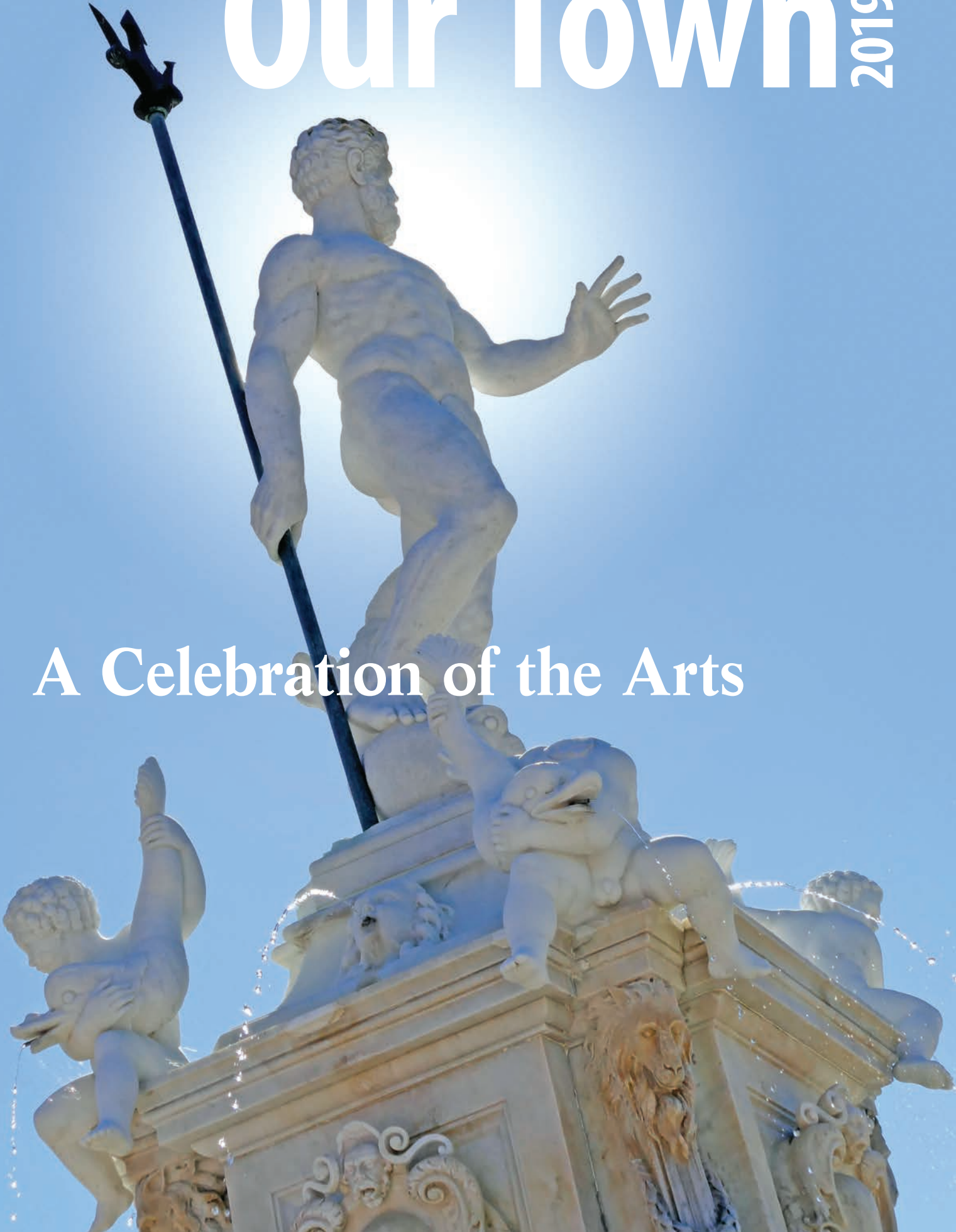


A PALOS VERDES PENINSULA NEWS
ANNUAL PUBLICATION

Our Town²⁰¹⁹

A Celebration of the Arts



Our Town 2019



12 Chamber music

4 PV Art Center is the hub for all things visual

8 PV Performing Arts Conservatory grows 'good people'

About the cover: Neptune, the Greek god of the sea, has watched over Malaga Cove Plaza in PVE since 1930. The original statue, a copy of a 16th century Italian bronze fountain by Giambologna, toppled in 1968 and the community rallied to pay for a new one. Our Neptune is an example of late Renaissance or Mannerist art.

Photo by Robert Casillas



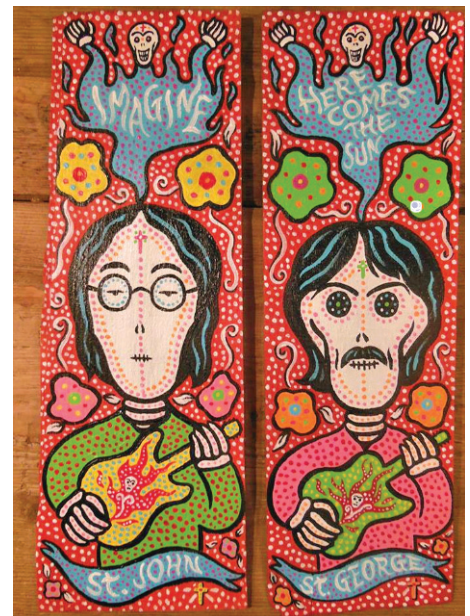
16 Art or craft?



20 En plein air



14 Do Re Mi



26 Humor



22 Performing arts calendar



24 Sculpture

OUR TOWN STAFF: Publisher Simon Grieve Editor Lisa Jacobs Guest Editor Deborah Paul Graphic Design Paul Kryczko Contributing Writers Genie Davis, Deborah Paul, Carrie Yamato, Shannon M. Hoffman Photographers Robert Casillas, Chuck Bennett, Gil Castro, Axel Koester. Advertising Jenifer Lemon, Molly Moreno.

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PV Art Center inspires imaginations and visual arts education outreach

By Deborah Paul

Travel up and down the stairs in the multi-level, remodeled post modern building at 5504 West Crestridge Road and you will see the Palos Verdes Art Center Beverly G. Alpay Center for Arts Education is not just a facility housing studios, exhibitions and workshops.

Founded in 1951, PVAC has become a venerated meeting place for children and adults on the Peninsula and surrounding communities. It's a place to come together to appreciate diverse talents, inspire imaginations and celebrate volunteerism and philanthropy.

Joe Baker, PVAC's highly animated and personable executive director for five years, has proven his salt in advocating for broad-based art and culture in the community.

Baker curates artists for exhibitions who he believes will draw a wide audience.

"They are a combination of people who contact the art center, artists who I meet in the broader community, or fellow artist's recommendations of



Muse sculpture at PV Art Center. Photo by Robert Casillas

other artists," said Baker who believes the artist is the seer and voice of things that are important in life.

"Our goal for the exhibition program is to promote challenging and stimulating programs to inspire our students so they can experience life in new and exciting ways."

That includes art exhibits by invited artists, such as glass sculptor Mitchell Gaudet's whose show "Shooting Gallery" is now showing through November 25.

Gaudet's mixed media pieces are a commentary on the prevalence of the gun culture in today's society.

"Mitchell Gaudet's exhibit is timely and important to what is going on nationally, Baker said. "As a person, I'm so concerned that our kids have to go to school with a shadow above them. Mandatory active-shooter drills are commonplace in many schools today. It represents a major shift about feeling safe in the world."

The exhibit is controversial and pertinent, poignant and whimsical,

One of Mitchell Gaudet's glass sculptures at the exhibit titled "Shooting Gallery" depicts a pair of praying hands encased in AR-15 casings. The artist's work is on display at the Palos Verdes Art Center through November 25.

and certain to touch hearts.

But one thing is even more clear about Gaudet's work. As edgy as the subject matter appears, the artist doesn't take sides and has a deep commitment to his craft, though he doesn't mind stirring up a gamut of emotions—even to the point of making us cry.

"Part of what I try to do as an artist is to visually respond to the current wave of madness," said Gaudet, a former Marine, former Army paratrooper and retired captain in the Army reserve who resides in New Orleans.

"When more school kids are killed than active-duty military, we have a problem. Using a material as attractive as glass to contain, count and display work dealing with gun violence can initially attract a viewer than perhaps inform. As far as the outcome, I would hope that sane conversation and moderate approaches on several fronts to reduce the gun violence would be the outcome."

