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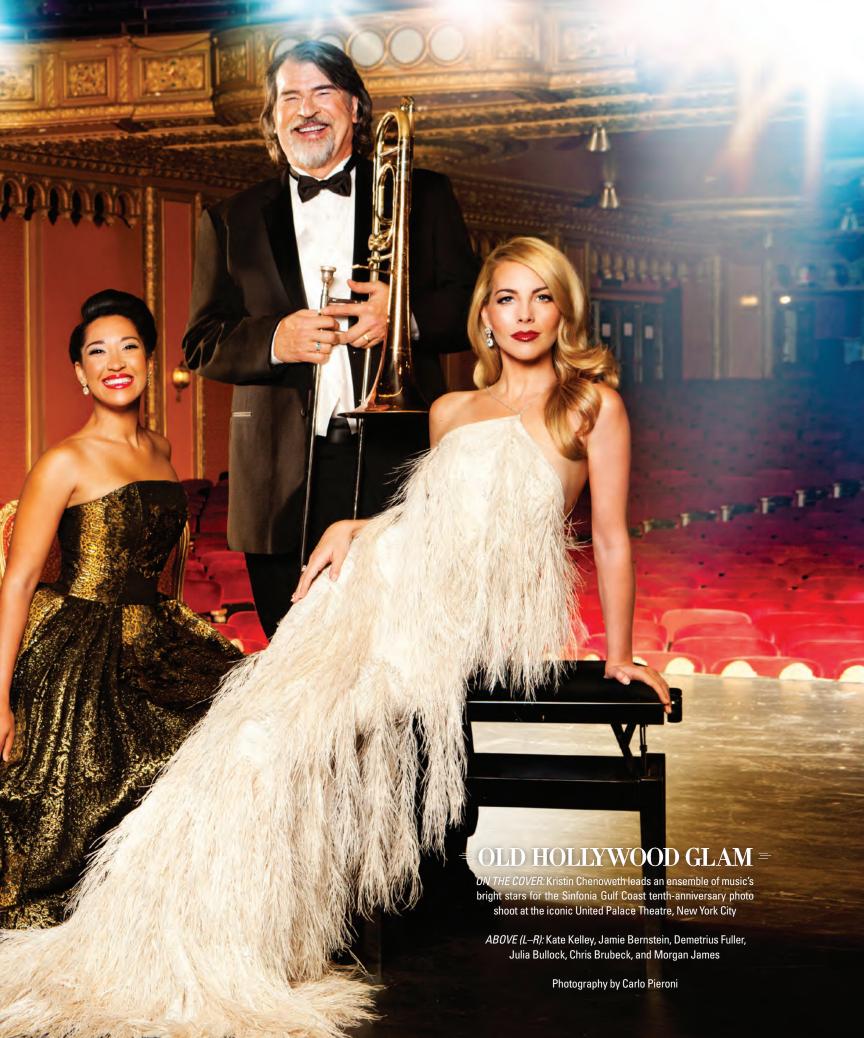
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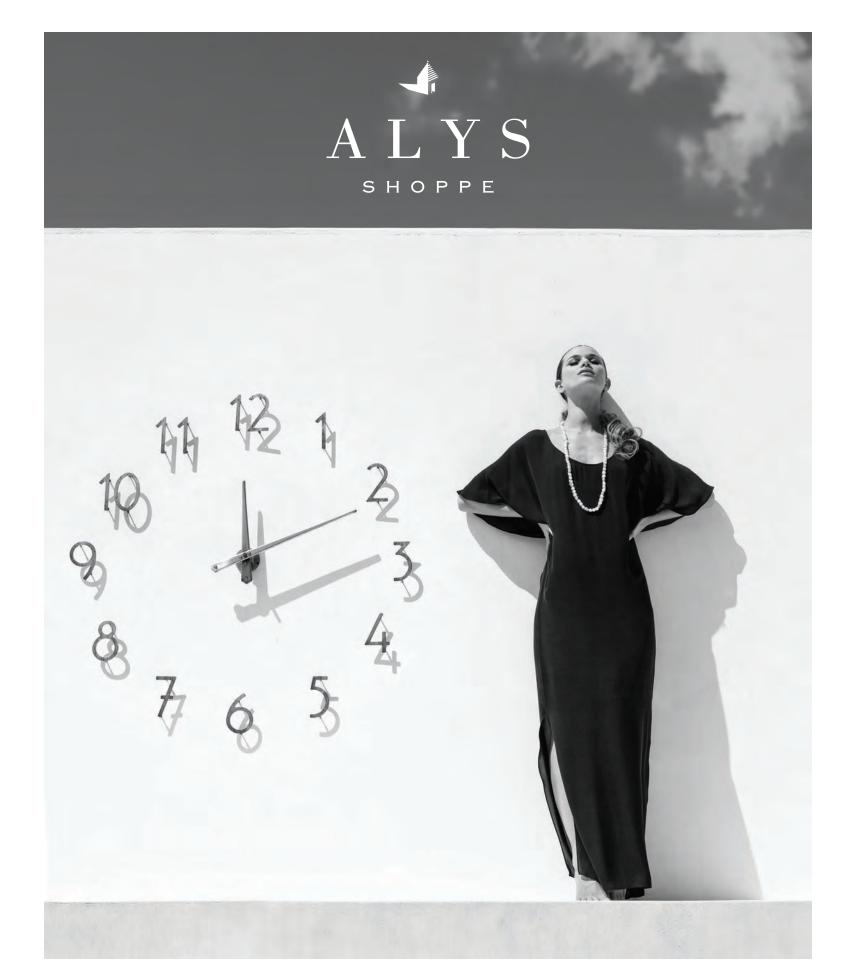
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Our building experience was exceptional. The reputation that drew us to you in the first place has been affirmed. We would be happy to share our building experience with any future customers.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Nixon, MD and Gregory Berkey, MD



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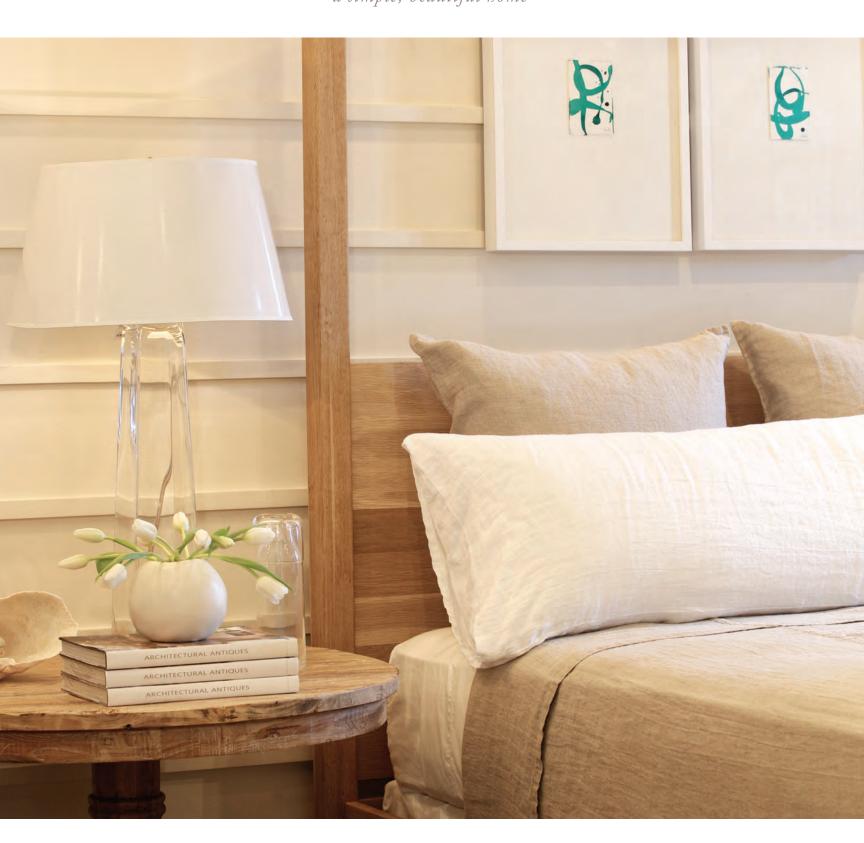


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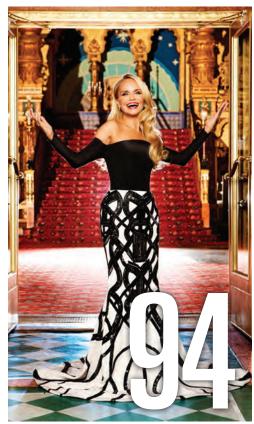


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ON THE COVER:



OLD HOLLYWOOD GLAM

Stage and screen star Kristin Chenoweth looks every bit the bombshell in a stunning red silk faille gown during *VIE*'s special photo shoot celebrating the tenth-anniversary season of Sinfonia Gulf Coast. Photographer Carlo Pieroni captures the magic as Chenoweth leads an ensemble cast of some of Broadway's and classical music's bright stars at the United Palace Theatre in New York City. Looking regal are Kate Kelley, Jamie Bernstein, Demetrius Fuller, Julia Bullock, Chris Brubeck, and Morgan James. The gorgeous gowns are by New York—based designer Christian Siriano; the fine jewelry is from DANI by Daniel K and provided by McCaskill and Company; and the suits are provided by Simply Elegant Bridal.



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THE CULTURE OF STARS AND STRIPES

Give My Regards to Broadway



Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, Lisa and Gerald Burwell Photo by Shelly Swanger

e have a diverse collection of topics in our first Cultural Issue; they range from the theatres of Broadway and beyond—and the musicians, singers, and actors who perform for those audiences—to an insightful insider's view of what it is truly like to live a military life. We showcase nerds and Dragon Con, pop-culture phenomena that are part of a rapidly emerging industry spun off of the superhero and science fiction themes that dominate Hollywood's offerings. We also feature many nonprofit organizations that continue to work toward improving the plight of those less fortunate. We welcome you to read all these stories and more.

What is the common denominator of our everchanging culture, and how do we continue to enhance, rather than detract from, our society in the land of the free and the home of the brave? Creativity. It's the only thing necessary to resolve, inspire, ignite, and grow a society that celebrates life and promotes positive change. When we continue to have open minds and hearts and we desire exploration of our collective gifts and talents, we create a better world for our communities and ourselves.

To say this issue is full of people who embrace this mind-set would be an understatement. Our cover girl, Kristin Chenoweth, lights up any room she enters—and that is before she even takes the stage. This powerhouse of talent, beauty, and goodness takes my breath away. The excellence she has attained in her craft is rivaled only by her sweet and generous spirit. She took part in a photo shoot at the United Palace Theatre in New York City just three short weeks prior to this publication. This creative collaboration of superstars in a glorious old theater was reminiscent of an era gone by. Read all about it in Lori Eckert's "A Cover Ten Years in the Making: Channeling Old Hollywood Glam."

We are proud to have partnered with Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its founder, Maestro Demetrius Fuller, as they achieve a milestone anniversary. Being in New York City with him, our entourage, Broadway greats, and musical geniuses for the cover shoot in the United Palace Theatre—one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen—was an honor. Here's to many more years and many more accomplishments, Maestro. Bravo!

My musings on the topic of culture and our cultural mores: keep thinking, keep creating, and keep being excellent. It will keep us safe.

To Life
—Lisa Marie



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VIE SHOW HOUSE PREVIEW

The Modern Minimalist | Zen by the Bay



Mike and Angela Ragsdale, owners and founders of the 30A brand and beloved members of our community, have embarked on a new adventure that mirrors a lifestyle they are embracing—one that is uncluttered and pure.

Following the personal tragedy of their beautiful home on the Choctawhatchee Bay being flooded and subsequently demolished, a rebirth of sorts occurred. The Ragsdales began the process of rebuilding and realized they want to live differently: living with less so they can experience more. And so was born their new home concept that focuses on simplicity and relaxation.

We are thrilled to follow the Ragsdales on their journey of rebirth and can't wait to reveal their new home to our readers. Many sponsors and partners have joined them in the creation of the new home, which we've dubbed "Modern Minimalist – Zen by the Bay."

Mike has written a beautiful and personal story for this issue of VIE and will continue to chronicle the journey with an article in each issue leading up to the home's big reveal, which will appear in the 2016 Architecture and Design Issue (May/June).

We are so excited to publish this family's story and show you their new home on the bay!

Sincerely, Lisa Marie Burwell, Publisher *VIE Magazine*

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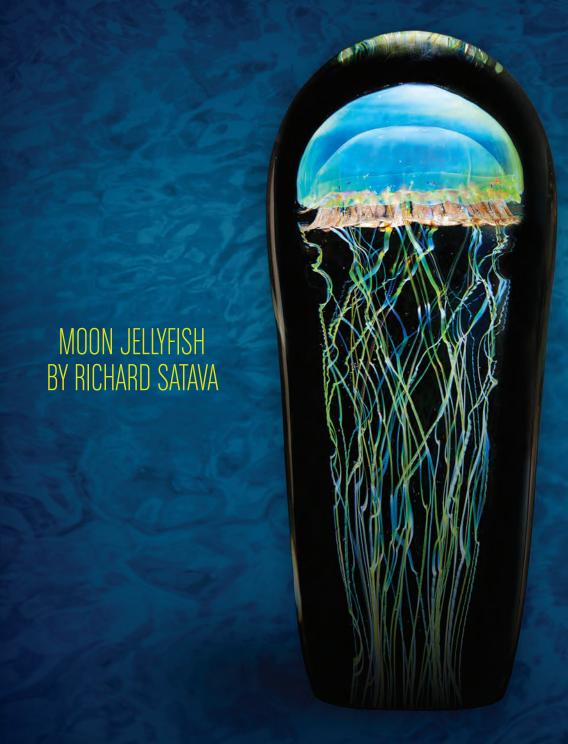
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FASHION WEEK HITS THE BEACH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROMONA ROBBINS

Once more, South Walton Fashion Week brought creativity and runway magic to Grand Boulevard Town Center in Miramar Beach, Florida. The event, in its third year, was presented by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and Visit South Walton. VIE was privileged to sponsor the Sheila Goode Model of the Year Award, which honored the late photographer and friend of the community and was presented by her daughter, Hayley Green, and our publisher, Lisa Burwell. Our art director, Tracey Thomas, was also on hand to serve on the judges' panel for the model competition.



MODEL COMPETITION JUDGES TOMMY CROW, TRACEY THOMAS, AND AMY PHILLIPS









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This year, South Walton Fashion Week's model competition awarded prizes to both a female and a male model, a first since SWFW's inception in 2013. The talented winners were Miranda Abney of Slidell, Louisiana, and Xinbang "Simba" Tang of Troy, Alabama. Every model looked chic on the runway with expert hairstyling done by Vivo Spa Salon and makeup provided by Sephora.

The ever-exciting Emerging Designer competition brought in thirteen designers from around the country. After three nights packed with runway shows from local South Walton boutiques and stores, featured runway partners, and the immensely creative emerging designers, the judges came to a difficult decision. Tieler Garsaud of clothing line Tieler James was proclaimed the winner of the 2015 Emerging Designer competition, while menswear designer Richelle Valenzuela of Pasaporte received honorable mention.

The winning models and designers will be showcased in a full photo shoot and story in *VIE*'s upcoming Culinary and Couture Issue next spring. Congratulations to all and thanks to SWFW and the Cultural Arts Alliance for allowing *VIE* to once again be part of this prestigious fashion event! **M**



Private Residence, Seagrove

A BOHEME DESIGN

"I call architecture frozen music..." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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One of the first questions people ask when they visit our area is "How can we be sure we're getting fresh seafood?"

That's an excellent question. There is a good chance that the seafood you will be offered traveled farther than you did. In the state of Florida, even though we are surrounded by water, more than 90% of the seafood sold this year will be imported from other countries.

Throughout the United States, the huge majority of seafood is imported. Most of it is mislabeled. Frozen seafood is sold as "fresh" and imported seafood is sold as "local." According to Oceana, 93% of fish sold as red snapper is actually some other species. 57% of tuna sold at sushi bars throughout the country is not tuna. Most of the tilapia served in this country comes from Viet Nam and Thailand and much of it is farmed in waters with sewage run-off and the source of feed is pig feces.

Harbor Docks has been selling fish through its wholesale market since 1981. We sell to markets across the United States and Canada. We also sell to select restaurants along the Gulf Coast. Harbor Docks contracts with over 100 commercial boats to insure that we have an adequate supply of fresh fish.

We invite you to dine at our restaurants – Harbor Docks, in the heart of Destin, and Camille's, overlooking the Gulf in Crystal Beach. But we'd also encourage you to try any of the wonderful, independent, local restaurants in our area that are committed to serving Florida seafood. We know who they are, because we sell them their fish.



Check our website to find out which restaurants sell certified Gulf-to-Table fish from Harbor Docks Seafood Market.

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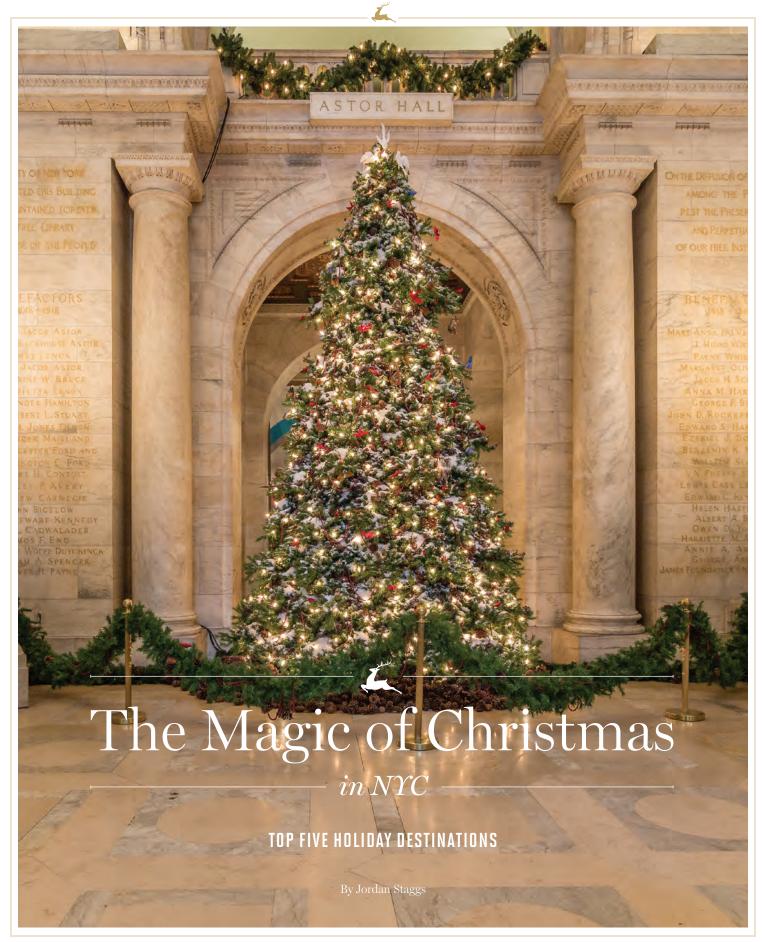






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Who says having a holly, jolly Christmas has to mean chestnuts roasting on a fire and a one-horse open sleigh? If the makers of such iconic Christmas films as *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, *Elf*, and, of course, *Miracle on 34th Street* have anything to say about it, the magic of Christmas might just be hidden within the grid of Manhattan's busy streets. Visiting New York City is a bucket-list item many world travelers can't wait to check off, and with some of the world's biggest and most elaborate holiday decorations, there's even more to see at Christmastime! But if you want to hit the highlights, here are a few destinations in the city you shouldn't miss!

5. THE PLAZA HOTEL

Built in 1907 and long considered to be one of New York's finest hotel experiences, the Plaza has luxurious guest rooms and suites, magnificent furnishings, varied dining experiences, and a storied past that have kept it in the top tier of accommodations since the city's Gilded Age. Fairmont Hotels and Resorts reopened the renovated property in 2008, and the building now boasts nearly three hundred guest rooms and over a hundred and fifty private condos, all conveniently located on Fifth Avenue overlooking the south end of Central Park.

The Plaza is the ultimate in Manhattan grandeur—especially around the holidays. Lobbies bedecked with garlands and grand Christmas trees will greet guests, while the famous Oak Room, the Palm Court, and more offer dining that's open to the public. And don't forget about one of the Plaza's most famous residents: Eloise. The Eloise series of books and films, which chronicle the life of a girl who lives on the Plaza's "tippy-top floor," has brought fans of all ages to the Plaza since the 1950s.

Those seeking the perfect New York holiday stay should look into the Plaza's Radio City Christmas Spectacular package, which includes tickets to the famous Rockettes Christmas performance.

www.fairmont.com/the-plaza-new-york

4. THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Take a stroll down Fifth Avenue, but don't get lost in the crowds at Rockefeller Center just yet. First, head a little farther south—between Forty-Second and Fortieth Streets, to be exact—and you can't miss the broad front steps and marble facade of the historic Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, better known as the main branch of the New York Public Library. It's worth a visit anytime, but visit during the holiday season for added value! As you head up the main steps, be sure to look left and right at the pair of majestic marble lions flanking the entrance. These stoic guardians are Patience and Fortitude, and they have been watching over the library's south and north ends, respectively, since 1911. At Christmastime, you will probably find them a bit more festive than usual, sporting wreaths and large red bows for the occasion.

Step inside the marble lobby and feast your eyes on a grand Christmas tree in the foyer. It's a great spot for a photo op. Before you branch off to explore the building, particularly the vast Rose Main Reading Room with its chandeliers and numerous study tables, check near the main lobby for information on special exhibits. Those running this year include *Public Eye:* 175 Years of Sharing Photography, Printing Women: Three Centuries of Female Printmakers, 1570–1900, and more. They even display historic Christmas cards and Charles Dickens's prompt copy of A Christmas Carol each year!

www.nypl.org



Photo courtesy of New York Public Library

3. BRYANT PARK

Exit the New York Public Library on the west side and you'll find yourself right in the middle of a true winter wonderland. During the holidays-from the end of October until just after New Year's—the Bank of America Winter Village in Bryant Park will transport visitors to what seems like a cozy North Pole village. Vendor booths selling art, handmade jewelry, comfy knitted accessories, delicious treats, and much more line the park. You can get all your Christmas shopping done in a day, all while sipping delicious hot cocoa or hot apple cider with cinnamon. Before you leave, take a spin on the Rink, which stays open until early March for those who might have missed it during the holiday season.

www.wintervillage.org

2. ROCKEFELLER CENTER

There might be some contest between numbers one and two on this list, so we'll let you visit and decide for yourself which is your favorite. But there's no denying that when you think of Christmas in New York City, your mind wanders to the largest Christmas tree there is, sparkling with multicolored lights as it overlooks a huge ice-skating rink buzzing with activity. Though large, the rink only holds a hundred and fifty skaters at a time to provide guests with an enjoyable experience with friends and loved ones. The Rink at Rockefeller Center is open daily from October 10, 2015, until April 2016.



Look to the east from the rink to Fifth Avenue, where sparkling white angels herald the season along the walkway toward the bustling shopping mecca of the city. The grand entrance of Saks Fifth Avenue, aglow in the evenings with twinkling garlands, also hosts a spectacular music-and-lights show projected onto its facade every few minutes.

There's no doubt that holiday decorations in Rockefeller Center follow the motto "the bigger, the better." Tourists and locals all pause for photos with giant displays of twinkling lights, enormous red Christmas baubles, monolithic reindeer, and more before crossing the street to none other than Radio City Music Hall. The theater's famous Radio City Christmas Spectacular, starring the lovely and talented Rockettes dancers, is a must for many who visit NYC for the holidays.

The best vantage point to take in all the magic of Rockefeller Center? The Top of the Rock, of course! Take a quick (and we mean quick!) trip skyward seventy stories to the observation deck and survey a frosted landscape that sparkles like diamonds in the afternoon sun. The Top of the Rock has some of the best views of the city's most iconic landmarks, including Central Park and the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings, and on a clear day, maybe even a peek of the Statue of Liberty.

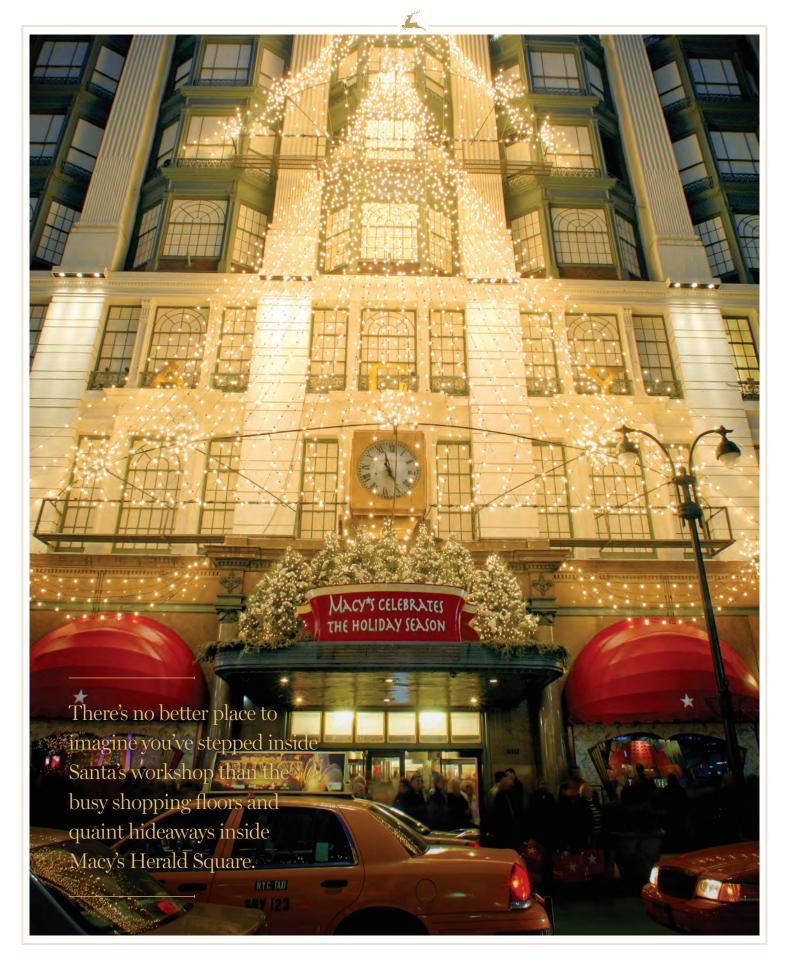
www.rockefellercenter.com

1. MACY'S HERALD SOUARE

In 1947, writers George Seaton and Valentine Davies made New York City Christmas history with the release of their film, Miracle on 34th Street, the beloved tale of a young girl whose mother hired a department store Santa Claus and got way more than anybody bargained for—the real thing. But Thirty-Fourth Street, home to Macy's Herald Square, was famous long before the movie. The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, a highly anticipated annual event, has marked the official start to the Christmas season since 1924.

Throughout the holiday season, there's no better place to imagine you've stepped inside Santa's workshop than the busy shopping floors and quaint hideaways inside Macy's Herald Square. The building is decked floor to ceiling with shining lights, garlands, and good spirits. Classic holiday tunes and newer contemporary Christmas hits will put you in the mood to be merry as you browse floors and floors to find that perfect gift.

