

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

He has seen big government take away people's can-do attitudes, the result being the opposite of a virtuous cycle.



REDISCOVERING 'SIMPLE ABUNDANCE'

A conversation with Sarah Ban Breathnach

Page 3

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE: NO-FAIL PRESENTS

Page 10

BELIEVING IN A BEGGAR

Page 9

KingFace

On a Mission to Spread Truth

ONCE A TROUBLED YOUTH, HE'S NOW FOCUSED ON GIVING BACK HIS COMMUNITY ITS SELF-WORTH

Page 6



Richard M. "Dick" Willis (Aug. 3, 1940–Nov. 5, 2019).

Remembering Mr. Willis

DEAN ABBOTT

I never called him Dick, never to others when he was absent and certainly never to his face. Even as our friendship stretched into my 40s, calling him by his first name never felt normal. I'm not sure I could have made the word come out of my mouth. Even when I saw him a few months ago, I greeted him as Mr. Willis. We met when I was a lonely 16-year-old, full of all the intensity that characterizes that age but with a special interest in ideas and poems and stories. He was an energetic mid-career English teacher, legendary for his theatrical approach to education. His class was a turning point for me. Already I was a fledgling writer, hoarding poems and scraps of essays in disintegrating folders, three-ring binders, and, when necessary, the back of my biology book.

Whether it was reciting Poe's 'The Raven' or Kipling's 'Gunga Din,' Mr. Willis didn't so much lecture as perform.

My identity as a writer was cemented the day I asked if he would look at some of these scribbles. For the next two years, I submitted endless bits of my adolescent mind to him, which he took with the utmost seriousness. No work I handed him ever came back without a stack of written notes correcting my grammar, commenting on issues of style, and reflecting on the content.

His investment in me laid the foundation for a friendship that survived the transition from my adolescence to adulthood. For years after I left high school, he would write me letters detailing his adventures in the classroom and around the world.

We stayed in touch until Mr. Willis died last month. His passing was announced on Facebook, many former students reminisced, calling him a great teacher, talking about the passion for life and the arts he had bequeathed them. Such lauds are appropriate surely, but they leave a less than a concrete impression.

This, however, is not just another "teacher-who-made-a-difference" story. It is a story about hiddenness, about light and dark, and, ultimately, about the nature of the world—which is fitting, because it is these things that also lay at the heart of Mr. Willis's lessons.

I grew up in New Castle, Indiana. You've never heard of it. Few have. In its heyday, about 20,000 people lived there. The town sits on a straight line between Indianapolis and the border of Ohio. At that time, New Castle was an industrial town, just beginning the decline that would come in future decades to similar towns across the country. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about it is its ordinariness. This is not a slight. To be ordinary is a very good thing. In those days, New Castle possessed the kind of ordinariness that made it a place that people mean when they say "a great place to bring up a family," a small, nondescript burg where both threats and opportunities were minimal.

The high school I attended valued two things above all: basketball and order. When the basketball team did well, we'd be excused from class to file into the largest high school field house in the world for a pep rally, where we'd be encouraged to scream and yell and transfer every bit of teenage energy we could muster to the players, as if our enthusiasm alone would carry them to a championship.

Such convulsions of sports fanaticism were the only sanctioned outlet for our stored energy. A normal day was regimented down to the moment. Hundreds of students moved through six classes a day and a short lunch period with precision. While the rigidity kept us safe and efficient, for a young man yearning for artistic expression and freedom, the environment was as barren as the surface of a far-off moon.

In this setting, Mr. Willis attracted attention. He carried his background as an

actor into the classroom. Whether it was reciting Poe's "The Raven" or Kipling's "Gunga Din," Mr. Willis didn't so much lecture as perform. Watching him daily, I began to pick up something subversive in his teaching. When he taught Thoreau, he seemed to think Henry was really on to something. There was, he seemed to hint, some value in failing to conform. It was this stream of sincerity, and his willingness to take seriously the ideas put forward in literature, even when their implications questioned the system in which we lived, that inspired in me the trust to approach him that day with my inchoate hope that I could be a writer.

I wasn't the only one he encouraged. When his passing was announced on Facebook, many former students reminisced, calling him a great teacher, talking about the passion for life and the arts he had bequeathed them. Such lauds are appropriate surely, but they leave a less than a concrete impression.