PVAC community outreach

So if Joe Baker is the go-to person for curating eye-popping cultural art displays like Gaudet's, then Education

See PVAC, page 34




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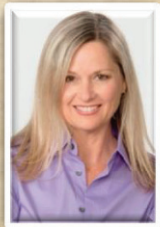
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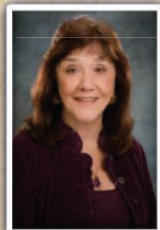
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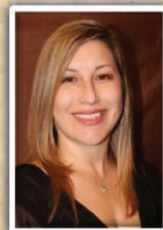
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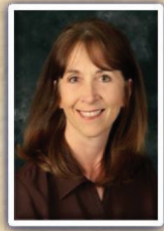
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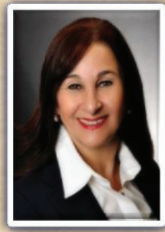


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It's not about creating the next star, it's about 'growing good people'

By Carrie Yamato

It's not recess, but outside on Rancho Vista Elementary School's playground, excitement brews as fourth graders eagerly await their turn to hop on stage to sing, dance and rehearse their lines for the upcoming production of "It's Time to Just Believe."

"It's Time to Just Believe" was created by the Palos Verdes Performing Arts Conservatory as part of their school-based performing arts program.

For 11 weeks, PVPAC's staff members go on campus to rehearse with each grade from second to fifth, for an hour until the day of the much-awaited invited dress rehearsal and the evening of the 30-minute show.

"Going to schools and igniting a passion for musical theater is very rewarding," says teacher/director, Emilee Yaakola. "While singing and dancing may not be every kids cup of tea, every student is learning about self-confidence and public speaking, which are life skills they will take with them into their adult lives."

The program is designed for each grade to share common songs, and for each grade's play to be tied into their current curriculum.

This year, second grade is focusing on habitat and nature, third graders are learning about space, fourth graders are reenacting the history of California and fifth graders are spreading the word of "Hamilton" in their rendition of the American Revolution.

"This is a lot more memorable than learning from a book and taking a test," says fourth grader, Audrina. "It's also a lot more fun,"

"Students really love the program," says fourth-grade teacher, Laura Monge, who has seen every play since the program kicked off four years ago. "It not only builds self-confidence, but it helps develop creative-thinking skills and thinking outside the box. We keep doing it because we've gotten a lot of

positive feedback from parents, and the kids really shine, especially on performance night."

Shining onstage and building self-confidence have been the goals of the Palos Verdes Performing Arts education program since it was founded in 1999.

Almost 20 years later, the Conservatory, as it has been known since 2014, has a full-comprehensive program that includes summer camps; a 40-class schedule including a special-needs class, workshops and master classes;

Heart of the Conservatory

The heart of the program, however, is the Conservatory's performing groups.

Sluyter started as the groups' choreographer six years ago. Now, he couldn't be happier in the way the program has grown and fostered a family atmosphere among the 60-plus performers.

The performers, who range in age from 8-18, and who audition every year, act as ambassadors for the Conservatory. The students perform at



Palos Verdes Performing Arts Conservatory cast plays to an appreciative crowd in last year's main stage winter production of "Beauty and the Beast."

four full-scale productions and four song-and-dance troupes.

It also serves the community through a series of outreach programs that has reached more than 12,000 low-income and special needs students as well as senior groups throughout the Los Angeles area.

"This is really a unique program because of all the venues they can choose from," says Conservatory Director Joel Sluyter. "There are so many different paths they can choose from—volunteering, singing, acting..."

community venues as well as at theme parks and sporting events, setting examples that bring in new students and talent.

"A lot of our performing group members do the shows, and they have to take classes, so they're here all the time, and they get people to join the conservatory" says Sluyter. This place would be a totally different vibe without them."

"It's a lot of fun," says Taryn, 12, who has been active in the Conservatory for four years. "I've made a lot of friends, got to do shows

and sing and dance. It's my happy place."

With a highly trained professional creative staff and top-quality instruction, many students have gone on to prestigious university theater programs and have become professional performers.

This, however, is not the main goal of the Conservatory. "It's not about creating the next star," says Sluyter.

"Yes, I've picked teachers who can create that, and the talent comes first, but at the same time, it's about growing good people and using the arts as a way to support that."

Because about 85 percent of his students will not choose theater as a career, said Sluyter, they'll be learning more about life skills.

"I am so proud of the kids and families that are in the halls because they put such hard work and dedication into this program," he said.

Expansion

With plans in the works for a \$5 million, 8,200 square-foot second story addition to the Norris Pavilion, which



4th grade students at Rancho Vista Elementary in Rolling Hills Estates rehearse for their upcoming fall play "Time to Just Believe." Photo by Robert Casillas

could be up and running as early as the summer of 2020, the Conservatory's future and commitment to the community continues to grow.

As Executive Director Julie Moe

Reynolds recently told the Daily Breeze, "Building the Conservatory on our own property makes a lot more sense, so we won't have [so many] payments and will be able to invest more into teachers and shows and programs."

There is already a list of ideas ready to put into action.

"The new building will have three studios that are the same size as our largest studio now, so we will have the ability to add more classes, another performing group, mainstage show and possibly a competitive dance team," said Sluyter, who added that the space is planned as a community-oriented conservatory.

"I want families, parents and kids to look at this as their second home and as a place where they can not only grow in the arts, but in other areas as well."

For more information on the conservatory or to make a donation to the building fund, contact the conservatory at palosverdesperforming-arts.com.



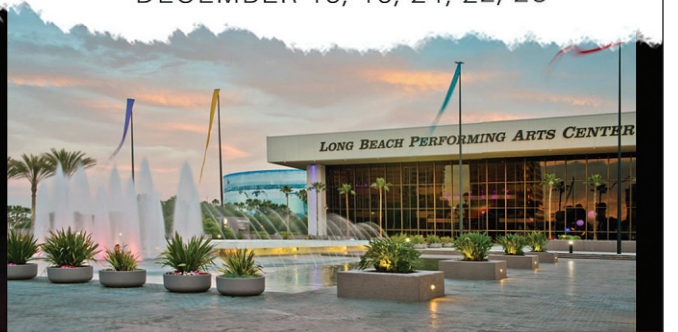
4th grade students at Rancho Vista Elementary in Rolling Hills Estates rehearse for their upcoming fall play "Time to Just Believe". Photo by Robert Casillas



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'The cultural jewel of Palos Verdes:' the lilting intimacy of chamber music

By Shannon M. Hoffman

A group of about 30 people sipped at wine and milled around the private Palos Verdes Estates home while admiring views of the California coast.

They quickly turned into a quiet, attentive audience as five musicians performed a quintet by German composer, Johannes Brahms.

The intimate setting was a throw-back to another era, a time when music was played only in a home or large hall.

This Benefactors' Salon was performed in a grand room with tall ceilings, crown molding and wooden accents. And it was a way to thank the strongest supporters of the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay.

In addition to the appreciation, the intimate concert marked the opening of the Chamber Orchestra's 36th season.


With Rufus Choi on piano, Miwako Watanabe, violin one, Nancy Roth, violin two, Elizabeth Wilson on viola and Frances Steiner on cello they performed a piano quintet in F minor, OP 34.

The musician's horse hair bows bounced and flicked in the air as they glided across the string instruments. They played a dramatic allegro introduction. And, then, the piece evolved into something slower and more romantic. The cadence built gradually as it went back and forth from light and flowy to sharp and heavy.

Audience members shared knowing looks as the quintet played some of their favorite pieces.

Then, as soon as the music stopped,

See MUSIC, page 28

A photograph of Frances Steiner, founder and conductor of the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, playing the cello. She is an elderly woman with short, reddish hair, wearing a blue patterned top. She is seated and looking towards the left of the frame. In the background, there is a grand piano and a framed picture on the wall. The room has high ceilings and wooden accents.

**Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay
founder and conductor Frances Steiner.**
Photo By Chuck Bennett

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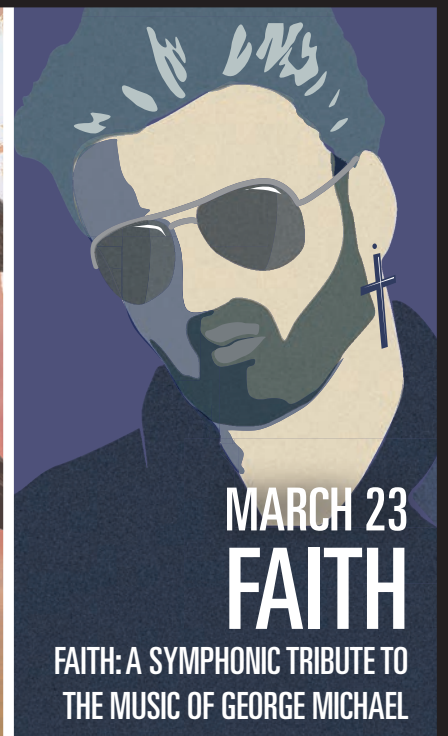


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Ariana Shafranovich, 8, participates in an arts class at the Hills Academy in Rolling Hills Estates. Photo by Axel Koester

Music, art and dance that stresses teacher/student bond and assessment

By Deborah Paul

Any day of the week, except Sunday, students at Hills Academy are painting, dancing, playing or drawing their way to fame, fortune and just plain fun.

Executive Director Jane Lee who instructs and oversees the day-to-day artistic buzz at the Palos Verdes Peninsula and Torrance Hills Academy locations, said it's her personal goal to create a safe, happy and productive atmosphere for the 400 students who come through her doors each week.

The Hills Academy mission is straightforward and succinct: "To develop and nurture students of character in an environment of integrity and excellence through the study of the arts."

"We're not here to just to produce winners, we're here to be a part of a student's life and make it better, said Lee. "It's about the person, not the product."

Hills students can take whatever art, music or dance classes they want at any level and any medium under university-trained teachers from institutions such as Juilliard, USC, Bob Cole,

Otis College of Art and Design, New England Conservatory and Cal Arts.

Classes are tailored to the student's need, so the relationship between student and teacher is monumentally important, Lee said. Tuition ranges from \$80 for a private lesson to about \$300 per month depending on the type of class and amount of participation.

Dance classes, for instance, are not based around practicing just to perform at year-end recital. Students are encouraged to be creative with their dancing. Classes include studying performances through video and choreographing the school's own dances with the use of props and games. Moving to the music together becomes a lively, collective endeavor for all participants.

What sets Hills Academy's musical program apart from other artistic establishments is the academy is a testing center as well as a founding school in California for the Royal Conservatory.

"The 130-year-old Royal Conservatory program is one of the largest and most respected institutions for music education and assessment in the world," Lee said. "It's an international program which brings in adjudicators

from Canada to judge student's performances. It's definitely for the more serious student who may major in music or students who need to set goals."

Like Peninsula resident and student Matthew Morreale who has become really good at tickling the old ivories.

The 15-year-old, home-schooled sophomore has been taking piano lessons at Hills since he was nine, but he's already beat out college students in serious competitions like the Southwest Youth Music Festival, a competition under the auspicious of Long Beach State. He also writes his own music for the piano and plays guitar for fun, he said.

"I love Hills," said Matthew who considers himself a very serious musician. "It's a great school. The teachers care, and it's a great environment. Because of Miss Lee, I'll be playing at Carnegie Hall next summer."

He said he likens Lee to a second mom because she is a loving and caring person to him and all the students.

John Morreale, Matthew's dad said he thinks Hills is not only a great

See HILLS, page 34

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Quilting: piecing together art and love

By Deborah Paul

Are quilt makers artists or crafters? This question has been kicking around creative circles all over the world for scores. But, ask any serious quilter around the Palos Verdes Peninsula and they will give you a resounding answer: “Both.”

Special skills using modern or traditional techniques are necessary to be considered a real, no-nonsense quilter. Accuracy, manual dexterity, the ability to choose fabrics and create complex designs for decorative or practical use is needed, as well as having an infinite degree of patience.

Fortunately, there are no right or wrong.

The South Bay Quilters Guild (SBQG), one of the largest quilting groups in the community, has inspired quilting craftsmanship in the South Bay since 1979.

Membership consists of about 150 mostly women, with many from Palos Verdes. Not only do they get together to talk stitches, patterns, fabrics and notions, but SBQG offers ways to volunteer for various community services or philanthropic endeavors.

Julie Limbach Jones, president of the SBQG said there are few requirements to join.

“Members must help with the logistics at the annual quilt show, but monthly meetings at St. Andrews church in Redondo Beach and participation in workshops mostly held at the PV Library are optional,” Limbach Jones said. “Members are also encouraged to support the philanthropic activities of the guild.”

Charitable undertakings within the guild always have a sweet, compassionate intent.

The guild is especially proud of its work with the Wounded Warriors where quilts may be sent to Afghanistan military bases.

SBQG’s Read Me a Quilt program donates quilts to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) who distributes the finished blankets to children in the foster care system.

Patchworkers choose fabrics and designs to coordinate with the story lines of suggested story books such as “Facing the Lion,” “I am Amelia Earhart” or “Bed Time Stories,” or they can choose their own readers for their preferred age group,” Limbach Jones said.

CASA serves the most severely abused, abandoned and neglected children through the efforts of community volunteers who advocate for a child’s best interests.

Currently, members are busy preparing for the SBQG 2019 Quilt Show “Delectable Quilting Deeds” at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center, Feb. 16 and 17. Members are always encouraged to enter their finely sewed designs into the show.

Rolling Hills Estates resident Mary Jane Jewell, is a seamstress and professional costumer who does intricate, custom work for individuals. As an enthusiastic guild participant, she attends the monthly meetings, participates in the Guild Show working with the treasurer, and by any standard makes and donates extraordinary fabric art for quilt show auctions.

Her favorite quilt in vibrant green and indigos with spirals and light colors is designed with 16, 3-foot geckos. The king-sized, award-winning work is completely hand-stitched.

“It took me nine months to do the quilting alone after the top was put together,” said Jewell who displays the

Quilt by Carollee Schuegraf Photo by Gil Castro

quilt on her own bed. “That meant working on it almost every day for some amount of time. It took me about 1,000 hours to complete. It was all hand appliquéed.

Member Carollee Schuegraf said when she moved from Palo Alto to Palos Verdes Estates she didn’t know anyone, but after joining the guild, she was able to make good friends really fast.

Schuegraf said she loves working with ceramics, but has been sewing all her life. She inherited her grandmother’s “Flower Garden” quilt made in the 1930s, which inspired her and her mother to make quilted blankets when she was in junior high and high school.

Fellow quilters agree, Schuegraf’s recently hand-painted large sunflowers and smaller burst of flowers quilts are beyond exquisite.

“We have a challenge called “Begin With Blue” to make small quilts about 15 by 20 inches for our quilt show,” Schuegraf said. “After the challenge, some are exhibited at the Road to

“Quilting helps my attitude and outlook on life. And it’s a whole lot cheaper than psychoanalysis.”

—*Mary Jane Jewell*

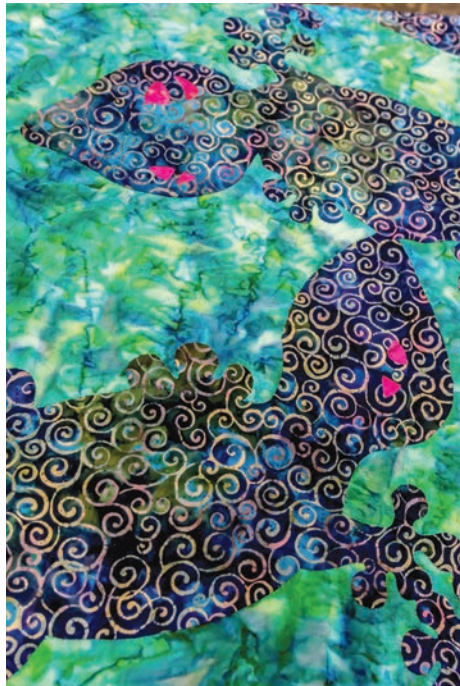
California, or given to friends or relatives. Some sell their quilts.”

The Road to California Quilters Conference and Showcase is a popular 4-day event held in January at the Ontario Convention Center. The event showcases products and creations in the quilting industry.

On a smaller scale, about 20 women at Rolling Hills Covenant Church who call themselves Pieces of Love Quilting Ministry are just as prolific as SBQG. The group will make a collector quality piece to raffle off for organizations like Community’s Child, a Lomita shelter for mothers in crisis. The quilts are so lovely they sometimes generate \$300 to \$400 at luncheon fundraisers.

