soft,
that is to say
all over the place -
an octaveless octomoose owl.
I have the voice of lard,
hard when it's cold
and spittin' when it's hot,
that is to say
I start bad and get worse -
an octaveless octomoose owlard.
I have the voice of a collard,
holler'd big and green-like,
that is to say
loud and untrained -
an octaveless octomoose owlallard.
I have the voice of a walking stick,
lickity split in the rain,
that is to say
that I can't hang -

an octaveless octomoose owlallard stick.
I have a voice that moves like Sisyphus,
is his ordeal ever over,
that is to say
no matter how hard I try
it's still the same -
an octaveless octomoose owlallard
stickyphus.
I have the voice of a single rain drop,
plop only one falls
and no others follow,
that is to say
I sing alone -
an octaveless octomoose owlallard
stickyphus drop.
I have the voice of a possum,
toss 'em in a frying pan
when there's nothing else to eat,
that is to say
I'm not the first one
picked in a line-up -
an octaveless octomoose owlallard
stickyphus droppossum.
One big pile of octaveless octomoose
owlallard stickyphus droppossum,
but boy do I love to sing,
and what bad singer doesn't
love to sing
LOUDLY! ◀

Teaching My Son How to Spell

F-O-R-N-I-C-A-J-I-O-N and Other Conversations

By Joseph Mills

i.

My son has access to music far more explicit than anything I ever listened to at his age, and when my wife and I ban certain songs, he hears them anyway. At his friends' houses or in public places like the gym or mall. He doesn't understand most of the lyrics not just the double-entendres, but the words themselves, "Ho," "bitch," "gold-digger." We talk about misogyny and race, the complexity of words like "nigga," but it's too much for him. He just likes the beat.

ii.

At a campus mixer my first month in France, when I knew little of the language except for Bonjour and Ça va?, a European girl taught me to say, Je suis monte comme un an, and I kept repeating the sentence, liking the way the words felt in my mouth although they meant nothing to me. I walked around the party, giddily saying out loud for everyone to hear, "I am hung like a donkey."
"Hello. How are you?"
"I am hung like a donkey."

iii.

As we listen to the radio, my son asks, "Is this song about sex too?" I say, "Yes," pointing out the rhyme "vacation/fornication." He asks, "What's fornication?" I tell him, and he wants to know how to spell it. Later, he tells his mother, "I learned a new word. Four Nations. It means sex. I can even spell it." She says, "It's good to have a vocabulary."

iv.

When I was young, my family drove to Florida from Indiana to visit my grand-mother who had moved to a trailer park in Bradenton, and we went out to a seafood restaurant. It was amazing. There were palm trees in the parking lot. Something called key-lime pie. Even vending machines in the bathroom. I came back to the table and asked, "Grandma, What's a French Tickler and why do they come in different colors and can I have some quarters to get one?" I don't remember getting answers to any of these questions, but I remember the shock and embarrassment and anger.

v.

As he clicks through stations, my son says, "I'm a version although I won't be after I have sex, which is weird because it sounds like it should be something you are afterwards. You should become a version." I agree it's weird. He wants to know if I'm a version. I tell him I'm not. I wait. He doesn't ask anything else. ◀

To a Friend Finding His Music

By Jon Obermeyer

I

In the old house, didn't your dulcimer,
lie flat upon the mantle? Ornament
and memento of your days in Blacksburg,
Appalachian violin, sweet music in the wood

II

Your life takes a turn, you strum
the warp of a hymn against the weft
of fingerslide on drone strings: the bass
rumbles like thunder beyond the ridge.

III

When dusk storms clear and clouds
glow gold, ballads rise from hollows
like mist from rhododendron: rose-trees
of purple and white, "Wildwood Flower"

IV

and azalea flame.
You are back
on the mountain
again. 🕒

The Syndicate

By Doug Stuber

Brattleboro rattles fortissimo,
without monitors or mains.
Where did Louisa go?
It's '04, no score, dirty
heinous oil war, here's the door.
It's scream time, broken
dream time, can't rest on the
old line -- world's gonna cry --
so the road calls to those
who care, to those who dare
to explain to the unaware,
the perils that lurk beneath
the broken skin, the needle in:
lives so twisted, bleeding
with that continual grin.
One more wise-ass remark,
one more police report,
one more pulled for "speeding"
but detained after her
Patriot Act search reveals
two seeds from the former
owner's stash. "Good - bye
Vermont," sorry for the short
set, still we're alive, road
bound, grinding night into day. 🕒

Sestina: In Her Hands

By Jeanne Julian

Old Gladys lost her voice and mind, they said. But Naomi offers a song, maybe “Jesus Loves Me,” not exactly the Aleinu Naomi herself knew from her distant Brooklyn childhood. As Gladys gazes with one clouded eye through Naomi’s stylish thick-lensed glasses, she seems to sense mutely the rhythm in some hymn Naomi sings: her shrunken hand keeps time, slapping the arm of her wheelchair, up and down.

Simple and sweet, the reassuring melody leads Gladys down into the past, her childhood, where a softly hummed song, maybe “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” helped the time pass when she was cleaning houses with her mother, who knew to labor unobtrusively. Wouldn’t make no sense to upset the white lady, under whose exacting eye

they scrubbed, dusted, and swept, with an eye toward saving for school for Gladys, who was counting down the days till she might flee all this servile nonsense and head to campus: she’d memorized the fight song, already had a t-shirt, and she just knew she’d be successful—a teacher, or a doctor!—given time.

But it seemed that hope and time dwindled into the dust they battled. Though they kept an eye on the money, safely in the bank, gradually they both knew—Gladys, and her mama—that the account was down below the necessary goal: college could not be had for a song, after all, and so it only made sense

for Gladys to give up her dream. In a sense, that is when her mind started going, too. In time, the collegiate shirt became a dust rag, the song they hummed in unison sank into a minor key, the child’s eye lost all luster except that reflected when she looked down at a stranger’s silver service she polished with her mother, who knew

the only doctoring for Gladys, now, would be at her mother’s bedside, knew they’d lost this battle. Meanwhile, in another world, Naomi had the sense to go to school and marry well and raise two kids. Feeling down after her husband died, she moved to Florida, found time to volunteer at a nursing home. There, crooning, with soothing touch, and lucid eye, Naomi coaxed from Gladys’ wordless mouth “in his hands”: refrain of a simple song

handed down from a mother with love. All those caretakers, time and time again, though compassionate, knew only what was absent, only what the eye allowed to them. So: how may we each come to sense the other’s long-hidden song? ◀

Untitled

By Shamonique Miles

Sometimes I analyze about this society
Because we must be arrogant as weary
To believe we prosper in gold-lined doors
While Steve Jobs rises in a stock posthumously
Where the accounts of college students
Are full of lasting debt
And those that become entrepreneurs
Struggle to consolidate the Blacks' respect
This so called "Awakening of the Minds"
Why aren't we WOKE yet?!

When we see these crooked ass monopolistic corporations
Constantly disrespecting us outwardly
HOW about you sit AND let that MARINATE
Now I bet some hypocrite will say I'm Benedict
I can tell by the angle you glare at me
Then I remember Patricia Ann, Hasan Miles and Alondra-
Who fell victim to addiction, betrayal, and lifestyle-
to hell with misperceived loyalty.
If anyone's got my back, I know it's only me. ◀

Inspired by Tupac Shakur's *How Can We Be Free*

College

By Zachary Gordon

For the apathetic student
Apathetic-minded scholars, the best students of my college destroyed by neglect,
Aspiring athletes, biologists, economists, doctors, all sat up drinking in the approaching eve
of final exams, floating across the edge of responsibility without contemplating a thing,
coasting through the course meetings at noon waiting for a class dismissal,
Daydreaming, focus shifting from the parties that night to the smoke blown in the perception of
freedom,
Pulverizing their futures to dust under the indifference and watching their degrees metaphorically
burning, ignited through misguided decisions: scorched. ◉

Inspired by Ginsberg's "Howl"

On the Morning You Were Born

By Dana Stone

Prince George had his first birthday,
the Red Sox played the Toronto Blue Jays,
Wyeth exhibited at the MFA,
children in Massachusetts
were declared better off than in any other State,
and a baby girl was born with July daybreak
streaming through hospital dormers.
Eyes wide open, like the twin galaxies
discovered that day.
Welcome to the world!
Shy hands cradle the tiny one.
Whispering breaths.
Laughs of love.
Hearts of devotion.
Soft petal-kisses before every one sleeps. ◉

Poet's Note: My granddaughter was born the day that NASA reported the birth of "twin galaxies," on July 22, 2014.

Blast from the Past

By Nick Sweet

I miss those jocks of yesteryear, those wonderful deejays
Who energized the airwaves in so many ways
A pack of P.M. poets, sultans of the squib
Their frenzied flow of live jive, rhythmical and glib

Back then my small transistor was friendly broadcast balm
For adolescent acne and always sweaty palms,
Whenever my life seemed like hell, I turned the dial toward heaven
And tuned in Wild Willy on one-o-six-point seven

This is Wild Willy, king of the kilocycles, conveyor of country classics 'bout
Tear-stained pillows and armadillos, buckin' broncs and honky tonks,
Rowdy guys, unfaithful wives and heavy hearts hurtin' in 4/4 time

The moment that the ads came on, I'd twist the dial once more
To seek out Alexander Heat on Smokin' 94

It's Alex Heat in the driver's seat, I got stacks of wax,
platters that matter, a smatter of chatter and patter that flatters,
Let's start in the golden grooveyard, it's old dust, but it's gold dust,
A stroll in the rain down memory lane

Sometimes close to 2 a.m. before the station knocks off
I'd locate Late Night Larry, the jock who rocks your socks off

ARE YOU READY for some white hot, sock hop, flip top,
non-stop be bop?

ARE YOU READY for the low down, new found, high ground
uptown boss sound?

ARE YOU READY for the slip slide, flip side, joyride, lost tribe,
cool vibes?