Here is an example of what they meant. This week, I wandered a library, slinking quietly up and down through the stacks, reading titles and author's names as I have done since high school. I stopped to pick up a book by an author whose name I recognized but whose work I had never read. The opening line was a stunner. Full of energy and intrigue and unanswered questions, it did its job. Instantly, on that afternoon, more than 30 years after graduating high school, I thought, "Oh, Mr. Willis would like that." Then, I remembered he was gone.

That is what those abstract testaments to the power of his passion and personality really mean. They mean that, 30 years later, your mind still sees him as the arbiter of taste and roots itself in the ability to take pleasure in stray sentences he modeled. No little thing like death can stop such power.

And that is the lasting point. No one knew about Mr. Willis. He never stood on a national stage, never received prestigious awards everyone can name. He didn't even have a blog. And yet, he was never without an audience, one he drew to himself through the power of his love. If there is a lesson to be drawn from that, it is this, that even in unknown places, even in places of rigid order, there are those who know that the spirit can be freed, that seeds carefully nurtured can sprout into unforeseen fruit; and that even in the most ordinary places, shine extraordinary lights.

Dean Abbott is a writer living in Ohio with his wife and daughters. His writing focuses on virtue, personal relationships, and quieter living.

Rediscovering 'Simple Abundance'

A Conversation With Sarah Ban Breathnach

COURTESY OF SARAH BAN BREATHNACH



The author Sarah Ban Breathnach.

BARBARA DANZA

Sarah Ban Breathnach rose to success after publishing her landmark book "Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy" in 1995. After a resounding endorsement from Oprah Winfrey, she found her book atop the bestseller list for two years, going on to sell more than 7 million copies.

"Simple Abundance" popularized the concept of the "authentic self" and the practice of keeping a gratitude journal—two key ideas that are still touted in the self-help space today.

For the book's 25th anniversary, Ban Breathnach is releasing an updated and expanded edition, aiming to inspire a new generation. I spoke to her about the new book and the impact her ideas have had over the past 25 years. Here's what she said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: It has been 25 years since the extraordinary success of "Simple Abundance." What inspired you to write this book originally?

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH: Simple Abundance was my third book. I'd previously written two books on Victorian family life and was about to begin my third, which would have been on Victorian decorative details. But a writer spends about two years on a book and the thought of meditating on the meaning of ruffles and flourishes for that long filled my heart with dread.

What I wanted to read was a book that would show me how to reconcile my deepest spiritual, authentic, and creative longings with what felt like overwhelming and conflicting commitments—to my daughter, marriage, invalid mother, work at home, work in the world, siblings, friends, and community. I knew I wasn't the only woman hurtling through life as if it were an out-of-body experience, worn out and frazzled. But I also couldn't imagine that I'd be the woman with any answers because I didn't even know the questions I should be asking.

"Gratitude is the most powerful force in the universe for transformation," says Sarah Ban Breathnach.

The author Toni Morrison, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, observed, "If there is a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." I took her advice.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What was it like to have your ideas resonate with so many people?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: Well, I was completely overwhelmed. But that's because it was such a struggle to get "Simple Abundance" into the world.

My backstory is that while I wrote "Simple Abundance," over a two-year period, I was turned down by 30 American publishers, some of them twice. So, I had been badly bruised in the rejection battles, which knocks writers, both experienced and new to the creative mat. The only thing that can keep you going is to believe that the "book" knows more than you do, and that if you were given this creative dream from the Great Creator, your story isn't over until others get to see it. You have to keep going if you want a happy ending.

I also had the unwavering support of my agent Chris Tomasino. Still, I won't kid you, it's hard to stay optimistic when the world keeps turning you down, and there were many nights that I cried myself to sleep. But the morning would always come, and I'd say, "OK, let's give it another shot."

So, after it finally was published and connected with so many women—eventually 7 million in 28 languages—and was on the New York Times bestseller list for over two years, I truly was stunned and humbled.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Since its first publication, you've released a number of companion books and have impacted millions of readers. What has been the most meaningful part of this journey for you?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: I believe that the invisible companionship I have with my readers is so extraordinary. I am especially touched by the number of women who keep me in their prayers. I think the greatest gift one woman can give another is her prayers. And I know that as my personal journey has had twists and unexpected detours, some deep reserve of hope has kept me going—and that's the prayers of my unseen sisters. And I feel happy that they, too, do not feel alone as they continue on their own personal journey. I'm with them all the way—on the page, in my heart and prayers.