South Shores resident Pam Turba said Pieces of Love sent dozens of quilts to Bridges of Hope Academy and Retreat in Franschoek, South Africa not long ago for boarding school children whose mothers had died from AIDS.

The academy deed was their biggest endeavor to date. Mountains of fabric was donated by the husband of a



Mary Jane Jewell spent nearly 1,000 hours hand stitching this award-winning, king-sized geeko quilt.

Photos by Gil Castro

member who passed away, so the quilters created about 75 vibrant bunkbed quilts that were met with squeals of delight, Turba said.

“We sent them in suitcases with short term missionaries and people visiting the compound,” said Turba referring to the problem of getting the quilts through customs and directly to the kids. “I managed to get 12 of them in suitcase using vacuum storage bags.”

Sadly, the school closed last year with the last graduating class. The quilts were a rare gift for kids going back to live in impoverished conditions, many having few earthly possessions.

Like the SBQG members, some of the ladies, also contribute quilts to the Read Me a Quilt organization. Additionally, they make and donate quilts for active duty military through Quilts of Valor.

Turba said Pieces of Love quilters Karen Courtney and Margaret Mohr, who are also keen seamstresses, have found a poignant use for much of their left over fabrics.

“Besides quilting together, we’re making 20 to 25 dresses a day at our meetings that Margaret gives to her son’s band Christafari to distribute wherever they are in the world,” Turba said.

Christafari is an internationally famous Christian rock group,

coincidentally, formed in Rolling Hills Estates. After the concerts, band members distribute the little dresses for girls and shorts for boys to the poorest neighborhoods.

Limbach Jones points there are so many different styles of quilting and ways to give back, but the love of textile art is always the common thread.”

Others may be more introspective. “Quilting helps my attitude and outlook on life,” Jewell said. “And it’s a whole lot cheaper than psychoanalysis.”



Karen Courtney and Margaret Mohr sew clothing for needy children all over the world. Christafari band member Nikita Carter (below) gives a child in the Philippines a new dress made by Pieces of Love Quilting Ministry at Rolling Hills Covenant Church.



No square of quilting fabric goes to waste at Pieces of Love Quilting Ministry at Rolling Hills Covenant Church. Members make dresses and shorts that are distributed to needy children throughout the world.

The Christian rock band Christafari, homegrown in RHE, is the conduit, taking the clothing with them when they go on tour.

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DAN DEMPSTER:
**Exploring the beauty
of the Pacific coast**

By Genie Davis

Dan Dempster is an artist who's made a major transition: from longtime Boston-area resident to the west coast.

Now living on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Dempster has embraced his new home and a new approach to his artwork.

"The Pacific is an entirely different animal," he said, when asked about the differences he's found working in the South Bay versus the east coast.

"It has taken three changes of palette and three years painting en plein air to truly get my eye in," he said. "Now that I have the code, I find I am returning to my original interest in abstract realism, finding the spectacular in the mundane. If you look closely, there is abstract in the real, and the real in the abstract. The two are inseparable."

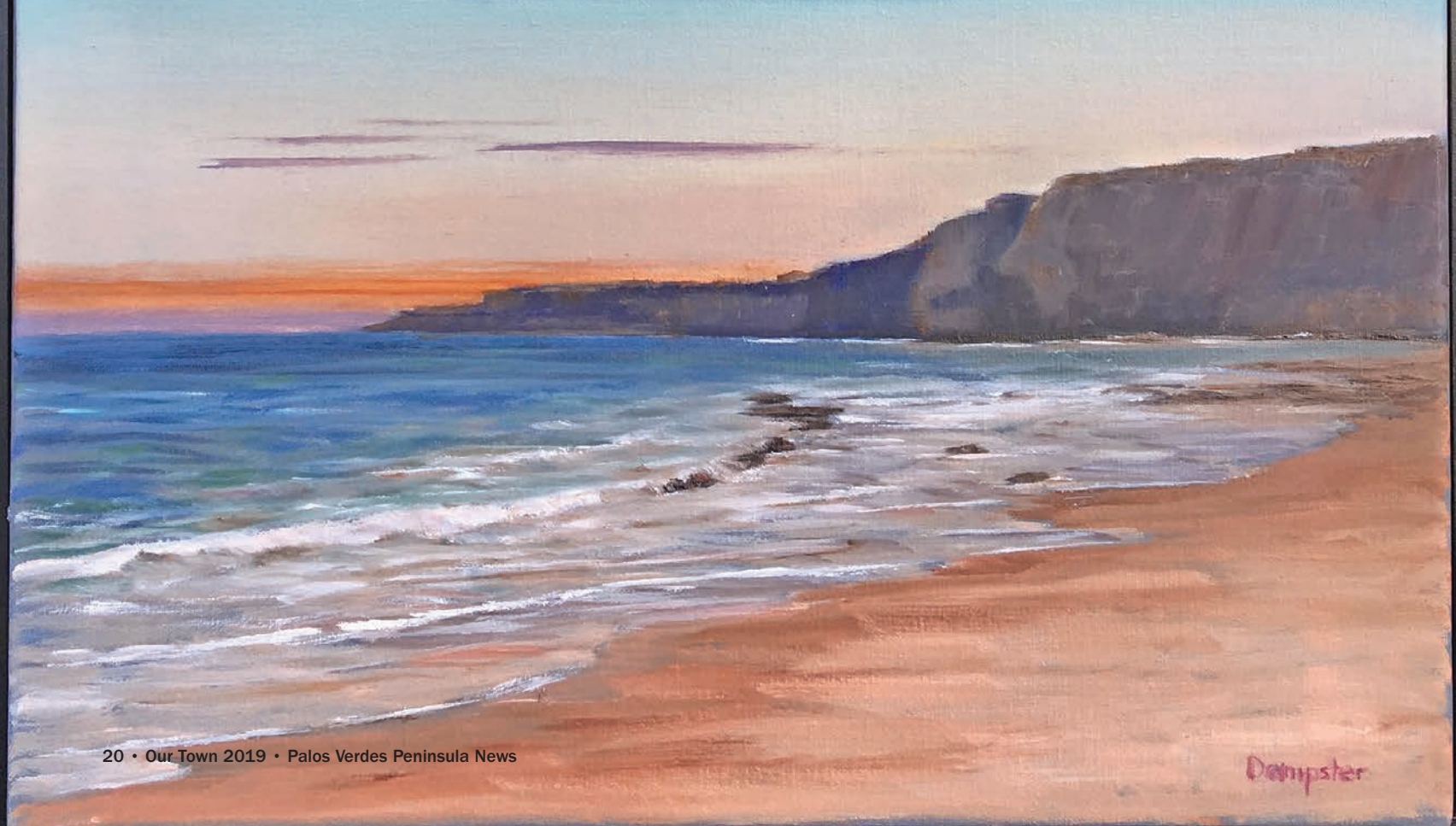


Over the years, regardless of medium, Dempster said the same theme threads through his drawing, painting and sculpture.

"I am interested in examining how our state of mind affects our perception, and how perception can affect our state of mind. I am interested in uncovering

See BEAUTY, page 32

Inspiration Point, 24x18 oil on linen, by Dan Dempster



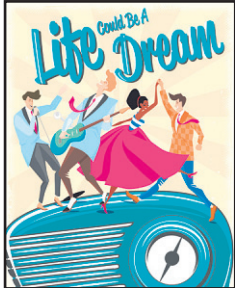


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– *Theatre Reviews Limited, New York*

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Best Musical of the Year – *LA Weekly*

Life Could Be A Dream is a musical trip down memory lane featuring hits from the 50's and 60's: "Fools Fall in Love," "Runaround Sue," "Tears on my Pillow," "Unchained Melody," "Earth Angel," and more.