Sending a special letter to Santa Claus? Well, Macy's has you covered with the special mailbox on the ground floor, where kids (and kids at heart) can write and send their Christmas wishes to Kris Kringle. The wishes are magically transferred straight upstairs to Santaland, where they are printed onto a list two miles long for Santa and his trusty elves to review before Christmas Eve. Last year's list broke the Guinness World Record for the longest wish list to Santa, with a whopping 121,138 wishes! Part of Macy's annual Believe campaign, the wish list and those from other Macy's stores across the country were accompanied by donations that totaled over \$2 million for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. After you navigate through a maze of impeccably decorated trees on the top floor, be sure to stop by Santa's Believe Meter and see how the campaign is doing this year!





Santaland is the place to be for Christmas at Macy's! With animatronic animals, real-life elves to help with anything you need, and more toys and decorations than you could possibly imagine, Santaland is the closest thing to the North Pole workshop you've always dreamed about. Santaland is open from the Friday after Thanksgiving—when Santa arrives in his sleigh during the parade—until Christmas Eve.

www.macys.com

These, of course, are only a few of Manhattan's most popular holiday destinations. Half the fun of visiting the city is exploring new areas and exciting attractions for yourself, and Christmas offers the chance to see it shine like no other time of the year. Even though it's one of the biggest cities on earth, New York might feel like a giant snow globe or a quaint Christmas village during the holidays as you traverse the sidewalks with your favorite people. Search for those perfect gifts, warm up with a cup of cocoa, sing carols, or maybe even start a friendly snowball fight in the park. Whatever your favorite holiday pastime in the Big Apple may be, enjoy it!





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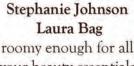
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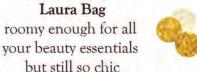
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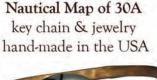


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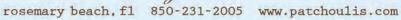
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C6 · 140 NORTH CHARLES STREET

Aspri Villa, the most spacious home in Alys Beach, provides an enchanting setting for family, combining shared living spaces with private suites, all surrounding an expansive landscaped courtyard. The dramatic tower room offers 360-degree views of the community and Gulf of Mexico.



$G~4~\cdot~5~5~H~O~G~P~E~N~N~Y~A~L~L~E~Y$

This custom home features 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, a bunk room, and a valued two car garage. The entry has a 22-foot ceiling and custom stairwell. The home features a kitchen open to dining and living area, and the outdoor courtyard has a secret garden and loggia, a fireplace, and summer kitchen. The second floor loggia takes you to a master bedroom and bath that opens to a master terrace.



A 1 2 · 3 8 NORTH CHARLES STREET

This 2,584 square-foot 4 bedroom, 41/2 bath courtyard home is located north of 30a. The first-floor master suite opens onto a large courtyard. A bright kitchen and an open living room and dining room make for entertaining. The second floor has a study, a roof-top terrace, and two guest bedrooms each with private baths. A private guest suite and bathroom is located just off the main house.



H5 · 251 NORTH SOMERSET STREET

"L'hôtel" is a beautiful and spacious 5-bedroom, 5½-bath villa in the gorgeous community of Alys Beach.

Surrounded on two sides by pristine parks, the home is located across the street from the breathtaking Caliza
Pool and Restaurant



P13 · 74 NONESUCH WAY

This family-friendly beach home has 4 bedrooms, 4.5 baths, and a bunk room that sleeps 4. The kitchen has an island and generous cabinet storage. The living room seamlessly transitions to a courtyard with fireplace and fountain. Bedrooms include a first-floor guest master with en suite bath, two spacious second-floor guest rooms, a bunk room, and a grand master suite.



H 7 \cdot 2 2 3 NORTH SOMERSET STREET

This villa offers 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths and overlooks Central Park and Caliza Pool and Restaurant. A family centric living area with fireplace, kitchen and dining circulate to a serene private courtyard with pool. The second-floor Master Suite has a fireplace and views of the courtyard & pool. Two charming guest bedrooms are located across the second-floor landing with a nicely appointed bathroom.



A L Y S B E A C H . C O M 8 5 0 . 2 1 3 . 5 5 0 0

A LIFE OF SACRIFICE





SMALL HANDS REACH FOR THE PLASTIC SPRINKLES OF COLOR HIDDEN IN THE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT OR NESTLED IN THE SLOWLY GREENING GRASS OF OUR COMMUNITY PARK. THE CHILDREN'S PARENTS AMBLE BEHIND, REMEMBERING THEIR OWN CHILDHOOD EGG HUNTS. THIS YEAR'S EASTER TRADITION CONTINUES WITH ONLY A FEW NOTABLE CHANGES. INCLUDING THE SMALL DRONE BUZZING OVERHEAD, FILMING OUR SATURDAY EVENING VERSION OF EASTER MORNING.

unday brunch at grandma's house would have been a more customary event. But two husbands were leaving town Easter morning on TDY (temporary duty) orders, and the brunch hour conflicted with our friends' early shifts at the base hospital. Our shared life choice had destined us to dwell a long car trip or an expensive plane ride away from our extended families. So, we did what military members do: we made it work. Sometimes, this can be a more difficult endeavor, like when the moving van catches fire en route to your fourth new home in seven years or when you're pregnant during your husband's deployment in Afghanistan and you hope you can time the baby's delivery for his two-week mid-tour leave. Today, on Nellis Air Force Base (AFB), stakes are low as nine Air Force families gather for a potluck breakfast-for-dinner and Easter egg hunt celebration.

The hunt was courtesy of the on-base thrift shop, which sold my mom a dumpstersized trash bag full of plastic eggs for three dollars. "What a great deal," she said, leaving me to find mates for each egg half. The park behind our houses never looked so festive, and if you don't believe me, you can ask our friend for the footage from his drone camera. Comm nerds—we love them and their love of tech. I should know: I married a communications officer.

I am a former active duty Air Force officer, currently a military spouse and the mother of two preschool-age boys. I'm also a new middle-school language arts teacher. Parts of my day and parts of my life look just like yours: juggling work, kids, and the house, and realizing you hate juggling, you get off work early, leave the laundry in the dryer, and go out for pizza. Job changes and promotions, family crises and vacations, sick babies and canceled plans, blessed grandparent babysitters, and worrying about the economy and terrorism have tempered our lives. The difference between my family and yours is nuanced, maybe no more than if you were to compare a farming community to a business community, but I'm biased: I lived the life before I chose it, as my parents are both retired Air Force veterans.



Karen and Richard McMillan met through a mutual college friend. My mom was struck in a movie-romance way, which made her rethink a noncommittal boyfriend who was living with his parents. My dad thought my mother was beautiful and outspoken, maybe even a little pushy, but she had to be as the oldest of five girls in a six-kid Air Force family. Her father's career in the armed forces made it easy for her to accept that my dad, at the time, was an airman.

They dated for eighteen months, married, and the Air Force moved them to Greece, where their first home was two modest rooms—sitting below the landlord's house—with an outdoor bathroom, a shower, and a kitchen sink. The water came from daily trips to the town well. They made it work—until a trip to the doctor confirmed that their means of distraction had yielded, well, me.

Outhouses and morning sickness do not mix, so my mom flew back to California and the family she had left behind. With a baby on the way, they decided my dad needed to go back to school to become an officer. I was born, dad left the military only to join the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at Fresno State, and my mom joined the Army Reserve. Clearly, leaving the military is difficult once you have lived the lifestyle. It's comforting in the way the ritual of Mass is comforting. Muscle memory takes over and you hardly need to wait for the command before your body tells you to march to the next assignment. A vernacular of abbreviations and acronyms becomes a second fluent language. And, as in church, we stand with brothers and sisters who share our faith in something bigger.

THE AIR FORCE HAS AN ENTIRE SQUADRON DEDICATED TO FAMILY SERVICES AND QUALITY-OF-LIFE PROGRAMMING. NEW COMMANDERS AT **ALL LEVELS MENTION FAMILIES IN THE SAME TWO** WAYS DURING A CHANGE-OF-COMMAND SPEECH.

The McMillans added two sons to the family before my father commissioned. Once he did, our family, as with most military families, spent the next fifteen years in a perpetual game of ping-pong: California to Texas, to Arkansas, back to California, then to North Carolina, to Hawaii, to Alaska, and-

finishing where it all started—to California, where my brothers and I started our own games. I would say the number of moves we made was average. There are urban legends about kids attending four different high schools; I attended two and one of my brothers attended three. Some members manage to "homestead" by checking multiple career boxes in different job positions on the same base with a permanent change of assignment (PCA) or by finding a permanent change of station (PCS) at another base close by. This path might include a yearlong unaccompanied or hardship tour overseas, where the family stays in the States. It comes with the risk of being passed over for promotion to the next rank.

The Air Force has an entire squadron dedicated to family services and qualityof-life programming. New commanders at all levels mention families in the same two ways during a change-of-command speech. They outline their intentions to improve or expand family programming, knowing that families are an important behind-the-scenes component of the overall mission. He or she will also thank his or her family for all their support and admit that the job would be impossible without their sacrifices. These addresses are sincere, as are the efforts toward easing stresses placed on families because of the demands of military life, but anyone will tell you that the surer career bets come at the cost of family. The





active duty member and his or her spouse have to balance career goals and family happiness—which sounds like it could be a dilemma for any American family.

Civilian friends have the most questions about the following parts of service: separating from a home you just built and friends you just made, and leaving behind family, your husband, your wife, or even your baby (as was the case with my mother, who left for four months of basic and specialty training before I turned one). How do we do it? Why do we choose the military lifestyle? For me, the answer to both questions is the same: it's because of the people.

As a military "brat" (a term for kids of service members that evokes the transient lifestyle they are born into), you become adept at making friends quickly. In my experience, there is a confidence and openness to brats that is less common in their civilian peers. My youngest brother, Charlie, had a knack for making friends in the hotels we stayed in between moves. During the middle of my sophomore year, we moved from North Carolina to Hawaii, and by the first day of school, a group of

teenagers who also lived on Hickam AFB introduced themselves, took me under their collective wing, and invited me to go to the movies that weekend. This is the result of honing our social skills in a wholly new cultural environment every couple of years. More importantly, in moving around the country, you come to understand at a young age that you won't find the same values in the Central Valley of California that you'll find in North Carolina's coastal plain. The life lessons about race, class, and culture that many do not receive until college, I received in elementary school, which is why I found most of my college friends and my husband in ROTC.

AS A MILITARY BRAT (A TERM FOR KIDS OF SERVICE MEMBERS THAT EVOKES THE TRANSIENT LIFESTYLE THEY ARE BORN INTO), YOU BECOME ADEPT AT MAKING FRIENDS QUICKLY. IN MY EXPERIENCE, THERE IS A CONFIDENCE AND OPENNESS TO "BRATS" THAT IS LESS COMMON IN THEIR CIVILIAN PEERS.



I received an ROTC scholarship to UC Davis during my senior year of high school. My actual ROTC detachment was at Sacramento State, which is where my husband, Nathan, went to school. He was a Marine brat, but his mother had threatened him with death if he joined the Marines. The Air Force was a compromise, and both his parents were very proud when he commissioned. Joining ROTC, I suppose, is a bit like being in a fraternity in the sense that you have a built-in community to watch out for you as you navigate college life and academics. As with fraternity life, you establish lifelong friendships. Our wedding party was mostly fellow cadets, and we went to a few weddings like ours. Behind these happy occasions, we were all faced with what would happen to us once we were commissioned because our classes were some of the first to serve in the military after 9/11.

I commissioned as a Services officer (now dubbed Force Support because it absorbed the Personnel and Manpower squadrons). While I was in tech school, I came to appreciate our unofficial motto: "Cradle to grave." On one end, Force Support cares for the youngest dependents at the child development center and, on the other end, we are responsible for search and recovery operations (recovery, not rescue), the honor guard, and mortuary affairs. Force Support handles everything in the middle, too: the fitness center, the youth center, the dining facilities, personnel issues, and all morale, welfare, and recreation programming and businesses. During my first assignment, I spent most of my time helping to deploy airmen from our squadron to various places in the Middle East and also to Dover Port Mortuary, where our enlisted folks worked as embalmers, sorted personal effects, or ensured that the men and women in their care were given final honors. With wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, deployment rates were very high, and before the end of our first assignment together—at McChord AFB, Washington—Nathan volunteered for a 365-day deployment to Afghanistan. During this time, the English department at the United

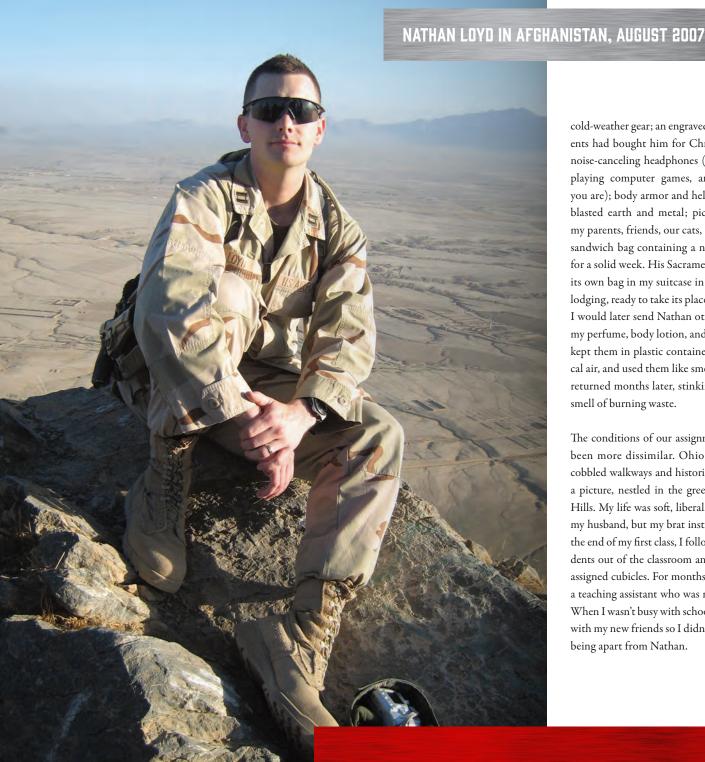
States Air Force Academy (USAFA) had offered me a sponsored master's degree with a follow-on teaching assignment. We knew we wanted a family, which is why Nathan chose to volunteer rather than receive a nonvoluntary deployment down the road. It's also the reason I decided to venture from my main career field in Force Support.

During the first six months apart before our deployment, we talked every day over the phone or the Internet, sometimes keeping our webcams on while going about our separate lives, pretending the other was just in another room. The night before he left for predeployment training in Kansas, I stayed awake writing an essay for my Renaissance poetry class while he packed. I was done before he finished and fell asleep watching him organize his bags. When I woke up the next morning, the monitor showed an empty room.

Anxiety, depression, and anger lurked around the edges as Nathan prepared for a war zone and I adjusted to life without him. By the end of Thanksgiving, I was angry at Nathan for wanting to spend so much time with his new, soon-to-be-deployed unit during my visit, and he accused me of distancing myself during Christmas vacation.

A third of the way into our separation and my graduate school classes, I flew in to see Nathan off. This visit had to last us for six months, when he'd come home for two weeks of leave before finishing his time in Afghanistan. Entering the barracks to meet him, I saw a floor cluttered with sixty piles, each attesting to a different man's needs for an entire year. In the midst of this jumble, spilling out of five duffle bags and a cavernous rucksack, was everything Nathan needed for a 365-day deployment: chemical suit and mask with glasses inserted; an old green toiletry case he brought to officer field training; desert uniforms; LED flashlights; the good nine-millimeter holster his unit bought and the cheap one that was supply-issued;





cold-weather gear; an engraved Leatherman my parents had bought him for Christmas; a laptop and noise-canceling headphones (for watching movies, playing computer games, and forgetting where you are); body armor and helmet to shield against blasted earth and metal; pictures of his parents, my parents, friends, our cats, and me; and a plastic sandwich bag containing a nightshirt I had worn for a solid week. His Sacramento State shirt was in its own bag in my suitcase in a Fort Riley, Kansas, lodging, ready to take its place on a pillow in Ohio. I would later send Nathan other shirts smelling of my perfume, body lotion, and shampooed hair. He kept them in plastic containers, away from the local air, and used them like smelling salts. The shirts returned months later, stinking with the chemical smell of burning waste.

The conditions of our assignments could not have been more dissimilar. Ohio University, with its cobbled walkways and historical buildings, sits like a picture, nestled in the greenery of the Hocking Hills. My life was soft, liberal. I felt lonely without my husband, but my brat instincts kicked in and at the end of my first class, I followed the graduate students out of the classroom and downstairs to their assigned cubicles. For months, some assumed I was a teaching assistant who was never assigned a desk. When I wasn't busy with school, I made myself busy with my new friends so I didn't have to think about being apart from Nathan.

VISITS, PHONE CALLS, SKYPE, LETTERS, AND CARE PACKAGES DO THEIR BEST. THEY ARE EARNEST IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BRIDGE THE DISTANCE, TO PLAY THE SURROGATE, TO FILL THE HOLES WORN BY TIME APART.



During yearlong deployments, spouses not yet accustomed to military life occasionally move back home to the support of family and old friends. No matter how welcoming the other families in your spouse's unit are, no matter how many activities the spouses' club offers, no matter how friendly the neighborhood, you can still feel isolated. The moment I stopped being busy was the moment the isolation began to seep in, so I threw myself into schoolwork and more than the occasional bag of cookies. When I realized my jeans weren't fitting, I reversed course and spent most of my spare time obsessing over calorie counts and working out at the gym. The one-year separation mark came after Nathan's two-week mid-tour vacation and we still had almost six months to go before we could live under the same roof.

We were no strangers to the long-distance relationship. Nathan and I married within a year of becoming a couple and immediately separated because Nathan commissioned and I had to finish school. When I graduated and joined the Air Force, Nathan received a deployment to Germany, and once he got back, I left twice for a few months of training, first in Alabama and later in Ohio, and so we completed our second year of marriage. Our third year was relatively normal and the stability even prompted us to buy a house. Despite our confidence in our ability to handle separation, we made a promise that no matter how bad things got during the deployment, we would make it work. We owe a lot to that promise.

Visits, phone calls, Skype, letters, and care packages do their best. They are earnest in their efforts to bridge the distance, to play the surrogate, to fill the holes worn by time apart. Still, another year and a half apart after three years of marriage worried with good-byes will take its toll. The house we bought so happily became an albatross around our necks as it followed the market down. We fought about the list price and our agent. Fights about the house led to fights about money, which led to fights about how much of it we needed to start a family, which led to

fights about which one of us would leave his or her career to take care of these hypothetical children, and so it went on.

Suddenly, it was Thanksgiving again, graduate school was over, and another moving van came to take our belongings to another rental home, this time in Colorado Springs. Communication between Nathan and me dwindled in the final months of separation, and I wondered how we would ever be the same. When a deployed family member returns home, they call the process "reintegration." It fits. Life goes on without you, and the path you wore fades like an unused trail, unmarked and overgrown. In our experience, it takes about as long as you were apart to return to something that resembles the relationship before the separation. Vigilance is key. Indifference is death. On top of the daily struggle to return to normalcy, military members have the added burden of post-traumatic stress. Nathan was angry and impatient. Even now, years later, the effects of war occasionally bubble to the surface during stressful situations, but I know it could have been worse.

I don't know what else to offer about how we got through this except to say we just decided to be married every day. We kept our promise. We also yelled. We were silent. We wrote lists. We read books. We talked to friends and family. We watched movies. We went on dates. We went on trips. We played video games (do not underestimate the power of play; kids know this and we would be wise to remember this childhood lesson). And, eventually, we made our way back to each other.

The family we imagined finally seemed possible, but as we decided to add kids to dual military careers and I became pregnant with our older son, Jude, the Air Force announced dramatic personnel cuts. Yes, even the military has to worry about layoffs. We took the coincidence as a sign, and at the end of the day, with the possibility of a deployment looming, I chose to separate from the Air Force rather than risk







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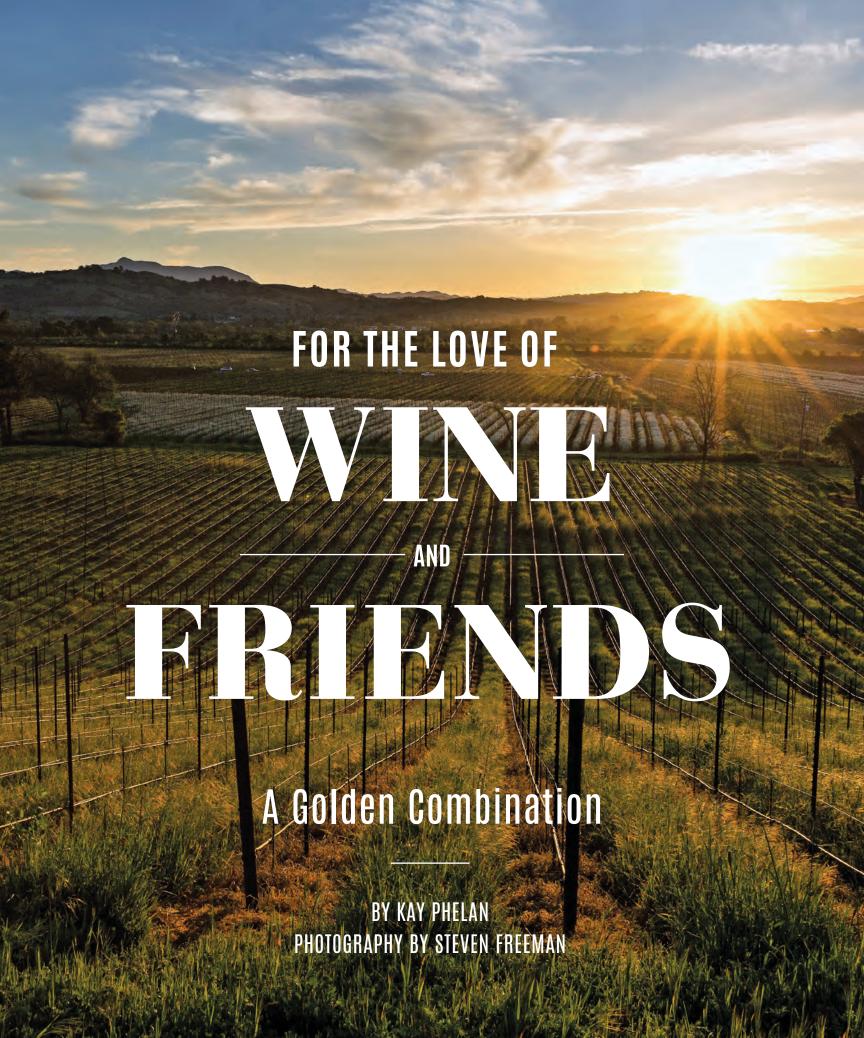
THIS IS A PORTRAIT OF OUR FAMILY, THE FAMILY WE CHOSE. IN A YEAR OR TWO, WE WILL LEAVE TO MAKE A NEW HOME SOMEWHERE ELSE AND KEEP GOING LIKE THIS UNTIL NATHAN RETIRES.

separating from my husband and new baby. The decision might have been more difficult if my husband was not in the military. I don't know if I could have given up the life that made me who I am; it's the life I want for my children. Jude has moved twice in his four years of life; our younger son, Maddox, has one move under his belt. Already, I see them making best friends out of strangers at the park and watch as muscle memory brings them to attention at the first sounds of "Retreat."

These days, we are enjoying the "sweet spot," that perfect assignment where your neighbors are also your friends and all the kids play well together. Recently, our

cul-de-sac put together an impromptu Labor Day barbecue, complete with a bounce house, to welcome families who moved in over the summer. Lawn chairs, paper plates, bowls of potato salad, adults talking about work while kids were sneaking cookies off the dessert table between games of tag. This is a portrait of our family, the family we chose. In a year or two, we will leave to make a new home somewhere else and keep going like this until Nathan retires. What will we do then? What will we do with this reflex to serve? My guess is that we will find our friends, our former neighbors who know our history and understand our stories, and we will hold each other steady, as we do now.







Meet Mike and Valerie Thompson.

Now married for thirty-seven years, they were high school sweethearts in their hometown of College Station, Texas. The energetic couple has two grown daughters and three grandchildren. While their primary residence is in Sandestin in Northwest Florida, they also own a home on six and a half acres in the Russian River Valley in Healdsburg, California. There they have recently founded Thompson 31Fifty Wines, a new vineyard and winery.

THE WINE CONNECTION

Mike attended college at Texas A&M University, where he got his bachelor's degree in business and marketing and went on to earn an MBA in finance. Mike launched a career with energy service companies before shifting into electronics manufacturing. He later became vice president of sales and marketing at his company, with major customers such as Apple, IBM, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard, to name a few. Valerie, meanwhile, focused on raising their two daughters while obtaining a BBA in business management.

As a vice president, Mike hosted dinners for his many clients in upscale restaurants around the country. "A sommelier would bring me the wine list, but I knew nothing about wine," he says. "So Valerie and I took a trip to Napa Valley in 1997 and were smitten with the lifestyle, the food, and especially the wines. We also went to Europe to learn more about wine and have kept on learning ever since."

Thompson retired in 2002 from the corporate world and founded I. Technical Services (ITS) in Alpharetta, Georgia, in 2003. ITS is an electronics manufacturing company building tech equipment for high-profile clients. Its mission is to be American based, employ Americans, and make a contribution to US society.

Around the same time, the Thompsons built and moved into their Sandestin, Florida, home, complete with their first wine cellar, which has now grown to hold five thousand bottles.



CHI CHI MIGUEL THROWDOWN FOR CHARITIES

Another important chapter in the Thompsons' lives that moved them toward creating Thompson 31Fifty was their philanthropic endeavors through the Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown.

Nine years ago, after the Thompsons discovered their love of vino, Valerie began hosting a backyard barbecue for friends at their Florida home. The Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown was born. By year four, they had turned the growing event into an annual spring fund-raiser to benefit area charities. Vintners, celebrities, sponsors, and chefs from all over the country still travel to the Emerald Coast in Northwest Florida to form teams and barbecue against celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse, all vying for the coveted Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown perpetual trophy. Over the years, millions of dollars have been raised at the live auction, where patrons can bid on exclusive items; one such item in 2012 was an evening with Academy Award—winning actor Morgan Freeman, which went for \$80,000.

The event has literally grown right out of the Thompsons' backyard and into an important two-day fund-raising event, with a golf tournament and Sip n Shop trunk shows the day before the Throwdown; well over three hundred people attend each year. This past spring, the Ninth Annual Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown raised \$1.1 million for the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Alaqua Animal Refuge, Children's Volunteer Health Network, Ohana Institute, Food For Thought Outreach, Camille's Art for Autism, the Tree House Episcopal Montessori School, the Ingram Lee Foundation, and Emeril Lagasse Foundation. In the last five years, the Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown has raised over \$6 million.



"This year the stars lined up with beautiful weather and a perfect group of people—from friends to vintners to celebrities," says Valerie. "In addition to two Napa winery teams, we also had teams from South Florida, Houston, Southern California, and New Orleans, making for six competing barbecue teams. Highlights of the barbecue competition include the creative team names, such as Smokey and the Bandits, and the character costumes—not to mention our guests partaking in fabulous barbecue dishes! This year Emeril Lagasse's team, Emeril's Diner, won, taking the perpetual trophy away from two-year defending champs, Larry and the Darryls. We like to put the fun in fund-raising for nonprofits. But I think we are most proud of the fact that 100 percent of the proceeds go directly to benefit these charities."

The biggest happening of the weekend—and the largest money raiser—is the much-anticipated live auction at the Throwdown, with an amazing array of lots such as dinner with Emeril Lagasse, magnums of wine, exotic vacation trips, art, vineyard tours, an Indianapolis 500 race package, and many more. The highest bid this year was \$60,000 for a Robert Kamen movie experience. Robert Kamen is the Hollywood screenwriter of such movies as *The Karate Kid*, the *Taken* trilogy, and *A Walk in the Clouds*; he is also the owner of Kamen Estate Wines. Robert will be using the winner's name as a main character in his next screenplay. This special experience also included a tour of Kamen Estates and a special dinner with Robert. Next year's annual Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown will take place April 15 and 16, and the Thompsons believe it will be the best event ever.