THE EPOCH TIMES: The new edition of "Simple Abundance" has been expanded and updated. What was that process like?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: I've been incredibly grateful that the original "Simple Abundance" has never gone out of print and finds new fans every week. However, several years ago I started to receive messages from younger readers, millennials, and Generation X women who remembered how their mothers had loved the "pink book" and they picked it up and something that they read inspired them. These young women were asking if I could update it for contemporary women. For example, my old suggestions for Joyful Simplicities such as writing for a mail-order catalog and watching a VHS movie completely broke the spell I had created in "Simple Abundance" as it didn't relate to their reality. Now we're ordering online and streaming movies!

After Grand Central Publishing gave the green light for an updated 25th anniversary edition of "Simple Abundance," I initially thought that this would be a quick and straightforward task. But as I mentioned earlier, the "book" always knows more than you do. When I got into the revising, I had to acknowledge that the world we live in today bears little resemblance to the one we lived in circa 1995. Today's rapidly changing, complex, and mostly alarming 24/7 "breaking news" culture engulfs us at every turn, depleting a woman's most precious natural resources—time, emotion, and creative energy.

All the women I know will admit that even though we don't talk about it, every day we wake up more anxious and overwhelmed by this barrage of constant bad news. Even more bewildering is that this continuous sensation has somehow become our culture's accepted "new normal."

But this is not normal, and someone has to say so. I'm going first: This is not normal. That's when I realized that the original "Simple Abundance" graces are as valuable and lifesaving now as they were for me 25 years ago! That gave me the impetus to bring the book into the 21st century.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What do you hope your readers will take away from the new edition of "Simple Abundance"?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: "Simple Abundance" has always been about finding comfort, restoring passion, and becoming as prepared for the unexpected as we can. It still is, and I hope that as a writer I'm able to reach through the page to help my reader discover contentment and serenity, one sentence at a time.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What is the greatest lesson you've learned over the last 25 years?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: That gratitude is the most powerful force in the universe for transformation, and that asking for one day's portion of amazing grace is the personal prayer that is always heard. I have never asked for one day's portion of grace and not received it. But we need to remember to ask for it as we would our daily bread and give thanks for it every night.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How is the new edition different from the original?

MS. BAN BREATHNACH: Well, to begin with, it's 128 pages longer because I obviously have a lot of things I want to talk with the reader about. When I write, it's only for one woman, which is why I think "Simple Abundance" feels like such a personal and intimate book. It is and there's nothing in a woman's life that can't be a source for reflection and reconnection.

It was time to talk honestly about the intrusion of technology into our lives and how we need to preserve ourselves and those we love by acknowledging that technology has its value, but also must have its limits. And we're the only ones who can set them.

I've also ended each month with an essay on preparing a Caution Closet as women down through the ages have, because we all know now that emergencies happen everyday and not just to other women. So, I wanted a gentle way of helping each of us gather—before the crisis—the things we might need if we had to evacuate our homes.

Doesn't every woman dream of being the calm center in a storm? Now she can be.

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"Simple Abundance: 365 Days to a Balanced and Joyful Life" is available now, as well as the 25th-anniversary edition of "The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude."

"Simple Abundance: 365 Days to a Balanced and Joyful Life" by Sarah Ban Breathnach.

Local Hero: Florida Hotelier Harris Rosen Keeps His Giving Close to Home

NEW YORK—Harris Rosen has a chain of eight hotels bearing his name in the Orlando area, but he makes most of his headlines these days for giving away his fortune.

The 80-year-old entrepreneur of Rosen Hotels & Resorts, who grew up on the Lower East Side of New York, adopted the Tangelo Park neighborhood near his hotels and has paid for preschool programs and college for local students. Among some of his other many causes: He endowed the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida, and he has been involved in charity efforts in Haiti, the home country of many of his staff.

Rosen's business also recently expanded its generous, self-funded health plan called RosenCare to cover the health clinic for teachers in Osceola County.

Rosen spoke to Reuters about how he came to make his fortune and then give it away.

Q: Who first taught you money values?

A: It came from my two granddads. Both of them came from Eastern Europe. One had a little restaurant on Lower East Side; the other made wooden barrels.

When my mom and dad got married, they went into business together to purchase little apartments where immigrants stayed. Unfortunately, there was



Harris Rosen sits with the children from Tangelo Park, Fla., who will receive an all-expense-paid college or vocational school scholarship when they graduate from high school.

a fairly significant depression in 1920s. They lost everything because they would not ask anyone to leave.

One night they came over, and said, essentially, you have something in your genes. You are going to be a businessperson, but don't ever borrow money.