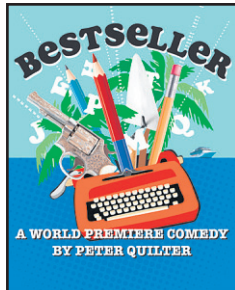
The Price By Arthur Miller (May 8 – May 26)

"...One of the most engrossing and entertaining plays that Miller has ever written. It is superbly, even flamboyantly theatrical." – *The New York Times*

WINNER: 1968 Outer Critics' Circle Award - Outstanding Play

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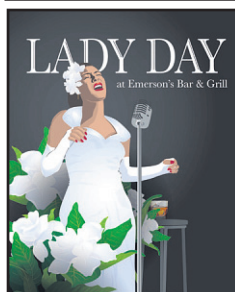
Beast On The Moon By Richard Kalinoski (Aug 21 – Sep 8)

"Humane, funny, and touching..." – *The Independent, London*

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Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill By Lanie Robertson (Oct 16 – Nov 3)

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Our Town Performing Arts Calendar

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

A Midsummer's Night Dream:

Palos Verdes High School presents "A Midsummer's Night Dream" in the MPR, 600 Cloyd Road, Palos Verdes Estates. Nov. 1 at 3:30 p.m., Nov. 2 at 7 p.m., Nov. 3 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 4 at 2 p.m. \$15-\$20. 310-378-8471, ext. 237

Cocuzzi Courtet: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents the Cabaret Jazz Dinner Super Club featuring the Cocuzzi Courtet the Harlyne J. Norris Pavilion, 501 Indian Peak Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 4 at 5 p.m. \$92. 310-544-0403, ext. 264

Forever Plaid: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents Produced Series "Forever Plaid" at the 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 16 at 8 p.m., Nov. 17 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Nov. 18 at 2 p.m. \$30-\$70. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Nutcracker: Peninsula School of Performing Arts presents the 30th Annual production of "The Nutcracker" at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 30 at 7 p.m., Dec. 1 at 2 and 7 p.m., Dec. 2 at 2 p.m. \$25-\$35. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Tacos, Tequila and Fun: Palos Verdes Performing Arts Conservatory presents "Backstage Annual Fundraiser: Tacos, Tequila and Fun" at the Harlyne J. Norris Pavilion, 501 Indian Peak Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 2 at 6:30 p.m. \$70. (310) 544-0403, ext. 303.

Thomas Hooten: Palos Verdes Performing Arts welcomes the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, featuring trumpeter Thomas Hooten to the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m. \$58. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Ultimate Queen: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Present Series "The Ultimate Queen Celebration," starring Marc Martel in a tribute to legendary Rock band Queen at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Nov. 10 at 7:30 p.m. \$45-\$88. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

DECEMBER 2018

Ceremony of Carols: The Norris Theatre welcomes the Joanna Medawar Nacheff Singers who will perform a Ceremony of Carols at 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Dec. 8 at 7:30 p.m. \$18-\$33. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Glenn Miller: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors Presents Series "Tribute to Glenn Miller at Christmas" featuring the Tex Beneke Orchestra at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills. Dec. 9 at 2 p.m. \$40-\$80 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Nutcracker: Palos Verdes Ballet presents its 38th Anniversary of "The Nutcracker" at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Dec. 15 at 7 p.m., Dec. 16 at 1 and 5 p.m. \$28-\$38. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

She Kills Monsters: Peninsula High School presents "She Kills Monsters" at the PAC, 27118 Silver Spur Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Dec. 7 at 7 p.m., Dec. 8 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Dec. 13 at 4:30 p.m., Dec. 14 at 7 p.m., Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 16 at 2 p.m. \$5-\$10. pendramatickets@cox.net.

JANUARY 2019

Andrea Obiso: Palos Verdes Performing Arts welcomes the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, featuring violinist Andrea Obiso to the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m. \$58. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Artimus Pyle: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents South Bay Live artists the Artimus Pyle Band at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m. \$55-\$95. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Backtrack: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Presents Series "Backtrack" at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Jan. 11 at 7:30 p.m. \$25-\$40. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Three Musketeers: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents Produced Series "The Three Musketeers" at the 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Jan. 25 at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 26 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Jan. 27 at 2 p.m. \$30-\$70. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Titan Hot Seven: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents the Cabaret Jazz Dinner Super Club featuring Titan Hot Seven at the Harlyne J. Norris Pavilion, 501 Indian Peak Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Jan. 20 at 5 p.m. \$92. 310-544-0403, ext. 264.

FEBRUARY 2019

Three Musketeers: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents Produced Series “The Three Musketeers” at the 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Feb. 1 at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 2 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Feb. 3 at 2 p.m. \$30-\$70. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

MARCH 2019

Blue Street: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents the Cabaret Jazz Dinner Super Club featuring Blue Street at the Harlyne J. Norris Pavilion, 501 Indian Peak Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Mar. 24 at 5 p.m. \$92. 310-544-0403, ext. 264.

Catapult: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Presents Series “Catapult” at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Mar. 17 at 2 p.m. \$25-\$40 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Chicago Experience: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Present Series “Kenny Cetera’s Chicago Experience” at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Mar. 23 at 7:30 p.m. \$40-\$80. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Gentri: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Presents Series “Gentri: The Gentlemen Trio” at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills

Estates. Mar. 9 at 7:30 p.m. \$40-\$80. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Narek Haknazarian: Palos Verdes Performing Arts welcomes the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, featuring Cellist Narek Haknazarian to the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. Mar. 3 at 7:30 p.m. \$58. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Spring Musical: Peninsula High School presents “Spring Musical” at the PAC, 27118 Silver Spur Road, Rolling Hills Estates. Mar. 8 at 7 p.m., Mar. 9 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Mar. 14 at 4:30 p.m., Mar. 15 at 7 p.m. and Mar. 16 at 7 p.m. \$10-\$20. pendramatickets@cox.net.

APRIL 2019

Cornet Chop Suey: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents the Cabaret Jazz Dinner Super Club featuring Cornet Chop Suey at the Harlyne J. Norris Pavilion, 501 Indian Peak Road, Rolling Hills Estates. April 28 at 5 p.m. \$92. 310-544-0403, ext. 264.

Footloose: Palos Verdes High School presents “Footloose: The Musical” in the MPR, 600 Cloyd Road, Palos Verdes Estates. April 12 at 7 p.m., April 13 at 7 p.m., April 14 at 2 p.m., April 18 at 3:30 p.m., April 19 at 7 p.m. and April 20 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. \$15-\$20. 310-378-8471, ext. 237

Hairspray: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents Produced Series “Hairspray” at the 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. April 26 at 7:30 p.m., April 27 at 7:30 p.m. and April 28 at 2 p.m. \$30-\$80. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Purple Xperience: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Presents Series “Purple Xperience” at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. April 6 at 7:30 p.m. \$45-\$88 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

Stephen Lin: Palos Verdes Performing Arts welcomes the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, featuring Pianist Stephen Lin to the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. April 13 at 7:30 p.m. \$58. 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

MAY 2019

Coed Choreo Show: Peninsula High School presents the Coed Choreo Show in the Gym, 27118 Silver Spur Road, Rolling Hills Estates. May 23 at 7 p.m. and May 24 at 7 p.m. \$10-\$15. hornh@pvpusd.net.

Hairspray: Palos Verdes Performing Arts presents Produced Series “Hairspray” at the 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. May 3 at 7:30 p.m., May 4 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., May 5 at 2 p.m., May 10 at 7:30 p.m., May 11 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., May 12 at 2 p.m. \$30-\$80. 310-544-0403, ext. 221

JUNE 2019

One Night in Memphis: Palos Verdes Performing Arts sponsors the Presents Series “One Night in Memphis” at the Norris Theatre, 27570 Norris Center Drive, Rolling Hills Estates. June 2 at 2 p.m. \$45-\$88 310-544-0403, ext. 221.

PEGGY SIVERT ZASK:

For her, the equine is sublime

By Genie Davis

Peggy Sivert Zask grew up surrounded by the open space and equine culture of Rolling Hills Estates.

“My childhood revolved around my horses, their care and exercise,” said Sivert Zask. “The horse took me away from the social life and deep into awareness of nature and the spiritual world.”

Today, Sivert Zask’s 30-year art practice places images of the horse at the center of her work.

“It embodies my ideas and feelings, always seeking liberation from troubles of the world,” she said.

Her graceful depiction of horses crosses all mediums and is shaped into a variety of styles.

“During college, I experimented with all media and subject matter. I avoided what was most familiar in order to grow. Horse as subject matter came into my art practice when my husband and I moved our family to Portuguese Bend in Rancho Palos Verdes,” she said. “I began sculpting and painting horses, and it became an obsession.”

But a wonderful obsession indeed, as she captures in form what she calls the essence of her memory of the horse and the role it has played connecting her to nature, art, and as she puts it, “the ethereal.”