ARE YOU READY for some new moon, back room, rough-hewn
big boom soul tunes?

I was always ready, and I had always known
With Larry and his colleagues on that I was not alone

Even on the bleakest nights of lonely teenage angst
I truly owed my "on-air" friends a debt of blessed thanks
If I'd battled with my parents, or if my heart was broken
I'd call them at the station; their lines were always open ◀

Sound of Mourning

By Lisa Ryan

Like sorcery... crows suddenly appeared from all directions,
Swirling silhouettes grew into a cacophonous chorus
of plaintive entreaties.

Black feathers –
iridescent blues and purples
sparkled in the strained sunshine

The dead crow,
lying breast down on a patch of grass,
agitated this swift tsunami of sound.

She stepped gingerly, her elfin features unveiled,
and her palms upturned, she quickly draped
the little black bird with an old brown linen cloth.

A cascade of crows tore through the fibrous clouds
Into the grey heavens.

Then ...
 simply
 empty
 sky. ❶

Choices for Emily

By Jo Ann Hoffman

Your oboe was your different drum.
You scorned the flute and sing-song strings,
the other girls all chose those things
while you preferred to snatch a crumb
of independence. No humdrum
violin for you! The slings
and arrows of your choice winged
you headlong into what was yet to come.

How could you know, at ten years old,
that oboe reeds were thin as floss,
that fingers could turn into thumbs,
that breathing could be uncontrolled
and oboe teachers could be cross? Or
when to fight one's sea of troubles,
or succumb? ❶

Steam Calliope on the Natchez

By Tom Dow

Even from way over on Elysian Fields it sounded
like a disaster drill, a siren, a frantic army of titanic
kazoos blasting out holiday medleys, alarmed we
headed down to the levee, there high up behind
the wheel house playing in harsh blasts and shrieks
the rotund meister hulking in a broad hat
walloping out Here Comes Santa Claus, the crowd
between panic and tears gaped at the discordant squeals
of steam, even a flock of birds sweeping up-river veered off over
the bayou for safety as we, trapped on the ground helpless
and too astonished to flee watched the whistles tear
into the air like a scene at a fiercely burning building
the whole steamboat threatening to explode with joy. 🕒

Late in the Day

By Diana Engel

Home after day's internment--
office cubicle entrapment,
the inching creep through rush hour
standstill on the freeway.

High in backyard cedars
a cardinal and robin regale the end of day,
call and response that fans
into molten sunset painting tree trunks,
sending Pan tripping with his flute
into my kitchen,
his hoofs ripping linoleum.

"This is the last straw," I think,
until listening, my ears
like sponge at the sink,
fill with water of song
as sun bleeds the horizon.
I twirl in scarlet dress,
head upturned and hips sashaying,
holding the hoof
of a flute-playing goat. 🕒

Riffing

By Lynn Veach Sadler

My Granddaddy Bob lived in Sanford, learned his tolerance from his love for what's now "soul" music.

He was in and out of Durham's Hayti section, where so many of his Black musician friends lived and worked.

Algia Mae Hinton from Smithfield had to fill in for John Dee Holeman, most famous of the surviving originals, when he suffered a stroke just before the celebration.

She played "Step It Up and Go," one of Blind Boy Fuller's best-known tunes. Granddaddy Bob knew Mr. Holeman, said the name ought to be spelled "WHOLE MAN."

He knew some of the others, too, like another White cat, Sam Pridgen, "Starvin' Sam," who went on to play with some of the great swing bands. Mr. Pridgen and Granddaddy Bob "traveled to Hayti" to get away from Jim Crow and hear "real music."

"Fuller" (Fulton Allen) was born in Wadesboro, died in '41. "Fuller," Blind Gary Davis, and ninety more, including Sonny Terry, Washboard Sam, William Trice, and John Henry Garner, were honored. Can you imagine so many mighty bluesmen in Durham? That ought to put it right up there with Memphis, New Orleans, the whole Mississippi Delta.

It was a hot spot, like, over seventy years ago. From the Twenties through WWII. Granddaddy Bob says it was "the original Underground Movement," and he was in the thick of it. Some of it got passed on, too, because Gary Davis made his way to New York City, was big in the "folk revival" of the 1950's, and gave guitar lessons to a member of Jefferson Airplane!

Blacks up in Durham played any minute they could snatch from their jobs in the tobacco warehouses. Granddaddy Bob said their music was miraculous. They'd perform in barbecue joints, on the street, on Miss Drusy's porch, in Uncle Delburtus's yard, at fish fries, in a warehouse itself if "Boss be a music-lovin' man." If it rained, they'd rig up tarpaulins from the tobacco warehouses, continue to "busk." (That's from Ms. Ellerby, my English teacher. She says "buskers" are a proud tradition in England and can be found even now playing for coins in the Underground stations.)

The lower-class Whites were around, too, working the crowds while the Blacks played, rivaling them at selling moonshine and poontang, but never could match their music. (Ms. Ellerby says *poontang* appears in Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*.)

Granddaddy Bob said prostitutes were called pom-pom girls from the pompom guns the Chicago gangsters used in the 1920's. He also said the best of "houses of ill repute" had real music, couples dancing, poker games. He played in some of them, played deep-deep bass and hot guitar. Just playing in those "houses of ill repute" could make him forget the world plain wasn't all that nice. 🎸

Dirt

By David Ostrovsky

Let it come up from the dirt
I have always been dirty
or go back to it
the quiet happiness of not needing.

In the dirt the body laying
mortar that holds the block
that holds the house,
doubled over underneath it
laying one at a time,
this is where I am
soulful beyond my measure
brown and gray without justification
with spells of stretching and fresh air.

How to live without protection
do you not see the world,
a thin god green as grass arrives asking.
Is it possible to listen
to an age-old song

as if it were the first time,
to be filled with the humor of whistling
and still whistle,
to unfill the murmur of reputation
as if it didn't precede?
The mantis revered for immovable patience
lands on the lip of my work bucket
filling it with questions.

I don't know why there is hope in the dirt,
the mortar, the block under the house,
the seamless product simple
laying time into beauty,
creating music from emptiness.

My losing hand
shoos the zen hunter
filling the bucket with grit instead. ◉

Pain

By Marilyn McVicker

Shrill siren music
Buzzes in head
Building
Pounding
Mounting
The rattle
Of a striking snake
Shaking faster
Accelerando threatens
To explode

Cacophony
Millions of cicadas
Shrieking their litany
Swirling noise
Swarming round my head
Progressing
Chord to chord
Tension building
Submediant
Leading tone

Dominant seventh
Dominant seventh
Dominant seventh
Hanging there
In tension
Waiting for resolution
That never comes ◉

Freedom's Just Another Word

By Judith Stanton

I admit it. Back then I inhaled
some really good shit and fell flat
asleep on the living room couch
I'd sewn the slipcovers for
cobalt kettle cloth picking up
blue from the scrolling flowers
in the curtains, ancient Indian design,
Ravi Shankar sitars, Meher Baba avatar

Then at Carmichael gymnasium one
star-stuck October Saturday evening,
we inhaled Janis not knowing she
wouldn't make it back next year but
that night oh my god that drugged
drunken moonshot night every woman
wanted to be her, earth mother, every
man wanted to be her pagan lover

Afterwards, our red Volkswagen
crunched down a narrow gravel road
to a friend's farmhouse, and man,
as we used to say then, that grass
was so damn good Bach fugue
playing on the stereo treble, alto,
basso profundo, counterpoint
all those lines curling
unfurling across my brain:
Lucy in the sky like diamonds,
me and Bobby McGee music
music our new joy
our freedom 🕊

Fingernail of a Moon

By C. Pleasants York

The curve of my fingernail –
a half-moon journey
taking me down Willowbrook Lane

to Woodcrest Drive past the brown house,
the one with the garden plot
where gourds and tomatoes and radishes

grew, curving into the knotty-pine den
where I sat on Pappa's lap in the duck-head
rocker while he rehearsed for Thursday's choir practice

from a battered Methodist hymnal "How
Great Thou Art" "Amazing Grace" and "When the Roll
Is Called Up Yonder I'll Be There"

curving into the rose bouquet bedroom
where Ma Mere read "The Three Little Kittens"
sketching all the while each kitten, searching

the chenille bedspread for the pink colored pencil to
color the noses, curving out to the bank of Ketner's
Lake where my brother Frankie and I looked

for toads in the twilight and told ghost stories, our feet
dangling off the edge of the pier as we watched the
sprinkling of stars and the curve of the moon ◐

Sound, sound the clarion

By June Guralnick

Ship records, Ellis Island archives, frayed postcards yield no clues.

Maybe the cornet traveled with him from the old country,
an orphan spared the aborted lullabies of his Russian youth.

Or perhaps it was pay-off for a well-placed bet,
(a deal at Louie's Pawn next to the pickle stand).

Up at five, in practiced hands by six, Grandy made daily love to his shapely horn,
(moistened lips, pulsating hands firing up quivering notes).

Who could resist the snaking tones, slurs, shouts and sighs—
his Golden Fleece of gleeful harmony and engraved desire?

*“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife
Throughout the sensual world proclaim, one crowded hour of glorious life...”**

Gone, gone your music when you breathed your last, Grandy.
But your song forever rings out from sea to shining sea. 🎧

*by Thomas Osbert Mordaunt

jazzmatazz

By C. Pleasants York

guitar	whisky	blood flows
banjo	young guy	night chills
rinky tink piano	jealousy and anger	one more man is dead there
hot night		
cool jazz	tempers	hot night
dancing in the alley	flaring	cool jazz
	bullets slice	rinky tink piano
sweet gal	the darkness	rinky tink piano
big boss		rinky tink piano ◉
from Louisiana		

Silence

By Marilyn McVicker

It is quiet.
A cricket chirps
outside
in the tall grass
of the pasture.
A bee buzzes
at the window screen.
The dog shifts her position
on the floor,
as the refrigerator compressor
clicks on,
clicks off.
Once in awhile the ice maker
empties itself
of frozen chunks
and refills.