"We like to put the fun in fund-raising for nonprofits. But I think we are the most proud of the fact that 100 percent of the proceeds go directly to benefit these charities."

Mike's other philanthropic endeavors include sitting on the boards of the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Emeril Lagasse Foundation, the American Diabetes Association of Houston, and the MBA Advisory Board at Texas A&M. All in all, over the past ten years, the Thompsons have helped raise over \$50 million for many different causes, with a focus on children's health, education, and welfare.

THOMPSON 31FIFTY

The Thompsons purchased their six-and-a-half-acre vineyard property in the Russian River Valley (RRV) appellation on Westside Road, known as the Rodeo Drive of the RRV in Healdsburg, California. Well-known wineries such as Rochioli Vineyards, Williams Selyem, Arista, Gary Farrell, and Thomas George are located along this prestigious stretch.

Thompson 31Fifty Winery was born with the planting of over four acres of vineyards in August 2014. The vines will take three to four years to mature under the eye of famous vineyard manager and grower Ulises Valdez. An immigrant from Mexico and now a US citizen, Valdez started from nothing and is known for his hard work, passion, and family values. He now owns the Valdez Family Winery, which has been featured in *Wine Spectator* magazine. The other integral part of the Thompson 31Fifty team is winemaker Patrick Sullivan, whose career has included stints at Spring Mountain, Rudd, Lewis Cellars, Paul Hobbs, and Peter Michael. His experience covers a broad spectrum of wine regions and varietals, prominently Burgundy, making him an ideal partner.

Although it will be a few years before the grapes on property are ready to harvest, the Thompson 31Fifty label is already established. "In the meantime, we are buying and crushing grapes from Russian River Valley at our winery to make our luscious wines," says Mike. "Pinot Noir is our favorite wine varietal and we believe the best



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"Pinot Noir is our favorite wine varietal and we believe the best is grown in the Russian River Valley. We want our wines to be full bodied but not overpowering. They will be smooth and elegant in the Burgundian style."



is grown in the Russian River Valley. We want our wines to be full bodied but not overpowering. They will be smooth and elegant in the Burgundian style." The Thompson 31Fifty 2013 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is in bottle, will be released this fall, and can be purchased at www.thompson31fifty.com. This wine is elegant, rich, and beautifully balanced, with hints of blackberry and cherry, and has silky tannins. It is refined on the palate with a long finish. The Thompson 31Fifty 2014 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is in barrel now, and the winery crushed its 2015 Pinot Noir in August. "We also plan to add a Chardonnay to our 2015 portfolio."

Thompson 31Fifty is a boutique winery with limited production; only 125 cases were bottled in 2013, and production doubled to 250 cases in 2014. The Thompsons believe that by having the best terroir, varietals, and team, their wine will reflect their passion for excellence.

It has been quite a story so far, and the Thompsons will avidly continue their journey through life with their passion and dedication not only for fine wines, but also for making a difference in the lives of many.



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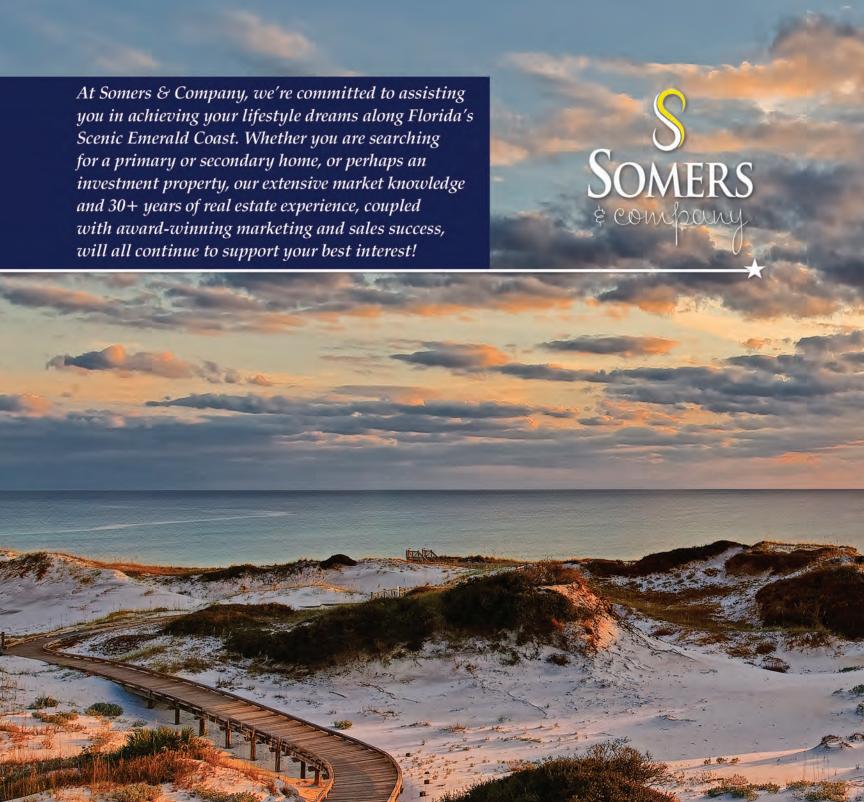
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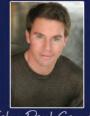
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he thunder and lightning rolled across
Choctawhatchee Bay in rapid-fire succession, just like the waves that crashed
against our seawall in Santa Rosa Beach,
Florida. It was well after midnight, and I couldn't
sleep. The house was pitch-black except for the blue
strobe-like flashes that illuminated every window
simultaneously with each boom. Dressed in my
bathrobe, I propped my feet up on the coffee table
and fired up my laptop.

By coincidence, all four of our kids were home that night. Our two eldest daughters were visiting from college, so this was the first time we'd all been together in quite a while.

Little did we know that this was the last night we'd ever spend in our home.

It seemed like it had been raining for days. But that night—April 30, 2014—God pulled out the plug. The storm would later be described as a two-hundred-year event—the kind of catastrophe that seems to be occurring with greater and greater frequency. The historic storm reportedly dumped some twenty inches of rain in just twenty-four hours and caused major flooding throughout the Florida Panhandle.

After pecking away on my keyboard for an hour or so, I thought I felt a drop of water on my leg. Probably just my imagination. Then another. Uh-oh. Not my imagination.

In the dark, I fumbled around for my iPhone and turned on the flashlight. I shined it upward and saw moisture collecting around one of the recessed ceiling lights.

"Probably just a little leak," I thought. "It doesn't look too bad."

I leaned forward and shined the light downward to see if any water had pooled on the floor.

"Um, but that looks bad."

What I saw was one or two inches of water, not in a contained puddle, but spread across our entire living room floor. And it seemed to be moving. I clapped my laptop shut and splashed my way down the hall to wake up my wife, Angela. The water wasn't just coming in under the doors—it was also gurgling in under the walls. A quick look out the bedroom window confirmed my fear: our home was now an island.

We knew we lived in a flood zone, and we'd always had water issues of one kind or another. (Our brick ranch-style home was built in the 1970s, long before current codes were put into place.) But this time was different. The water was flowing in from all sides of every room—and fast.

We woke up our groggy kids and quickly got dressed. We began moving as many things as possible up onto tables, chairs, beds, and countertops. We grabbed a select few possessions to take with us, but without really grasping the fate of those things we were leaving behind.

As the floodwater continued to rise, I knew we had to leave—soon. But wading to our cars through a foot of water in a lightning storm with four kids and two dogs hardly seemed rational. The rapid-fire light show outside was at its crescendo. According to the Weather Channel, about six thousand lightning

WE GRABBED A SELECT FEW POSSESSIONS TO TAKE WITH US, BUT WITHOUT REALLY GRASPING THE FATE OF THOSE THINGS WE WERE LEAVING BEHIND.



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348/6 Emerald Coast Pkwy Destin, FL (850) 654-5251 strikes were tracked in just fifteen minutes that night between Pensacola and Panama City.

At some point, I knew the chance of getting struck by lightning outside was less likely than being electrocuted while standing in ankle-deep water inside.

We had no choice. It was time to abandon ship. Women and children and Maltese first.

There were too many of us to fit in one car, so we lined up at the front door and prepared everyone as best we could, barking last-minute instructions and letting everyone know where we would meet. When I opened the front door, a wave of water rushed past us into the living room. We sloshed as quickly as we could through the water and made it to our vehicles.

THE HOTEL WAS WITHOUT POWER, BUT AT LEAST WE HAD A DRY PLACE TO STAY FOR THE NIGHT. WE ALL SAT ON THE FLOOR TOGETHER IN THE DARK WITH ABSOLUTELY NO COMPREHENSION OF THE LONG ROAD WE FACED AHEAD.

Ironically, it wasn't rising bay waters that got us—it was water that flowed in from the street. The ground was already supersaturated from days of sustained rainfall, and our local drainage ditches couldn't keep up with the intense downpour. Local streets had become rivers.

Around 4:30 a.m., we finally found a hotel that would accept pets. The hotel was without power, but at least we had a dry place to stay for the night. We all sat on the floor together in the dark with absolutely no comprehension of the long road we would face ahead.





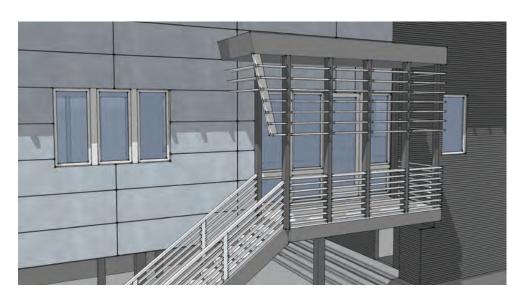
Once the floodwater receded, we returned to survey the damage. What a mess. The waste. The garbage. How in the world did we accumulate so many stupid things? And while the flood had certainly wreaked havoc on our personal possessions, the real damage was later discovered behind the walls. Mold, mildew, and rot—concealed nastiness from decades of repeated, often-invisible water intrusion.

As we threw contaminated items into the giant dumpster that had been unceremoniously dropped in our driveway, I became sick to my stomach. And yet, as the days progressed, the more junk we tossed into the dumpster, the better we felt. When we found ourselves with almost nothing left, it was

as though great weights had been lifted off us—weights we didn't even know we had carried. The flood was a baptism of sorts, and we were awakening to a new chapter of possibility.

Today, eighteen months of hand-to-hand insurance combat behind us, we're finally building our new home with some of the region's best builders, designers, and craftsmen as our allies. This one-acre bayfront lot is a blank canvas.

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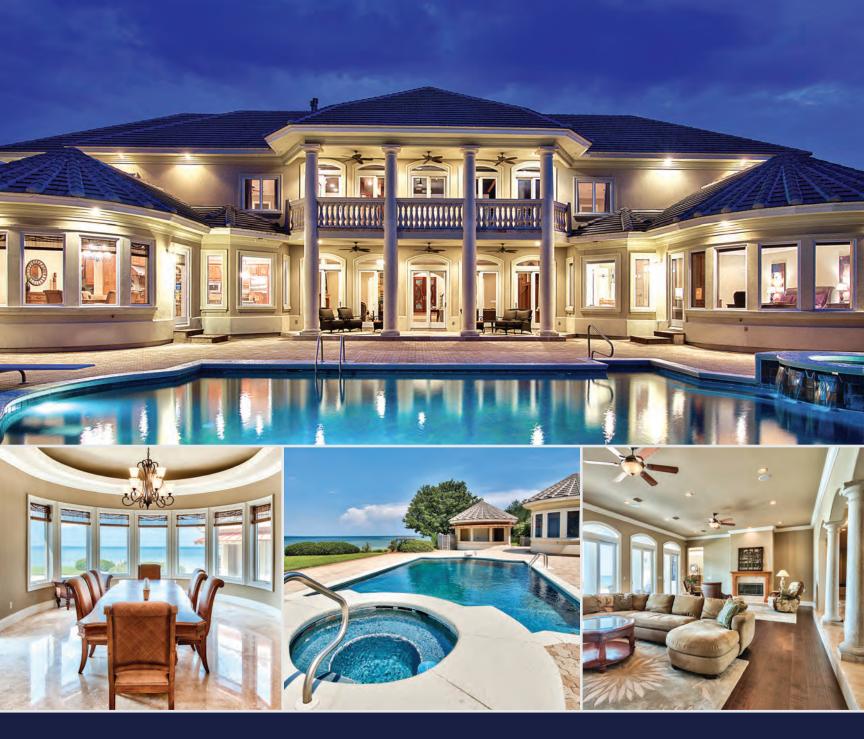
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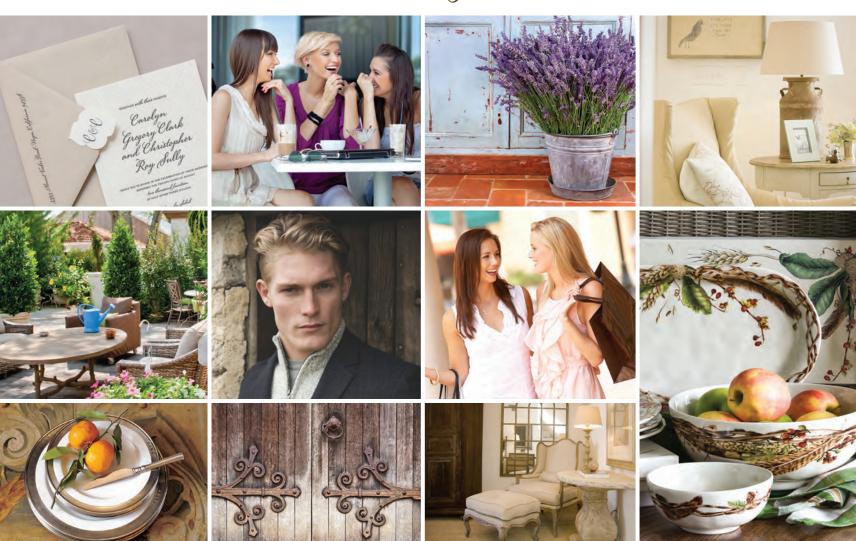
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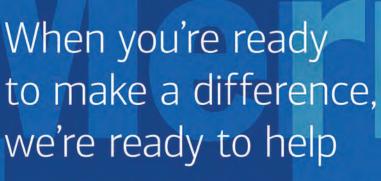












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September 23, 2006, will forever remain an inspirational turning point in my life. It was on this date that Sinfonia Gulf Coast made its Emerald Coast debut to a very enthusiastic audience; it was a stellar performance that began with Leonard Bernstein's Overture to *Candide* and ended with the incomparable diva of stage and screen, Bernadette Peters. Ten seasons later, Sinfonia continues this tradition with an offering of exemplary guest artists, incredible musicians that comprise the orchestra, impactful music education initiatives, and a dedicated board of directors, sponsors, donors, and patrons that enable the organization to fulfill its mission to entertain, educate, and inspire the community.

Planning any season is an exciting yet daunting project. Sinfonia's tenth was even more so, considering the incredible artists that we have been fortunate to present to Northwest Florida since 2006. We polled patrons and sponsors, and we talked with previous guest artists, managers, and colleagues familiar with Sinfonia's work. The end result? Sinfonia's Season Ten!

Headlined by the stunning Emmy- and Tony Award-winning singer and actress Kristin Chenoweth, season ten will not disappoint.

From the return of Sinfonia favorites vocalist Morgan James and narrator/host Jamie Bernstein to the Tenth Anniversary Gala Event headlined by the stunning Emmy- and Tony Award–winning singer and actress Kristin Chenoweth, season ten will not disappoint. Please peruse the brochure to see the complete lineup of guest artists and concerts.

The purchase of season tickets gives you the best value for enjoying the main season lineup. Please remember that ticket sales only cover a small fraction of Sinfonia's operating costs. Your tax-deductible contribution is instrumental to our success and enables us to provide great music and educational outreach to our community.

Thank you, our many patrons, sponsors, and community collaborators. Sinfonia would not be what it is today without your support!



Musically yours,

Demetrius Fuller

Music and Artistic Director

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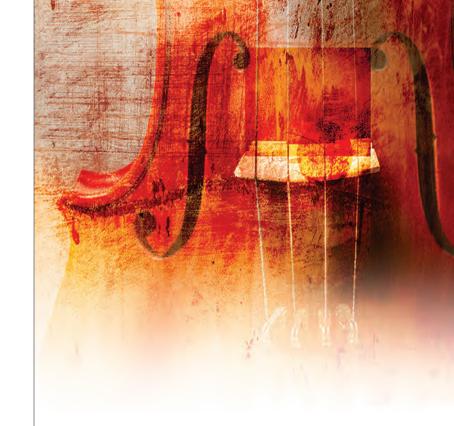
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A NOTE

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Commemorating our tenth anniversary on the Gulf Coast, Sinfonia (Italian for "symphony") originated from our musical director and conductor, Demetrius Fuller, and his brilliant spark of creativity. Thanks to his inspiration, individuals of all ages experience music in ways that have utterly redefined the traditional orchestral performance. Beyond celebrating a full spectrum of music and related events, Sinfonia not only educates youngsters (and the young at heart), but also enriches their lives with an understanding and appreciation of music.

Beyond celebrating a full spectrum of music and related events, Sinfonia not only educates youngsters (and the young at heart), but also enriches their lives with an understanding and appreciation of music.

It's hard to believe that shows by big-time stars and Grammy winners like Bernadette Peters and Roberta Flack are among the many thrilling performances happening right here in our little ol' Florida Panhandle. Others have included the US premiere of *Brothers in Arts: Seventy Years of Liberty*, a piece created by acclaimed composers Chris Brubeck and Guillaume Saint-James to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of D-Day; the Florida premiere of *Ansel Adams: America*, another Brubeck legacy; Sinfonia Goes Pops, the annual Alys Beach Fourth of July concert, featuring familiar strains of patriotic music highlighted by a beachside fireworks display; the gifted von Trapps, making our sand dune "hills" come alive through their family's musical story; Beyond the Score: Tchaikovsky, bringing us familiar classics, and so much more.

Looking back on Sinfonia's cultural contributions to the Gulf Coast, I realize how much I've personally gained from the music. One of my favorite memories entails boogying around the concert hall and out the door to the sounds of Pink Martini, a band that delights audiences around the world. Yet another is the echo of kids shouting "Mambo!" as Jamie Bernstein—concert narrator and daughter of the world-famous composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein—illustrates the sheer breadth of music. The most poignant moment that sticks in my mind is observing an autistic child as he draws the magical connection between different Pixar theme songs and the instruments that produce them.

I could go on by naming numerous collaborations that Sinfonia enjoys with community arts organizations. (We are thrilled to offer music as an accompaniment to such a broad spectrum—dance, painting, and even the medical arts!) In closing, however, I'll simply convey the deep commitment shared by Sinfonia's Board of Directors, Maestro Fuller, and our talented musicians to Northwest Florida's cultural vitality.

Just imagine the innovative music programming coming our way over the next ten years!



Jennifer Howard

Jennifer Howard

President



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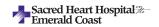
























DR. JAMES R. PATRINELY MD, FACS







SINFONIA EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Since 2006, Sinfonia Gulf Coast has impacted more than eighty thousand school children throughout Northwest Florida's Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Thanks to the continued support of patrons and education sponsors: the Boeing Company, Destin Commons/Turnberry Associates, ExxonMobil, the St. Joe Community Foundation, and Target, the organization continues to bring the highest-quality music-education initiatives to our region. These include live orchestra concerts, musicians and guest artists in the schools, a youth orchestra program, and an expanded collaboration with the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall's Link Up program for third- through fifth-grade students.

Continuing Initiatives:

- · Link Up program in conjunction with Carnegie Hall
- Live orchestra performances for students
- Paint the Music in partnership with the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's All Kinds of Art
- Sinfonietta Strings and Sinfonia Youth Orchestra
- Musicians in Schools
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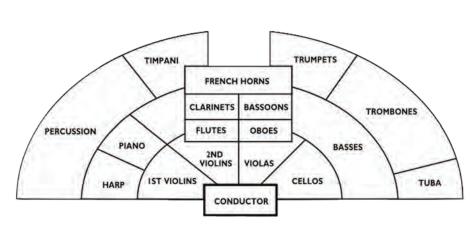
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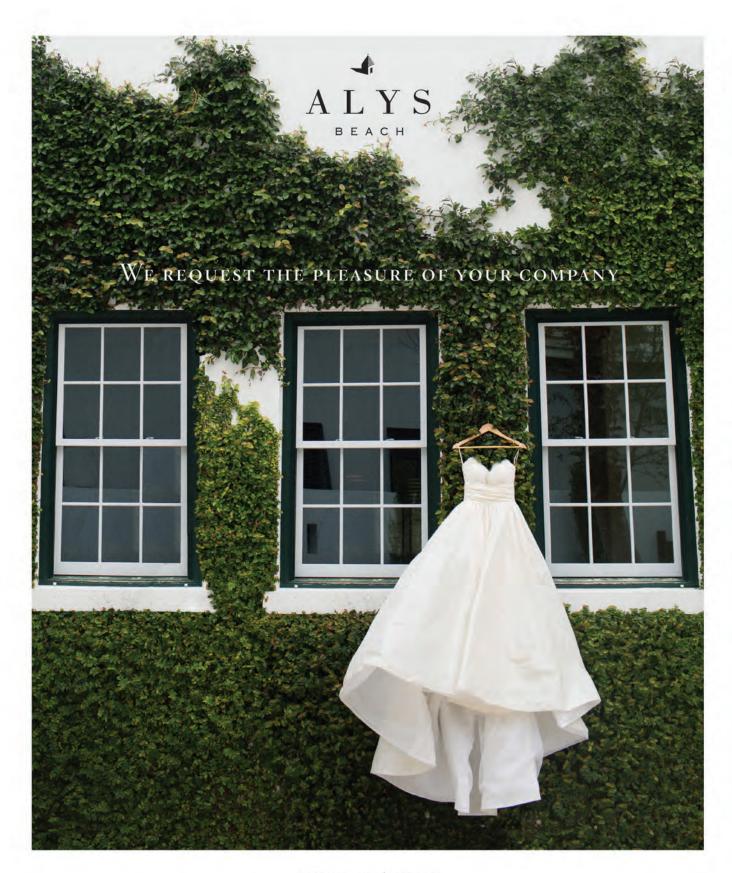
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L'emetrius Luller

CONDUCTOR

Innovative and energetic conductor Demetrius Fuller is garnering critical acclaim at home and abroad. The 2015–2016 season marks his tenth as music and artistic director of Florida's Sinfonia Gulf Coast. Fuller has redefined the cultural landscape of Northwest Florida by offering inspiring and artistically evocative performances that have excited critics and patrons alike.

A versatile conductor, Fuller has been chosen to work with some of the world's most prestigious conductors and orchestras. He is an award recipient from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, the Werner Foundation, and the International Music Foundation. Fuller trained at the University of Cincinnati – College-Conservatory of Music, earning both his bachelor's and master's degrees in music.

As an accomplished clarinetist, Fuller has performed in the Dame Myra Hess Chamber Music Series sponsored by the International Music Foundation and broadcast live on Chicago's WFMT 98.7 FM. Festival appearances include the Opera Theatre of Lucca (Italy), David Oistrakh Festival (Estonia), Aspen Music Festival, Cabrillo Festival of Music, and Eastern Music Festival (USA). He has appeared in master classes with Gustav Meier, Michael Tilson Thomas, Daniel Lewis, Marin Alsop, Neeme Järvi, Jorma Panula, Larry Rachleff, David Loebel, and the late Robert Shaw. Fuller has been fortunate to work with various icons in the music industry, including Roberta Flack, Bernadette Peters, Mary Wilson, Patti LuPone, Chris Brubeck, and Pink Martini, among others.

An advocate of contemporary music, Fuller has premiered, commissioned and/or collaborated with composers such as Augusta Read Thomas, Dorothy Hindman, Thomas Schneller, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, Joel Hoffman, Moiya Callahan, Samuel Robles, Steven Winteregg, Tan Dun (giving the Southeastern US premiere of his *Crouching Tiger Concerto*) and Chris Brubeck (giving the Southeastern US premiere of both his violin concerto *Spontaneous Combustion* and symphonic tribute *Ansel Adams: America*, which was cocomposed with his father, the late Dave Brubeck). During the 2013–2014 season, Fuller led the Southeast US premiere of *Identity: Zhongshan Zhuang*, cocomposed by Victor Cheng and Michael Gordon Shapiro. During the 2014–2015 season, Fuller and Sinfonia cocommissioned and performed the US premiere of Chris Brubeck and Guillaume Saint-James's *Brothers in Arts* and the world premiere of Nico Muhly's full orchestration of his electric violin concerto *Seeing Is Believing*.

Abroad, Fuller was invited several times by Maestro Kurt Masur to conduct the l'Orchestre Nationale de France (Paris) in a set of conductor readings. In July 2007, Fuller was one of two conductors selected worldwide to conduct the Iraqi National Symphony and three other Iraqi orchestras in a groundbreaking Unity Academy in Erbil, Northern Iraq, sponsored by American Voices and the US Department of State. In 2009, New York City-based Musicians for Harmony appointed Fuller as one of three artistic advisors—an honor shared with musical luminaries Arnold Steinhardt of the renowned Guarneri String Quartet and violinist Cho-Liang Lin.

Locally, Fuller serves on the boards of the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, Okaloosa Arts Alliance, and Alaqua Animal Refuge. He is a past chair of the American Cancer Society's Cattle Barons' Ball and continues to serve as a grant panelist for the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.













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Lindsey Peters

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A COVER THE MAKING

Channeling Old Hollywood Glam

By LORI HUTZLER ECKERT Photography by Carlo Pieroni

With each click of the shutter, the lights hiss and pop, creating a steady staccato as the white-hot flash illuminates the gilded backdrop of the baronial United Palace Theatre in New York City. On the cavernous, storied stage, a lineup of musical artists strikes stunning poses, and their high-wattage personae prove to be formidable matches for each brilliant burst of light. Carlo Pieroni's camera is set to capture a single moment in time, an Old Hollywood–inspired cover photo and spread for this magazine, VIE's first Cultural Issue. The image also represents a confluence of creativity by dozens of professionals who are artists in their own right.

Just forty-eight hours earlier, on an unseasonably cold, late October day, a team of ten VIE staff members and several associates—including an internationally recognized photography crew, videographers, professional makeup artists and stylists, editors, and more—converged on Manhattan, approximately twelve hundred miles from the magazine's headquarters on Northwest Florida's sunny coast. The mission: mark a milestone for Sinfonia Gulf Coast. The result: a magazine cover that was a decade in the making.

THE PROLOGUE

Every good story has a backstory, and this one sprouted last spring when Demetrius Fuller, maestro and music director of Sinfonia Gulf Coast, the region's only fully professional orchestra, and Lisa and Gerald Burwell, publisher and editor-in-chief of VIE, respectively, came together to discuss coverage for the nonprofit symphony's ten-year anniversary.

Wheels spun, creative sparks flew, and the Burwells—longtime Sinfonia supporters knew this was a chance to do something innovative. And Fuller, known for pushing beyond the conventional boundaries of what the orchestral experience should be to what it actually *could* be, given his own gift of unconstrained creativity, was instantly a willing partner.



Just forty-eight hours earlier, on an unseasonably cold, late October day, a team of ten VIE staff members and several associates converged on Manhattan. The mission: mark a milestone for Sinfonia Gulf Coast. The result: a magazine cover that was a decade in the making.