Her linear steel horses capture a dominant equine characteristic, which is scale.

Sivert Zask has been influenced by artist Susan Rothenberg, who has tak-

en the horse subject matter beyond the physical, and Deborah Butterfield, who has mastered the form of the life-sized horse as fine art sculpture.

“These animals have imparted a lasting influence on my art, aesthetically, spiritually and conceptually. The horse throughout time has carried meaning; as a veiled reference to an unspoken element or as harbingers of judgment. It is believed that horses

See EQUINE, page 30



“Resolution” by Peggy Sivert Zask, (in progress) 2018, welded steel, 108 x 40 x 108 inches

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GARY JOHNSON:

Mixing pop culture, humor and Southwest style in Dias de Los Muertes art

By Genie Davis

A professional graphic artist for 20 years and editorial cartoonist at the *Palos Verdes Peninsula News* for 14, Gary Johnson is also the creator of humorous, delightfully light-hearted work that celebrates iconic Dias de Los Muertes art.

The Rolling Hills Estates resident, who designs

graphic T-shirts for Tommy Bahama, loves the beach, but he's also passionate about Southwest art. It's that latter passion that led him to create his witty skull art.

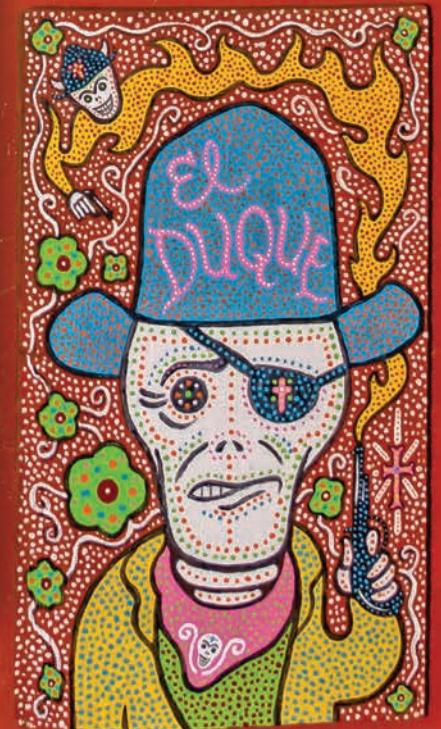
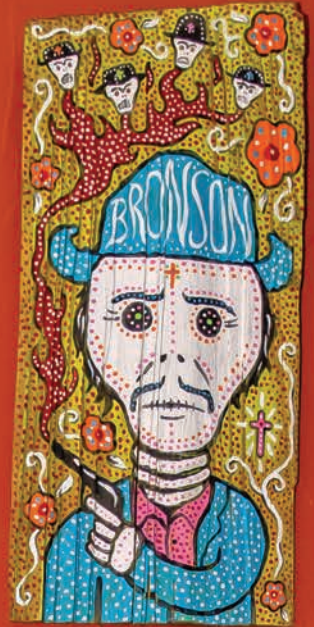
"My take on things is always to infuse them with humor. I started the skull imagery by painting on some votive candles about eight years ago. And people saw them and liked them. They're skull figures as caricatures, really."

Which is harder than it sounds. Capturing likenesses of pop culture icons such as Elvis, James Brown and Johnny Cash using skulls as their faces takes inventive talent.

"The challenges of working with a skull is that you don't have the ability to create

See **HUMOR**,
page 35

Gary Johnson, best known as *PV News'* editorial cartoonist, gets colorful with Dias de Los Muertes artwork.
Photos by Gil Castro





concert 03

A BAROQUE CHRISTMAS

Music of Joy to Celebrate the Holiday Season

A holiday favorite, Martin Haselböck and Musica Angelica ring in the holiday season with trumpets, oboes, strings, voices, and more! The performance kicks off with Corelli's joyful **Christmas Concerto**, famed for its pastoral character. Soprano Teresa Wakim features in Bach's famous cantata **Jauchzet Gott** in allen Landen before being joined by tenor Thomas Cooley and the Long Beach Camerata for Handel's exuberant **Ode to Saint Cecilia**, and much more!

December 8, 2018, 7pm | Beverly O'Neill Theater, Long Beach
December 9, 2018, 3pm | Zipper Hall, The Colburn School, Los Angeles

Director: Martin Haselböck | Soprano: Teresa Wakim
Tenor: Thomas Cooley | Guest Choir: Long Beach Camerata

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MUSIC, from page 12

they jumped from their seats to give a standing ovation.

President of the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, Peter V. Barrett was on hand to mingle with guests before and after the performance.

Barrett, who played trumpet at Harvard, was introduced to instrumental music through the radio. His interest grew and he eventually fell in love with classical music.

“It’s a fine work of art, not just a matter of throwing stuff together,” said Barrett. “The creation of chamber music is something that doesn’t happen in five minutes but is something that’s been very thoughtfully created,” he said. “It’s a back and forth with instruments talking to each other and as you listen to it trying to hear their voices and your way of understanding it. You have to work at it, it doesn’t just flow over you. You have to be involved in it.”

Making classical music cool

Barrett calls the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay, “the cultural jewel here in Palos Verdes.” He just wishes more people knew about it as he joked that you don’t hear Brahms on a college campus too often.

“This is a timeless kind of high quality music that I think everyone should have access to. One of the things that worries me in a broad brushstroke ... I think it’s important for people to make choices—but if you’re going to make a choice you have to be aware of what the choices are,” he said. “I think it’s important for young people who are growing up to be able to be exposed (to classical music). I think it’s becoming harder and harder for a lot of the population to hear some of the music that (was performed) today. Now a lot of them wouldn’t like it, that’s ok, but if they’ve never heard it they wouldn’t know that they don’t like it.”

The music that was performed during the Benefactors’ Salon was composed nearly 150 years ago in 1869 during the Romantic period. It was a period which followed the Baroque period from 1600 to around 1750 and the Classical period from 1730 to 1820, respectively.

It makes sense that if someone wasn’t involved with music in school or wasn’t specifically exposed to it by someone they know, or by accident, they could potentially live their entire life never hearing it.

But, Barrett is making an effort to change that. He has reached out to a

Philadelphia has ever accepted: Dr. Frances Steiner.

Steiner, who founded the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay in 1974, is also its current music director.

She graduated from Curtis with a Bachelor of Music degree at age 19. She then studied composition with Walter Piston and Randall Thompson at Harvard University where she received an M.A. She followed that with music studies in France with Nadia Boulanger, a woman who also taught Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland. Boulanger was also one of the first women to ever conduct the New York Philharmonic.

Brought out to California by her husband who resides here, Steiner then received a D.M.A. from the University of Southern California where she majored in cello and conducting.

After a few stints as principal cellist for the California Chamber Symphony and the Glendale Chamber Symphony along with a few free-lancing gigs, Steiner had with a trio that also



Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay held a private concert at a benefactor’s home. Peter Barrett is the president of the Chamber Orchestra. Photo By Chuck Bennett

few schools inviting their music classes to the Chamber Orchestra rehearsals at no charge. The orchestra has also worked with the Boy Scouts to help fulfill their community service badges.

“There’s lots of kinds of music but this is one that’s important to our culture and has been for years,” he said. “Chamber music is something makes you think, makes you relax. I think this is important to our society and I’m glad to do what I can to keep it going.”

Founder Frances Steiner

Barrett is fortunate enough to have one of the best accomplices the South Bay could possibly offer. He refers to her as a “dynamo” and “the cornerstone” of the organization. As an 8 year-old, she was the youngest cellist The Curtis Institute of Music in

included playing alongside her sister.

But Steiner’s music journey started long before when she was only 3 years old. At first, it was on the piano, but the cello called her name a year later. She said she was simply drawn to the sound of the instrument.

“Both my parents were musicians so it was sort of the family business. (My dad) had a student cello he would lend out to students under the piano and I crawled under the piano one day and took out the cello,” she said after the performance Sunday. “I just love that sound, that deep voice. I really do believe, and I always advise this to parents, I think children really do kind of have a sound they like, and I always like to let them choose their own instrument.”

Since Steiner started so young, she



Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay held a private concert at a benefactor's home. Photo By Chuck Bennett

read music before she was able to read English. She “feels the music,” she said, and joked that she even “spoke music,” before she spoke English.

“I think music is a language, it’s a non-verbal language but it’s a language,” she said. “I relate to the music and what the music says—just the language of the music itself. Anything else is translation and I don’t want to translate music ... You diminish it.”