Other than that,
it is quiet.

I do my chores,
care for myself,
fold laundry, empty the dishwasher,
conduct business, walk the dog,
nurse various projects,
read, sew, write.

Some days I am sicker than others.
Many days I am too sick to do much.
Still, it is quiet.
Sometimes the phone rings.
If I am able, I answer it.
Afterwards,
the silence resumes.

Today
the quietness is tinged
with nostalgia,
the memory of when
I was never lonely,
a memory that knows
the silence
will only continue ◉

*Midnight Meeting at the Crossroads
near Clarksdale, Mississippi, circa 1936*

By Alice Osborn

I love the smell of burning trash, yeah, baby,
the smoke spreading out here at Highways 49 and 61.
Robert's right on time,
October moonshine
glints off his \$25 guitar—
"Over here, Robert, let me tune it up for ya.
I hear you be bein' an okay harp player ain't enough."
Tonight I'm a big black man in my fifties,
but I can be any color, size or age. Even a woman.
That's how I appeared to Senor Paganini
before I gave him his gift.
Man, could he play the fiddle!
Only took them 36 years to find a resting place
for his long bones. No one rests after
we shake hands and I deliver.
Robert Johnson's another smart hobo,
aching for fame now,
not in a decade or two
when his knees fail and his fingers wither.
"Robert, let me play ya 'Cross Road Blues,'
my favorite." He hums, slaps his hand
to his thin side and grins, all white teeth,
while he licks out in the key of open A.
Then his fingers burn all over the neck, all them
sharps and flats he never knew before existed.
Our meeting takes 10 minutes at most—
good, 'cause I've still got a shitload of work tonight.
Thanks to me he'll be crowned
King of the Delta Blues,
but first he must be poisoned
and thresh to my whispers
in his dreams. ●

The River Mussel

By David Ostrovsky

The river's oblong mussel locks tenderness behind
a greyscale landscape of
rough ridges
sharp edges
not to be
stepped on.

Observing gingerly from the outskirts of the audience
your song
your eyes
your spirit
of untarnished youthfulness
inside an old world wisdom.

The river's oblong mussel incubates the tenderness into
a barnacled secret immersed in
the practical elements
it is protected
from.

The quiet corner sheltered from the audience of friends and family,
I allow myself the full indulgence
this once to cherish
your eyes less their age and family
letting your beauty
wash over me.

The river's oblong mussel, now lifeless, unfolds its fortress into
a delicate pair of fleshless
angel wings lined in
a smooth purple pearl iridescence,
the angel wings exhaling the
mysterious next life of their
tender creator. ◀

The Gift

By Brandon Alexander Whitehurst

I classify it a gift to have an entire symphony,
Escalating in your head.
Those that disagree use the same psychology,
To critic any mode of the theater.
Charisma has an eclectic tone all its own.
Allowing me to utter in perfect English,
What many miss hidden beneath the undertones
Of lyricists.
Perk of an ear, I can hear,
what many seek to synchronize behind allegories of spoken word therapy,
dub-step, Japan-pop, jazz, scream'O, emo,
Without taking a breath or allowing my ears to eat grass, the mesh of acid
rock
Blue grass blues may confuse you;
Thankfully I can soothe you,
For without missing a beat,
Nor to be motivated by the articulated innuendoes,
I can share the story of
How music died and along with her originality.
We all can agree they were wed,
Beautiful brides and groom to be.
At her tomb stood children whom, all had the same sound,
Many little souls,
Asking for validation from generations,
Seemingly singing from the same throat,
Songs on different tempos,
Men of flesh and bone,
Woman with her empathetic touch,
Each allowing talent to gather rust. ◉

Neon Nights

By B. R. Strahan

stoned shock-wave
of guitars
electric suns
spark your eyes

psychotic chords
slash your throat
roller-coaster
your legs

werewolves howl
inside a purple sky
crammed with
tin spangles

neon-blazed
Barbie-doll
lips nuzzle
your shoulders

her teeth wired
for sound moan
into your veins
hypnotize your feet

long past midnight
you've turned
into sneakers
that slosh with wine ◀

American Music, 4/4 Time

By Jeanne Julian

The Budget Motel phone book
in Asheville, North Carolina,
said Wednesdays are for bluegrass
at the Smoky Mountain Barbecue.

We drove the hazy highways
confused about the address,
lost among the back streets
where the black folk gather.

It looked mighty empty.
Bare dance floor, tables covered,
as you might expect,
in red-and-white checked plastic.

Bass, banjo, guitar, fiddle,
side by side, like fingers
on the same hand. Voices
sewn together, simply.

Black-leathered Harley riders
in town for their convention
and the scruffy bearded drunk
hollered "Orange Blossom Special!"

How do I know this music
when I have seldom heard it?
Old quilts, snug and intricate.
Waterfalls. Woodsmoke.

Like a Moroccan, met in Amsterdam,
wrote—flirting—to Ohio:
"America means corn,
the smell of leather, mountains."

Their CD's cardboard liner
says our dreams, like bubbles
slow-rising in warm syrup,
move from the heart to mind.

It's true. I felt it,
in a tune, sweet, clear, and wistful.
But I guess it's not important.
And all too nice, my friends said.

But oh! The young one's dad behind them
out of the lights, chair tipped back
against the wall, just playing
like the stage was his front porch. ◉

Woodstock

By Doug Stuber

You started such a change of time,
A decade of evolution.
Marakesh blows through my mind,
An awareness revolution.

Richie cries the song of the free,
Carlos plays to open masses.
Looking back I see
A crossbreeding of the classes.

Thousands swarmed and felt the rain,
Jimi let it flow.
Sly gave soulful tears of pain,
Will we ever know?

As water cuts through stone,
Time cuts the best of men,
But Ravi, not alone
Would do it all again.

Beautiful people, 'oft insane,
Birthdays come and go,
Staying dry against the rain,
Peace-songs make the show.

Surprising unknown acts
Made their way around.
Who are you? - Rats?
Listen to the sound.

The Who was most excited,
Getting all the glory.
Abbey, uninvited,
Tried to tell a story.

Pinball wizards filled the crowd,
Beside the acid heads.
Psychedelics made it loud,
John sang for new-born deads.

Muddy fun-wars 'round the lake
And the music of Alvin Lee.
Jamming out for Jesus sake!
Goin' home, (the blues are free).

Ten years after Woodstock,
Will it ever be the same?
Maybe I should stop
This agonizing game.

Sha-Na-Na sold out to movies,
But Johnny Winter was there.
Playing his slide - groovy
Nothing there was square.

Max Yasgur we all owe you,
For your business-sense and balls.
No one else will repeat
"The concert without walls."

Grace found somebody to love,
Rock was a way of thinking.
Joe got extremely stoned,
Everyone was drinking.

Reverb at Land's End

By Jon Obermeyer

Janis screamed for rebels,
War-torn lovers tripped.
Joan sang out for politicians
Draft dodgers got ripped.
Vietnam was going strong
But music filled the field.
No way to right the wrong
Committed by the steele.

Where have all the players gone?
Long time passing.
Joni sings of Mingus
But is she, just now, laughing?

Give me one old-time "F"
And what are we fighting for!?
There's nothing really left,
Let's boogie on out the door.

Creedence and the Grateful Dead
Gave us Blood Sweat and Tears.
The Band played on (unsaid)
Has it been ten years?

Butterfield sang the blues,
I guess he's still around.
They've all paid the dues,
But where can they be found?

Try, just a little bit harder,
To remember all those dreams.
Make up your mind,
Are they what they seem? ◉

Scraps of Madagascar,
an island arc revealed
in the scar of trail. Sail

along the Jurassic chute
of loose russet chert
and slag to salt grass

savannah. Manna,
or merely the sea mist,
forms on tree buds

like ice. Splice
the bright eucalyptus
(a late arrival,

hardly indigenous).
Any sounds sent
since us are ancient. ◉

Messiah in Paris, 2017

By Nancy Walker Benjamin

Bitter cold it was that night,
a sleety wind swirling
around the ancient church
when doors opened at last
to huddled ticketholders.
Little warmth inside either,
we stomped feet and perched
on chairs in our bulky coats,
gloved hands struggling
to grasp and open programs.

A baton lifted, lilting strains
familiar as a mother's voice
calmed the shuffling
and dispelled the cold
as glorious sounds filled the air.
Nothing but the music mattered,
soaring, spiraling, insisting.
We nodded, swayed, anticipated
singing to ourselves
deep inside.

Then suddenly a voice,
"Behold! A virgin shall conceive"
pierced our reveries.
We craned our necks, startled
as shepherds in the fields
by celestial music,
this from a counter-tenor
whose coloratura shivered
up and down our spines
until breathing stopped.

From that moment we were his,
awaiting his next aria
looking up from libretti
to read an expressive face
encircled by gray curls
in a cherubic halo.
His visage so sorrowful,
his voice breaking to a whisper
when he sang "He was despised,"
we wept with him. ❶



P R O S E

Her Mother's Playlist

By Linda Johnson

Kayla opened the apartment door and stood at the threshold. Music swelled around her. Her mother's voice belted out the lyrics to Katy Perry's Firework. Kayla breathed a sigh of relief: it was a happy day.

She stepped into the foyer and closed the door behind her, glanced into the living room.

"Hi, sweetie!" Her mother opened her arms wide. "Come dance with me!"

Kayla set her backpack on the hall bench. She had a reading assignment for science class, a take-home quiz in history, and math homework, but they would all have to wait. When her mom was in her happy mood, there was no saying no. She walked into the living room, her steps in rhythm to the pounding beat.

Her mother grabbed her hands and twirled her around. "Baby, you're my firework!" She let go of Kayla's hands and reached for the sky, her face turned up like an evangelist praying to the god of music.