I've lived with that all my life: I'm going to be a businessperson, and I can't borrow money. That's impossible! The first hotel I bought, I put down \$20,000 and assumed a \$2.5 million mortgage.

I will tell you now with great pride 45 years later, though, with 7,000 rooms, we don't have a penny of debt.

Q: What did your first job teach you?

A: When I was 10, I overheard fishermen talking about how badly they needed worms. So I went into the night crawler business. I hunted them with a flashlight, and then arrived early at the fishing pier.

I learned that you try to find something that people need and want, charge a fair price, and save as much as you can.

Q: Once you got some money together, what was your investing philosophy?

A: One of the first stocks I bought was Avon, because I met some of

the ladies who ran the company. They said, "Harris, buy the stock." I couldn't buy more than 10-15 shares, but I'd look at Avon every morning, and I did very well.

Then I bought Automatic Data Processing, because the grandmother of the company founder worked as a clerk in their sales office at the Waldorf Astoria, where I also worked.

I don't think I've owned anything other than my company for about maybe 45 years. I invest only in Rosen.

Q: When did you start getting very generous with employee benefits?

A: Early on, about 30 years ago, I discovered I wasn't very happy with our whole health plan. I didn't understand why our premiums would go up year after year. We had a tiny little office where our accounting folks stayed, but they outgrew it. I said, we'll convert it to a primary care health center. I called a friend who knew insurance and said, 'Help me start my own insurance company.' Then I said: 'Let's look for a doctor.'

We focus on keeping people healthy.

Q: You have many charity projects, how do you decide how to give away your money?

A: About 25 years ago, sitting at my desk, I heard a voice and it said, "Harris, you have been blessed beyond anything you imagined,

and now it would be appropriate to offer a helping hand to those in need."

“When I was 10, I overheard fishermen talking about how badly they needed worms. So I went into the night crawler business. So I went into the night crawler business.”

Harris Rosen

Q: How do you pass along this legacy of giving to your children and grandchildren?

A: I just think they need to do the kind of work that they enjoy. They need to be honest and treat people with respect, and if they are in the position to become philanthropic, what they need to do is express that generosity by helping others.

I'm very happy with the way things are working out. I love the opportunity that I have had to offer a helping hand to so many people.

By Beth Pinsky
From Reuters



Michelangelo, the Dunhuang Caves, and Shen Yun

Art and Divine Inspiration

MADALINA HUBERT

If we could ask Michelangelo about the qualities necessary for creating an artistic masterpiece, we could understand the values that guided his own art. He might mention “patience” because his creations required hard work, precision, and a skillful hand. He could say “devotion” because he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to his art. He might say “faith in the divine” because he was convinced his artistic mission came from God.

“Many believe—and I believe—that I have been designated for this work by God. In spite of my old age, I do not want to give it up; I work out of love for God and I put all my hope in Him,” he said. Michelangelo was one of the most

Shen Yun's composers use classical composing techniques, guided by principles of goodness and divine inspiration.

important artists of the Italian Renaissance, a period that gave birth to brilliant works of art that still inspire us today with their beauty, perfection, and depiction of worlds beyond our own. He lived during the time when people discovered the works of the ancient Romans and Greeks and began to re-evaluate their own outlook on life.