The cello is part of her identity. She plays every day even when she doesn’t necessarily feel up to it. Except eight years ago, when she tripped, fell and broke her elbow—a part of her was put on hold.

“The elbow wouldn’t bend enough to come back this way. I’d sit at the cello trying to get the elbow working,” she said. “I’d sometimes sit there with tears running down my face because I couldn’t play.”

While she admits the demand of music is the least appealing aspect, “you have to practice every day; you lose it otherwise,” she said, there’s no stopping her and her team, as they now call the Palos Verdes Performing Arts home for the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay.

“When the Norris Theatre opened it gave us a professional venue—we had been playing in churches and schools before that,” she said. “The orchestra became fully professional at that time.”

When asked what her favorite time period is, her favorite composer, her favorite piece: she doesn’t have one, she replies.

“The music itself inspires me. It’s not like I’m taking the inspiration from anything,” she said. “It’s all about the music. I always say I’m in love with whatever I’m working on right now.”

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EQUINE, from page 24

had an important part to play in the formation and development of human spirituality.”

Certainly Sivert Zask’s own work has a highly spiritual quality; there is reverence and wonder in her depictions of horses, some dream-like, some ghostly, skeletal, some more grounded in more natural imagery.

“My art process involves the attempt to capture the awe I feel for the physical characteristics of the horse—its powerful form balanced with elegant grace, while reflecting the memory of my relationship with the animal as a companion and guide that taught me the reverence for nature,” she said.

Sivert Zask believes that when viewers are able to connect with her work and understand its ephemeral quality, it is because they “trust in nature.”

Despite her recent, large-scale sculptural work, the artist remains in love with the act of painting.

“It really causes me to struggle and is my biggest challenge. I want to master it and it is not easy for me, but I love it all the more for that,” she says.

I think my work in sculpture does help me with my painting and I work interchangeably with the two, often combining painting and sculpture together,” she adds.

Along with her work as an artist, Sivert Zask is an accomplished curator and gallerist. In those roles, she said she is free to respond to art different from her own, works that are often abstract or non-objective.

Sivert Zask has been involved in the local, contemporary art scene since 1989 when she started the Minus Zero Gallery in Torrance. She later founded the nonprofit South Bay Contemporary and is currently at the helm of SoLA Gallery located half-way between the South Bay and downtown Los Angeles on Slauson Avenue.

Creating in her nature-centric studio and home on the Peninsula, Sivert Zask shapes her art along with her husband, Ben Zask, whose medium is primarily composed of found materials.

“Ben tells me that his work is a constant challenge for acceptance as a piece of art. He seems to enjoy the struggle that is required in assembling discarded material and having it hold up as a legitimate piece of art.”

Sivert Zask is as committed to the South Bay as she is to her images of the



“Stage”2018, Oil, Acrylic, collage by Peggy Sivert Zask

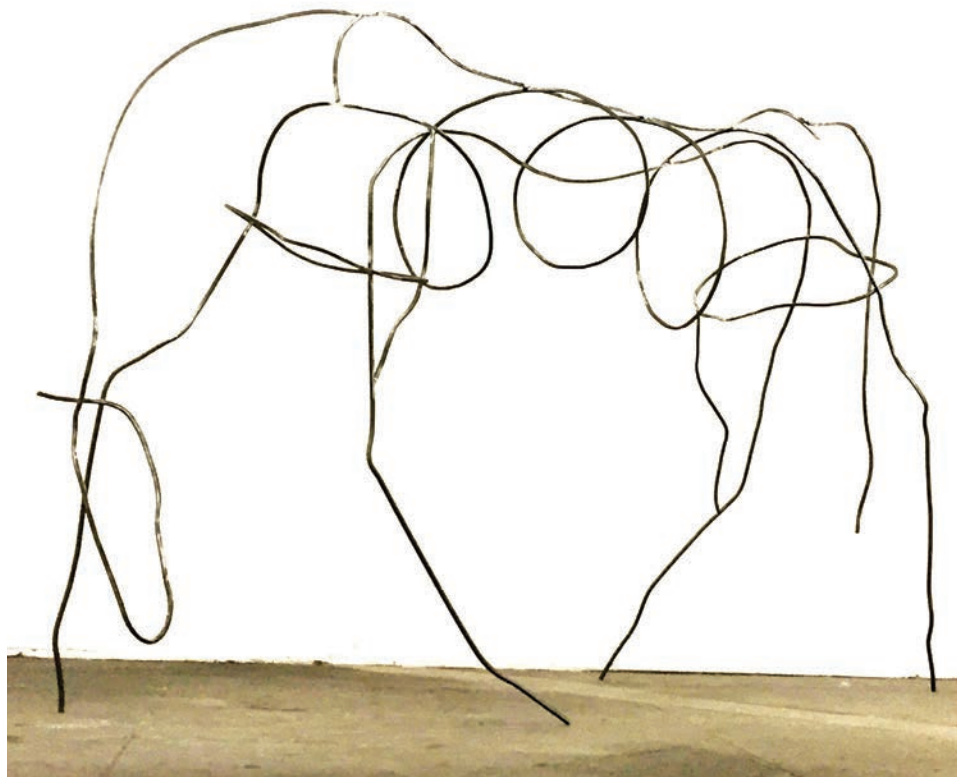
horse: born of the area and galloping into the vast and beautiful realm that only art can shape.

“My own artwork is really my retreat from the world, a place to forget and be free.”

In December, her work will be exhibited in a show at Juri Koll’s Gallery at the LOFT in San Pedro. She and her husband will sell small works at the

annual Arty Party at the Shriver Home in Portuguese Bend this December.

At South Bay Contemporary, SoLA Gallery hosts a juried show called Interplay: Craft, Art and Design curated by Holly Jerger, curator for Craft and Folk Art Museum. The show runs Nov. 10 – Dec. 29 and includes a grand opening of the gallery’s gift shop with handmade local art and crafts.



“Looking Down”, 2018, Welded Steel, 66x27x106 inches by Peggy Sivert Zask

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BEAUTY, from page 20

clarity and vastness and re-presenting that, so that it can be experienced by the viewer.”

The artist said his work is intended to be healing.

“It’s meditative, calm. It cultivates a sense of wonder and delight about the complexity and beauty of our surroundings. The spectacular is everywhere, if we take the time to see.”

Dempster’s love of nature and the ocean itself began in his childhood.

“I was very fortunate to grow up in Bermuda, so I’ve literally spent decades studying the water and light on the seashore. It’s part of me,” he explained. “In Bermuda, we harvest the rain for our household needs. The awareness of water and its preciousness is always there.”

He said that he also developed a “healthy respect” for the subtleties of nature and its forces. With hurricanes a fact of life, he quickly came to the realization that “Nature is more than pretty. Its complexity, regardless of scale, is awe-inspiring.”

Along with creating his own work, Dempster also teaches Drawing from Life Classes.

“I teach how to see. Drawing comes later. Most people are hesitant about drawing because they think either you’ve got talent, or you don’t. They remember doing art in primary school, perhaps not very well, and that impression has stuck with them all this time. I teach people how to literally draw past their inhibitions,” he stresses. “We do so much drawing that in three weeks, without realizing it, they’re drawing without thinking about it. I see the change in their posture and know they’ve got it.”

He teaches the human figure because of its complexity.

“I feel if you can draw that, you can draw anything. I find the challenge of drawing from life, particularly the short pose drills, very useful for finding the essential line. There’s no time to get precious.”

With work that depicts coastal beauty from ocean tides to tide pools and the magic of the horizon, he creates a wonderful quality of light and motion. To do so, Dempster said he must look and see deeply to achieve that quality in his work. He said he is also strongly influenced by having grown up near the ocean, and later,



Dan Dempster with Suzan Redgate, director of the Copley Society of Art in the main gallery, on 158 Newbury Street, Boston.

from studying light and motion in graduate school courses using computer anima-
tion.

His work offers a rich, contemplative view of nature that shimmers, glows and shifts. There is a strong Zen-like quality to his images; and his palette evokes

all the colors of sea and sky and water imaginable. Both with his paintings



Prospero’s Pool, Charcoal & Conte 38x27 inches, by Dan Dempster

and drawings, there is a vast, spacious beauty that is compelling to viewers.

“Our enjoyment of outer vastness is simply our inner vastness recognizing itself,” said the artist.