When Kayla was younger, she loved when her mother was in her happy mood. They played dress-up with her mother's fancy dresses, costume jewelry, and high heels. They painted each other's faces with make-up, looking more like clowns than ladies. They'd look in the mirror and collapse into giggles.

Now that Kayla was older, she knew the price they'd pay. As high as her mother soared would be as low as she dropped, a meteor plummeting to the earth to crash and burn.

Firework ended and they were on to I Kissed a Girl, her mother wrapping her in her arms and kissing her each time the lyric played. Next up was Roar, and her mother dropped to all fours, shook her hair like a mane. She pulled Kayla down to the floor. "Roar with me, baby, roar!"

In between the beat of the music, they heard a pounding from below. Kayla recognized the sound: their first floor neighbor driving his cane into his ceiling. "Turn down the music, god dammit!"

"Party pooper, party pooper," her mom sang out. "Come up and join us. I'll show you a good time, Henry."

Even though she knew her neighbor wouldn't take her mother up on her offer, Kayla cringed. Too many men in the past had. She turned down the volume.

“Sorry, Mr. Cahill.”

“God, I’m horny.” Her mother grabbed Kayla’s shoulders, stared into her eyes.

“Let’s get dressed up, go to a bar.”

“Mom, I’m sixteen. They won’t let me in.”

“They will if you’re with me. We’ll order you a Shirley Temple.” Her mother’s eyes glittered like stars. “Come on! We’ll have fun. We can dance, sing as loud as we want.”

And you’ll find a desperate man to hook up with, Kayla thought. “It’s too early. There won’t be any men there yet. Why don’t we make some brownies first?” Sometimes enough chocolate would satiate her mother’s desires.

“Yes!” Her mother clapped her hands like a little girl. She danced into the kitchen to Taylor Swift’s Shake it Off. “Cause the neighbors gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate. But I’m gonna shake, shake, shake, shake.”

Kayla followed her mother, pulled out chocolate, flour, sugar. Her mom took out a brownie pan and tapped a spoon against it like a drum. They fell into a routine. Kayla measured each ingredient as precisely as a watchmaker. Her mother dumped everything into a bowl, breaking eggs and laughing as bits of egg shell swirled around in the mix. “Extra crunchy! Just the way I like it.”

Kayla put the brownie pan into the oven to the sound of the Black-Eyed Peas I Gotta Feeling. When the song ended, Kayla’s mother asked if the brownies were ready.

“We’ve got another fifteen minutes, Mom.”

“I can’t wait that long. I want them now!” She stomped her foot.

“How about if I make us a cup of hot chocolate while we’re waiting?”

“With marshmallows?”

“Absolutely.”

“Okay. Then let’s dance some more.”

Kayla watched as her mother twirled her way into the living room, collapsed on the floor with dizziness, laughed hysterically.

“My feet are all tangled up, baby girl.”

Kayla opened up a kitchen cabinet and reached behind some never-used glasses. She pulled out a container of sleeping pills, put two into her mother’s empty mug, and poured the hot chocolate over them. She stirred until they dissolved, then added a few marshmallows on top.

She carried the mugs into the living room, set them on the cocktail table, and pulled her mother up from the floor. She hugged her tight. “I love you, Mom.”

“I love you too, sweetie.” She brushed a strand of hair off Kayla’s face, as Thelma Houston belted out Don’t Leave Me This Way. “I don’t know what I’d do without you.

You're my everything." She began to cry. "Don't leave me, Kayla. Don't ever leave me."

"I'm not going anywhere, Mom."

"Everyone always leaves me." She put her hands over her ears. "Turn off that music. I hate that song."

Kayla led her mother to the sofa, handed her the mug of hot chocolate. She went to the stereo and powered it off. The silence was deafening.

She sat next to her mother, wrapped her arm around her shoulders, until she felt them sag. She fluffed a pillow, lay her mother down, and tucked a blanket around her. She watched her mother sleep, then got her backpack and went into the kitchen. She ate the brownies for dinner, then tackled her homework. The next morning, she kissed her still-sleeping mother on the forehead before she left for school.

When she got home that afternoon, Kayla opened the apartment door and stood at the threshold. Nora Jones's haunting voice sang *Come Away with Me*. Kayla closed her eyes, leaned against the doorframe. It was a sad day. There'd be no homework tonight. She'd need to hold her mother's hand all night, keep her from falling into the abyss. ●

I Go Back

By Erika Hoffman

I remember Mommy. She's squeezing her accordion in and out for all its worth, while seated on a folding chair with a blue three-sided cardboard stand unfolded and erected in front of her. She's playing in the hallway of our split-level home in Plainfield, New Jersey. The intense expression on her face bewilders eight-year-old me. It's a stifling summer day. Above her upper lip, she sweats. She bites her bottom lip. Totally absorbed in the sheet music, she pounds the keys as the huge contraption pinches the flesh on her thighs. Mommy's wearing shorts and espadrilles. Back and forth the pleats collapse and expand. The screen door allows in a tepid breeze. Mommy doesn't want us kids bothering her. She's in another world. We're supposed to go out and play. Which suits me. I watch a moment. With gusts of concentrated energy and zealous enthusiasm, Mom belts out "Val-de-ri, Val-de-ra." I follow her fingers as they mash tiny buttons. She sings aloud: "I love to go a-wandering..." With a flourish, she finishes, inhales, blows out the breath, looks up, takes me in, and turns the page to start anew.

"Mommy! Mommy!" I shout over the bouncy tune. She glares at me. "What are you doing, Mommy?"

"I'm playing my accordion."

I'd never seen her with the instrument before let alone witnessed her intensity tickling the keys and pushing the wind out of the thing as though her life depended on it.

Her eyes never lift from the sheet music. I wait. When this piece ends, she looks up at me with uncertain eyes as though she's never seen me before, like I'm an alien. "I used to practice two hours a day," she mutters. I'd never seen her with the instrument before let alone witnessed her intensity tickling the keys and pushing the wind out of the thing as though her life depended on it. "I was really good, once," she says solemnly. "I played with Charley Nunzio." I stare at this stranger. But, she makes no eye contact with me. I notice sweat drip onto the white and black piano-like keys. "We went to New York. We played on the radio."

"Aren't you hot?"

"So, what?"

"Why are you doing this now?"

She shrugs.

“It’s a good day to go swimming,” I meekly suggest.

She fixates on her page. She arches her fingers; she shifts the weight of the monster on her lap. “Maybe later.”

I sigh.

“I was an only child,” she adds. “This accordion kept me from being lonely.” She squeezes the boxy device again.

I meander outside to join my younger brother and sister. “Let’s get a Good Humor down at the park,” I say. “I’ve a can of nickels and dimes.”

“I got a silver dollar,” my five-year-old sis says. “Aren’t we going to the shore?” she asks hopefully. “Will she take us?”

I hear strains of “Moon River.”

“Nah.” I look at the door; I gaze back at Mom hypnotized, in another world.

The screen door slams behind me, and I take their hands.

I realized then Mommy had another life before us. She was different from what I thought she was. She had passions, needs, memories besides this “now” situation of three little kids, a hubby, a mortgage and a pile of laundry sitting next to the mangle. All of this was a revelation in 1959.

Now I have lived longer than the age Mom was when she passed. I so wish I could go back in time and tell her I understand now how a woman wants hobbies, friends, a career – basically a life besides being “Mommy.”

And whenever I hear an accordion belt out a melody, I go back to that split-level, that un-air -conditioned house, and I remember a woman--- a smart, accomplished, ambitious woman, who was also my mom. ◉

Cleaning Out the Woodpile

By Donald E. Byrne, Jr.

The pile was not entirely my fault. I inherited it with the decaying Victorian mansion we bought twenty years ago in this tidy Pennsylvania German college town. A modest pile then, I kept it in equilibrium by feeding it during the cold months to the cast-iron wood stove that also came with the house. If I hadn't discovered that the chimney was filled teen feet up from its base with a plug of reeking ashes, leaves, and failed birds' nests – which explained the rank bacon odor all summer – and if the chimney sweep I called had not folded his brushes in despair over the chimney's crumbling mortar, saying, "Look, there's no way I can clean this damned thing," I might have kept the woodpile manageable, even though I had several trees cut down, including a huge mulberry that had been planted near the garden years ago to distract birds from the black raspberry bushes but now was shading the whole plot. I kept the logs for a cold winter, tripling the size of the pile, while I tried to decide what to do about the chimney. Finally I moved the woodstove out of the kitchen for safety's sake and replaced it with a new kerosene heater.

Each spring for several years I restacked it carefully, hoping someday I could afford to have the problem chimney repointed and move the woodstove back into the house. But I couldn't keep up with the sticks and boards from tree-trimming, falling branches, brush I cleared twice in eight years from along the property lines, ten years of Christmas trees thrown out too late for the free township pick-up, and the massive wooden stairway to the third floor – built by the previous owner from scavenged lumber – that rotted because the gutters above it were always clogged by pigeonshit, birdsnests, or maple seed helicopters no matter how many times I cleaned them.

So the woodpile got out of hand. We started losing things in it: my son's new Christmas pocketknife, a cereal-box Frisbee thrown awry, the dog's collar, pulled over her ears when she backed out from chasing some animal deep inside, a toad brought back from a camping trip that hopped in and hid. The pile engulfed a small pile of junk I'd placed nearby: rusting tubular kitchen chairs, a white porcelain dog's bowl, broken window frames, fruit crates, pieces of chicken wire and screen, tar-crusteD brooms I'd used for patching roofs. I watched it grow until it was five feet taller than I am and covered the bottom branches of the maple tree shading it. You couldn't see over or around it. Each summer it grew a thick green cover of Virginia creeper and stinkberry. In the fall, the sugar maple above covered it evenly with bright yellow leaves. In January, snow smoothed its rough edges, and made it look like a small Matterhorn behind thehouse.