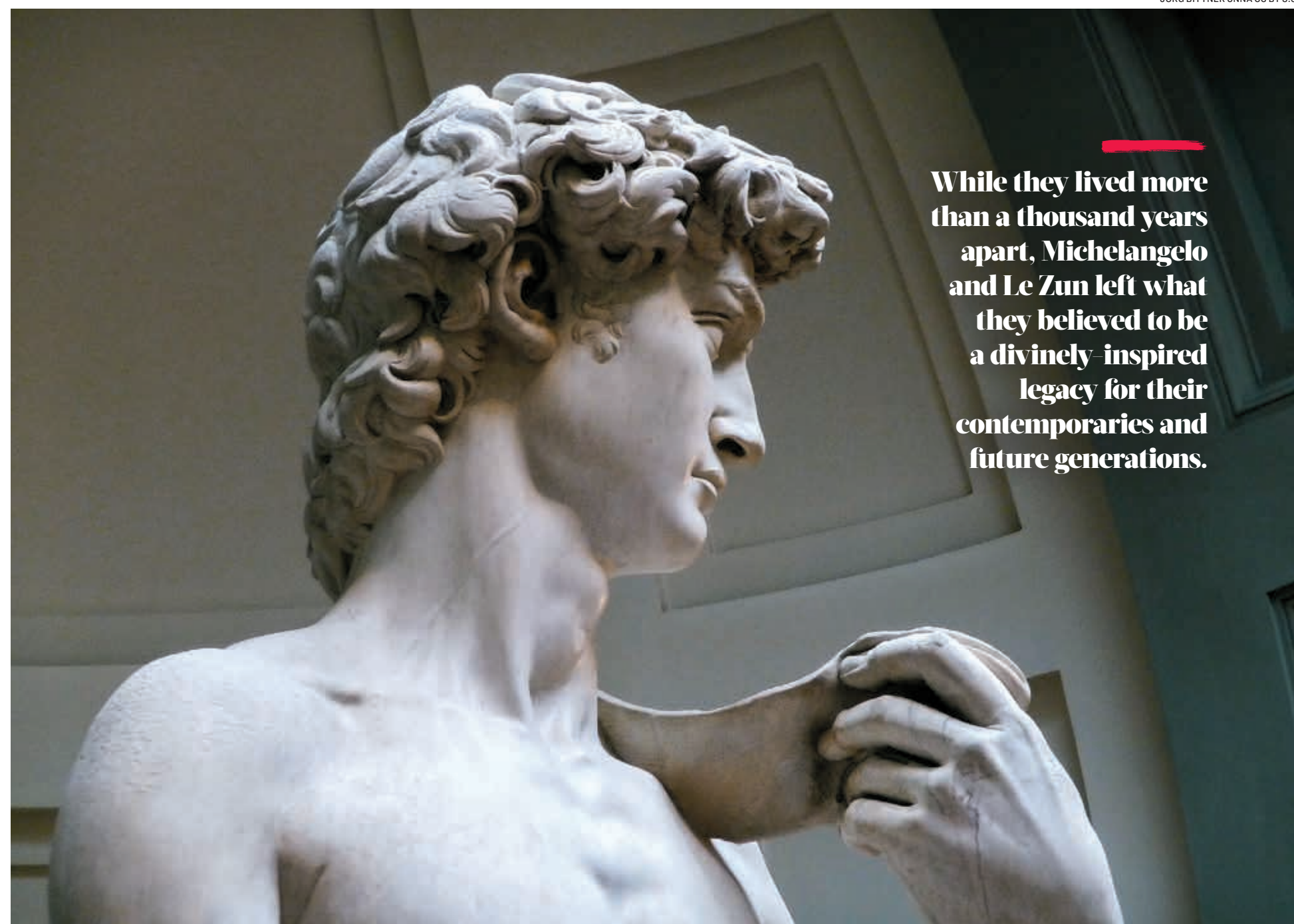
Sculpture was one art form that the ancients had mastered, depicting the human body with remarkable precision and beauty. Not only were the wealthy of the Italian Renaissance buying ancient Greek art, but artists were aspiring to emulate it. Michelangelo's genius left us with works that look remarkably lifelike. Standing next to one of his sculptures, we almost feel the Madonna in the “Pietà” breathing or sense that David will move to sling the rock toward Goliath.

Michelangelo's artworks depict biblical scenes; the ancient Greek and Roman sculptures portray their pantheon of gods. In both cases, the eyes were turned toward the divine for inspiration and subject matter. Michelangelo said, “The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection.” He also claimed that he was not the original creator of his sculptures. “I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free,” he said. Michelangelo's words indicate that the work of art existed before he touched it; his task was to bring it out for people to see.

While we cannot precisely know how his artistic inspiration came about, there are records of many painters and sculptors of religious art throughout history who believed divine visions guided their work.

While they lived more than a thousand years apart, Michelangelo and Le Zun left what they believed to be a divinely inspired legacy for their contemporaries and future generations.

JORG BITTNER/UNNA CC BY 3.0



“David,” 1501-1504, by Michelangelo (detail). Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

A Pianist's Musical Mission to Bridge Cultures and Values

Pianist Qin Yuan.



COURTESY OF QIN YUAN

CATHERINE YANG

Shen Yun Performing Arts is known for its beautiful dance and vivid colors, but there is a point in every performance when things become quiet, a soloist takes to the empty stage, and the audience is immersed in pure music that goes straight to the heart.

Sometimes this is a bel canto vocalist, singing an original work in Chinese that conveys soul-stirring spirituality. Sometimes it's an erhu virtuoso, keeping thousands rapt in attention with a wide range of sounds and emotions with just two strings.

Since 2017, pianist Qin Yuan has accompanied these soloists on tour and, in joining the company, developed a sense of mission she feels is her calling.