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The VIE team shot out of the gate, negotiating and scheduling (and rescheduling it was a certain badge of honor to be bumped from the first theatre booking date by none other than filmmaker Woody Allen), to create a glossy gatefold cover commemorating the orchestra's anniversary by featuring several Sinfonia guest artists from seasons past and present.

THE DEADLINE

This issue was slated to reach readers' hands by Sinfonia's Anniversary Gala on November 13, and thus, the shoot was perilously close to the publication deadline. But the staff raced forward on the heels of those months of planning—and maybe just a few bouts of problem-solving insomnia. Any mounting pressure seemed to make the team only work harder and with a symbiotic rhythm I can't say I've seen often on shoots that were half the undertaking.

Indeed, adrenaline can feed the creative process, but sometimes its chaos-causing companion, tension, can impede. Add to that fact, divas—and, seriously, I mean real-life, professional divas—and performers at the tops of their games, complete with their own teams, on the scene. As the passive observer of the group, tasked to tell the behind-the-scenes tale, my finely tuned drama radar was on. (Spoiler alert: This was one shockingly well-behaved group, both in front of and behind the camera. However, there were just a few unexpected revelations along the way.)



Kristin has such a wonderful personality, which is always exciting when fitting anyone. Sometimes it helps to break the ice when you have a client who loves clothes and loves to have fun with fashion.

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THE WARDROBE

Standing in a shimmering puddle of poppy-red silk, she extends her elegant, lithe arm, firmly grabs the man pinning the magnificent gown to fit her frame and delivers a deadpan demand: "Does it hurt? All those artistic brains—it's got to be weighing you down!" And the room's vibe shifts in a split second as the reverential awe is broken by a chorus of laughter.

It's a surreal scene for those of us gathered in the sun-streaked ninth-floor design studio in New York's Garment District: the woman is Tony Award-winning Kristin Chenoweth, who will perform with Sinfonia in mid-November, and the object of her

praise and sincere affection is noted fashion designer Christian Siriano.

Siriano's name is often offset by defining phrases such as "reality competition winner," as he captured first place (and supermodel Heidi Klum's adoration) in 2008 on the fourth season of Project Runway.

Certainly, many in the fashion world thought his appearance on the show was a lucky break for Siriano; however, as it turns out, it was actually a lucky





Photo by Lucy Mashburn

break for the fashion world. Seven years later—now twenty-nine and the youngest person ever to appear on Crain's New York Business "40 Under 40" list-Siriano is steering a burgeoning lifestyle brand. His fashion designs, which he shows each season during New York Fashion Week under his eponymous label, are feminine, elegant, and au courant.

Despite his professional achievements and fame, Siriano, who greeted us immediately upon our arrival, is approachable and completely lacking in pretense. He graciously says the VIE Sinfonia Old Hollywood shoot was a "great opportunity to show some of my favorite looks in a beautiful setting on some beautiful women."

The fitting was the first meeting for Chenoweth and Siriano, whose graceful designs evoke contemporary Oscar de la Renta. Every gown the designer chose for her seemed more stunning than the last. "Kristin has such a wonderful personality, which is always exciting when fitting anyone," Siriano says. "Sometimes it helps to break the ice when you have a client who loves clothes and loves to have fun with fashion. She is so fun to work with, and I haven't had such an easygoing fitting in a while. I loved so many pieces we tried on her. Even though she is so petite, she has a wonderful figure and looks beautiful in elegant clothes."

"He's timeless-that's the word," Chenoweth later says with a matter-of-fact nod. "Christian Siriano has an uncanny ability to make anything I put on that he's designed work."

THE SCENE

The morning following the fitting, in a cavalcade of cars en route to the theater, VIE's Lisa and Gerald Burwell, along with art director Tracey Thomas, managing editor Jordan Staggs, graphic designers Rinn Garlanger and Lucy Mashburn, and several other team members traded texts, e-mails, and phone calls with rapid-fire efficiency, ensuring that every final detail would be handled. A production of such Homeric proportions required numerous last-minute maneuvers to be a success.

The 3,400-seat United Palace Theatre swallows a city block on the corner of Broadway and 175th Street. Erected between 1925 and 1930 as a Loew's theater, it is now owned by the United Christian Evangelistic Association, which promotes the theater's unique style as a "monument to eclectic Orientalia with Moorish-Rococo influence." This

This ornate architecture somehow escapes being overly ostentatious and stands as a reminder of a time when artistic workmanship and longevity were factored into a building's design.

"





Photos by Lucy Mashburn

ornate architecture somehow escapes being overly ostentatious and stands as a reminder of a time when artistic workmanship and longevity were factored into a building's design.

The theater, which currently serves as a nondenominational house of worship and a multicultural arts center, is nothing short of a grand dame dressed in her finest gown and jewels. Resplendent with bordeaux-red velvet seats, a soaring burnished-gold stage curtain, a magnificent sweeping staircase, and gilding that arches from the floor across the massive ceiling, it is a scene-stealer all on its own.

Noted photographer Carlo Pieroni and his lovely wife, former supermodel Carol Wilson, survey the theater for just the right spots to set up their money shots for the day.

In the dressing rooms below the sixty-five-foot-wide stage—which has seen the likes of musical stars such as Adele, Bob Dylan, Lorde, and B.B. King—makeup artists and hairstylists file in as the Siriano

gowns are carefully steamed. In an adjoining room, countless carats of sparkling diamonds in red carpet—worthy settings from New York jewelry designer Daniel Koren's DANI by Daniel K line, secured through McCaskill and Company Fine Jewelry in Destin, are selected for several of the artists.

The team is already racing against the clock. They have seven hours, which is a relatively short amount of time to get the images needed for a cover and spread.

THE CAST

Morgan James arrives an hour before call time. An Epic Records artist who most recently released her sophomore album, *Hunter*, James has performed with Sinfonia twice and will return to the Emerald Coast again this year to headline the orchestra's annual holiday performance on Friday, December 11.

"It's so great to have a relationship with this organization and with Demetrius, who values good music, new music, and developing young artists," James says of her ongoing association with Sinfonia. "Plus, I get a break from New York and get to come down to the sunshine."

She slips into a black gown with a silhouette that flatters her diminutive figure as though Siriano made it just for her. "I *love* it so much," James says with a tinge of thrill in her melodic voice. "It is perfect for me—it is so my personality. Siriano is a true artist."



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James, with her long, golden, Veronica Lake-inspired hair, looks like a Twentieth Century Fox star as she finds her place in the spotlight and the photo shoot begins.

In a departure from his de rigueur black-tie concert attire, Fuller appears stage left in a white dinner jacket and black-and-white wingtips that reflect the spread's classical cinema feel. He's uncharacteristically quiet as he takes in the enormity of the effort going into the day, understanding its relationship to what the orchestra has achieved over the past decade.

"The shoot is unreal, yet so much fun," Fuller says. "At this moment, this whole experience is beyond comprehension, but I do realize how incredible it is to have all of these amazing artists with whom Sinfonia has a strong connection standing on this stage to celebrate our decade of 'symphony redefined."

That connection is far reaching for composer Chris Brubeck, who has been associated with Sinfonia through his works *Spontaneous Combustion* in 2011, *Ansel Adams: America* in 2012, and *Brothers in Arts: Seventy Years of Liberty* last year. "Demetrius just gets it," says Brubeck, fresh out of the makeup chair, with his archetypal conductor's mane slightly tamed. "He has always been an adventurous programmer, and I am so impressed with how his programming has helped him build a very vital audience."

The Grammy-nominated composer, who began performing at five, speaks with a geniality that belies his imposing frame and a restraint that denies his international success. Wearing black tie and preparing for his turn in the spotlight with his trombone, he says of the fashion shoot, "So far it is interesting," and laughs deeply at the thought of being part of it, adding, "and funny."

Brubeck had just returned from Geneva, and as soon as the shoot wrapped, he headed to Connecticut for a concert appearance. Next year will include a full schedule of composing and touring, including concerts with his talented brothers; however, he stopped Fuller in the dressing area and they quickly fell into conversation about future collaborations.

Cradling her cherished violin as she's put into position by Pieroni for a group shot, Kate Kelley is an exception among this exceptional group. She's not a guest artist, but her affiliation with Sinfonia is extensive. She's a board member, the marketing coordinator, and chair of the education committee. Fuller says Kelley "represents the orchestra in this shoot because she embodies the spirit of Sinfonia." She is also principal second violin and has been with Sinfonia since it was a nascent concept.

"I played with Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra beginning in 2000, and when Demetrius left, I left too," says Kelley in her distinctive English accent. "I liked the idea of Sinfonia and the vision he had. It was something I wanted to be a part of. Ten years later, it has grown to where it needs to be, and I'm sure that evolution will continue."

In a breathtaking black gown with dramatic draped sleeves, and her short blond-streaked hair in waves, the typically reserved and unassuming Kelley's appearance evokes a beguiling Jean Harlow. She modestly says, "Being part of this shoot is a very big honor. I love being in Sinfonia; it is a huge part of my life."

Center stage, the willowy and elegant Carol Wilson, clad in white jeans and a simple black shirt, passionately gesticulates as she gives direction. Jutting forward an impossibly long leg in demonstration for one artist, Wilson punctuates every sentence with an exuberant vocal uptick and an exclamation point. "Put all your weight on your back hip!" The pose looks contorted and uncomfortable on the stage, but through the lens, it reads as natural grace.

With boundless energy, Wilson, a former model who walked the runways of Chanel, Dior, Valentino, Dolce & Gabbana, Hermès, and more, knows a thing or two about striking a pose. And she is the perfect professional partner for her husband, Carlo Pieroni, who sits on a nearby wooden crate intently adjusting his camera.

To have Pieroni shoot the images is a creative coup. The Italian-born photographer, known for his still-life and classic USO pinup—inspired images, has shot for *Vanity Fair*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *GQ*, just to name a few high-profile magazines. This marks his second collaboration with *VIE*.

Like Wilson, Pieroni's energy reserve seems endless and the couple turns their focus, literally and figuratively, on Jamie Bernstein. They quickly pose the petite artist in a regal stance that makes the most of the sophisticated black sleeveless column gown with a high-low overlay skirt. A sparkling diamond bracelet and necklace complete her ensemble.

"This is like nothing I do in this world," Bernstein says. "It is completely a surreal planet that I've landed on for the day—all the fussing and the hair and the makeup. I have set aside who I am to be a part of this fantasy."



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The shoot is unreal, yet so much fun. At this moment, this whole experience is beyond comprehension, but I do realize how incredible it is to have all of these amazing artists with whom Sinfonia has a strong connection standing on this stage to celebrate our decade of 'symphony redefined.'

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The candid and animated artist's last name may be familiar, as she is the daughter of renowned American composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein, but she has made her own way in the music world by writing and narrating concerts. She says it's something she "fell into accidentally—I love talking about music and being in the world of music."

Bernstein, who is working with her family on a celebration to commemorate what would have been her father's hundredth birthday in 2017, performed *The Bernstein Beat* for Sinfonia in January 2014. "They are a wonderful orchestra. I loved working with everyone," she says, adding, "It's all about Demetrius—that powerhouse, that mover and shaker that he is."

Bernstein will return to the Emerald Coast to perform with Sinfonia on January 29, 2016, as she shares a stage with soprano Julia Bullock—winner of the first Sinfonia Gulf Coast Young Concert Artists prize three years ago—for a program titled Made in America.

Following the group shot, Bullock was seated in the auditorium intently observing the photographer's setup for the next shot. In a classic-cut ball gown of golden brocade with a textured twist, a dramatic hairstyle, and stage makeup enhancing her already flawless beauty, Bullock looked the very definition of glamour.

Among her constant tour dates, the Saint Louis, Missouri, native will perform with the Berlin Philharmonic in Germany in late November and at Carnegie Hall next January. She has received significant praise from the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Boston Globe*, and more, but despite those diva-defining credentials, she possesses a real warmth and charm.

The up-and-coming opera star, who will perform works by Gershwin, Josephine Baker, and Leonard Bernstein during her Sinfonia appearance, says, "In the case of the music we are doing for this concert, it is going to be really entertaining."

When asked about the Siriano dress, she says, "It's fabulous," with a bubbling laugh that is so beautiful, it could only come from a Juilliard-

trained singer. "Well, it's just fun to dress up and see all of these wonderful people, great artists each in their own mediums, coming together and sort of doing a favor for Demetrius."

Bullock is off to the dressing room in a dramatic swish of the billowing gown, as the first portion of the shoot is concluded. The schedule is getting tighter, and the crew rushes to prepare for Kristin Chenoweth, the special guest performer for Sinfonia's Tenth Anniversary Gala on Friday, November 13 at the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach.

THE STAR

"What is she *like*?" That's the type of question that usually follows meeting a celebrity, and it is, in great part, why we read news and magazine stories about them. Therefore, as I sit in the wing of the stage, I wait and wonder if I'll actually get my scheduled time with Kristin Chenoweth.

Among her many achievements and accolades, Chenoweth has won a Tony Award for Broadway's *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and an Emmy for ABC's hit series *Pushing Daisies*, and she originated the role of Glinda the Good Witch in *Wicked*. In short, she can easily be described as the brightest of stars, but one of her own constellation. Her many talents defy the usual entertainer identifiers.

A classically trained singer, she performs everything from opera to show tunes; on stage, film, and TV, she can tackle dramas and comedies with equal ease; and her memoir, *A Little Bit Wicked*, debuted on the *New York Times* Hardcover Nonfiction Best Seller list. (It's a hilarious and candid read, and I highly recommend the audiobook version, which Chenoweth narrates.)

But here's what I notice right off: she arrives on time. Anyone who has had to deal with a celebrity in any capacity knows this does not happen regularly.

Hair and makeup artist Bruce Wayne, stylist Angelique O'Neil, publicist Jill Fritzo, and more accompany Chenoweth. It's also worth noting that her people, while intently focused on their jobs, are courteous and easy to work with, as is Christian Siriano's publicist. Often, the collective attitude of the individuals surrounding a public figure is a telling reflection of his or her own personality.

"If I'm in a show, I'm going to be with the crew; that's just who I am," Chenoweth says with a laugh after I had been called for one of the two sit-downs she granted me, and I believe her.

With the posture of a prima ballerina, Chenoweth gracefully sits toward the edge of her chair in her dressing room. She's wearing a stunning silk-crepe Siriano gown, featuring an off-the-shoulder ink-black bodice and a white skirt, with jet beads cascading to the floor in a graphic art deco pattern.

Chenoweth speaks straightforwardly about growing up in Oklahoma, calling her schoolgirl self "a little bit of a nerd," and about her ongoing efforts to raise awareness for breast cancer with Genius 3D Mammography, rhetorically asking in justified frustration, "Why are we even *still* having this conversation?" She talks of her future plans for more Broadway appearances and concerts and of her hope for a new TV series, adding, "I'm a woman in my forties, so I've still got some things to do!"

But time and time again, Chenoweth turns to what she now sees as her most important role: "I want to inspire young artists; that's what I care about," she says, earnestly. On her current tour, she shares the stage at each stop with young vocalists from that area.

"So I come in for these sound checks and I meet the kids for the first time. And they are so wanting to be great, and they always are. But they want to be there and they want to be in the moment," she says with a small catch in her voice. "So actually, I'm being reminded of how it all began, what I was. It wasn't that long ago that I was them.

"It's real for me—it's emotional. I'm not sure why so much emotion, other than I'm being completely inspired—reinspired. And I will have kids there (at the Sinfonia concert), too, that I haven't yet met," she adds.

Chenoweth, who launched the Kristin Chenoweth Arts and Education Fund in 2014, was delighted to find that her passion for supporting young artists aligns with Sinfonia's Arts in Education programs.

She also says she has found other common ground with Fuller. "One of the things I love about that guy, I know that his background and what he does a



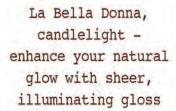
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lot is classical music, which is my training," she says, "But, he can also have a good time. I mean he can laugh. Not that classical people are stuffy, but it's made me relax knowing I can discuss Puccini with him *and* discuss (Lady) Gaga with him."

THE SHOT

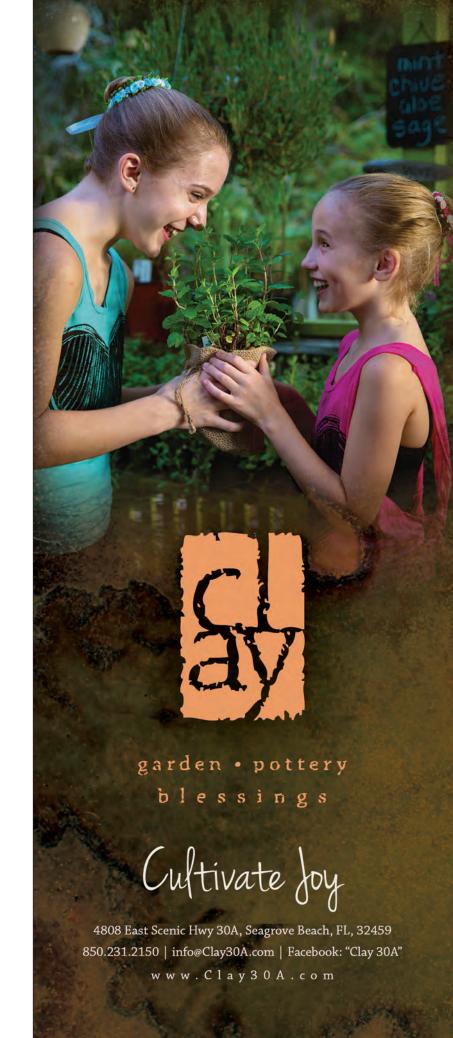
It is relatively quiet in the auditorium as the team is aware that Chenoweth is under the weather today, and we are all appreciative that, despite that fact, she came prepared to do what she committed to do.

In the dramatic, off-the-shoulder red faille dress from Siriano's studio, glittering Daniel K jewels, ruby-lacquered lips, and a 1940s-starlet hairstyle, Chenoweth is ushered to her position on stage. Along the way she does her best to greet everyone she can with a broad smile, extending her charm and humor when she can. Then, when she turns to Pieroni and the camera's flash begins again, she vamps it up, becoming every bit the glamourous bombshell and the very picture of Hollywood's Golden Era.

EPILOGUE - SPECIAL THANKS

VIE would like to extend thanks to all those who helped us celebrate Sinfonia's tenth anniversary by making this shoot possible!

- Kristin Chenoweth, Morgan James, Julia Bullock, Jamie Bernstein, Kate Kelley, Chris Brubeck, and Demetrius Fuller
- · Wardrobe gowns by Christian Siriano, tuxes by Simply Elegant Bridal
- Jewelry DANI by Daniel K, provided by McCaskill and Company Fine Jewelry
- · Carlo Pieroni and Carol Wilson
- · Hair and makeup for Kristin Chenoweth Bruce Wayne
- · Hair and makeup for Morgan James Jessica Hoffman
- Hair and makeup for ensemble Irene O'Brien, Theodora Fiotodimitraki, and T. Cooper
- · Mike Fitelson and Kevin Calderon, United Palace Theatre
- · Jill Fritzo
- · Angelique O'Neil
- · Ted Brunson
- · Young Concert Artists, Inc.
- · Agentry PR
- Laurie and Emma Crowley
- · Pish Posh Patchouli's
- Tish Brubeck
- · Pick & Eat, 177th Street and Broadway





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TEN YEARS OF SYMPHONY

BEDEFINED

Amping the Cultural Quotient

 $By \ {\tt TORI\ PHELPS} \\ Photography\ courtesy\ of\ {\tt SINFONIA\ GULF\ COAST}$

The traditional ten-year anniversary gift is tin. But Sinfonia is all good on pie plates and Altoids boxes, thanks. Instead, they've decided to give fans a gift: a season of old favorites, new surprises—and Kristin Chenoweth.

CHANGING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Sinfonia exists because of Demetrius Fuller. At age twenty-five, when many of his peers were still figuring out what they wanted to be when they grew up, he decided to reinvent how the entire Northwest Florida coast experiences music. By that time, Fuller was a professional conductor who had lived and worked throughout the United States and Europe. After a stint with the Northwest Florida Symphony, he resolved to act on his conviction that the area needed something different.

Others agreed. The original group behind Sinfonia's creation shared Fuller's vision of a truly stand-alone orchestra that served the community as its mission—one that could make a difference from both a cultural and an educational standpoint.

The mantra of Sinfonia became "symphony redefined," and that's exactly what it's done. "Many people think classical music is inaccessible," Fuller explains. "We're taking away the notion that the arts are only for a certain demographic by incorporating fun events, great music, and amazing guest artists."

Symphony audiences are traditionally empty nesters with disposable incomes. And those folks are certainly welcome at Sinfonia performances, Fuller stresses. But Sinfonia is also about reaching a community that may not be familiar with

classical music. Families, kids, young professionals everyone is the target audience.

Ten years in, that original mission hasn't changed. If anything, the focus on education and greater accessibility has only expanded. Sinfonia's community partnerships, including a variety of programs that are serving seventy thousand children, are setting the standard in this region and beyond. Two years ago, for example, Sinfonia added a sixty-member youth orchestra. It's an amazing opportunity for the kids, of course, but it's also a chance for Fuller and the Sinfonia musicians to nurture the next generation of performers. Then there's Paint the Music, a collaboration with the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation for local kids in third through eighth grades. This interactive program encourages students to listen to samples of classical music-last year it was Stravinsky's The Firebirdand then literally paint it. "It's fun to see how all those young minds interpret what they hear," Fuller says.

Sinfonia also has a high-profile collaboration with Carnegie Hall, which provides a nine-month music program for grade-school students. The kids learn a music set, usually on a recorder, and then play with Sinfonia during a spring concert. A record three thousand kids signed up this year, making it one of the biggest components of Sinfonia's education programs. The massive number is a good news/bad news situation for Fuller, who recognizes its popularity for what it is: a sign that, for many kids, this is the only arts program they experience all year.

The disheartening number of children who aren't exposed to the arts is why the Sinfonia staff works so hard to provide that contact. Fuller even ropes guest artists into visiting local schools while they're in town. Some aren't especially receptive to the idea, but others go above and beyond, like superstar musician and composer Chris Brubeck, for instance. "He's been to the schools every time he's been here, even hosting a jam session with students last time," Fuller raves. "It's mind boggling. I sure don't remember Grammy-winning artists performing for us when I was in school."

Meeting kids where they are is important. But it's also important to bring them into the world of Sinfonia for performances. Luckily, Sinfonia donors and sponsors subscribe to the same idea, making it a priority to distribute tickets to families who might not be in a financial position to buy their own.









"Fun" is a word that comes up a lot with Fuller. That approach has won over a lot of people who were hesitant about the idea of classical music.







These programs—and a long list of others—are a big part of what makes Sinfonia tick. In the "symphony redefined" environment, action has replaced lip service when it comes to serving youth and attracting a diverse audience. As a result, Sinfonia has thrived over the past decade while other cultural organizations around the country have not.

Then again, they don't have Fuller on the podium.

His desire, as long as he can remember, was to do exactly what he's doing today. From the time he was a preschooler conducting *The Muppet Show* in his parents' living room, the Fort Walton Beach native never wavered from his goal. "Those who know me know I want to be in charge all the time," he admits with a chuckle.

With Fuller at the helm, Sinfonia has attracted a who's who of guest artists, starting with an inaugural concert featuring Bernadette Peters. Other notable names over the decade include Mary Wilson of the Supremes, Broadway legend Patti LuPone, and R & B icon Roberta Flack. From a classical angle, Fuller points to Caroline Goulding, who Sinfonia audiences met when she was fourteen years old and who's now a Grammy-nominated violinist.

Though he protests that he couldn't possibly pick a favorite guest artist, Fuller concedes that Flack's 2008 performance would be tough to beat. "She was amazing to work with—a true musician," he says. "The orchestra loved her; the audience loved her. It was the most meaningful moment of my career from a musical standpoint."

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

The biggest name, however, has been reserved for Sinfonia's tenth anniversary this year. Broadway and television star Kristin Chenoweth takes the stage with Sinfonia at its November 13 gala at the Emerald Coast Convention Center. In addition to Chenoweth, the gala will offer a bit of a retrospective of Sinfonia's first decade.

The concert's old-and-new theme extends to the rest of the 2015–2016 season. Fuller paid particularly close attention to what audiences wanted. After all, it's because of faithful supporters that there's an anniversary season to plan. Fuller ended up programming a blend of back-by-popular-demand performers (like Epic recording artist Morgan James) and fresh experiences for the Emerald Coast.

Whether it's an anniversary gala or a regular season performance, Fuller's approach is the same: he's there to have a good time. People frequently ask whether he gets nervous ahead of concerts, but he insists he doesn't. Rather, it's a time for him to enjoy the payoff of what Sinfonia has been working toward. It also helps, of course, that he knows the orchestra's musicians are the best in the region—better, he believes, than what can be found in many major metropolitan areas. So there's no need to be nervous. "It's just fun," he insists of their performances.

"Fun" is a word that comes up a lot with Fuller; it's no coincidence that the orchestra has nicknamed itself "Funfonia." That approach has won over a lot of people who were hesitant about the idea of classical music. Purists might grumble a bit over some of the nontraditional content, but they still attend.





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Fuller refuses to apologize for their repertoire. Sinfonia can—and does—play the classics. But it's also the place where audiences meet new favorites. "We're known for taking the classics and weaving them into something you haven't heard before," he explains.

It's a formula that has clicked for residents and visitors. Today, the fully professional organization contracts between sixty and eighty musicians each season and boasts the highest-paid orchestra in the region. Another sure sign of its success is the level of staffing, which in the last ten years has gone from one—Fuller—to eight. What hasn't changed is the quality of the board. It's always been an active, working board, Fuller says, with every member willing to get down in the trenches.

That kind of involvement is necessary if Sinfonia is going to continue to maintain its high standards. Patrons often ask Fuller, "How are you going to top *that* season?" Trying to outdo what Sinfonia has already accomplished is probably the most difficult part of his job, he admits. He's learned, though, that going outside of what he knows Sinfonia should be for the sake of "different" always backfires. The key is finding inspiration within what they do best: creating great educational opportunities for the community, presenting exceptional guest artists, and showcasing a phenomenal orchestra.

The good news is that he's in no danger of running out of ideas for the future. Fuller can rattle off a dozen with no problem—additional focus on the youth orchestra, commissioning new work, starting a music school, and engaging more newcomer artists are just a small sample.

Thankfully, nowhere on Fuller's personal list is "leave Sinfonia for bigger and better things." He lived outside of the Emerald Coast for eleven years and still spends quite a bit of time on the road for work. It's the best of both worlds, he believes: a home base that's truly home and the opportunity to gain new perspectives through traveling. "No matter what the future holds, I know Sinfonia will always be part of my life," he says.

And Sinfonia will always be part of the Gulf Coast, at least if Fuller has a say. Though he shakes his head at the sheer audacity of launching an orchestra like Sinfonia when he was in his midtwenties, he's thrilled that his audacity paid off. Most of all, he's grateful for the unwavering support Sinfonia has received from the beginning and for a foundation that's strong enough to carry them through anything. "We're ready for the next ten years and beyond," he promises.