Only in spring did I see it as
it was: an eyesore, and an embarrassment,
even though it was deep in the middle
of my acre, hidden by the barn from
the alley and out of my neighbors' direct
sight. Twelve years after we bought the house,
when I was forty-six, I decided to
clean out the woodpile and make it into
a picnic place.

Twice I tried to get someone to haul the
debris away in exchange for whatever good
wood remained, once even to a man who advertised
such services. Each time they took one load
and didn't call back to say they weren't
interested in the rest. So I did it myself,
in stages, starting in spring after the snow
melted, but before the creeper and stinkberry
took hold. I pulled out the driest limbs,
sawed them into stove-sized pieces, and put
them in a new pile, still saving for the rusting
wood stove stored in the barn against some
catastrophe, nuclear or otherwise. I tossed
a deeper layer of branches that might
possibly dry into another pile
that sat through the whole summer sheltering
the skunk that sprayed the dog in September.
The next March, I borrowed a wheelbarrow
from one of my neighbors, a pick-up from
another, and gingerly loaded the
newly rotting pile aboard, sniffing faint
skunk farts. I waded into what was left
of the old pile and took three truckloads to
the landfill. I tied up twenty bundles
of smaller sticks and brush for the garbage
truck, which almost jammed its hydraulic lift
trying to cram all of them into one load.

A circular tell remained, detritus
of years' disintegration beneath
the woodpile's seasonal facades. I dug like
an amateur archaeologist searching
for clues, curiously picking up
soaked orange logs rotted intact, crumbling now
between my gloved fingers, exposing tightly
curled metallic worms and intricate
labyrinths of chilled ant civilizations,
stirring faintly around translucent
cream-colored eggs. I gently rubbed fungi
shelving over dry-rotted, feather light
sticks, sniffed at the wine-tinted heartwood of
hard old lilac knobs, felt the iron heft
of saturated locust branches. I
pulled out shards of brittle red vinyl from
the kitchen chair seats, twisted and pitted
pieces of aluminum edging, and
rusted spikes from the rotted outside stairs.
The only lost thing I found was my son's
Christmas pocketknife, which still sits in a
cookie tin in the barn, immersed in solvent.
I shoveled down to the clean, ochre
clay, loading the wheelbarrow again and
again, trundling rich humus to the pile
of last year's leaves composting for this year's
garden. When I came to the last load,
my foot sank in a burrow curving down
and away, where the rabbit or groundhog
the dog was chasing must have lived. I thought
of looking for her collar, but filled it
in instead and stamped it down.

I covered the cleaned circle with ashes
left in a pile by the former owner
from the days when the house was heated by
coal. I put my picnic tables in place.
But wandering cats think the ashes are

litter and scratch together their little
shit-piles underneath, so we don't eat there
often, though one neighbor's coprophagic
retriever comes around each morning to
wolf them down, ashes and all. Still, there's no
denying the property looks neater,
cleaner, less open to reproach, and that
I feel better – as if my head were cleared –
with the woodpile gone.

But now I have two piles, one a compost
heap in the garden, the other a new
woodpile stacked in the shade along the side
of the back kitchen, hidden by spindly
snowberry bushes, unkempt mock orange
that never blooms, and leggy lilacs that
will have to come out some day. The logs at
the bottom are rotting, and I'm stacking
cut brush and windfall sticks again. It takes
a long time to clean out a woodpile, not
long to make another. ●

Beadie and Dede

By Calista Moon

Before Newtown, before Columbine, before Virginia Tech, things might have gone down differently. Then Miss Wilford, the Principal of Broad Beach Elementary, would probably have waited for more details before dialing 911 and before ordering the lockdown procedures the staff had been practicing for the past two months. But, when word reached her that a gun had been seen on the school grounds she reacted immediately. Then came the terrible realization that Miss Hemrick had taken her first grade out for a nature walk that morning and that she and her 13 tiny wards were not inside the building.

If there was a hero that day -- a two legged one -- it was Eddie Isely, the Broad Beach janitor. When the alarm sounded, he raced out the front door, found the straggly little band returning from its walk, and, sirens sounding in the distance, rushed the bewildered Miss Hemrick and her frightened children, pell mell, back inside, locking the door behind him.

After the police arrived it didn't take them long to establish that the "man with a gun" never existed. It appears that Sammy Jaydell, staring out the window during math class, had seen crazy old Leon Kravnik, out for a walk, shaking his cane at a squirrel he thought was about to attack him. Sammy's imagination, no less fevered than Leon Kravnik's, had done the rest. By then, however, news of the crisis at the grade school had spread through Broad Beach like wildfire. Parents, reporters, and television vans had gathered in the street outside the school. It was about this time that a shaken Miss Hemrick reported to Miss Wilford that Beadie and Dede were missing.

Beadie Balance and Dede Loops might as well have been twins. Born the same day in the same hospital, twenty minutes apart. Ever since, they have been almost inseparable.

Their mothers met at the Baby Viewing Window the following day, both in hospital gowns, tied loose to hide their sagging bellies. Beadie's mother Velma, wearing a pink chenille robe, waddled down the corridor in flip flops, tilting from side to side like she was still pregnant. Dixie Loops wore pink corduroy. She was already at the window and spoke first.

"You're wearin' pink: yours a girl?"

Velma, nodded and pointed. "That one. How 'bout you?" she asked with a gap-toothed smile.

"That's Dede over there. She's my first." "My first, too," Velma added. "I'm not scared at all, though. I helped raise a slew of little brothers."

"Shoot, what's to be scared of? My Jake's got these two German Shepherd pups -- I feed 'em and walk 'em and clean up their poop. Can't be no harder than that."

The two young women, still girls themselves, laughed together and gazed admiringly at their new offspring, each outdoing the other in admiring the beauty, intelligence, and brilliant future of her new friend's child. Later in the day they exchanged telephone numbers and addresses. Lo and behold, they were nearly neighbors. So near that six years later, Beadie and Dede entered first grade at the same neighborhood school: Broad Beach Elementary. By that time the girls were fast friends, walking in lockstep most of the time.

Beadie loved school, especially Reading and Art. Dede liked Circle Time and Recess. Dede couldn't wait to get home each day to her two German Shepherds, Randy and Roscoe, for an afternoon of running and playing outdoors. Often she would invite Beadie to come over after school. If Velma could pick Beadie up after her job finished for the day, it would all work out.

Velma worked part-time as a nurse's aide at Star of the Sea Hospital. That awful day, she saw the Breaking News flash on TV as she was helping a patient get ready for lunch. Her first inclination was to drop the tray, run down the hall and out the automatic doors, run, run down the street to get to her Beadie. Instead, she set the tray down and yanked her cell phone out of her uniform vest pocket to call Dixie.

"I feel as useless as a dead cricket. What can we do?" asked Dede's distraught mother.

"Might would be better if we sat tight," Velma said. "There's been no more news since that first flash report. Stay put for now is my best advice."

"If Dede don't get off that yellow school bus at 3:15 them dogs will go all crazy whinin'."

"Dix, I've got 'call waiting'," Velma said.

Dixie frowned. Her fidgety fingers twined and untwined until Velma came back on.

"First responders, firetrucks and such have surrounded the school. Some kind of trouble inside. I don't know what. That was Lummie Faukingberry callin' me. You know he coaches the kids' soccer team and lives around the corner from the school. He said 'lots of people waiting outside but no traffic in or out. Ghostly quiet', he said."

When Velma said good-bye to Dixie, she tracked down her supervisor. "I can't

stay. I can't work or think about anything but my Beadie."

The supervisor understood; she told Velma to run along and not to worry, that it would all come out all right. "Remember there are more good people than bad," she added and hugged Velma.

Velma had to park her car three blocks from the school and after walking a few yards she was not allowed to cross the yellow police tape that now surrounded a large area, including the school.

Broad Beach was a small town. Velma knew most everyone, at least by sight. Her phone began ringing. Lummie again."Seems a kid in the fifth grade made a mistake about something he saw. Oop, I hear a beep; I'll let you go," he said.

Velma pushed the red button and sure enough, the phone rang again. This time it was Miss Wilford, the principal.

"Velma, I have been trying to reach you. We have a problem of location. Beadie and Dede cannot be found. They are missing. All the other students are accounted for. We have searched lockers, cubbies, rest rooms, the cafeteria, even the Boiler Room. Gone. I am calling you to give you the information but also to ask if you know anything about their disappearance. They were both counted in the morning attendance. Any clues?"

Velma pressed the phone tight against her ear, so tight it was painful She could barely breathe. "Let me call Dede's mom, please. I will get back to you, Miss Wilford."

Velma didn't call Dixie. She raced back to her car. Her heart was pounding and her eyes blurred with tears. With trembling hand she opened the car door and flopped down in the front seat. She rested her head on the steering wheel and tried to control her racing thoughts: "Gone, missing, accounted for this morning, lost. Where? What to do? If Miss Wilford knows, the police know."

She sat up straight. Her eyes cleared and her galloping heartbeat subsided to near normal. Two heads are better than one, she thought, and put the key in the ignition.

Arriving a few minutes later at Dixie's, the dogs greeted Velma enthusiastically. Dixie ran from her house and threw her arms around Velma. This excited Roscoe and Randy even more.

"O.K., O.K., down, guys. Go away, go away." Obediently they beat a whining retreat.

While Velma was relaying Miss Wilford's awful message, Velma's friend, Lemmie, drove into Dixie's yard.

"Three is better than two," he called out to them. So he knew, Velma concluded.

All three sat down on the grass, not even looking for a chair or a bench. Their conversation was serious and ran like a mini-meeting. Velma began: “This is what we know...”

Then they talked about what they didn’t know. Could their girls have gotten scared by the announcement of the lock-down? Could skinny Dede, the wiggle worm, have found a half-opened window or door for them to slip through like Dora the Explorer might do?

The three adults wrestled with ideas and possibilities. They knew their town well; they knew their girls well, even their favorite hiding and thinking places.