Dempster moved to Palos Verdes with his wife and two sons

in 2014, but continues showing his work in Boston and abroad as well as becoming involved with the local art community. He’s recently participated in shows at the Palos Verdes Art Center and the Torrance Art Museum. He’s an artist member of the Copley Society of Art, too.

Dempster is a strong supporter of the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy through art donations and by organizing artists to paint during the group’s monthly Nature Walks.

The artist will be an Invited Artist in an upcoming exhibition, Art Unites 12 at Gallery 800, NoHo in January 2019; recent exhibitions and workshops included Drawing from Life for AOG at the Palos Verdes Art Center in 2018, and exhibitions at the Copley Society of Art in Boston in 2017.

For more information and to see more of Dempster’s work, visit DempsterFineArt.com.

“Nature is more than pretty. Its complexity, regardless of scale, is awe-inspiring.”

—Dan Dempster, artist

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PVAC, from page 4

Director Gail Phinney is the person who has her finger on the pulse of every PVAC artist group, class, community outreach programs, and school-to-gallery endeavors.

What is amazing Phinney said, is the community at large has no idea how many outreach programs the Palos Verdes Art Center actually organizes or contributes to, not only on the peninsula, but Los Angeles County at large.

The list is long, but includes a number of educational programs Phinney directly oversees or confers with community leaders, volunteers, professional art instructors and students:

- Art at Your Fingertips is a PVAC school-based outreach program started by parents in 1976 which brings affordable visual arts education to elementary school classrooms from developmental kindergarten through fifth grade. The objective is to help every child feel comfortable using art as a means of expression. Parents train and volunteer their own time in the classroom.

- Special Mornings, a program for differently-abled and at-risk children and teens, is a five-week sequential art education program teaching the basics of art and enhancing the students' communication skills and self-esteem. Students come to the Art Center for their classes and also tour exhibitions.
- PVAC is working in collaboration with the Beacon House, a residential facility in San Pedro for men in recovery to provide art instruction to the men.
- The John Wessel Photography program is designed to provide a creative outlet to low-income youth with the hope of sparking a lifelong passion for photography. The after-school instruction, taught by photo journalist Henry Cherry, is held at the Family Resource Center at Harbor Village Apartments in Harbor City in partnership with Project Access, a non-profit dedicated to giving low-income families the tools to break the cycle of poverty.

- Thanks to an advancement grant through the LA County Arts Commission Arts Ed Collective, PVAC provides art instruction for 3rd grade residencies in drawing programs for all Schools in the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District'.

"The pendulum is swinging back, now," said Phinney referring to the return of arts in every classroom. "People are recognizing the importance of arts, again. One of my great joys is finding great artists and inviting them to be teaching artists in the classroom or in an outreach program."

And having a vast number supporters at hand helps PVAC to perpetuate arts on the hill for many years to come.

"The Artist at your Fingertips program that is part of the art center continues to thrill me," Baker said.

"It's such a beautiful example of volunteerism. You are marshaling 300 parents, reaching 7,000 students and bringing to them the artist experience. It's really mind boggling. It's one of the finest examples of volunteerism anywhere in the country."

HILLS, from page 14

school, but he appreciates his son has a way to measure his progress and set pivotal life objectives.

"The Royal Conservatory not only tests you in performance but students are also tested in music theory music, history, rudiments, harmony—basically you're taking all the courses of an introductory college student," Morreale said. "By the time you reach the last level, you have a written test that makes you a complete musician."

The academy also provides musical instruments for those who have yet to acquire one of their own, keeping parents from investing in expensive gear and accouterments if the child doesn't wish to continue.

Lee said the school began with offering art and music, then added dance lessons. The academy later added an after school program where vans are sent out to Dapplegray, Rancho Vista, Montemalaga, Soledad, Cornerstone, Vista Grande. Peninsula Heritage and Country Day, to pick kids up for homework assistance in math and writing.

"Students are able to enroll in one



Children participate in the choral arts program at the Hills Academy in Torrance, lead by Christina Wilson and Sherdale Smith. Photo by Axel Koester

elective class including ballet/tap, Hip Hop, elementary art, drawing/sketching, music and singing with the Palos Verdes Children's choir," Lee said. "We're always expanding our vocabularies how to become better teachers and examples."

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HUMOR, from page 26

expression with the eyes, you can't do a nose, or ears," he said. "That's my favorite part, taking on the challenge to really get the person, so that when you look at it, you recognize them. I try to capture individual facial features through eyebrows, mouth, hair, and the shape of the head. I always incorporate humor in my images, but respectfully," Johnson notes.

"When you nail it and it works, that's the gratification. You don't really know if it will work until the end."

Johnson moved from painting his Day of the Dead-style art on votive candles to larger scale paintings.

"I started with a piece of found wooden board. I love recycled material. I spray painted the background bright green, and on that I painted my first painting of Johnny Cash. And I never stopped," he laughs.

Johnson finds most of the material he paints on right in his own neighborhood: discarded wood, tile, an old tin tray, shingles, even a baking dish. His primary "canvas" is wood.

He usually spray paints a base coat before beginning his acrylic painting, but doesn't do much prep on the surfaces he uses. A rough or gnarled surface can be incorporated in his work.

A board from his neighbor's old chicken coop was perfect, for example, and it already had an orange, distressed background. He used that for an image of Merle Haggard. And, since Johnson is country music fan, he kept that one.

But, Johnson doesn't keep many of his paintings these days. Initially, he says "I just kept going until I couldn't hang them all in the house. Then I began to contact people to see what I would do with them."

One place he contacted was the trendy Mexican restaurant Ortega 120 in Redondo Beach. "I called at the right time. They were just taking some of

Gary Johnson moved from painting his Day of the Dead-style art on votive candles to larger found boards.
Photos by Gil Castro



their old art work down, and let me put 20 or so of my pieces up."

The rest is history: Johnson hung images ranging from Colonel Saunders to Marilyn Monroe, Edgar Allen Poe, and one of his favorites, Freddy Mercury. And they sold.

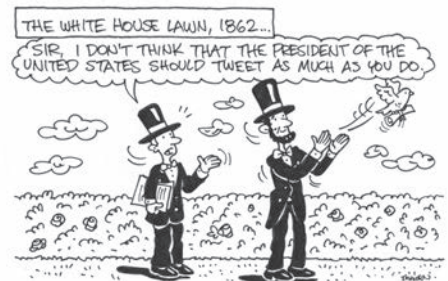
So, he's hung more. "I keep replacing them," he relates. "Along with displaying them at Ortega 120, I post them on my Facebook art site, Folk Everything." He also has had work exhibited at the Autry Museum.

While sales have been brisk, he added: "You don't do it for the money, but because of the pleasure of sharing art."

As much pleasure as he gets from his artwork, he urges us not to take ourselves too seriously.

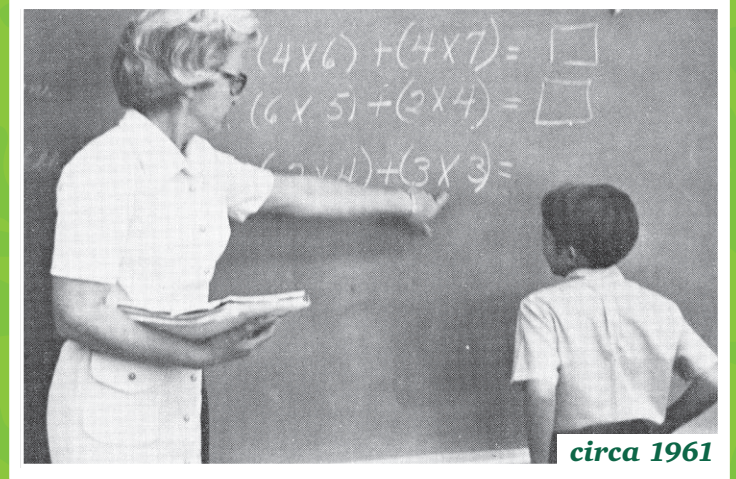
"You have to laugh at yourself," Johnson said.

"I've ruffled a few feathers along the way, but again, everything I do really is humor based. Tommy Bahama. Palos Verdes News. And these paintings."



Gary Johnson infuses humor into his work whether he's working his day job at Tommy Bahama as a graphic artist or "ruffling feathers" as our editorial cartoonist. Above are two of his cartoons.

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