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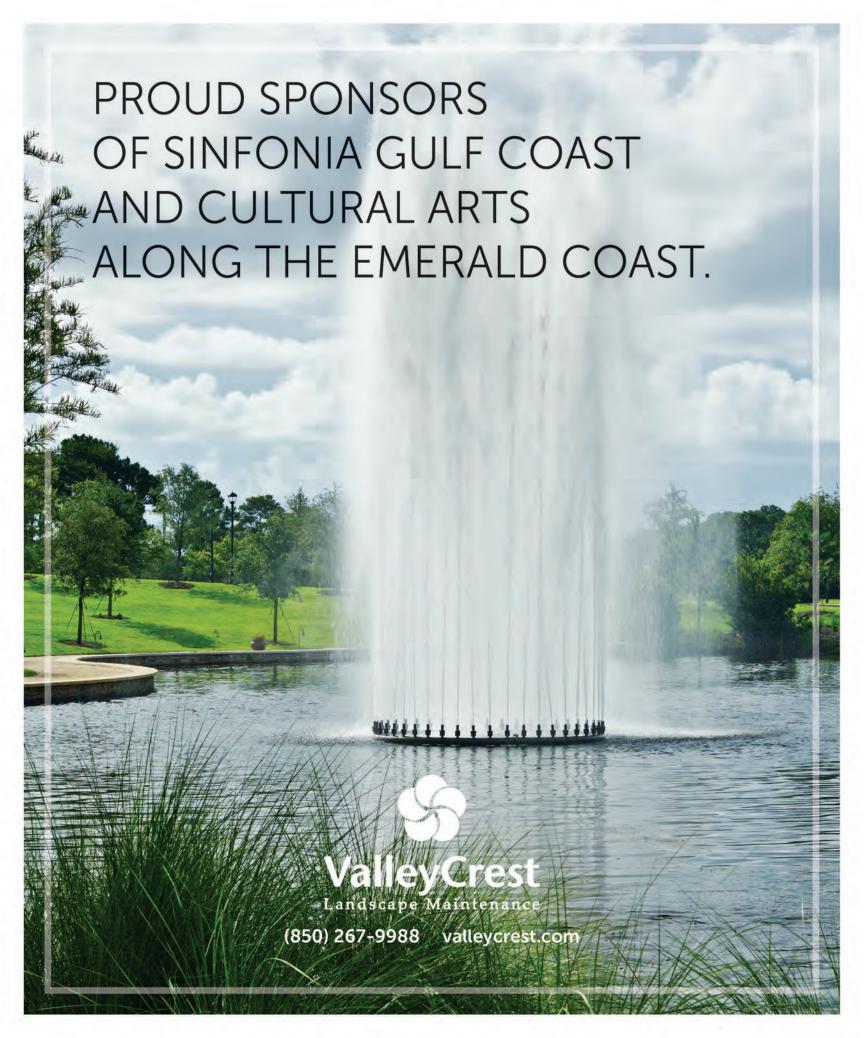
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KRISTIN CHENOVETH

Sinfonia Tenth-Anniversary Gala Event featuring Kristin Chenoweth

Friday, November 13, 2015 at 8:00 p.m. Emerald Coast Convention Center Fort Walton Beach, Florida

Emmy- and Tony-winning actress and singer Kristin Chenoweth takes the lead in a career that spans film, television, voice-over, and stage effortlessly.

She received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her work on the ABC series Pushing Daisies. (Pushing Daisies was also nominated for a Golden Globe Award and an Emmy Award for Best Television Series - Musical or Comedy.) On Fox's hit comedy Glee, Chenoweth lit up the stage of William McKinley High as a former student who returns to town with more than the baggage from her flight. For her role as Glee's quirky ex-songstress April Rhodes, she was nominated for two Emmy Awards and a People's Choice Award in the category of Favorite TV Guest Star. Although Chenoweth has often come into our living rooms on hit TV shows (such as The West Wing, where she starred as Annabeth Schott), she may be most remembered by Broadway lovers everywhere for her origination of the role of Glinda the Good Witch in Wicked, which earned her a Tony Award nomination, and her Tony-winning performance in You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown, in which she stole the show and many hearts in the process. In July, Chenoweth received a coveted star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in the category of live performances on stage or in theatre.

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Chenoweth recently made her return to Broadway, playing the glamorous film star Lily Garland in the Roundabout Theatre Company's On the Twentieth Century, which has received rave reviews. Her performance earned her the following awards: a Drama Desk Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, and a Broadway.com Audience Choice Award. She has also earned nominations for the following awards: Tony Award for Best Lead Actress in a Musical and a Drama League Award. Earlier this year, she costarred in the Universal film The Boy Next Door alongside Jennifer Lopez. She was also seen in the film A Bet's a Bet (international title: The Opposite Sex). She's completed production on the indie teen drama entitled Hard Sell. In July 2015, Chenoweth was seen in the Disney Channel's liveaction original movie Descendants, where she played the classic Sleeping Beauty villain, Maleficent. With 12.2 million viewers for its premiere, Descendants became the number five cable TV movie in history. The movie's soundtrack debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 chart and peaked at number one on the iTunes album chart.

In 2014, Chenoweth starred as a poisonous frog named Gabi in the hit animated film Rio 2. She also reprised her nominated role in the hundredth episode of Glee. In May 2014, she returned to the famed Carnegie Hall (her first solo concert at Carnegie Hall was in 2004). On stage, she performed songs from her album Some Lessons Learned as well as some of her most memorable songs from Broadway's Wicked and Promises, Promises and TV's Glee. She performed An Evening with Kristin Chenoweth at London's Royal Albert Hall, during which she received a record-breaking standing ovation. She was featured in Star-Spangled Spectacular: Bicentennial of our National Anthem, a concert special honoring the two hundredth anniversary of our national anthem. The event was televised live from Baltimore, Maryland, on PBS as part of the network's Great Performances series.

Chenoweth hosted the PBS Arts Fall Festival in 2014, which featured classic Broadway hits, music from around the country, and theatre performances. The festival included her own performance, Kristin Chenoweth: Coming Home, a career-spanning concert in her hometown of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

A veteran of the concert stage, Chenoweth has performed to sold-out crowds in concert halls across the globe.

A veteran of the concert stage, Chenoweth has performed to sold-out crowds in concert halls across the globe. In 2013, she made her Australian national touring debut, headlining the Adelaide Cabaret Festival and performing at the famed Sydney Opera House. When she performed at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, she made national headlines for her stunning renditions of Hollywood's most beloved songs from classic films. Chenoweth was also inducted into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame. That year, she also performed her show Kristin Chenoweth: The Dames of Broadway... All of 'Em!!!! at the Allen Room (now called the Appel Room) in New York's acclaimed Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; the concert also aired on PBS.

Additional concert highlights include her Los Angeles solo debut at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, a solo concert at the Metropolitan Opera (she was the third musical theater star ever to present a solo concert at the Met), an evening at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, the Washington National Opera's Fiftieth Anniversary Golden Gala with Plácido Domingo, a solo concert at Sam Mendes's acclaimed Donmar Warehouse as part of the Divas at the Donmar series, and collaborations with renowned symphonies including the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Pops, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony.

Chenoweth has also written an upliftingly candid and comedic chronicle of her life so far: A Little Bit Wicked, which was released by Simon and Schuster in 2009 and debuted on the New York Times Hardcover Nonfiction Best Seller List.

It's no secret that Chenoweth wears her heart on her sleeve when it comes to her love of theater, which was the catalyst for her charity partnership with the Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center (BAPAC) Foundation. The Kristin Chenoweth Theater at the BAPAC (renamed in 2012 to celebrate its biggest advocate, supporter, and role model to aspiring hometown performers) welcomes internationally acclaimed concert artists and Broadway productions and provides educational outreach and master classes with touring artists, after-school and summer arts institutes, scholarship programs, community enrichment, and opportunities for students to travel and perform on a national level.

Chenoweth is also a passionate supporter of charities that dedicate their time and efforts to helping those in need, such as the Kristin Chenoweth Art and Education Fund, the Red Cross, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Point Foundation, and ASTEP, and organizations supporting breast cancer awareness, adoption advocacy, and animal welfare.

Chenoweth earned a bachelor's degree in musical theater and a master's degree in opera performance from Oklahoma City University. She was also presented with honorary doctorate degrees from both OCU and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Chenoweth is an inductee into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame as well as the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame.

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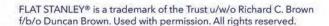
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ne voice is all it takes. The right vocalist can make you fall in love at first listen, elicit tears, or bring you back to a different era altogether. A microphone and a stage remain the only necessities. That holds true for New York-based singer and songwriter Morgan James. On her full-length debut album for Epic Records, *Hunter*, she casts an unbreakable spell with a powerhouse voice equally inspired by smoky soul, swaggering R & B, theatrical swing, and a virtuosic classical poise.

The Idaho native discovered her passion for music early on and pursued it wholeheartedly at the prestigious Juilliard School. While in the midst of the institution's rigorous academic program, she soon realized that her path would diverge from the classical world.

"I didn't want a career in opera, but Juilliard still shaped me," she confesses. "The traditional training really made me a disciplined singer. I carry that with me to this day." After graduating, Morgan spent the next few years facing the proverbial struggles of being a young artist in New York. Low on money, she bounced back and forth between bartending and restaurant gigs while fighting to survive. Immersed in classic sixties and seventies soul records, she concurrently experienced a pivotal revelation.

"Out of that frustration came this other voice," she says. "It was my true voice, and I feel like I discovered it in the middle of so much hardship just trying to be heard. I embraced who I was at that very moment."

Soon, she would be heard in a big way. In 2008, Morgan booked her first Broadway show—appearing in *The Addams Family* alongside Nathan Lane, as well as in prominent and leading roles in *Wonderland, Godspell* ("Turn Back, O Man"), and Berry Gordy's *Motown: The Musical* as Teena Marie. The latter set the stage for her to properly launch her solo career. Gordy recognized the vocalist's immense talent and introduced her to Doug Morris and L.A. Reid, opening the door for a deal with Epic Records in 2012.

Around the same time, Morgan booked a landmark show at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, where she paid tribute to Nina Simone with a set of songs that were closely associated with the legendary artist. The incendiary show was recorded and released as the critically acclaimed *Morgan James Live* on Epic Records. It also proved to be the perfect segue for her first studio album, *Hunter*, which was released in June of 2014.

"I always knew to make a neo-soul pop record," Morgan says. "The foundation is all real ingredients, and those roots of soul and R & B are pretty strong. It's the culmination of my musical life up to this point. The painful songs are straight out of a bad relationship with someone from my past. The joyful moments are wonderful memories. It's all coming from me. I've lived every one of these stories, and I love the genres I'm representing. It's one point of view—mine."

The first single, "I Want You," tempers electronic elements with her overpoweringly soulful delivery. "It incorporates that classic spirit with a modern framework," she goes on. "It's a fresh take on writing a love song. Lyrically, I really wanted to capture what it's like to fall for someone and not be able to live without them."

The title track and album opener, "Hunter," boasts a seductive hook with cinematic noir flair. Flaunting the singer's immense delivery and dynamic presence, it's an undeniable and classy come-on that proves as animalistic as it does magnetic. "From a woman's perspective, it's such an empowering and sexy song," she smiles. "It totally makes me feel like a warrior! Music is so sensual and

life affirming. That's what I look for. You don't often see a girl take this position, and that's what I love about it!"

Morgan assumed cowriting duties on eight of the collection's eleven tracks and even performed all of her own background vocals and harmonies. From the empowering farewell of "Fed Up On You" to the mournful rumination of "You Never Lied," she continually bares it all—both emotionally and musically.

"I sing like I'm never going to sing again," Morgan affirms. "I wanted to capture that power and passion every time. At some moments, it might sound flawless; at others, it might sound like it's going to break. I'm revealing something about myself with every song. You've got to do that. My favorite artists, whether Joni Mitchell or Michael Jackson, are and were always honest."

There's a unique structure to the album. The first five songs boast electronic elements, while the last six don't have any. "There's a gradient of the record that goes down," she says. "By the time you get to the last song, it's just piano and voice. It starts with a song about power and ego, and it ends on one about surrender and selflessness. I have all of that in me. Maybe we all do."

Ultimately, her honesty permeates everything that Morgan James does, and it's why you'll always remember her voice. "I want people to walk away from this album feeling fulfilled. That's the way it used to be. Often, I think I'm from another time," she says, her voice trailing off. "I just want to bring back the power of the singular legacy voice."





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Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo

Aaron Copland

Buckaroo Holiday Corral Nocturne

Saturday Night Waltz

Hoe-Down

Lincoln Portrait

Aaron Copland Jamie Bernstein, narrator

**Winner of 2012 Sinfonia Gulf Coast Prize

PROGRAM NOTES

by Barbara Heninger

El Salón México

The music of Aaron Copland (1900-90) is so entrenched in American consciousness that composer Ned Rorem once called him "a fact of sonic geology, like a throbbing, song-filled Rock of Gibraltar." Listeners familiar with his works, such as Rodeo or Fanfare for the Common Man, may not realize that Copland's long career took him through several distinct periods: a jazzy phase (1925-1929); an avant-garde period (1930-1936); a populist phase (1936–1949); and a return to modern, serial territory.

El Salón México marks Copland's entrance into his populist phase, when he wanted to find a broader audience for contemporary music by using simpler harmonic melodies, often based on folk tunes, in a more accessible but still sophisticated manner. The work's genesis was a visit to Mexico in 1932, when composer Carlos Chávez brought Copland to the popular dance club El Salón México. Copland described the scene, and its inspiration to him, in his autobiography:

"Perhaps my piece might never have been written if it hadn't been for the existence of the Salón México. I remember reading about it for the first time in a tourist guide book: 'Harlem-type nightclub for the peepul, grand Cuban orchestra. Three halls: one for people dressed in your way, one for people dressed in overalls but shod, and one for the barefoot.' When I got there, I also found a sign on the wall which said: 'Please don't throw lighted cigarette butts on the floor so the ladies don't burn their feet.'

In some inexplicable way, while milling about in those crowded halls, one really felt a live contact with the Mexican people—the electric sense one sometimes gets in far-off places, of suddenly knowing the essence of a people—their humanity, their separate shyness, their dignity and unique charm."

Copland determined he would write a "musical potpourri" that would convey his impression of the Mexican people. He realized that as an outsider he might miss the mark: "I felt nervous about what the Mexicans might think of a 'gringo' meddling with their native melodies." But he discovered he needn't worry when, "at the first of the final rehearsals that I attended \dots as I entered the hall the orchestral players, who were in the thick of a Beethoven symphony, suddenly stopped what they were doing and began to applaud vigorously." The work was premiered by Chávez conducting the Mexico Symphony Orchestra on August 27, 1937, and was a critical and popular success.

In creating his potpourri, Copland borrowed at least nine Mexican folk tunes from two collections he received during his trip, El Folklore y la Música Mexicana edited by Rubén Campos and Cancionero Mexicano by Frances Toor. Most of the tunes use meters of 6/8 or 3/4 time, sometimes in alternation. Copland applied standard folk music practices throughout the work, such as harmonization in parallel thirds and sixths, slides in pitch, clarinet cadenzas, string glissandos, and some call-and-response constructions.

The work consists of an introduction and four major segments, alternating slow-fast-slow-fast. A trumpet solo following the introduction is the longest quoted melody from the Campos collection, a tune called El Mosco. A slow "Mexican hat dance" segues into a lyrical, broad melody that ends with a repeated trumpet call, announcing the second, faster segment. This builds to a crashing close, followed by the so-called "siesta" section, introduced by a solo clarinet and violin. Lyrical, sleepy melodies alternate, followed by an insistent, rocking melody that gradually increases in tempo. The finale builds in rhythmic intensity and melodic complexity, when, as Copland writes, "I present the folk tunes simultaneously in their original keys and rhythms. The result is a kind of polytonality that achieves the frenetic whirl I had in mind before the end, when all is resolved with a plain unadorned triad."

Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo

Aaron Copland is probably best known for three

ballet scores he composed from 1938 to 1946. The first was *Billy the Kid*, the last, the justly famous *Appalachian Spring*. The central portion of this ballet triptych originated in 1942 when Agnes de Mille, the American dancer and choreographer, asked Copland to write music for a new ballet set on a western ranch. Having already composed one cowboy ballet, Copland was reluctant to accept the assignment. But de Mille persuaded him by promising that her work would be unlike *Billy the Kid*: no legendary outlaws, no high drama, just a simple and universal story in a pastoral American setting.

That story could not have been more elemental. A cowgirl raised at Burnt Ranch competes for the attention of young ranch hands. Her search for romance culminates at a Saturday night barn dance, where she finally gains a suitor. *Rodeo* debuted in October 1942 and enjoyed an immediate success. The freshness of de Mille's choreography certainly accounted for some of the work's appeal, but Copland's music was no less important. Among other things, *Rodeo* gave further evidence of the fertility of the composer's use of American folk music.

Soon after *Rodeo* opened, Copland adapted a concert suite of four dances from his ballet score. The first of these dances, "Buckaroo Holiday," uses two authentic folk melodies: "If He'd Be a Buckaroo by His Trade" and "Sis Joe." Rhythmic dislocations, sudden pauses, and unprepared shifts of harmony impart a comic touch to the music. After treating each tune separately, Copland combines them in complex counterpoint.

The ensuing "Corral Nocturne" is a tender interlude in an asymmetrical 5/4 meter and marked by evocative woodwind solos. Copland stated that he wanted this music to convey the sense of loneliness felt by the ballet's young heroine. "Saturday Night Waltz," the third movement, hints at the sound of country fiddlers tuning up, as well as at the cowboy tune "Old Paint." The final dance, "Hoe-Down," has long been the most popular portion of *Rodeo*. Here Copland quotes two square-dance tunes, "Bonyparte" and "McLeod's Reel," using the sound of country fiddling to impart a lively rural atmosphere.

Lincoln Portrait

Copland wrote *Lincoln Portrait* shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, hoping that the piece would help to boost patriotic sentiment and morale at a time when the nation's fortunes seemed at low ebb. In paying tribute to the sixteenth president, Copland decided to use Lincoln's own words and to have these spoken, rather than sung, against a background of evocative orchestral music to simply frame around the impressive words of Lincoln.

Copland intended the long orchestral prelude to suggest the mysterious sense of fatality surrounding Lincoln's personality, and, toward the end of the passage, of Lincoln's gentle and simple spirit. Here the composer uses a variant of the song "Springfield Mountain." The second section is livelier, reflecting "the background of the colorful times in which Lincoln lived," Copland noted. Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races" weaves its way through this musical collage, as does a recollection of "Springfield Mountain."

Lincoln speaks through his writings in the final portion of the piece, the several quotations connected and given biographical context by means of short phrases—"He was born in Kentucky ... and this is what he said ..."—which Copland added to the text. The haunting "Springfield Mountain" tune sounds again, and the final piece of narration, taken from the Gettysburg Address, provides the occasion for a sonorous climax.

Narration from Lincoln Portrait:

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history."

That is what he said. That is what Abraham Lincoln said.

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation. We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility." [Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862]

He was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, and lived in Illinois. And this is what he said. This is what Abe Lincoln said:

"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we will save our country." [Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862]

When standing erect he was six feet four inches tall, and this is what he said. He said:

"It is the eternal struggle between two principles, right and wrong, throughout the world. It is the same spirit that says 'you toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation, and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle." [Lincoln–Douglas debates, 15 October 1858]

Lincoln was a quiet man. Abe Lincoln was a quiet and a melancholy man. But when he spoke of democracy, this is what he said. He said:

"As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy."

Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

AbrahamLincoln, sixteenth president of these United States, is everlasting in the memory of his countrymen. For on the battleground at Gettysburg, this is what he said. He said:

"That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."







JAMIE BERNSTEIN



Jamie Bernstein is a narrator, writer, and broadcaster who has transformed a lifetime of loving music into a career of sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with others. She grew up in an atmosphere bursting with music, theatre, and literature. Her father, composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein, together with her mother, the pianist and actress Felicia Montealegre, and their legions of friends in the arts, created a spontaneous, ebullient household that turned Jamie into a dyed-in-the-wool cultural enthusiast.

Jamie's symphony pops concert, Bernstein on Broadway, produced with conductor Michael Barrett, has enjoyed success with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the San Antonio Symphony, and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, among others. An evening of Leonard Bernstein's music for Broadway, the Bernstein on Broadway program features Jamie's concert narration performed live with orchestra and vocalists.

Replicating her father's lifelong compulsion to share and teach, Jamie has written and produced several concerts for families and young people on the music of Copland, Mozart, Bernstein, and others. The acclaimed program The Bernstein Beat, a family concert about her father modeled after his own groundbreaking Young People's Concerts, has been presented by Carnegie Hall Family Concerts, the Caramoor Festival, and orchestras across the country. In 2009, Jamie was commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra to write a youth concert narration in partnership with the Philadelphia Orchestra's education department based around Pennsylvania State curriculum standards for school children. The final program, Music Can Morph!: Folk Music in the Concert Hall, was presented by the Philadelphia Orchestra in nine sold-out schooltime concerts during the 2009-10 season.

Jamie also travels the world as a concert narrator, appearing with orchestras from Philadelphia to Minnesota, Havana to Beijing. In addition to her own scripts, Jamie also performs standard concert narrations, such as Walton's Façade, Copland's Lincoln Portrait, Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, and her father's Symphony No. 3, Kaddish. She is a frequent speaker on musical topics, including in-depth discussions of her father's works.

In her role as a broadcaster, Jamie has produced and hosted numerous shows for radio stations in the United States and Great Britain. In addition to hosting several seasons of the New York Philharmonic's live national radio broadcasts, Jamie has presented several series for New York's classical station, WQXR-FM, including annual live broadcasts from Tanglewood. Most recently, Jamie presented a series for BBC Radio 3, Fast Machine, about the music scene in New York City.

In addition to writing her own scripts and narrations, Jamie writes articles and poetry, which have appeared in such publications as Symphony, DoubleTake, Town & Country, and Gourmet.

JULIA BULLOCK



Winner of the 2014 Naumburg International Vocal Competition and recipient of a 2015 Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship, the 2015 Richard F. Gold Grant from the Shoshana Foundation, and Lincoln Center's 2015 Martin E. Segal Award, soprano Julia Bullock has been hailed as an "impressive, fast-rising soprano... poised for a significant career" (The New York Times).

Her busy 2014–15 season began with a performance of Delage's *Quatres poèmes hindous* with the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra and a recital at Napa's Festival del Sole. She performs recitals and educational outreach programs at the University of Florida Performing Arts, the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center, the Levine School of Music, and Music for Youth, as well as recitals at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, San Francisco Performances, the Rockefeller University, the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University, and Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts. She is also featured in the New York Festival of Song's Harlem Renaissance program on tour and at Merkin Concert Hall, as well as in the Mondavi Center's Rising Stars of Opera. She reprised the title role in Henry Purcell's The Indian Queen, directed by Peter Sellars at the Perm Opera House and at English National Opera. She was acclaimed for her performance of the role last season in Perm and at the Teatro Real in Madrid; a DVD of the Madrid production will be available this season. Last summer, Bullock made her debut with the New York Philharmonic. performing Bernstein's West Side Story Concert Suite no. 1 with Alan Gilbert and tours with the orchestra in Vail and Santa Barbara.

Bullock has performed the title role in Massenet's Cendrillon with the Juilliard Opera, as well as Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen, both to rave reviews. Opera News wrote of the latter, "Julia Bullock as the titular vixen led the way in terms of clarity of delivery and beauty of sound. Her broad range of expression allowed her to be impetuous and demonstrative... then opulent and glorious." Bullock has toured South America as Pamina in Peter Brook's award-winning A Magic Flute; she toured China, singing with the Bard Music Festival Orchestra. Other opera roles include Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro, Monica in The Medium, and the title role in L'enfant et les sortilèges.

She made her San Francisco Symphony debut last season in West Side Story in Concert, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas; an album of the concert was released on the orchestra's label in June 2014. The San Francisco Chronicle wrote: "The evening's most remarkable showstopper, Julia Bullock, appeared out of nowhere to deliver a full-voiced, stunningly paced account of 'Somewhere'—for just a moment, it seemed as though nothing Bernstein ever wrote was quite as magical as that one song."

Bullock has performed contemporary works at the Ojai Music Festival and the Music Alive! series, curated by composer Joan Tower and pianist Blair McMillen; collaborated with early music ensembles, including the Clarion Music Society; and explored lesser-known repertoire with the American Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Delage's *Quartre poèmes hindous*. She has also appeared with the New York Festival of Song at Caramoor, with the Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society at the Kimmel Center.

She enjoys the collaborative process with both established and up-and-coming composers. In 2011, she attended SongFest in California as a Stern Fellow, where she worked with pianist Roger Vignoles and composers John Musto and Libby Larsen. Bullock has sung in master classes with bass-baritone Eric Owens at Juilliard, soprano Jessye Norman at Zankel Hall, and José van Dam at the Opéra Bastille in Paris. She also performed in the Dawn Upshaw and Donnacha Dennehy Workshop at Carnegie Hall, premiering pieces written for her by young Chinese composer Shen Yiwen.

Winner of the 2012 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Bullock made her recital debuts at Merkin Concert Hall and the Kennedy Center to critical acclaim. At the Auditions, she was also the recipient of five special prizes: the Alexander Kasza-Kasser Prize, concerts at the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany, the University of Florida Performing Arts, and with

the Albany Symphony and the Sinfonia Gulf Coast. She holds the Lindemann Vocal Chair of Young Concert Artists. Her management is also supported by the Barbara Forester Austin Fund for Art Song.

From 2003 to 2005, Bullock participated in the Artists-in-Training program with the Opera Theater of Saint Louis and graduated with the prestigious Marielle Hubner Award. She earned her bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music and her master's degree at Bard College's Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where she was the first recipient of the Mimi Levitt Scholarship and won Bard College's 2010 Concerto Competition. She received her Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School, where she worked with Edith Bers.

Originally from Saint Louis, Missouri, Bullock integrates her musical life with community activism. She has organized benefit concerts for the Shropshire Music Foundation and International Playground, two non-profits that serve war-affected children and adolescents through music education and performance programs in Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Uganda, and Saint Louis. She also participated in the Music and Medicine Benefit Concert for New York's Weill Cornell Medical Center.

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Destin Commons General Manager

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Sponsorship funds benefit both Sinfonia concerts and its music education initiatives throughout the region, including numerous student programs such as annual "Paint the Music" concerts and Link Up concerts in partnership with Carnegie Hall. Since 2008, Sinfonia's youth education projects have introduced the symphony to 82,000 students in Okaloosa and Walton County schools. Destin Commons has been Sinfonia's Education Sponsor for the past three years.





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Sinfonia Gulf Coast Youth Orchestra Programs Sinfonia Youth Orchestra & Sinfonietta Strings

Mission: To foster the education, development and creativity of young musicians through orchestral ensemble performance.

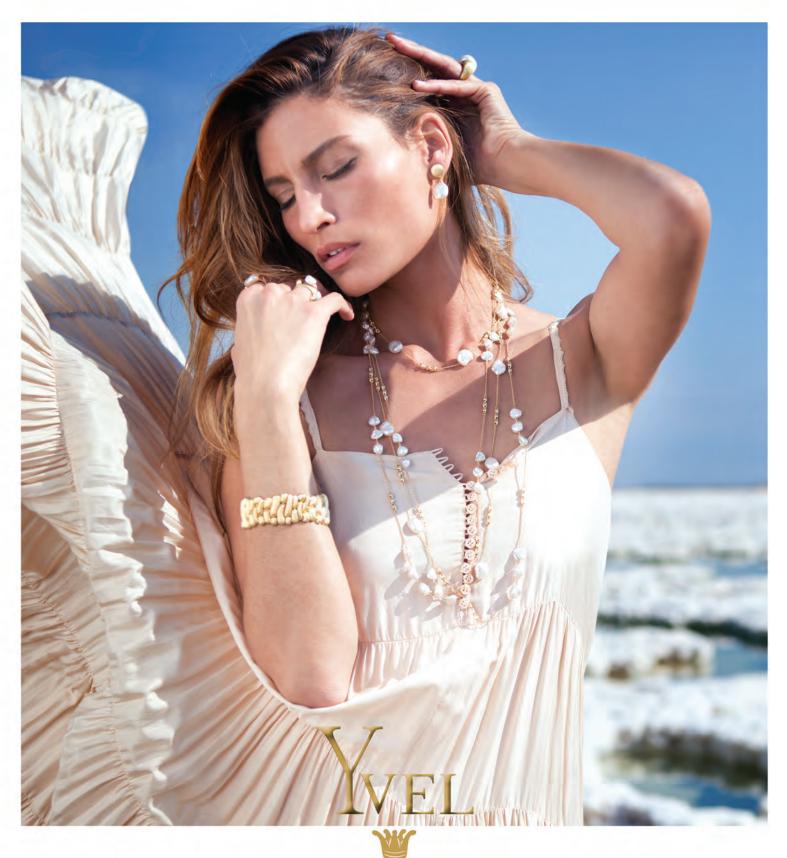
The Sinfonia Youth Orchestra program is the premier training orchestra in Northwest Florida and consists of more than sixty students who participate in a variety of ensembles that perform throughout the school year.