Velma returned to her car and from the back seat, retrieved one of Beadie’s sweaters and her car seat. Dixie brought from the house Dede’s sweatshirt and favorite Dora the Explorer pillow. She then called the dogs, Randy and Roscoe.

“Here boys, here boys.” After lots of sniffing the clothes, the seat, and the pillow, Lemmie, Velma and Dixie began slowly jogging down the street, accompanied by Roscoe and Randy.

“Good boys, good boys, we’re going to find them. Good boys,” whispered Dixie.

After a mile or so, the team reached a short stretch of beach, not the main Broad Beach, but a scrubby little patch of beach bordering a cove of water. This beach, a favorite at low tide, boasted a couple of super-sized rocks, behind which kids loved to play Pirate, or Hide-and-Go-Seek. At low tide, even the barnacled mossy smaller rocks were laid bare in the sun. Low tide today was 2 p.m.

Taking a quick detour from the main road, the three runners followed the lead of Roscoe and Randy down to the shell infested strip of sand.

Randy stopped suddenly. His ears perked straight up. He must have heard something. Roscoe turned his head to look at him. The three joggers stopped. A crooning? Music? Something faintly heard in the air: Like a sing-song game.

“One potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, four,” followed by high girlish squeals of six year-old laughter. The two dogs paused again for a second, then bounded with joy toward the biggest rock of them all. 🕒

The Sanford Background of International Trumpet Star Charles Lee Lazarus

By Lynn Veach Sadler

“Chuck” came home to Sanford to perform November 12, 2010. At the time, I was reading Leonard Rogoff’s *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010) in hopes of answering a question persisting since my childhood in Duplin County, North Carolina—how did the Brooks and Katz Department Stores come to be in Warsaw, my hometown? Rogoff concentrates on larger cities but mentions a Jewish Circle formed in 1938 by “the rural towns of Wallace, Warsaw, Clinton, and Burgaw.” Though I still lack my answer, I was intensely interested in the extraordinary contributions of the Jewish community to North Carolina. Many Lazaruses are referenced, but not in connection with Lee County.

Sanford’s Lazaruses likely represent the Ashkenazi Branch of Judaism. Chuck’s great-grandfather, Wolf Lazarus, fled the Russian Bolsheviks, moved to South Africa, arrived in Sanford in 1903 (before Lee County was formed from Moore and Chatham Counties in 1907) and opened a haberdashery on Chatham Street. When the Temple Theatre was first remodeled, an old canvas curtain used in its vaudeville days turned up; on it was an advertisement for Wolf’s store. His children were Jack, Ike, Joseph, Maurice, and Rose. Maurice, the youngest son, operated a 5 and 10¢ store also on Chatham Street.

Joseph (“Joe”) Lazarus, Chuck’s grandfather, was born in South Africa, where his education, in Bulowaya, was so advanced that, after coming here when he was fourteen, he was graduated early from high school and then, at eighteen, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where pharmacy was a two-year program. [His sister Rose was its first female pharmacist. Marx Lazarus, perhaps related to the Sanford family, was the first Jew to enroll there (1837).] Joe had to wait three years to get his pharmacy license because of his youth.

“Mr. Joe,” as he was called locally, became a partner, with Robert Watson and John White, in Crabtree Pharmacy on the corner of Steele and Carthage, soon bought it outright, and operated it as Lee Drug Store (“The Busy Store,” Phone 74) for fifty years. He married Lee McIver of the Charles Duncan McIver clan (whose namesake was a champion of education, particularly for women), and they lived at 223 Hillcrest Drive. She made homemade sandwiches and soup in their home (lost

to a fire) in the early years, and they became a staple at the very popular Lee Luncheonette. People came from Fayetteville, Raleigh, and Southern Pines for her food. The McIver family was active socially and politically, and Chuck's great uncle Jimmy was Editor of the Sanford Herald under Bill Horner, Sr.

Joe Lazarus had a rich sense of humor, as indicated by his ads (sampled in the Herald Progress Edition (16 March 1936):

Did You Know—

THAT salt sprinkled on cornbread will sober you up, but who wants to know that?

THAT Jesse James once spent the night in Jonesboro and attempted to trade horses there?

THAT the Rev. G. T. Adams played on the Trinity College (now Duke) football team?

THAT tigers do not eat people, and if you are eaten by one[,] you may rest assured he was abnormal?

THAT although the eclipse wasn't total here, it was a darn good one for a town this size?

Dr. Judy Wilkie Fowler cannot eat at Sabatino's (formerly Casa Toscana) without recalling that it was Lee Drug Store. Her most cherished memory of Sanford, where she lived from 1947-1962 and to which she has now returned, is working there. She learned a lot about the town and the people and about people in general and met her husband Bob (and me!) at Lee Drug. She reports that Joe jokingly called himself a "Methodist Jew" because he attended the Methodist Church. She did not know his first wife but has rich memories of the second. Virginia Formy-Duval Thomas Lazarus worked in the drug store three nights a week with Joe, who shared night duty with another pharmacist. She regaled young children (e.g., Candace Perry) by reciting her full, tongue-twister name and getting them to repeat it. The "ultimate extrovert," she was a former high school English and French teacher, who, in the early fifties, went to summer school in Chapel Hill to renew her certification. She did not return to teaching, however, because she married Joe (and his drug store). The Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society published (1981) the calendar, *Historic Lee County*. It includes one of the twin houses on Maple Avenue in Sanford built about 1905 by Makepeace Millworks and used as a dormitory for nurses working at the old hospital. Virginia Formy-Duval (Lazarus) and Ruth Phillips (Manning) passed notes via a wire-spools-and-pulley "contraption" between the two homes.

Joe and his first wife had two sons. Judy Wilkie Fowler was in the Sanford

Central High School Band with them before she began working at Lee Drug Store. Oddly, I was asked to write the Fifties history of that school and found statistics and tidbits about the brothers in their class annuals. John Michael, “Mike,” whose name kept getting misspelled “Micheal,” including his listing among the Seniors of 1955, has the descriptive, “The will to follow or art to lead,” and these statistics: Band 1-4; Drum Major 3, 4; Beta Club 3, 4; Key Club 3, 4; Student Council 4; Dramatics Club 3; Class Officer (Vice-President) 1; Junior-Senior Prom Waiter 2; Marshal 3; Boys’ State 3; Glee Club 1, 4; and Superlative (Neatest) 4. In the “Last Will and Testament,” he leaves his neatness to Paul Kelly [forthcoming in Section 5]. The “Class Prophecy” finds him more than likely the “new boss” of the New York Giants. He is “an ardent sports fan and also owner of a chain of drug stores throughout the south.” Dr. Michael Lazarus was graduated from UNC in pharmacy and medicine and practiced in nephrology in Boston before returning to Chapel Hill.

Charles Lawrence Lazarus, “Larry,” Chuck’s father, Class of 1957, was apparently deemed easy-going, as is implicit in the quotation defining him: “Roll on, old world, and I’ll roll with thee.” His statistics are Band 1-4; Glee Club 1, 2; Football 1; Hobby Club 2, Officer 2; Hi-Y 3, 4, Officer 3; Marshal 3; Block “S” 4; Basketball Manager 3, 4; Superlative (Wittiest) 4; Class Officer (Treasurer) 4; Key Club 3, 4. (No “Prophecy,” “Last Will and Testament,” or “History” is included.) He, too, was graduated from UNC’s School of Pharmacy. He took over the operation of the drug store when his father became ill.

Larry and his wife Sandra, Chuck’s mother, owned a chain of pharmacies in Western North Carolina and lived in Spindale, Shelby, and Black Mountain. With Chuck on the way, they returned to Sanford, where he was born, and resided there until the death of his grandfather. Then he and his mother returned to her home in Rutherfordton, while his father remained in Sanford and continued to operate Lee Drugs for four more years, closing it in 1979. His second wife is Pamela Kirian from West Virginia.

Chuck left Sanford for the School of the Arts in Winston-Salem. At nineteen, while still a student at Julliard, he solo debuted with the New York String Orchestra on the main stage of Carnegie Hall. He has been on the trumpet faculties of Princeton and St. Olaf College, has performed and taught Master Classes throughout this country and the world, and also composes. In 2005 came his debut CD, Solo Settings; in 2007, his orchestral pops show, A Night in the Tropics, which he performed in Sanford. That same year he won the prestigious McKnight Fellowship for Performing Musicians. His “Waves” was voted the Great American Song Contest’s instrumental song of the year; “Now Is Leaving” was honored with “Outstanding Achievement in Songwriting” (2008 Great American Song Contest). He has performed his

compositions for the Montréal and Ottawa International Jazz Festivals, live on Radio Canada, for music videos that have aired nationally on Canadian television, and as an opening act for Tony Bennett. He has recorded for television and Imax film scores, as well as major symphony orchestras and numerous classical, pop, and jazz ensembles. He has been a member of the Dallas Brass, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Canadian Brass, and Minnesota Orchestra. He is known for his distinctive blend of lounge/exotica and funk-fired jazz and has received acclaim from critics worldwide. [Much additional information can be found on his website—<http://www.charleslazarus.com>.] He remains a gift to music and to Sanford and Lee County. 🎵

Jewel on the Crown

By Donald E. Byrne, Jr.

I noticed it cleaning up after my six-year-old's ordinary afternoon production of objets d'art, and taped it to my study wall.

When she was sitting in my lap that evening, I told her I liked the drawing very much, and asked her what she called it. She said, "Oh, that's the 'Jewel on the Crown'" with such assurance I didn't ask if she perhaps meant "The Jewel in the Crown" her mother was watching Sunday nights on PBS.

We looked at it together for a moment before she went off to bed. It was drawn on an eight-and-a-half by eleven sheet of blue-lined tablet paper in crayon and colored pencil.

A large crown rested on a slightly convex silver-gray ground. On either side of the tall center spike of the crown there were two smaller spikes, one large and one small. She had inscribed in black crayon the words "men" and "night" on the left hand pair, "women" and "day" on the right. I asked her why and she said, "Because they're opposites, of course."

The tall central spike of the crown said "world" in green letters, and rose up to pierce the heart of the sun near the top of the picture. The tip of the spike impaled a small, rose sphere at the center of the sun. Seven concentric circles, each colored differently, surrounded the rose sphere. Orange and yellow coronas flamed from the surface of the last circle.

A large black rectangle, rising from the silver-gray ground at the bottom, surrounded both the crown and sun. She had colored the sky behind the rectangle burnt sienna.

From the right border of the picture, a large, flesh-colored hand reached through the red sky, black rectangle, and corona to touch the surface of the seventh circle with the nail of its first finger.

I was about to ask her if she knew her picture was a cosmogony. And if she really meant that men and night together are opposites of women and day. And whether she understood that the symbolic significance of seven concentric circles is perfection upon perfection. And if she had ever seen the finger of Michelangelo's God touching Adam alive on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. And why she encased both the crown and the sun in what was shaped and colored like a tombstone.

But it was clear she had nothing more to say about the picture. She said that she preferred one of the others I had salvaged and taped to the wall. Maybe the Japanese Barbie in the fluorescent red kimono. Or the angel with a spider body, capturing red and blue hearts in the webs of her wings.

As she kissed me goodnight, I thought: “For you, my goddess, the picture is what it is. Nothing more. I am the one who needs to salvage and explain creations. By the time I got to it, you had already abandoned it. And if I had carelessly put it out to burn like a flaring supernova, or squashed it into a balled-up dwarf, you would have forgiven me, if you ever noticed.”

She walked to her bedroom, singing. The backside of her golden pajamas flared her counter-question to me: “When will you understand? When was the last time you tried to draw the whole world, so much for the sake of making it you didn’t care who saw it or where it fell when you finished, you were so absorbed with trying again?” ◀

Little Feet Jap

By Robin Whitten

My feet march in time to the music, small pianos, playing in unison, playing loudly, their melody fast, the notes familiar.

Darkness greets me when I open the door and turn off the alarm. Except for the whisper of small feet running across the floor, the house is now quiet. Without turning on a light, I run into the living room, hoping to catch them. By the time I get there, there's nothing, no noise, no movement. Only the smells of laughter, the scents of happiness. Fumbling with the light switch, it's suddenly bright and I have to squint to adjust before I can see.

Pink and yellow walls surround a white couch and the many windows that open into the back yard. Pillows of large colorful flowers fill the crevices of the couch and often surround the small frame that sometimes sits in the overstuffed cushions. The many colors of this room always surprise me and make me smile. In front of the couch, balanced on the red Oriental rug is a small table with a Lladró figurine, a girl sitting on an airplane, guiding it through the air, filling its center. I watch her, imagine her weightless, high above the clouds.

Corner shelves behind the couch hold more of the Lladró, as well as Royal Doulton and many small Hummels, each figurine elegant in its movement, yet frozen in position, waiting for me to leave. The dresser next to the fireplace is full of fine linen. Gone are the business dinners, gone are the loud evenings of many courses, the long days of cooking and sharing recipes. On the other side of the fireplace drawers and cabinets hold the black and white pictures, memories only she will know, memories of a time long ago.

I examine the large portraits hanging over the long table that hugs the wall. Two faces, historic and statuesque, someone's relatives preserved through time, stare back at me. They are ageless, free of dust and wear, happy to watch over the house when I'm not here.

Little porcelain and wooden dolls peek out from under the low boy, others are tucked into the various bends of the room, poised to perform. I am reminded of the little feet that rush around to find a place to pose when I come in. They stand innocently aware of me, each in a staged position, frozen, as if they did what they were told and remained each in their own spot. I know better.

The organ sits silent against the outside wall, surrounded by five miniature pianos, all anticipating their next concert. I have heard their music, felt the notes, as I've crept along the outside of the house, spying. I flip the on switch, as I do each time I come to visit, and begin to play the song I heard only a few minutes before. I play the notes slowly and softly, hoping the dolls will come alive and join in. A slight chill runs through me in anticipation, but as every other time, the small pianos remain quiet.

I close my eyes, feel the music, as it courses its way through me and around me. I find the notes, my fingers sure and true. I imagine the dolls waking from their wooden slumber, making their way slowly to the organ bench. Little feet tap, little hands clap. The music fills me, surrounds me as the dolls begin to dance, free and open, including me in their circle.

Echoes of Tchaikovsky surround me, surround the dolls, after I have stopped playing. Little feet prance away from me, to find their homes. I stand and turn thinking I might spot some of them in motion. No one, nothing has changed.

French doors lead to the card table on the porch, laden with paints. Pictures scattered around, of flowers in various stages of completion, colorful flowers. Here is a portrait of a woman, a woman much like the woman who lives here, sitting alone, small and frail, remembering, remembering. Her smile hides many secrets, about her house, about the music. I study her hoping she'll finally talk to me.

I lock the door and head toward my car. The pianos start again, their high-pitched notes serenading. No one sings along, no one. I whistle in tune with the beat. 🕒

The Song of Forever Childhood

By C. Pleasants York

Alas, the magic and the enchantment of “Peter Pan” were not to be mine! I wanted so badly to see the Mary Martin version that, at age six, with footed pajamas and a rabbit named Twinkerbelle, I hid behind the rocking chair the night the highly-acclaimed TV show premiered. I knew that my parents would never let me stay up late that night – the night before my first day in first grade at Old Town School. I wrapped myself in a blanket and was very quiet behind the chair, but Frankie, my older brother, told on me, and Mommy trundled me off to bed. As I fell asleep, I heard Mary Martin in the Darling nursery singing to Wendy, Michael and John “Never, Never Land.”

The song was always a favorite of mine, as was the book Peter and Wendy by Sir James Barrie. It was soon after I was married that my husband Guy and I traveled to California and met Guy’s grandmother, Irma Landon Kiester. I found out that summer that Irma was the great niece of Maude Adams. Maude Adams was a dear friend of the Scottish playwright Sir James Barrie, and it was for her that the play was written. Maude Adams was the first person to play “Peter Pan or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up” on Broadway. In a letter dated 22 March 1906, Sir James Barrie wrote, “There never was such a girl as you for finding out what her author was up to. I MUST see you as Peter, and so, dear little Maudie, good-night.” Maude played the role numerous times and owned her own traveling theater company by the time she was 25. Her acting ability appealed to many people, and she became one of the highest-paid and most successful performers of her day. During her peak, she made more than a million dollars as her yearly income.

Irma sat on her red velvet couch in her Victorian parlor in Santee, California and told us her personal story of Peter Pan. Irma grew up in Belvedere, Illinois, living with her aunt and uncle, Lizzie and Sam Gossard, owners of the prosperous Gossard Corset Company. When Irma was about five years old, she remembers dressing in her fanciest lace dress, a silver cuff bracelet and patent leather shoes. She and Lizzie traveled to Rockford, Illinois when the renowned Maude Adams was performing at the Rockford theatre. Irma remembers being invited backstage to talk with Great Aunt Maude, but her greatest joys were seeing Peter Pan flying “second star to the right and straight on ‘til morning” and hearing the lyrics of the song “Never-

land.”

Years later, when my son, Adam, recognized his skill in acting at the age of nine, he worked on a series of productions at The Temple Theatre, just down the street from our house in Sanford. And, of course, for the Christmas season one year, he acted in “Peter Pan,” playing both the Lost Boy Tootles and one of Captain Hook’s bloodthirsty pirates. As our family slid into the theater seats as many times as we could during the three-week production, we heard the haunting music of “Never, Never Land.”

The tune drifted once more into my life when I wrote my first novel, a gift for the two September birthdays of my parents, Frank and Jessie May Stearns of Winston-Salem. Published under the title *Dream Within a Dream* several years later, the name originally was “Haunting Melody.” In the book, three generations of girls in a Southern family are first enchanted and then horrified by the tune “Neverland” which plays in the music box of an antique doll.

The song “Neverland” comes to me at the oddest times now, and I find myself thinking of Peter Pan, the boy who would never grown up, the boy of a forever childhood. And I find myself humming and singing the words: “. . . Just think of lovely things, and your heart will fly on wings forever in Never, Never Land.” ◀

Thomist with a Brain Tumor

By Donald E. Byrne, Jr.

Wheelchair bound, thinking ens
gropes for edges of a glioblastoma
that mimics the brain it feeds on,
envelops thought in its growing coma,

though metaphysics posits a One among
the many, that is, coherence and continuity
amidst multiplicity and change – a One
without which neither words nor rationality

that cannot share its own explanation,

could exist, and we would live in an untielligible
chaotic world – Plato's mistake was to name
the One in an essence, FORM, somewhere in a double
of our shadow world, for which he deserved the blame

that, unlike thinking, is physical ens

of his student Aristotle, for excluding THAT
WHICH IS, that is, an essence incarnate
more truly than abstract FORM – the simple predicate
“IS,” shared by every being proportionate

and therefore exists in a lobe of the brain

to its potency for actuality—
without which we are left with a metaphysics
of timeless ghosts and disembodied quiddity—
rather than one which explains what angels and fish

as spatio-temporal modifications

have in common, not to mention God and woman,
since the world we really live in (not to beg
the question!) consists of particular things which man-
ifest their form in matter, not in neg-

illogically living and growing, but mute

atives, and since – to focus on intelligence –
what is most deeply significant about
an existence such as you is that your essence
is to exist as an embodied spirit

as if counterpoint to reflection and

so that even though body and soul, matter
and form, potency and act, essence
and existence can and must be distinguished after
the fact, they can never be separated, since

intention – only analogically present

--the Anglic Doctor teaches – you are this body,
and this body is you; to put it plainly, your
mind is this body – a mindbody – conversely,
your body is this mind – a bodymind – for

in the physical time and space of his brain,

the one can no more be without the other
than the other can be without the one,
or a lover without a beloved, or a mother
without a child, because the definition

an accomplice to its transformation

and reality of any being's existence
involves, as we have held immemorially,
unity per se, not per accidens,
by THAT WHICH IS: sheer actuality

by THAT WHICH IS: sheer actuality. ◉

Beethoven and the World Beholden

By Lynn Veach Sadler

In me, the arts, medicine, and funny and deaf bones conjoin. My predecessors can't be found on Ancestry.com but certainly should be. (The reason they won't be has nothing to do with bastardy.)