The largest ensemble, the Sinfonia Youth Orchestra (SYO), consists of the full complement of instruments from the orchestra with primary membership being the older, more advanced students. The youth strings or Sinfonietta Strings, focuses on developing beginning string students to prepare them for the full orchestra. Additionally, students engage in chamber music ensembles and participate in master classes given by visiting guest artists and current principal musicians from Sinfonia Gulf Coast.

Music Director of the Sinfonia Youth Orchestras is Liz Aylor. Ms. Aylor holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Heidelberg University and Master of Arts Degree from Case Western Reserve University. Her efforts have been featured in numerous string education publications and more recently in "Florida Monthly" magazine. She is a member of the Association of String Teachers of America (ASTA), is a Suzuki Association of the Americas accredited instructor and taught in the Okaloosa public schools for more than thirty-five years.

For more information on Sinfonia's youth orchestra program, please visit: www.SinfoniaGulfCoast.org/education or call (850) 460-8800

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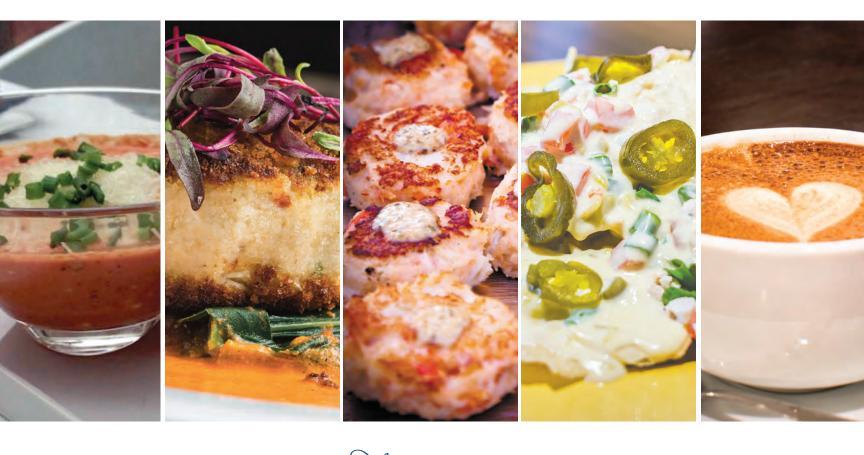
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it's the little things in life that make a difference like spending time with family and shopping with girlfriends. Carolyn Christensen suffered from debilitating leg and back pain for several years before seeking help from Dr. Kornelis Poelstra, Medical Director of the Spine Center at Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast.

"I was in a store, and the numbness came out of nowhere. I got so worried I would fall and hurt myself," said Carolyn.

When Carolyn's pain began progressing, she and Dr. Poelstra sat down to discuss her surgical options. It was then she was first introduced to the Mazor Robotics Renaissance system. Dr. Poelstra determined that Carolyn was an ideal candidate for the new system to help heal her "pinched nerve" or decompression fusion of her 3rd, 4th, and 5th vertebrae.

"The Renaissance system was explained so thoroughly; I really had no questions or anxiety. I felt very cared for every step of the way," said Carolyn.

Carolyn was shown how the Mazor system utilizes CT images to create a 3-D image of the spine to help the surgeon precisely create each patient's customized surgical plan. The apparatus used during surgery guides the surgeon's hand to the exact position required and uses a minimally invasive approach to drastically reduce a patient's exposure to radiation.

Carolyn and her husband, Dick, attended the Spine Center's Boot Camp to prepare themselves for her surgery. "The Spine Camp was marvelous. It was a brief two hours and after the class my husband and I knew exactly what to expect pre-op and post-op, even what to do when I went home and began rehabilitation."

On the day of surgery, Carolyn shared she felt very comfortable going into it. "Pre-op went very smoothly. Everyone was so

kind and understanding, from the nurses, anesthesiologist, and Spine Coordinator."

Afterwards, Carolyn remembers some pain, but described it as manageable. On the very first day, she was able to sit up in bed. Her surgery was performed on a Friday, and she was discharged home on Monday.

"Before leaving the hospital, the Spine Coordinator came in and talked through all of my discharge information. Everything was written down and ready for me to take home; and my follow-up appointments had all been scheduled," shared Carolyn.

Carolyn used a walker for two weeks. Just four short weeks later, she was cleared by Dr. Poelstra and deemed 100% recovered.

"Everything worked out beautifully," says Carolyn. "I'm amazed at how quickly I was able to get back on my feet. The surgery was a complete success, and now I can carry out the small things in life - the ones we take for granted until it becomes too painful to do them."



To learn more more about the Spine Center at Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast, call (850) 278-3261 or visit www.sacredheartemerald.org/spinecenter.



Miró Quartet

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12 & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2016 AT 7:30 P.M.

Rosemary Beach Town Hall

PROGRAM NOTES

by Joseph DuBose

Franz Joseph Haydn

Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4

Composed in 1772 at the height of the Sturm und Drang period of Western European music and literature, the six string quartets that make up Haydn's Opus 20 are a landmark of the genre and of music history. It was these quartets that gave Haydn the nickname "Father of the String Quartet." The vestiges of the old Baroque were long gone and the Galant style was the prevalent style among composers of the time—a style which focused on simplicity and clearness. Such intricate techniques as counterpoint fell into disuse in preference to a single melody unobscured by its harmonic accompaniment. Major keys were favored over minor ones as they were more adapted for the lighthearted quality of the Galant style. Finally, music of the period often was divisible into evenly constructed four- and eight-measure phrases. Haydn's Opus 20 changed all this forever.

Perhaps taking his cue from the great philosophical and artistic trends that were spreading across Europe, Haydn wholly rejected the prim and proper etiquette of the Galant style. He returned to many of the hallmark techniques of the former Baroque era (such as fugue), but at the same time he forged a new method of composition that has influenced composers for the string quartet right up until modern times. Chief among his innovations was an equal balance among the four instruments. It was typical for the first violin or, on some occasions the second as well, to dominate the entire quartet melodically while the lower instruments simply provided harmonic support. Haydn, however, placed equal importance on each member of the quartet. If one part were omitted, it would certainly be missed and the whole would suffer. A corollary to the added importance of each part is a reinstatement of a contrapuntal form of writing. Whereas each of the quartets displays a contrapuntal mind-set in nearly every measure, it was Haydn's inclusion of such seemingly "dead" idioms as canon, melodic inversion, and even fugue that solidified his wholesale rejection of Galant simplicity. Lastly, the structural innovations of Haydn's Opus 20 cannot go unmentioned. In addition to the use of uneven phrases, the six quartets also show the first fruits of the modern sonata form.

Among the six quartets of Opus 20, the fourth in D major is the best known and has met with greater public admiration than its five siblings. Actually the fifth by composition order, the Quartet in D major opens with a pastoral first movement. The opening is reverent yet imbued with fervent energy that manifests itself as the movement progresses. The first movement is also a wonderful example of Haydn's "false reprises." Multiple times through the course of the development section, Haydn alludes to a return of the sonata form's first theme, each time only to carry the development onward. When the recapitulation finally does make its appearance, it begins deceptively, not in the key of the tonic, but in that of the subdominant! The following movement, a theme and variations in D minor, is one of Haydn's most profound pieces. No doubt, it is surely a piece of supreme genius. One finds within its compass the intricacies of the Baroque era, the clearness of the Classical, and a fascinating foreshadowing of the Romantic. Four variations follow the theme. Each instrument receives its turn in leading the ensemble—the second violin and viola together in the first variation, the cello in the second, and the first violin in the third.

Though titled "Menuetto," the third movement's only visible connection to the court dance is its triple meter. Marked "alla zingarese," the movement is actually a gypsy air. High and low instruments play alternating accents, greatly confusing the location of the downbeat. In total contrast, the trio section, led by the cello, could not be more straightforward, as if the music was somehow immovably fixed to the barlines. The fiery *Presto scherzando* finale continues in the gypsy spirit of the Menuetto. Flashy melodic lines and chromatic harmonies abound. The ending, however, is not as one might expect, though we should expect nothing less from Haydn.

DANIEL CHING, violin WILLIAM FEDKENHEUER, violin JOHN LARGESS, viola JOSHUA GINDELE, cello

Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Allegro di molto
Un poco adagio affettuoso
Menuetto: Allegretto alla zingarese
Presto scherzando

Quartet No. 2, Op. 26

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

Allegro rustico
Adagio angoscioso
Presto magico
Tema libero e rapsodico
Furioso

Intermission

Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Allegro con brio Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato Scherzo: Allegro molto Allegro

Quartet No. 2, Op. 26

Alberto Ginastera

This quartet was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and was premiered by the Juilliard Quartet at the 1958 Inter-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C. It was written at a time when Ginastera was consolidating his second stylistic period, known as his "international" style, when he used the twelve-tone system. Here, he used it in a free manner, mainly to generate themes.

Ginastera admired Bartók's string quartets, particularly the fourth and fifth, which were written in five-movement "arch form." He followed a similar structural procedure for this quartet. As the movements are all designated by tempo markings indicating their moods, listing them, as above, helps describe the emotional life of the quartet.

The first movement begins with angry and strident music, full of repeated notes, *sforzato* chords, and harsh harmonies. The second movement (which itself is written in a small arch form) expresses its anguish in a solo viola phrase and rises to a fever pitch, marked to be played "as loudly as possible."

The "magic" third movement is mostly very quiet, almost on the edge of audibility. Like the corresponding movements by Bartók, it is full of unusual playing techniques, including fingernail pizzicatos, pizzicato glissandos, the eerie hollow sound of playing with the bow practically on the bridge, and tapping the strings with the wooden back of the bow.

The complementary curve of the arch continues the musical line of the second movement, now in a melancholy mood in a set of free variations. The finale is again angry, with loud, frantic music.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

When Ludwig van Beethoven moved from his hometown of Bonn to Vienna in 1792, it was initially for the chance to hone his compositional skills under the tutelage of Joseph Haydn. Unfortunately, Beethoven's expectations of receiving "the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn" were dashed when he found the elder composer to be a pedantic and detached teacher. In 1795, Beethoven broke off all contact after Haydn savaged his Opus 1 piano trios, calling them unfit for publication. Yet for three years, Beethoven avoided publishing any music in Haydn's preferred genres, thus averting any direct comparisons between master and student. This changed when Beethoven was commissioned to write his first string quartets by Prince Lobkowicz, one of Vienna's foremost arts patrons. Beethoven must have known that Lobkowicz had commissioned six quartets from Haydn that same year (though Haydn would only complete two, publishing them as his Opus 77). Comparisons would have been unavoidable, but Beethoven jumped at his chance to beat Haydn at his own game. Over the next two years, he fulfilled the commission, publishing the six quartets together in 1801 as his Opus 18.



In the eighteenth century, music publishers did not consider string quartets substantial enough to be published individually. Instead, they were printed in sets of six, much as Baroque concertos were a century earlier. Beethoven would later break this mold, releasing his last seven quartets as freestanding works, but at the beginning of his career, he was still bound by tradition. At the same time, however, this tradition offered composers the chance to display the full range of their skills over a set of diverse works. Beethoven did not disappoint: although the Opus 18 quartets show the influence of Haydn and Mozart, each one has its own character. Together, they point to the very different direction Beethoven would later take.

Assembling six quartets into a set was an art form in itself. The composer had only a limited opportunity to appeal to a potential buyer, so the choice of the first quartet was crucial. This is why Beethoven's First String Quartet is not, in fact, the first quartet he composed. Instead, we believe that this quartet, in the key of F major, was probably composed second, but it ended up as No. 1 on the basis of its overall strength. The allegro con brio first movement opens with an attention-grabbing gesture: a simple turn-based motive in the unison strings. This settles into a propulsive melody, which eventually segues into a leaping second theme. In the development, Beethoven links the short opening motive into insistent, repeating chains, prefiguring what he would do with his Fifth Symphony nearly a decade later. The coda boldly introduces a new theme, also based on the opening rhythmic gesture. The adagio affettuoso ed appassionato second movement was reportedly inspired by the tomb scene from the end of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Starting from a mournful melody in the first violin, answered by the second violin and viola, this tragic movement builds to an intense climax and then fades. The fleet-footed scherzo that follows dispels the gloomy mood and injects a measure of wit. For the allegro finale, Beethoven borrowed from himself, recomposing a theme from his earlier String Trio in C minor (Op. 9, No. 3). This spinning melody recurs throughout the movement, bringing the quartet to an ebullient conclusion.







MIRÓ QUARTET

The Miró Quartet—an Austin, Texas-based string quartet whose moniker was inspired by the highly imaginative works of Spanish surrealist Joan Miró—is one of America's highest-profile chamber groups. Now in their twentieth year, the Miró Quartet is constantly praised for their deeply musical interpretations, exciting performances, and thoughtful programming. Each season, the Miró Quartet performs throughout the world in the most important chamber music series and on the most prestigious concert stages, garnering accolades from critics and audiences alike.

The Miró's concert highlights of recent seasons include a highly anticipated and sold-out return to Carnegie Hall to perform Beethoven's complete Op. 59 Quartets (which they also recorded); the debut season of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center; the world premiere of a new concerto for string quartet and chamber orchestra by Pulitzer Prize—winning composer Kevin Puts; performances of the complete Beethoven Cycle at the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival and Tokyo's Suntory Hall; and debuts last season in Seoul, Korea, Singapore, and the Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival.

During its 2015–2016 season, the quartet will return to New York City's Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, performing Beethoven in Alice Tully Hall and the complete cycle of Ginastera quartets at the Rose Studio. The quartet will also return to perform at its birthplace, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. With concerts in Philadelphia and Phoenix and throughout Florida, Texas, and the Midwest, this busy season also includes a complete Late Schubert Quartet Cycle for the prestigious Slee Series in Buffalo, New York.

A favorite of summer chamber music festivals, the Miró Quartet has performed at the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest, the Chamber Music Northwest Summer Festival, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Music@Menlo. The Miró Quartet regularly collaborates with pianist Jon Kimura Parker, percussionist Colin Currie, and mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke.

Formed in 1995, the Miró Quartet has won first prizes at several national and international competitions, including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. Deeply committed to music education, members of the quartet have given master classes at universities and conservatories throughout the world. Since 2003, the Miró Quartet has served as the quartet-in-residence at the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2005, the Miró Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant.

September 2015 saw the quartet's twentieth anniversary and the release of their Emmy Award—winning multimedia project, *Transcendence*. A work with visual and audio appeal available by live stream and on CD and Blu-ray, *Transcendence* encompasses philanthropy, documentary filmmaking, and the Miró's riveting performance of Franz Schubert's Quartet in G Major on rare Stradivarius instruments. *Transcendence* fosters appreciation and enjoyment of classical music in a wide audience.

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Preservation Hall was founded in 1961 to promote traditional New Orleans jazz in all its authenticity. Legendary players like George Lewis, Sweet Emma Barrett, and Kid Thomas Valentine, all rooted in the formative years of jazz, were its original stars. That generation is long gone now, yet the hall is still in business and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band (PHJB) continues to tour the world.

Therein lies a paradox: how does an institution based on an early twentieth-century musical culture prosper in the twenty-first century? When asked that question on the occasion of the Hall's fiftieth anniversary, creative director Ben Jaffe had a ready answer: "This anniversary is about the next fifty years."

For Jaffe, 41, this is not just a business question: he's carrying on a family tradition started by his parents, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, who were instrumental in founding the Hall and turning it into an internationally known cultural icon. When Ben Jaffe took over the operation in 1995, he faced the challenge of keeping it going with a dwindling band of veteran musicians and an aging audience base. His solution has been to inject the touring band with new blood, bringing in some younger players with fresh musical ideas, and to form collaborations with groups and musicians from outside the New Orleans tradition. In recent years, the PHJB has performed and recorded with a wide array of musicians, ranging from groups like My Morning Jacket, Tom Waits, Merle Haggard, Pete Seeger, and the Del McCoury Band. The culmination of this collaborative effort was the sellout fiftieth anniversary concert that the PHJB hosted at Carnegie Hall in January 2012.

Their 2013 album, *That's It!*, breaks new ground for Jaffe and the PHJB: it's the first time in the history of the band that it has recorded an album made up of entirely original material—most of it composed by Jaffe and members of his group. The album was coproduced by Jaffe and Jim James, leader of My Morning Jacket, and encouraged by songwriters Paul Williams, Dan Wilson, and Chris Stapleton, who cowrote three of the titles with the band. Band members Charlie Gabriel, Rickie Monie, and Clint Maedgen also pitched in on some of the compositions.

Once the material was written and rehearsed, Jim James and sound engineer Kevin Ratterman drove down from Louisville with a van full of equipment and set it up among the splintery wooden benches and smoky paintings in Preservation Hall. That recording session produced the eleven tracks on this historic album.

Though it was not unheard of in the past for Preservation Hall musicians to compose some of the music they performed—drummer Paul Barbarin wrote "Bourbon Street Parade" and clarinetist George Lewis wrote "Burgundy Street

Blues," for example—this album marks the first time that a substantial body of new music was created by the band and entered the Preservation Hall repertoire. This constitutes a rich lode of fresh material not only for the current members of the touring PHJB, but also for other musicians who play at the hall and may be inspired to pick up on some of these songs. In the heyday of the Jazz Age, New Orleans musicians learned new tunes all the time by listening to what their peers were doing in the dance halls and on their recordings. One of the aims of this album is to stimulate that kind of cross-pollination among today's New Orleans jazzmen.

Though some traditional jazz purists may be surprised, the broader public will hopefully find this music engaging, enthralling—and irresistibly danceable. No one who hears Jaffe's funky tuba lines, Joe Lastie's backbeat drumming, and the band's groove on tunes like "The Darker It Gets" could doubt the group's traditional New Orleans roots.

On the other hand, Clint Maedgen's boozy "August Nights," with its haunting tenor sax riffs and sultry, muted trumpet work by Mark Braud, is a Tom Waits-like hymn to urban despair that would be at home on any barroom jukebox in the world. The punchy horn-section riffs on "Come With Me" and "That's It!" have a bite and exuberance that recall the Ellington big band sound. "I Think I Love You," is a pop tune with a Caribbean beat and a smooth, sexy vocal by eighty-year-old reedman Charlie Gabriel (with Jim James singing backup).

In addition to Gabriel, Ronell Johnson ("Dear Lord Give Me the Strength" and "Halfway Right, Halfway Wrong") and Fred Lonzo ("Rattlin' Bones") turn in strong vocal performances that underscore the wide variety of talent this band embraces.

In short, *That's It!* is an eclectic album that draws on the collective experience of players nurtured in the New Orleans tradition but determined to build something fresh and exciting on that foundation. It marks an important milestone in Jaffe's crusade to carry forward the Hall's original mission while making it relevant to today's audiences. For his part, coproducer Jim James is convinced that the PHJB has a future as vibrant as its past: "The music will speak forever," he says. "Will people stop listening to Beethoven? Will people stop listening to Bob Dylan? Will people stop listening to the Preservation Hall Jazz Band?"

Not if Ben Jaffe can help it. "My parents were never preservationists in any strict sense," he says. "They simply presented the music the way the old jazzmen wanted to play it. This is the music we want to play today. We'll continue to do the old standards along with new material that allows us to be creative and relevant. With this album, I wanted to do something that would challenge us and make us proud." That's it.

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FESTIVAL DEL SOLE OPENING WEEKEND

AGED FOR TEN YEARS IN NAPA

By Demetrius Fuller Photography by Gerald Burwell

"MUSIC IS THE WINE THAT FILLS THE CUP OF SILENCE."

-Robert Fripp

A lot happened ten years ago. Sinfonia's debut is at the top of my list (forgive the bias), but coming in a close second is the launch of Festival del Sole in Napa Valley. This annual summer jubilee is dedicated to three of life's great pleasures: artistry, food, and wine. It's a week and a half of world-class classical, jazz, opera, theater, and dance artists paired with phenomenal culinary fare. And it's all served up in some of Napa Valley's most iconic settings.

Revelation struck after February's Wine Women and Shoes event: How better to celebrate Sinfonia's anniversary than by attending Festival del Sole's opening weekend? Which is how a dedicated cadre of Sinfonia patrons found themselves seated within the courtyard of Calistoga's Castello di Amorosa last July.

As the final rays of sun illuminated the picturesque castle, we waited. And then the anticipatory silence of the steamy evening was broken by the pristine voice of soprano Nadine Sierra. The pure sound she radiated set the stage not only for that evening, but for a weekend that culminated in a gala headlined by stage and screen star Kevin Spacey.

It was, indeed, the perfect opening night for Napa's beloved Festival del Sole. But it wasn't the beginning of our trip. We had arrived the day before and checked into Meadowood Resort. Even knowing that this Saint Helena landmark is listed among Travel + Leisure magazine's top one hundred hotels in the world didn't prepare us for the grandeur. It's a wonderland of perfectly manicured grounds filled with perfectly manicured people receiving perfectly manicured service. One of the many perks is the resort's fleet of chauffeured Mercedes SUVs that shuttle guests within the resort and into town. And then there's the eye candy of a mini-fleet of Bentleys aligned in the parking corridor.

Our first destination upon arrival kept to the trip's tenth-anniversary theme. Ma(i) sonry Napa Valley (MNV) proprietor Michael Polenske also owns Blackbird Vineyards and the Bespoke Collection, which is celebrating its tenth year as well. We got to experience MNV's combination of art, architecture, and wine as well as say thank you to Polenske, who's been a good friend to Sinfonia and a participating donor for its Wine Women and Shoes events.

Just up the street from MNV is Thomas Keller's famed restaurant, the French Laundry. Our objective wasn't food (as delightful as a meal there would be), but rather a tour of its organic gardens. Master culinary gardener Aaron Keefer was our guide, expertly weaving the concept of sustainability into a personal tour of the gardens' produce and herbs, as well as the egg-laying vintage chickens. The bounty of those gardens serves the French Laundry and sister restaurants Ad Hoc and our next stop, Bouchon.

Bouchon sommelier Danielle Aita led us through the sounds of laughter and popping corks onto the restaurant's private patio. We spent several hours in that slice of heaven, leaving only long enough to take another tour-this time of Bouchon's wine cellar and kitchen. Ms. Aita explained that Bouchon has a unique program called Vin de Carafe, which sources wine from the regions surrounding the restaurant. Those wines are only on the menu until the barrel runs out.

So far, so great.

The next day's first group outing was lunch at BRAND Napa Valley. Perched above the cloud line on Pritchard Hill (known as the Rodeo Drive of Napa Valley), BRAND Napa Valley boasts twelve acres of vines planted in red volcanic soils. It's a unique terroir, to say the least. The winery was designed by Juancarlos Fernandez to the specifications of celebrated (read: rock star) winemaker Philippe Melka, who leads the wine-making program and also makes his own label on premises. And, just like the views, the wine is stunning.











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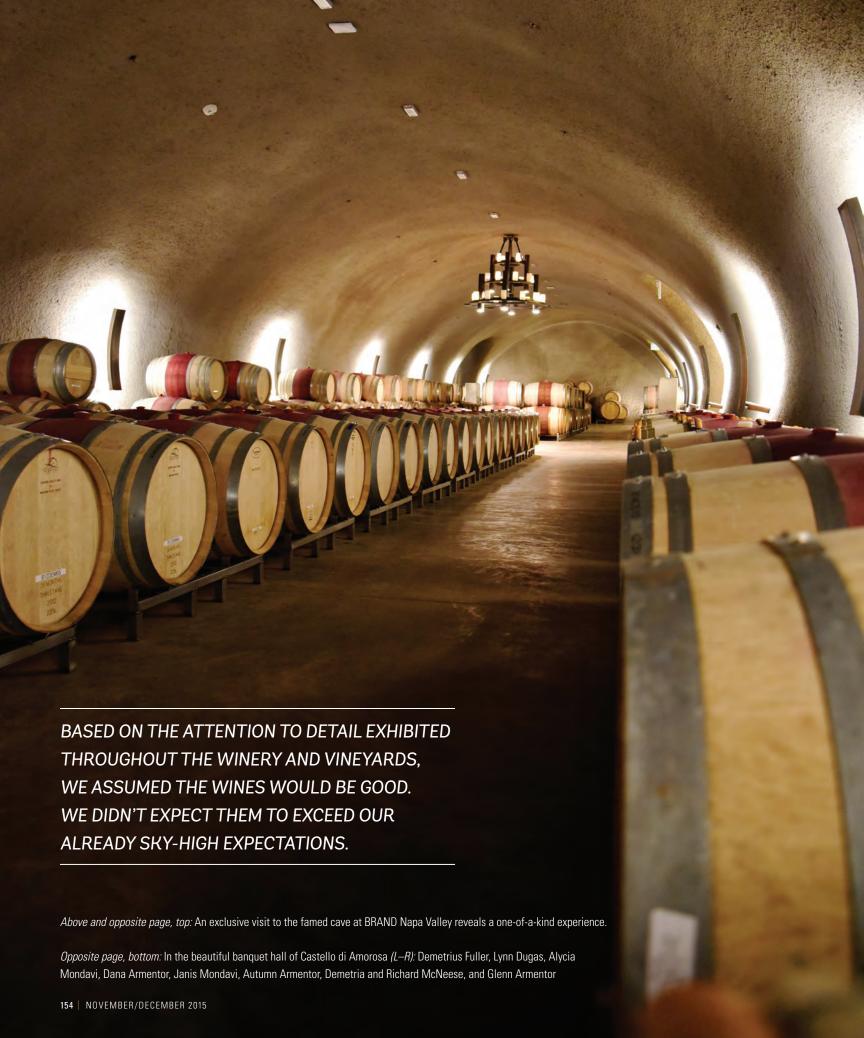
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The Sinfonia group made its way up the hill for a tour of the winery, wine cave, and surrounding grounds given by estate director Greg Gregory himself. So eloquent were his descriptions of how BRAND Napa Valley came to be that we almost forgot we hadn't yet tasted the wines—or the gourmet lunch prepared for us by the Meadowood culinary team. Almost.

Based on the attention to detail exhibited throughout the winery and vineyards, we assumed the wines would be good. We didn't expect them to exceed our already sky-high expectations. It was a rare treat to taste truly phenomenal wine available in such limited production. We're talking a total output of less than seven hundred cases per vintage.

Then came that magical opening night of Festival del Sole's tenth-anniversary season. The Castello di Amorosa's roots can be traced back nearly twenty years, when Dario Sattui purchased the 170-acre plot of land on which it now sits. Originally envisioned as an 8,500-square-foot winery featuring Italian-style wines only available on site, the project morphed into a behemoth 121,000-square-foot structure. It boasts 107 rooms, with four levels above ground, four levels below ground, and an intricate labyrinth (illuminated only by faux candlelight) leading into the cavernous barrel room. It was there, post-concert, where we indulged in an elaborate feast with curated plates of food and carafes of estate wine.

The evening ended with another trip to the courtyard, where a spread of delectable desserts and dance band Wobbly World waited. We were more than satisfied, at least until the next day.









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Day three was scheduled to start with six of us participating in a Sun Run through the vineyards. Only two of us actually made it. Unfazed, my trusty fitness partner and I conquered the perilous path that comprised the vineyard 5K and 10K. Okay, it was mostly a very safe sidewalk.

With exercise under (two of) our belts, the next item on the day's agenda was the annual Taste of Napa. This epicurean extravaganza included more than seventy wineries, a live culinary competition, and food tastings prepared by Napa culinary icons like Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto. Our group skipped the crowds and stayed in the outdoor VIP section, a self-sustaining area with several restaurant participants and very tasty wine. We followed this home-run event with a quick jaunt to the eclectic Oxbow Market for a light lunch and a change from all that vino: a beer and oyster tasting.

The evening brought us back into the fold of Festival del Sole programming. A concert featuring the Russian National Orchestra at the Lincoln Theater in Yountville was a joyous performance that highlighted Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 and the world premiere of an orchestra/choral work by Gordon Getty—yes, from that Getty family.

After the concert, we were whisked away to dinner at the fabled Far Niente Winery in Oakville. The now century-old building was brought back to life in 1979 by Gil Nickel, earning it a spot on the National Register of Historical Places. Carved into its facade are the words *Far Niente*, short for the Italian phrase *dolce far niente* ("sweet doing nothing"). Here, we dined alfresco on the estate grounds, nestled in an elaborate tent that was decked out with crystal chandeliers, carpeted footpaths, and elegant linens. The food was worthy of the surroundings, and the wines were expertly chosen from the winery's extensive library of Cabernet and Chardonnay vintages.

After dinner, we transitioned into a "garage" that housed a cavalcade of vintage cars and motorcycles illuminated by pulsing stage lights. The spectacular vehicles competed for our attention with a live jazz performance inspired by NYC's famed Blue Note Jazz Club. Their performance was the only thing that could have upstaged the autos. The atmosphere was enhanced with exquisite desserts strategically placed around the room and paired with Dolce, a Far Niente sweet wine commonly referred to as "liquid gold."

It couldn't get better than this. Could it?

The following morning was blessedly lazy. And then our group entered the unassuming gravel drive of Martin Estate, oblivious to what lurked behind the extensive, expertly manicured hedges of Petra and Greg Martin's Rutherford enclave.

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Emerging from the driveway into the chateau's backyard, it was impossible to miss an enormously long pool surrounded by immaculately manicured gardens and linen-draped farm tables. Yep, it was all ours.





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Once back in our respective cottages at Meadowood, we had a front-row seat to the pinnacle of our weekend of events. The annual Festival del Sole gala would take place on property—literally right outside of my cottage. I got to hear the sound check for Mr. Spacey while the fairway that leads to the property's main cottage transformed into a Hollywood-era nightclub. It was the perfect setting for white-clad guests whose dress evoked vintage glam.

Once past the velvet rope, we enjoyed a multicourse dinner expertly prepared by Meadowood's culinary armada, this time with estate chef Alejandro Ayala at the helm. Vintage and library wines donated by Beaulieu Vineyards, Hewitt, Acacia, Provenance, and Sterling appeared and reappeared on tables throughout the evening. As lead-ins go, they were sublime.

And then it was time for the main attraction.

Two-time Academy Award and Golden Globe winner Kevin Spacey took the stage to perform swing era standards and popular classics from the Great American Songbook. And if that wasn't enough, Grammy Award—winning vocalist Patti Austin joined in for a couple of numbers. We had barely recovered from the rush of the live performance when the evening's focal point, a live auction, was upon us.

Auctioneer extraordinaire (and owner of Arietta Wines) Fritz Hatton introduced the first lot: walking the red carpet for the Los Angeles premiere of Kevin Spacey's new movie. One of the highlights of the evening was a couple from our entourage nabbing the winning bid. Other auction items ranged from dinner with Gloria and Emilio Estefan to a cultural voyage to Cuba to a trip up the California coast in a Bentley.

The weekend was filled with glitz and glamour, but the reason for Festival del Sole could be found in that auction. The gala raised a record \$1.6 million to support the Festival's free and low-cost concert opportunities for local residents, as well as Napa County public school arts education programs. This year's Fund-A-Need netted \$430,000, doubling last year's results, and will help establish an arts education fund in honor of longtime Festival supporter and board member Margrit Mondavi.

THE WEEKEND WAS FILLED WITH GLITZ AND GLAMOUR.

Though our experiences encompassed only the opening weekend, over the course of the ten-day celebration, the Festival welcomed more than ten thousand attendees to sixty events at nearly forty venues throughout the Napa Valley. In total, more than 150 wineries, hotels, resorts, theaters, restaurants, and vintners took part.

What's truly remarkable about Festival del Sole are the funds it raises—and the difference those funds make to the region's public school arts programs. Partnerships with generous business owners in Napa Valley even extend to Northwest Florida. It was a good reminder about the importance of our area's own fund-raisers, like Sinfonia's Wine Women and Shoes events, which support arts education in an underserved area.

And if we have to eat fabulous food, drink outstanding wine, and experience the artistry of international performers along the way to raising those funds, so be it.







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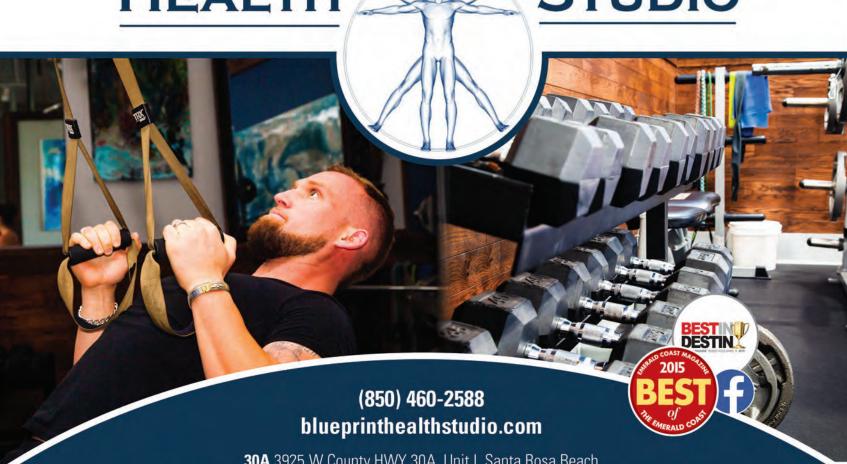






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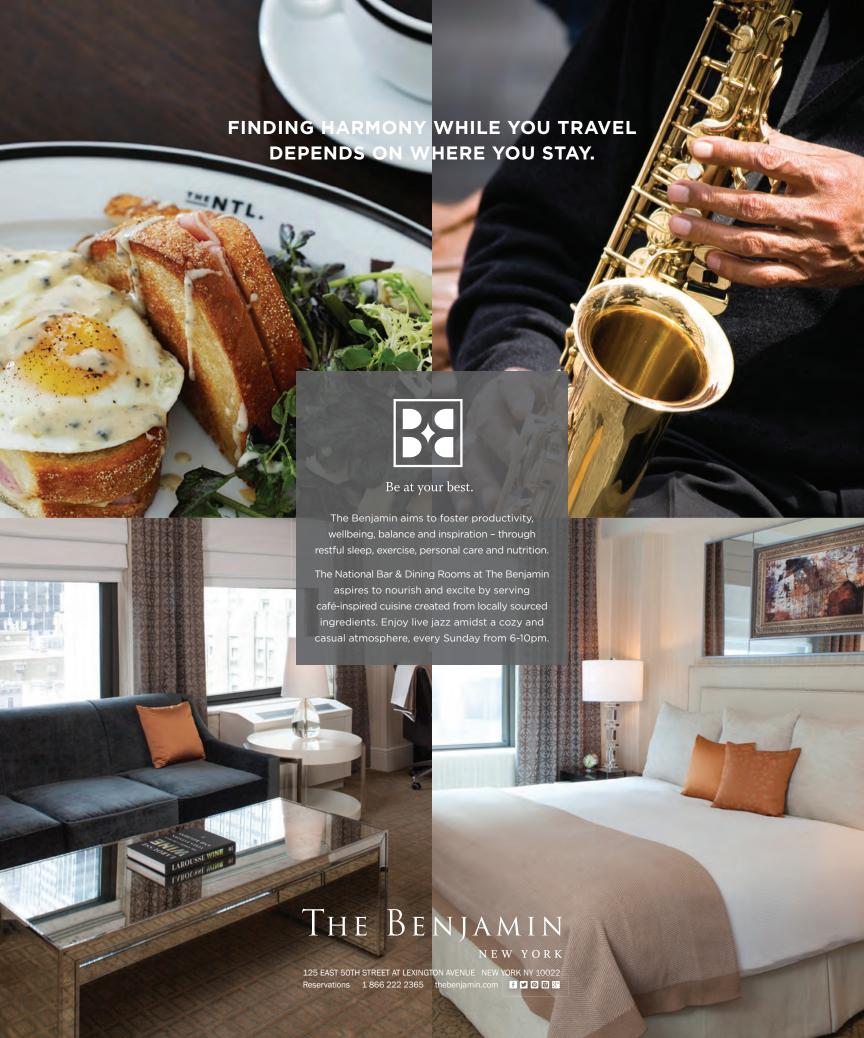






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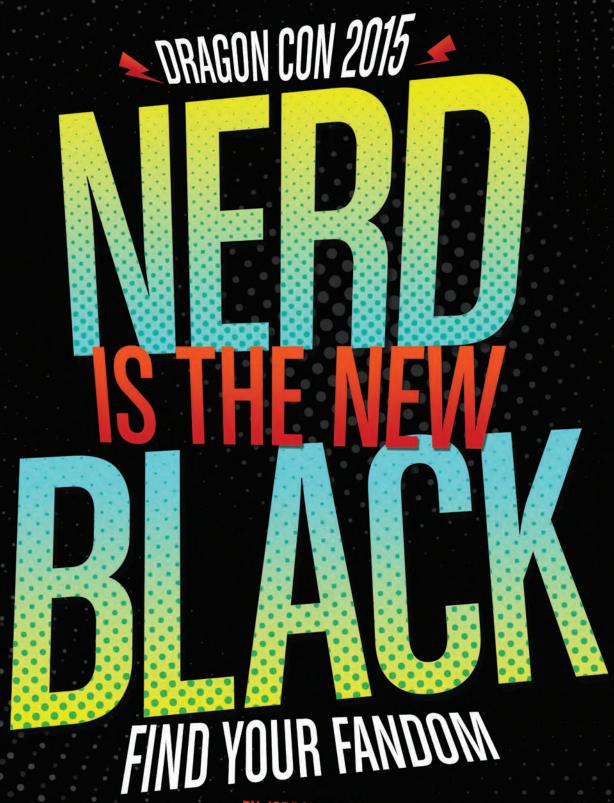
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BY JORDAN STAGGS Photography by Bill Wecke





It was opening weekend of the NCAA football season and a game was about to start at the Georgia Dome—but these fans were not here for that. These were folks of a different sort, whose pleasantries were far more likely to be along the lines of "Live long and prosper" than "Go team." Some of their garb included Jedi robes, lightsabers, magic wands, masks, and a *lot* of spandex. The memorabilia they chose to purchase that weekend were not team logo hats or T-shirts; more likely, they took home artistic renderings of their favorite superheroes or autographed photos from some of their favorite TV stars.

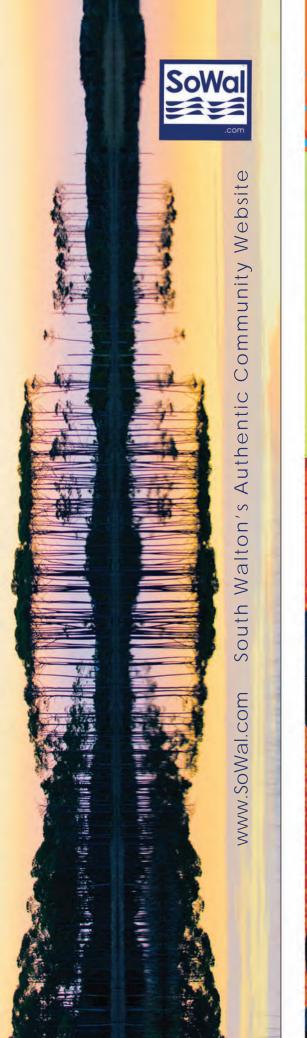
This horde of seventy thousand avid and, dare I say it, obsessed fanatics gathered in the city for the annual Dragon Con pop-culture convention.

Yes, that's right. They were pretty much a bunch of nerds.

In recent years, the term "nerd" (for the sake of simplicity in this story, "nerd" also serves for those who might consider themselves "geeks" or even "dorks," characteristics of which are topics of debate among the three) has changed with the times. In fact, if the number of comic-book adaptation films breaking box office records is any indication, nerd is the new black.

What is a nerd, anyway? Writer and vlogger John Green might have said it best when he proclaimed that if someone calls you a nerd, all they're really saying is "You like stuff." Everyone is a nerd for something, whether a particular book, character, sports team, fashion line—anything, really. People like things, and that's awesome. Everyone should like something so much that they want to know everything about it. They might even want to write about it, make a movie about it, or dress up like it. When it comes to films, books, TV series, and pop culture in general, that's what conventions like Dragon Con are all about. People who like stuff come together and talk about that stuff with others who like it too. It's beautiful in the same way that fans gathering in a stadium to cheer on their favorite team is beautiful—you never feel alone, and you'll always be able to find "your people."

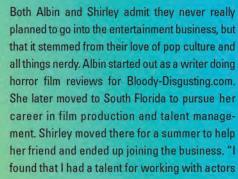




Publicists and film producers Andrea Albin in Miami have been traveling the country for several years promoting their celebrity clients—many of whom are self-proclaimed nerds—who make appearances at conventions such as Dragon Con, San Diego Comic-Con, and even slightly smaller (but no less fun) events such as Pensacon and Gulf Coast Comic Con in Pensacola, Florida. Bloody Bombshell represents actors who have appeared in "nerdy" shows and films such as

The Walking Dead, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and The Hobbit.

"Bloody Bombshell Entertainment combines two of our biggest loves: geek culture and film," Albin says. "Our main goal is public appearance management for celebrities, as well as publicity services, but when it comes down to it, we're just a group of fun-loving geeks who love traveling the world and connecting with like-minded people in a professional setting."



"THERE'S SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT A GROUP OF PEOPLE COMING TOGETHER TO SHARE A LOVE OF SOMETHING GREAT."

and in the convention world, along with production," Shirley says. "I like to say that it chose me rather than my choosing it." The two friends also run Fatality Films production studio.

"I would say nerd culture has entered hipster territory," Albin says. "More and more people are buying Star Wars T-shirts, wearing rimmed glasses without lenses, and watching Marvel movies. But deep down, it's a true culture. There's something magical about a group of people coming together to share a love of something great."

Shirley agrees, continuing her business partner's thought: "Most of our clients proudly sport nerd T-shirts or gossip over what happened on The Big Bang Theory or Game of Thrones. The truth is, of anything mainstream anymore, the majority of it is 'nerdy.' We live in a world where the Avengers assemble and Baby Groot is rocking out to Jackson 5, where Batman is king and we visit Gotham City every week on our televisions. Our clients want to be in nerdy projects because those projects are the exciting new ventures that everyone wants to be a part of, and it's the actors that are part of those projects that everyone wants to see."

Those celebrities make appearances at conventions to interact with fans, sign autographs, take photos, and hold discussion panels where they can answer questions and talk about upcoming projects. Stephen Amell, star of the CW series Arrow (an adaptation of DC Comics' Green Arrow stories), was by far one of the most popular celebrities to appear at Dragon Con this past year, holding at least one panel each day, along with autograph and photo sessions for fans. Often, the wait in line to get a seat in any of the Arrow panels was well over an hour.

Other highlights from pop-culture conventions include vendors and artists selling their wares, themed parties, games designed specifically

for certain "fandoms" to enjoy (fandom is the preferred nerd term for those who love a certain series or universe, such as the *Doctor Who* fandom), panels on writing and other industry topics, and—maybe the king of all convention staples—cosplay.

Short for "costume play," cosplay is the hobby though it really is considered more of an art form-of dressing as a character from any fandom or pop-culture universe. Many serious cosplayers spend hours creating elaborate handmade designs that reflect their favorite characters and worlds. More casual cosplayers might purchase a costume or make something less detailed, but there's no doubt you will see cosplays from all ages, shapes, sizes, and fandoms at conventions. There are also crossovers and original takes on a concept, such as the incredible Iron Merman (an Iron Man/merman design) created by Facebook user aracknoid3 Cosplay, which happened to mesh perfectly with the Georgia Aquarium's Dragon Con 2015 party and cosplay contest. The contest was emceed by famed cosplayer Yaya Han and featured about ten finalists chosen by judges with distinguished cosplay backgrounds.

"I appreciate cosplayers so much. I personally never got into the dress-up side of conventions, but it truly is an art form," Albin says. "I meet so many amazing cosplayers with so much talent that it makes me envious of their creativity."

Though she hasn't cosplayed before either, Shirley also admires the art form. "The concept of cosplay makes complete sense to me," she says. "Who didn't dress up whenever they had the chance as a little kid? It provides an opportunity to be someone else. You can be a superhero or a villain. You're playing a role. Just because we get older doesn't mean that we have to grow up."

Conventions and fandoms—or nerd culture in general—provide an opportunity to do just that: embrace your inner child (or outer geek, dork,



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and/or nerd) and truly show your passion for your favorite things in an environment where you won't be judged and can share your enthusiasm with fellow fans.

"Every convention and event is a new experience for us," Albin says. "Nothing stands out more to me than those once-in-a-lifetime experiences where I really feel that a fan has been touched emotionally by one of our clients. I've seen tears, laughter, extraordinary gifts; you name it, our clients have experienced it. And that's what makes what we do worthwhile—not the drama, not the parties—it's the fans."

The Bloody Bombshells have supported Pensacon since its inception in 2014, and in its second year, the convention had more than twenty-two thousand

attendees over the last weekend of February. Pensacon 2016 will be held at the Pensacola Bay Center, the Crowne Plaza Hotel, and the Saenger Theatre from February 19 through 21. The event will once again benefit two official partner charities: Manna Food Pantries and OneBlood. Dragon Con 2015 also chose an official charity and raised over \$100,000 for the Lymphoma Research Foundation.

"The promoters, the cochairs, and all the people that we've worked with have been amazing," Shirley says. "Mike Ensley with Pensacon and Rachel Reeves with Dragon Con are class acts and wonderful people. It's hard to compare events because, as I've said before, each event is different and each one brings something new to the table. Dragon Con is definitely one of the heavy hitters in the convention world."

The revenge of the nerds in pop culture has occurred in full Force. (I hope you understood that reference! And I hope you understood that reference.) Whether it's a blockbuster film or an award-winning television or book series, there's no denying that sci-fi, comic-book, and all-around nerd-culture staples are becoming cool. You don't have to wear glasses or a pocket protector to appreciate them. All you have to do is embrace your love of stories, characters, and the worlds they live in, and not be afraid to share that passion with others.

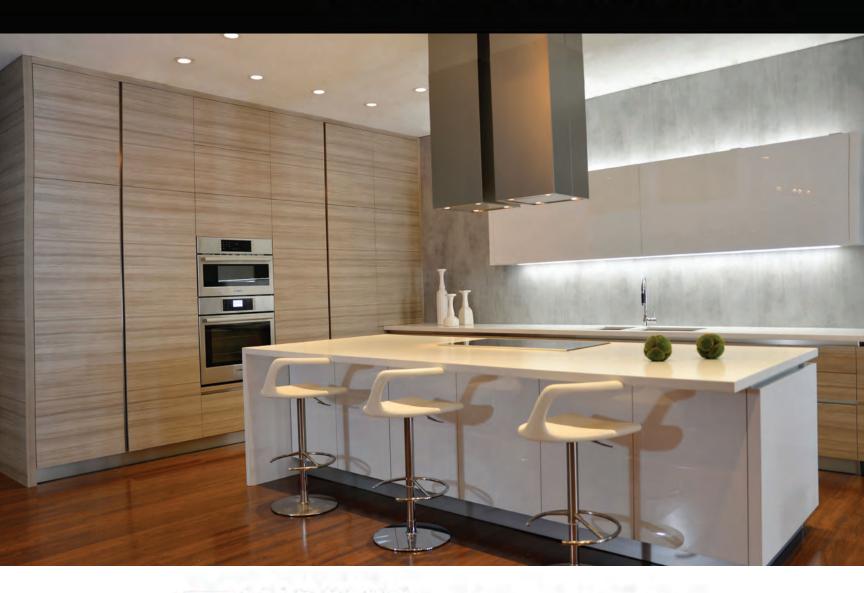
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Frame of Mind



WOOD CREATIONS WITH A CAUSE

By Christy Milliken | Photography courtesy of Chirpwood

Scott Moody was on a retreat with Alliance Ministries of Birmingham, Alabama, when a little bird planted a few seeds for his third career—seeds that took root but did not sprout until later in his life. The camp was held at a Young Life property in Colorado, and he recalls the impact the retreat had on his current mission.

Scott, a graduate of Auburn University's engineering program, says one of his favorite creative projects in college was working on a float—a motorized Aubie the Tiger driving a jalopy—representing his fraternity for the Homecoming float competition. His engineering degree took Scott to work at IBM in 1984. After three years there, he transitioned into teaching high school robotics, calculus, and physics for twenty-five years. After completing a fulfilling career as a teacher, he heard someone speak at an Alliance Ministries event in Colorado about a gap-year program for students in Rwanda.

Bridge2Rwanda offers an intensive program for top Rwandan students in the following areas: academic preparation, discipleship and spiritual growth, servant leadership, entrepreneurship, and community service. The scholarships provided through the program connect students with top universities around the world to help them pursue their dreams. Hearing about this program piqued Scott's interest, and he soon became directly involved as a teacher.

It was during his first trip to Rwanda that Scott's heart was captivated by the eagerness of the students. Their willingness to learn was very different from the experience he had had in the traditional US classroom during his years of teaching, and Scott decided to try and adopt some of that mentality himself. The ideas began to flow on how he could develop a plan and handcraft a lifestyle with his core values of faith, family, and teaching intact. The third phase of his career began to develop in ways he wasn't expecting, and his overall goal became "not just to relate life experiences but also to create life experiences."

That bird feeder would later help the very students he had met on his trip to Rwanda develop wings and soar to new heights.

Scott actively started planting seeds to pay it forward while using his engineering prowess for a personal project—a handcrafted bird feeder. That bird feeder would later help the very students he had met on his trip to Rwanda develop wings and soar to new heights. Better equipped to compete in today's global marketplace, the students would be able to take their education and new skills home and have a positive impact on their country.

After Scott's first trip to Rwanda, Chirpwood was born—a wood products company founded by third-generation forest owners. (Scott and his wife are in the timber business.) It is a celebration of small, handmade, native, and solid goods. It is also about commerce with a purpose. Half of all the profits from Chirpwood's products, such as bird feeders and picture frames, currently go to—you guessed it—Bridge2Rwanda. Scott's goal is to continue to partner with programs that he and his company believe in.











Carl Coleman

FINE ART













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While bird feeder sales help with causes that create change, the handmade custom framing is where Scott enjoys collaborating with other artists. He works with fellow artisans and offers them premium craftsmanship with custom specifications to enhance their artwork. His wood of choice, southern yellow pine, is selected with durability in mind, so the artists' works, as well as the frames, will stand the test of time. Scott's basement studio is covered with paint splatters, test samples, and other evidence of his color scheme formulations, while his wood barn is filled with remnants of sawdust from carefully crafting each frame. Meanwhile, guests might spot the family cat perched on a windowsill overlooking Scott's courtyard, watching birds land on his simple yet elegant handmade bird feeders.

Scott's ability to work with an artist to achieve a specialized color palette is something that really inspires him. Scott is currently working with multiple artists and recently helped frame works by mixed-media artist Andrew Lee of Auburn and letterpress studio Cotton and Pine in Montgomery as they

prepared for the Made South Market in Franklin, Tennessee, this past September. Another recent commission was for restaurant owner and executive chef Chris Hastings of Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham, Alabama. Hastings has opened OvenBird, a new live-fire restaurant with a menu focused on the amazing seasonal Southern ingredients we know and love. The restaurant, which is located in Birmingham's Pepper Place, features a small-plate format inspired by the live-fire traditions of Spain, Portugal, Uruguay, and Argentina. Among OvenBird's decor are images displayed in custom Chirpwood frames.

Scott Moody is an artisan at heart, engineering a life framed with all the elements of creativity while bridging the gap between education, art, and entrepreneurial endeavors!

For more information about Chirpwood products and Bridge2Rwanda, please visit www.chirpwood.com.





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While most parents are trying to decrease their kids' exposure to technology, Michael Shaver is determined to dramatically increase exposure for Florida's at-risk kids. The CEO of Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS) says technology is, in fact, the key to breaking generations of poverty, abuse, and addiction. Microsoft agrees—to the tune of \$7.3 million. CHS intends to turn the company's cutting-edge grant into nothing less than stability for foster children, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

icrosoft's YouthSpark software grant will fund Tech Success programs for at-risk children across the state. The CHS Emerald Coast Division's initial priority is teens, according to executive director Sean Golder, with both a permanent site and a mobile site in the works. The idea is that youth aged fourteen to nineteen will use webbased learning to become familiar with Microsoft Office

essentials like Excel, PowerPoint, and much more. The agency is also partnering with CareerSource Florida to give teens experience filling out job applications and building résumés.

While the rest of us take technology for granted, kids in the "system" often have little experience with computers. That's a problem when you consider that 80 percent of job applications are only available on the web. "We need to do something to close this digital divide," Shaver insists. "Even if they don't own a computer, they can go to the library if they understand how to create a document, how to put it on a thumb drive, and how to download that file. It's something totally new to these kids."

Eventually, Golder wants to expand Tech Success to include younger kids whose lack of familiarity with computers can affect standardized test scores. "These tests are now done almost exclusively online," he explains. "Many at-risk kids are fairly transient, and they haven't had consistent access to computers."

Tech Success isn't a nice perk; it's crucial in breaking cycles of child welfare involvement. Sadly, the greatest risk factor for entering the foster care system is being born to a former ward of the state who has aged out of the system. Why? Because traditionally, there's been nothing to help wards create a different future. CHS will continue to help kids work through the trauma that brought them into the system, but that's just a Band-Aid without educational assistance. "If we can provide opportunities for these kids through programs like Tech Success, what we're really doing is insulating ourselves against the likelihood that their kids come into the system," Shaver says.

CHS has found "forever" families for about forty thousand children since its founding in 1902, but its initial mission and reach have expanded tremendously. It now operates from ninety sites statewide and has more feet on the ground than any other child welfare institution in Florida. Today, the agency has three branches of effort: child welfare services, behavioral/mental health services, and early childhood services. Child welfare, which focuses on children who've been abused or are at risk of abuse, accounts for about 60 percent of the agency's activities statewide. That percentage is even greater locally, Golder says. In response, the Emerald Coast Division has initiated several innovative programs.