My kind started in music—dancing to the tune of one John Shore, for whom the Great Handel wrote many trumpet parts (probably not entirely “trumpet voluntaries,” since he was Court Composer for King James II). For his own part, my “progenitor,” Mr. Shore, so mightily trumpeted that he split his lip during a concert and betook himself to the lute, for which he devised me in my first guise. I am, I sing forth modestly, TUNING FORK. The honored Shore sparked laughs, too, for he subsequently began each concert with plying me to tune his instrument while the sly devil pronounced that he never went anywhere without his “pitch fork.” He gave his to the Great Handel, thus allowing you to know the exact pitch at which he and his fellow composers meant their compositions to be heard. Then everybody started pitching pitches [Philharmonic, International, New Philharmonic, Philosophical, Scientific, with Symphony Space doubtless forthcoming]. Why, when Col. Somerville persuaded the British Army to accept the International Standard for me, military bands could play together! Consider the airs of my heirs. As to the military, consider what Beethoven did to the Eroica when Buonaparte declared himself Emperor!

Thomas Coram—sea captain, trader, founder-trustee of Georgia Colony—established a foundling hospital (with attendant “playing fields”) for London's abandoned children. His patrons included Hogarth, Reynolds, and Gainsborough, who exhibited their pictures in it. Handel donated Messiah's more-than-widow's mite and, at the end of one of his concerts there, presented my ancestor to it. Said hospital may sound “Baroque” but never went “broke.”

By 1746, we were referred to as “intonators” or “retonators” and found purchase below your ear, tooth, or head that you might hear better. Herr Ernst Heinrich Weber advanced by octaves in 1825 to use us to examine hearing loss, and Herr Heinrich Adolf Rinne moved on to bone vs. air conduction per se before 1885. Perhaps if such physicians hadn't seen—heard—so much in me, I wouldn't have been taken

up by the deaf Beethoven, who subsequently became a man of absolute pitch. (That unemptied chamber pot beneath the piano I did not like, but I suppose I must accept that it portended the great chamber music.)

I'm certainly not sounding a sour note but always found it a little queer that Beethoven bequeathed me to a violinist, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower. I wondered as I wandered next upon Ulysses Bolton, from whence I wafted to Paul Waddington, who bequeathed me to the admirable John H. Balderstone—upon the promise never to sell but to give me to “some decent musiker” to pass along when his time came. No balderdash there. Recipient Gustav Holst passed me to Vaughan Williams. Mrs. Ursula Vaughan Williams forked me over to the British Museum so that, in belonging to that “treasure house,” I might belong to all musicians.

Now the British Museum has sent me, with other spoils, to the technologically advanced British Library, whose displays are not entirely “apt.” Short people, you see, cannot reach across its glass display cases to take up the earphones or select a work to hear. Bored by my exile and quiveringly restless, I have taken to serving warning when such short approach by vibrating freely. You may have heard the BBC's consternation at such behavior and lesser persons' conclusion that Beethoven's ghost inhabits me. So far, would you believe, no one has made the connection to shortness! But rest assured, if you are short and venture here, lo, I, said tuning fork, will begin, like Birnam Wood, to move as if Beethoven's Fifth were sounding fast upon both me and you. My form will be the cavatina to serve as clue. ◀

The Musician in My Family

By Mary Barnard

When the Green Bay Press-Gazette hired a music reporter in the 1930's, Francis X. Barnard, my father, began his 40 year career in journalism. A famous musician came to town on a train with a boxcar reserved just for his piano. My father got to interview him for the newspaper.

When asked if his love for music originated in childhood, my father replied, "Well, yes, my brother and I learned to play the piano from my Aunt Ethel. Now John, he was the virtuoso."

When we, Francis' children, studied music at St. Clement's Parish School, we mainly crowded around a piano and sang while Sister Lorenzo played.

When I read novels about families whose lives centered around music, I imagined myself singing and dancing and playing something with these made-up parents and siblings.

When I raked the lawn this spring, I reflected on my parents. My mother, so loved, all five of us craved her attention more than candy or gum.

When the bustling house quieted while we did our homework, we could hear the 78 rpm strains of Beethoven, Brahms and Schubert coming from above us, our father's upstairs room.

When enraptured by the music, he pounded his fists on the arms of his plum-colored chair. And he could whistle two parts of a song at the same time.

If, as music sometimes does, a family has a ligature - a curved line connecting notes to be sung or played as a phrase - I know at last, at long last, that my father played that part in the music of the Barnard septet. ●

The Monday Evening Piano Player

By Elisabeth Plattner

Come and listen to a warm summer evening in the picturesque and quaint imperial town of Bad Ischl, Austria.

It is late and we are sitting in a cozy, dimly lit lobby of a charming Hotel, nestled at the edge of the mountains within walking distance of the late emperor's summer residence.

A few, elegantly dressed guests, are lounging, talking, laughing and listening to the music, escaping the piano.

A mixture of sounds is arriving our ears and reminding us of past events, loves, joys and sadness.

Music as an echo from the past is still lingering in the surrounding mountains, meadows and lakes. Nostalgic and enchanting. My older friend's memories travel back to a time before the war when her Mom would play the piano and sing a children's song, "Kommt ein Vogerl geflogen ...", or an homage to close by beautiful Vienna, "Wien, Wien, nur Du allein.....", People were still waltzing to Johann Strauss' music and then the cadence changed and a war started. Threatening rumbles of airplanes, exploding bombs and high-pitched sounds of sheer despair an unimaginable never ending canon of pain and suffering.

Finally the silence of the fallen souls could not be overheard any longer and peace arrived. Dissonance changed to consonance and was seen in the faces of smiling US soldiers. Sweet and nourishing as chocolate and the new tunes on the radio. Promising you, promising you.....

"Blue Suede shoes" and the moving hips from Elvis promising her another life as the barefoot, crippled bodies and minds she had tried so hard not to join.

"You are my sunshine....." the promise of a first love turning into a lifetime of companionship were no cloud would ever be too dark.

Glenn Miller's Chattanooga Choo Choo promising her a new destination than the one she can no longer arrive.

A Tennessee Waltz promising her new love, leaving old ones behind.

The piano player and my friend traveled down the same memory lane. Every song coming from his heart and magically moving his hands to free them from the strings of the piano, dancing through the evening, taking her with him.

As the chords of the last song were traveling our way, it was time to finish our drinks. Starting and ending our days with Prosecco was an easily adopted habit in a town of charm, culture and celebrated *gemuetlichkeit*. Filling our plates and glasses in between with golden red wines, savory dishes and the most delicious cakes and pastries of our youth promising us a new day, a new song.

I am watching my friend, who had been humming to the music, sitting in her elegant, carefully chosen outfit, tapping her pedicured feet in the dainty little sandals up and down to the rhythm of the evening's music.

Her gaze is directed to where the songs are coming from. I can tell, she had been enjoying herself all night.

Now I can see a sweet, knowing smile lightening up her face. The piano player, tall and handsome was crossing the room, walking towards our table.

Maybe, this is not the end of the evening yet?

As he came closer, I straightened myself and noticed how my friend got into the very same preparations. A tiny movement with the head, chin up, head gently tilted to the side, shoulders back and ever so slightly placing the chest from where a skilled glance can easily travel to the tiny waist without being found out, ending with an experienced look at the legs and feet. She checks quickly on her sandals and knows, good investment here!

I am smiling inside, happy to see, at the age of 88, she still has it. Enjoying herself, open for a lovely encounter, feeling good about being alive, always a true woman.

“Gnaedige Frau,” he said, “I could tell, you really enjoyed the music.” I motioned to a chair and invited him to have a seat and knew, I might as well go up to my room. This was her moment, her evening with him.

Within minutes a conversation you will only have with an old, trusted friend, let's call it a soul mate was unfolding. Admitting to each other in hushed voices how these tunes from the evening made them feel and what a song can do to you. She confessing, how she hasn't played in a while, fearing the pain of memories, he gently encouraging her to trust the transformation by giving in to the joy and power of music. Moving the soft conversation briefly to their pasts, sharing bits and pieces of their lives and quickly returning to the present evening and its quiet, late hour, savoring the moment gifted to them. Will they ever meet again? I don't believe it is important!

“Remember me as the Monday evening piano player,” he says gently when they

were parting, “and don’t forget to return to your tunes for your heart will love to hear the music and I will continue to play for you.”

Some love stories are short, but its music will last for a lifetime. ◀

COLOPHON *publication* n o t e s



Volume 11 of the *Red Clay Review* uses the type styles: Champagne & Limousines for headings & other text; Century Schoolbook for body text & author biographies; *Sunshine in My Soul* for headings and other text; Prestige Elite Std for bylines, folio numbers & other text; FIREFLY FOR HEADINGS & OTHER TEXT

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2020 *submissions*

Red Clay Review is accepting submissions for its next issue, for which the theme is ACCESS. Contributors can submit prose up to 1500 words, up to three poems of up to 80 lines each, and/or up to three original images. Poetry and prose submissions must be sent electronically as .doc, .docx, or .rtf file attachments. Please submit each document in individual files. Images must be submitted as high-resolution files. Submissions should be sent to rcr@ccc.edu and include the writer's name, mailing address, and phone number. Please submit entries by May 15, 2020.

Questions may be sent to the same address, or you may contact Summerlin Page Webb at 919.718.7270.