The division is perhaps best known for Clair's House, a group residence in Panama City for teen girls who, for multiple reasons, cannot be reunited with their families of origin or placed with foster families. What the girls experience at Clair's House is a different kind of family—but a family nonetheless. The home is decorated with pictures of the girls' outings and has a Brady Bunch-like space where they can do homework or just hang out. Because these girls have been affected by trauma, Clair's House is staffed twenty-four hours a day and offers the behavioral and educational support they need. Just as importantly, it gives them a sense of normalcy. "Clair's House is their home," Golder says, "and the girls see it that way."

"Many at-risk kids are fairly transient, and they haven't had consistent access to computers."

-SEAN GOLDER

Early Childhood Court is another groundbreaking local program. Launched in June, it gives parents tools to fast-track reunification with an infant or toddler who's been removed from his or her home. This aggressive program is purely voluntary for parents, who get access to multiple services but also must agree to weekly meetings with a caseworker and monthly court appointments. The concept can be intimidating for some parents, who often are afraid of failing



While not all families are homeless, Golder says too many are living in intolerable conditions—like a family of six in a one-bedroom apartment.

to meet requirements that range from keeping a job to maintaining a visitation schedule with their child. "We work a lot on providing parents every opportunity to succeed and move away from the mind-set of failure," Golder says.

There's a lot at stake. The effects of abuse and neglect on children from birth to three years old are typically greater than on older children, he explains, because it impacts cognitive development. So important—and impressive—is the division's Early Childhood Court that the national organization Zero to Three has named Panama City one of five demonstration sites in the state. Eventually, data collected locally could impact practices for at-risk children around the country.

The more kids they can help, the better. But Golder is laser-focused on the stability of children on the Emerald Coast. That's why CHS works diligently to help families navigate the often-frustrating red tape surrounding services they need. Among the

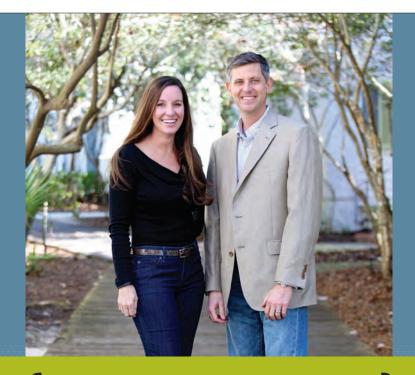
most prevalent need right now is adequate housing. While not all families are homeless, Golder says too many are living in intolerable conditions—like a family of six in a one-bedroom apartment. "It's very difficult for us to tell the court that a situation like that is in the best interest of the children," he explains. "So we do our best to assist them in finding better living arrangements."

In a touristy area like Panama City, which has plenty of high-income residents, it can be hard for people to see past the beach condos and into the areas of desperate need. The good news is that CHS and its partners in child welfare have made strides in educating the community about neighbors in need. Even better, the Emerald Coast is filled with people who are eager to help.

Golder and the CHS team can use all the support they can get to ensure Tech Success lives up to its name. Some current community partners have already agreed

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to become involved with the program, and CHS is actively working to recruit mentors from the education and business sectors. The technology built into Tech Success makes it even easier for volunteers to say yes, with remote capabilities that allow mentors to assess students' progress and interact with them online.

At its heart, Tech Success is another way for CHS to help kids in the child welfare system beat the odds. "The human desire to succeed, to be happy, to love, to laugh, to have a fulfilled life—that's evenly distributed across the human race," Shaver says. "What isn't evenly distributed in our society is the opportunity to realize those gifts. That's what we do: we even the odds for these kids."



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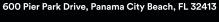
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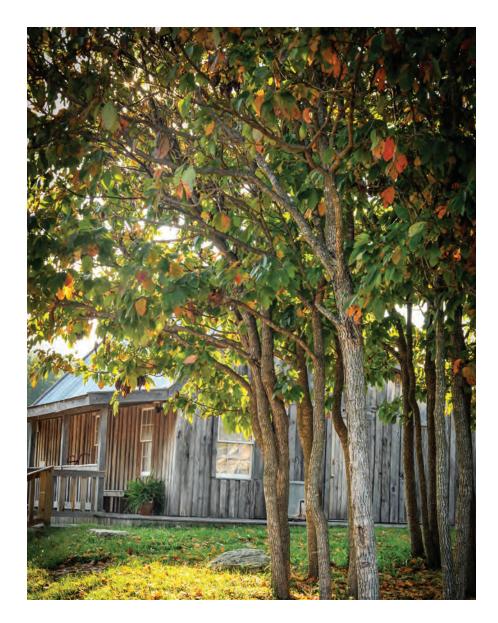


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hen the hazy dog days of late July and early August settle on us, there are two topics of small talk one can most always count on in any social encounter: a discussion about the stifling blanket of humidity and heat frequently followed by boastings that one's tomatoes are ripening on the vine and soon to be on the plate.

As any true connoisseur of the *Solanum lycopersicum* knows, there are tomatoes and then there are *heirloom* tomatoes. Within the gardening community, heirlooms are understood to be fruits and vegetables grown from seeds that have been passed down through the generations. These gifts of nature are open pollinated; their perpetuation relies upon natural pollination—insects, birds, bats, and the wind. As with all of creation's wonders, the fruits and produce of open pollination are widely varied and nothing short of marvelous.

Within this generation of American farms, there are seemingly fewer and fewer heirloom seeds commonly available for the fewer and fewer people who possess the golden knowledge and ability to grow their own food. Jere and Emilee Gettle of Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company in Mansfield, Missouri, have made it their mission in life to augment that.

The Gettles proliferate the knowledge and availability of heirlooms, all while inspiring and educating current and future generations of American growers and gardeners—as well as the rest of the gardening world—about the dwindling heirloom varieties. Jere uses cauliflower as an example to show where our seed supply has gone. "In the 1880s, some of the different seed catalogs listed around forty-five different varieties of cauliflower," he says. "These were all local pollinated varieties that you could save your seed from because they weren't patented. Today, if you look through the modern seed catalogs, you'll likely find one or two varieties of cauliflower, and oftentimes most of these varieties are hybrid. This change in the offerings of the seed catalogs shows how our food supply has been taken away from the small farmers and gardeners and turned over to the hands of a few big seed producers, like Monsanto-owned Seminis."

Baker Creek carries one of the largest selections of seeds from the nineteenth century and has become the premier go-to source for gardeners and home growers to promote and preserve their agricultural and culinary heritage. With interest in heirloom seed varieties on the rise, there are also many boutique seed companies that thrive in contrast to the conglomerate commercial seed producers that grow almost exclusively for large-scale industrial farms.



WITHIN THE GARDENING COMMUNITY, HEIRLOOMS ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES GROWN FROM SEEDS THAT HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE GENERATIONS.

"With the majority of food crops today, one seed company may control 50 percent of the supply on one particular variety of lettuce, or one seed company might control 30 percent of the tomato crop or 60 percent of any other crop," Jere explains. "The greater portion of our food supply is in the hands of just a few seed companies. Often, the highest production of a crop is controlled by a major seed company, as well." With control of crops consolidated into a few seed companies, a few seed producers, a few crop distributors, and a few big-box stores, Jere points out that it creates a dangerous situation. "It puts all of the food supply chain in the hands of just a few seed companies. If something were to happen to any of the major seed companies, a large part of our food supply would be greatly affected. There are lots of links in the food supply chain, and these may be strong links, but any one of these companies could go bankrupt or possibly be affected by a



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natural disaster—for one reason or another—and then many communities would not be able to feed themselves."

Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company plays a leading role in assisting and educating people in growing their own food in small garden plots. This is the "teach a man to fish" adage in action for the betterment of our world.

"We started out basically as a hobby in my bedroom as a kid," Jere says. "I was excited about saving seeds, and that was where it all started. I started talking to other people and found out that they too were excited about heirloom seeds, so I started putting out catalogs. Part of the focus of our catalog and company today is to let people know about all of the different varieties that are available, and also to encourage them to save varieties and keep their local varieties going as well. It just seems like a continuous fortune that people are sharing and giving us new varieties all the time."

Baker Creek gets people involved in the heirloom movement by talking about and promoting heirloom seeds with events throughout the year in different areas of the country. For example, the Gettles and their company sponsor and help organize the annual National Heirloom Expo in California.

"Sometimes people are just interested in heirloom varieties or saving and trading different seeds," Jere says. "Many of them are in the process of learning. We try to find varieties that may be suitable for other regions, such as varieties we've obtained from faraway places like Siberia. Then we make these available to people who otherwise may not have had access to such seeds. Our main objective is to connect people not only with past varieties that may be culturally relevant to them through their history, but also with varieties that may do well in their certain climate or market. Or, people may want to have fun just growing heirlooms as a hobby or want diversity in their gardens." The Gettles appreciate that people have different reasons for growing heirloom plants. Baker Creek tries to "connect the dots" by finding historic seeds that may even have been grown by a family's ancestors. "That's one of our most common requests—to find something that their grandmother raised because they'd like to get that back again: that flavor, the taste of a particular variety."



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Since its inception, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds has grown—just as its products do after a good rain. The Gettles have expanded the company; there is now a location in Sonoma County, California, in the beautiful town of Petaluma. Their most recent project is the restoration and preservation of a Wethersfield, Connecticut, landmark—Comstock, Ferre and Company, the oldest continuously operating seed company in New England. The Gettles publish Heirloom Gardener, a quarterly magazine, and put out an annual edition of the Whole Seed Catalog. They've also written two books.

Throughout the year, the Gettles and their company host classes on seed saving, preserving heirlooms, breeding new varieties, and heirlooms for the future. Baker Creek hosts a spring festival at the main location in Missouri that is one of the best-known events in the gardening world. People come together to share seeds and knowledge, have fun, and ask questions of the Baker Creek experts.

"THAT'S ONE OF OUR MOST COMMON REQUESTS—TO FIND SOMETHING THAT THEIR GRANDMOTHER RAISED BECAUSE THEY'D LIKE TO GET THAT BACK AGAIN: THAT FLAVOR, THE TASTE OF A PARTICULAR VARIETY."

"Whether it's a tomato breeder, a saver of heirloom varieties, or someone who does specialized work with cauliflower and so forth, people come together and share ideas," Jere says. "We work a lot with real mom-and-pop operations that may have three- or four-acre farms of assorted crops. We don't really work with large-scale or even medium-scale farms. We meet lots and lots of people who grow for chefs and farmers markets."

Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company is also dedicated to teaching the next generation of food growers. Each year, the company donates between five hundred thousand and a million seed packets to school garden projects so children can learn about where their food comes from and alternatives to buying from those big corporations who dominate the food industry.

"Often, once these kids experience the diversity, the colors, the sizes, and the shapes of plants available, they get very excited," Jere reveals. "They become knowledgeable about genetically modified organisms (GMOs), growing different crops, and different types of crosses. Once they see, taste, touch, and feel what's available, they get superexcited. We're getting a lot of new school gardens going, and lots of teachers are realizing that not only is this an excellent cross-disciplinary educational tool and an opportunity for a lesson, but it's also something our future generations need. Kids need to get off of their cell phones and video games and get outside, put their hands in the dirt, and do something productive in the garden."

Gardeners can request a free color catalog, buy the Whole Seed Catalog, or get more news from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds at www.rareseeds.com.







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Story and photography by Caitlin McGrother

WHAT IS VEGAN?

Chances are you know someone who adheres to a vegan lifestyle. But what exactly does *vegan* mean? Vegan describes a lifestyle in which one abstains from animal products. Most recognizably, a vegan does not eat dairy, eggs, honey, meat, or other ingredients that are derived from animals. A vegan avoids all cosmetic, personal care, and household products that contain animal ingredients, and a vegan does not purchase clothing made from animals. Veganism also tends to coincide with animal rights issues, and followers of this lifestyle avoid products tested on animals and forms of entertainment that involve animal exploitation.

Reasons for becoming vegan are often personal and vary among individuals. Often, veganism is the result of individuals learning about the atrocities of factory farming, in which chickens, cows, pigs, and other livestock are confined to small spaces and unsanitary conditions. Others may adopt a vegan lifestyle due to the catastrophic environmental issues resulting from animal farming. Vegans may also choose this lifestyle because they want to take a stand against the animal exploitation that runs rampant in our culture, including unnecessary animal testing and animals in entertainment. Or, individuals may change to a vegan diet for the vast health benefits, which include weight loss, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and a healthier heart.

MY VEGAN STORY

When I went vegan ten years ago, I wanted to make a positive contribution to the world. Once I made the connection that animals had the same right to live as humans, it made no sense to sacrifice their lives for my own pleasures. Animals are my friends, companions, and fellow earthlings. What makes me better than them? Nothing.

During my formative years as a vegan, there were very few resources available. Because I was initially only aware of the food politics involved, my first lifestyle change was adopting a plant-based diet. I learned by reading ingredient labels and practicing common sense. I researched veganism and asked questions to those who were more knowledgeable about it. I ate simple, healthful meals comprised of plant-based ingredients. Over time, I also switched to all-natural bath and beauty products and stopped purchasing clothing and accessories made with animal fabric.

Over the years, veganism has become much more mainstream and accepted. A decade ago, there were very few high-quality choices when it came to animal-free alternatives in clothing, food, and personal care products. Now, I love



Caitlin McGrother | The Vegan Chickpea

experimenting with the variety of cruelty-free brands available. Vegan clothing and accessories have also become extremely fashionable, and I love discovering new product lines. Thanks to the growing community of individuals, bloggers, cookbook authors, and fashion brands, as well as the cosmetics, personal care, and household product companies all dedicated to the cruelty-free lifestyle, being vegan has never been easier.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Becoming a vegan can appear overwhelming when one is faced with the necessary lifestyle changes, but it's simply about replacing one product for a similar vegan alternative. Milk, butter, ice cream, yogurt, and *even cheese* have amazing animal-free alternatives. Protein, which vegans are often accused of being deficient in, is abundant with options including beans, nuts, whole grains, tempeh, tofu, and seitan. Additionally, animal-free fabrics are more innovative and stylish than ever before, making animal skin completely unnecessary.

Below is a simple guide for experimenting with a vegan-friendly lifestyle. Although it is not an exhaustive list, it provides the groundwork for beginning your journey to living cruelty-free. Understand that all changes are positive, whether going meat-free one day of the week, choosing animal-free clothing, or no longer supporting entertainment that exploits animals. Most of all, please take the time to research and find your own truth. There are abundant resources available about the vegan lifestyle, and it is important to educate yourself.

VEGAN CHEAT SHEET

Joods:

To avoid: all dairy and dairy by-products (milk, yogurt, ice cream, butter, cream, etc.), eggs, honey, meat, and meat by-products (beef, broth, fish, poultry, pork, seafood, etc.).

To enjoy: all fruits and vegetables, beans, grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, dairy alternatives (almond, cashew, coconut, hemp, soy, etc.), and meat alternatives (tempeh, tofu, seitan, etc.).

Personal care/cosmetics:

To avoid: bee products (honey, pollen, wax, etc.), carmine, dairy, gelatin, lanolin, and shellac.

To enjoy: plant-based oils (almond, coconut, macadamia, etc.) and fruit-derived colorants.

Clothing and accessories

To avoid: leather, suede, silk, and wool.

To enjoy: fabrics made of cotton, hemp, and soy and all man-made materials.

Entertainment

To avoid: aquariums, circuses, SeaWorld, and zoos.

To enjoy: animal-free circuses, animal sanctuaries, parks, and rescue events.

Follow Caitlin's vegan story at www.theveganchickpea.com!



Yield: 4-6 servings Total time: I hour



Although chowders are traditionally made with cream, the same creaminess can be achieved through dairy-free alternatives. With the combination of almond milk and a partially blended consistency, this soup will make you forget it's missing the dairy. For added texture, crush some of your favorite crackers on top.

INGREDIENTS

- · 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 Vidalia onion, finely chopped
- · 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- · 4 cups unsweetened almond milk
- · 8 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed into one-inch pieces
- 3 cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 cup carrots, sliced

In a large soup pot over medium heat, combine olive oil, onion, garlic, and salt. Sauté until onions are translucent. Add potatoes, corn, and carrots, and lightly salt the mixture. Allow the vegetables to lightly cook, about 5 minutes, stirring well. Add in the almond milk. Allow the soup to begin to bubble, stirring every few minutes. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 45 minutes, or until the potatoes are soft.

If you have an immersion blender: Blend approximately 1/3 of the soup while still in the pot.

If you have a regular blender: Remove one cup of the soup and transfer it to a blender. Puree until smooth and then recombine with the rest of the soup, stirring well.

Ladle soup into bowls, salt to taste, and enjoy!



Healthy Banana "Milkshake"

Yield: I smoothie
Total time: 5 minutes



When bananas are frozen and then blended, they become intensely creamy and resemble ice cream. This smoothie is the best of both worlds—extremely healthy and filling (especially with the help of the almond butter) and delicious. It's like drinking a milkshake for breakfast! Feel free to modify the recipe to your liking: add more or less almond milk depending on your desired thickness, or an extra spoonful of almond butter for a creamier consistency.

In a blender, blend bananas and almond butter until bananas are finely chopped. Add almond milk, two tablespoons at a time, until desired consistency is

reached. Add in chocolate chips or other desired add-ins. Pour into glass and serve. Enjoy!

(or nut butter of your choice)

2 tablespoons chocolate chips

(or other desired add-ins)

• 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsweetened

vanilla nondairy milk (such as almond milk)

INGREDIENTS

· 2 large bananas, sliced and frozen

Find more delicious vegan recipes at www.theveganchickpea.com





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MAKING AN MPACI

Giving Is Good in Northwest Florida

By Sallie W. Boyles Photography courtesy of IMPACT 100 of Northwest Florida

y no coincidence, the word humanity has a dual meaning: the existence of humans and the depth of their compassion. Survival and caring for one another are entwined, which explains why people across cultures and throughout history have given their time and worldly possessions to support those in need and the greater good of their communities.

Giving begins with the individual, of course, and every little bit helps, but humanitarians have long recognized the power of pooling their resources. Among today's countless groups of fund-raising operations, sometimes referred to as giving circles, one organization worth noting is IMPACT 100. Since launching in 2001, IMPACT 100 has inspired thousands of women to raise tens of millions of dollars, every dime of which has been spent on grants valued at a minimum of \$100,000 apiece for worthy causes. Its local chapter, IMPACT 100 of Northwest Florida, has served Okaloosa and Walton Counties since 2012. Commencing with 128 women, the group has grown to 323 in 2015. Remarkably, by the end of year four, IMPACT 100 of Northwest

Florida will have presented grants totaling \$921,000 to eight different organizations.

An elementary equation explains the IMPACT 100 model. A group begins with a hundred women. Each one pays \$1,000 in annual membership dues, totaling \$100,000 for the group. Since members contribute their time and cover assorted costs, the sum of dues for the year matches the grant money distributed. Upon receiving and subsequently reviewing grant requests from charitable organizations, each member gets one vote to choose which cause receives the award. Paying dues and voting are fundamental responsibilities of membership.





Horizons and Shelter House were each awarded \$125,000 grants by IMPACT 100 NWF in 2014.

Importantly, a guiding principle of IMPACT 100 is to make a *decided impact*, so the value of any grant is \$100,000 or more. Thus, a club with 120 members, for example, issues a single grant of \$120,000 to one recipient. A two-hundred-member club, however, may award grants of \$100,000 apiece to two different organizations.

"The very simple concept came to me after years of asking my women friends to come get involved," says Wendy Steele, a longtime volunteer and founder of IMPACT 100, Inc. of Cincinnati, Ohio, and founder and CEO of Generosity Matters, which consults organizations and families about charitable giving. From serving on nonprofits' boards, she has a history of calling upon friends to contribute their talents. Some would say that they couldn't afford the time or that they were focused on their own causes. Others would cite high salaries paid to nonprofits' CEOs as a reason not to write a check. "All objections were real and justified," Wendy acknowledges, "but I felt the women were missing out. I went about creating something that would systematically eliminate all of the objections I had been hearing and open the door for philanthropy."

IMPORTANTLY, A GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF IMPACT 100 IS TO MAKE A DECIDED IMPACT, SO THE VALUE OF ANY GRANT IS \$100,000 OR MORE.

She considered both donors and recipients in establishing the membership and contribution thresholds. "When you give \$1,000, you think about it," says Wendy. "It's important to think about your gift and the cause." While significant, the membership fee is affordable for women of varied income levels, and upon joining, each one, no matter her personal wealth or standing in the community, has equal influence with her vote. The mechanism further allows the individual to decide how involved she'll be—such as serving on her IMPACT 100's board, chairing a committee, vetting grant candidates by conducting site visits, and more.

"At the same time," Wendy adds, "nonprofits are always asking for money but not getting enough to execute their vision." IMPACT 100's structure empowers women to deliver worthwhile grants.

Attracting 123 members and donating \$123,000 to a dental clinic for the homeless in their inaugural year, IMPACT 100 of Cincinnati readily became the subject of media stories, including an article in *People* magazine. Wendy also received a prestigious Jefferson Award for her outstanding public service. As the news traveled, women in other cities and states adopted IMPACT 100's model. At this time, twenty-six groups have been established, five of which are in Australia. "What we share is a deep commitment to our community," Wendy states.

"Every year, we are finding a new dimension to how we can grow and serve our community," says Michelle Anchors, a sixth-generation resident of the region and founding member of IMPACT 100 of Northwest Florida (NWF).



2015 grant finalist AMIkids

"WE DON'T JUST WRITE A CHECK. GRANT CANDIDATES MUST OUTLINE PRECISELY IN THEIR APPLICATIONS HOW THEY PLAN TO SPEND THE MONEY."

-CHRISTINE CARTER

The large awards grab people's attention, but as Christine Carter, current president of IMPACT 100 NWF, points out, "We don't just write a check. Grant candidates must outline precisely in their applications how they plan to spend the money."

A recipient of \$125,000 in 2014, Horizons of Okaloosa County (now the Arc of the Emerald Coast)—a provider of childcare for boys and girls

with developmental challenges, such as autism and cerebral palsy, plus many other services for the disabled of all ages—presented a plan to build an aquatic center. "We are surrounded by water," says L.A. Woodall, the nonprofit's director of community development. "We have the beach, the Intracoastal Waterway, lakes, and pools; however, so many of our people are unable to enjoy the water because they can't swim or don't have access."

Horizon's challenge was getting the project off the ground. "The financial obstacle would have been too great without the grant," says L.A., revealing that the center's main feature is a 1,400-square-foot saltwater pool with wheelchair access. "Because of the \$125,000, we were able to achieve additional funding to ensure completion of a project that otherwise wouldn't have happened. The women of IMPACT 100 set this in motion, and within months from now, we'll have an aquatic center for the disabled to use year-round. IMPACT 100 helped us reach an entire populace with physical and intellectual disabilities. We'll even host Special Olympic meets!"



The Emerald Coast Theatre Company, one of the 2015 grant finalists

Shelter House, the other 2014 IMPACT 100 of NWF grant recipient, is the only certified domestic and sexual violence center for Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Having outgrown their facility, staff and clients were crammed into office and counseling space. With two or more to an office, personnel had to juggle and limit appointments to meet clients in private. Young children also shared a waiting area with teens and adults, and the structure itself was shabby.

"We focus on respect and dignity, and treating people who are victims as if they matter," says Dawn Hoffman, president of the board of directors at Shelter House. "That was hard when the building was run-down. The grant opened the door to a number of possibilities. Now the airy and open environment lets them know that someone is interested in them. The staff feels more valued as well, and they have the ability to serve more people. We also built an isolated and cozy space to counsel sexual assault













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2015 grant finalist Grace Rides

CANDIDATES MUST DEMONSTRATE PLANS FOR A NEW PROJECT THAT WILL HAVE "A MAJOR POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY AND CAN BE COMPLETED WITHIN TWO YEARS."

victims, so those clients no longer feel as if people are looking in on them. Many are also surprised to learn that our shelter serves more kids than adults, but we now have a playroom for them."

One longtime client commented that as soon as she entered the new facility she felt better, even before her counseling began. The calm environment so inspired her that she sat silently, gathering her thoughts for a more productive session. Grateful, she expressed that the new office was what she had always envisioned Shelter House should be.

With so much need, voting for one project over another isn't easy, but clear-cut rules facilitate the process. To qualify as a candidate for an IMPACT 100 of NWF grant, the organization must be registered as a 501(c)(3) and must serve in either Okaloosa or Walton County. In completing an ontime application, which is detailed but not nearly as

complicated as government forms, candidates must demonstrate plans for a new project that will have "a major positive impact in the community and can be completed within two years" in one of the following areas: arts and culture; education; environment, recreation and preservation; family; or health and wellness. IMPACT 100 of NWF does not fund grants to pay debt or regular operating costs.

From this year's five finalists—the Emerald Coast Theatre Company (arts and culture), AMIkids Emerald Coast (education), Matrix Community Outreach Center (family), Grace Rides (health and wellness), and the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College (environment)—three winners will each receive \$107,667.



2015 grant finalist Matrix Community Outreach Center

WHILE REACHING OUT TO NEW MEMBERS, THE WOMEN OF IMPACT 100 ENCOURAGE MORE NONPROFIT LEADERS TO APPLY FOR GRANTS, EVEN IF THEY HAVE NO EXPERIENCE.

Interestingly, although many view Wendy's original IMPACT 100 as the parent organization, each group operates autonomously, allowing boards and members to establish their own bylaws. Still, the framework is free online for anyone to copy, and Wendy and others from different chapters happily coach leaders of newly forming groups and also collaborate with one another. For groups to share information, find solutions, and instruct those who want to start their own organizations, Wendy and Florida's four IMPACT 100 groups are hosting a first annual global conference in Delray Beach, Florida, on October 23–25, 2016.

When forming the NWF organization, Michelle and her team looked to the already established

IMPACT 100 Pensacola Bay Area for insights. "They were like big sisters to us," she says, "offering ideas and suggestions, and we took advantage of their mentoring." Nevertheless, she discloses, "One piece of advice that meant the most was not to copy their organization. As a new, young board of directors, we needed to go through the process of whom we wanted to be and serve."

Regarding whom they want to be, Michelle and Christine both echo a common saying among their members: "We don't seek wealthy women; we seek generous women." With a minimum age of eighteen to join, many are surprised to witness the passion of their youngest members. "We have a number of multigenerational families in our groups," says Wendy, "and it's





Organization representatives at the 2015 IMPACT 100 NWF grant finalist ceremony

THIRTY-SIX ORGANIZATIONS APPLIED TO IMPACT 100 OF NWF IN 2015. THE LIST WILL UNDOUBTEDLY EXPAND; IN TURN, THE GROUP AIMS TO ATTAIN 501 MEMBERS.



Representatives at the Matrix Community Outreach Center

not always the mom encouraging the daughter to join. IMPACT 100 transforms their relationships with one another and with their community."

While reaching out to new members, the women of IMPACT 100 encourage more nonprofit leaders to apply for grants, even if they have no experience. To educate them, NWF and other IMPACT 100 groups host annual grant-writing workshops and offer critical feedback before the submission deadline. On top of that, winners are not the only ones who profit. "When the women from our group go on site visits and uncover needs," Christine contends, "they very often step up to the plate and volunteer. It's always beneficial for an organization to apply.

We also publish an online wish list of their needs. If you apply for a grant, we post your wish list."

Thirty-six organizations applied to IMPACT 100 of NWF in 2015. The list will undoubtedly expand; in turn, the group aims to attain 501 members. The figure—a wink to 501(c)(3)—would fund five grants, one for each category. ■

Groups interested in applying for future grants (beginning in 2016) and prospective members will find applications, deadlines, and more by visiting IMPACT 100 of NWF online at

impactnwf.org.

Updates about the global conference are posted on the **IMPACT 100 Global Advisory** Council Facebook page.



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