“I wish that through my practice and

effort, and the company's touring, we can convey traditional culture, especially the traditional values behind it, and bring this to more and more people. It can affect hearts, and impact society in a positive way, towards things become quiet, a soloist takes to the empty stage, and the audience is immersed in pure music that goes straight to the heart.

Qin Yuan's mission as an artist lines up with the company's. Shen Yun was founded in 2006 to revive the 5,000 years of traditional Chinese culture, which was nearly stamped out in just the last century with the communist takeover of China.

China was once called the Celestial Empire, and the culture is said to be divinely inspired. In the past 13 years, Shen Yun has traveled the

world to bring to life this ancient culture through the performing arts, and its acclaim and reach have only grown with every passing year.

This truly is a deep and divine culture, Qin Yuan said. Though she was born and raised in China, Qin Yuan feels there is still so much more she has to learn about this traditional culture.

“There are still so many things I need to deeply investigate so that I can more directly and authentically bring out these ideas in the music,” Qin Yuan said.

Qin Yuan and the Versatile Piano Shen Yun's music, especially the solo showstoppers, is written in the ancient Chinese music style. Already embedded in these compositions is the style and rhythm of ancient Chinese music, Qin Yuan explained, so strictly speak-



Shen Yun Performing Arts in the dance “Han Imperial Air.”

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Dunhuang Caves

In China, there is the oasis city of Dunhuang, famous for the Mogao Caves, which are home to an incredible collection of Buddhist paintings and statues. The more than 500 caves contain scenes of heavenly paradises, Buddhas, and deities. The caves have been a pilgrimage site for centuries and hold some of the world's greatest artistic treasures.

The story goes that in A.D. 366, a Buddhist monk by the name of Le Zun stopped in the area and saw a glorious heavenly scene: A thousand glowing Buddhas appeared before him, surrounded by heavenly maidens playing divine music. A trained painter and sculptor, Le Zun stepped into a mountain cave and set to work to re-create this vision. Later, more monks came to this area and saw similar scenes. They entered the surrounding mountain caves and filled them with splendid otherworldly images.

While they lived more than a thousand years apart and were part of different cultural traditions, Michelangelo and Le Zun left what they believed to be a divinely inspired legacy for their contemporaries and future generations. These artistic works uplifted people through beauty and joy. They also inspired a deeper appreciation of the role of the divine in this world.

Shen Yun and the Divine

Today, another group of artists is working to create exquisite works of art, guided by divine inspiration. Since its establishment in 2006, New-York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts has been dedicated to reviving the lost world of traditional Chinese culture and sharing it with the world.

Touring to more than 150 theaters every year, Shen Yun presents classical Chinese dance, ethnic and folk dances, and story-based dances, accompanied by an orchestra. Shen Yun also features solo performances of vocal and instrumental music, as well as digital backdrops that interact with the dancers in innovative ways.

Every aspect of Shen Yun's performances is remarkably executed. The artistic team pays attention not only to the



US-PD

interpretation and its technical execution but also to the inner realm of the dancers. According to the company's website, the dancers, musicians, and the whole team look to the divine for inspiration, just as the great artists of the past did.

“For them, this spiritual connection is motivation for striving to excel, is the heart behind each movement of the dancer and each note of the musician. It is why audiences can feel there is something different about Shen Yun. Their source of inspiration, rooted in traditional Chinese culture, is the spiritual discipline known as Falun Dafa,” says the website. Focused on character improve-

A cave mural of Avalokitesvara, Worshipping Bodhisattvas and Mendicant. Tang Dynasty, A.D. 618-907.

ment, this meditation-based practice rests on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

The name Shen Yun can be translated from Chinese as “the beauty of divine beings dancing,” and the name comes to life as artists, dressed in ancient Chinese garments or adorned as heavenly figures, dance gracefully on stage. The ladies' movements are delicate and gentle, with precise technical execution. The men embody strength and elegance built on a foundation of superior athleticism. The dancers' synchronization is particularly astounding. They move as one, even in remarkably intricate and fast-moving pieces.

Through the orchestra, which combines the Eastern and Western musical traditions, we hear the strength of Western instruments and the spirit of Chinese instruments. Shen Yun's ability to blend the distinct tonalities of the two systems is so impeccable that it seems the two traditions have always been working together. In fact, this is an incredibly difficult task and a new frontier in classical music.

Shen Yun's pieces are original compositions that reflect China's history, ethnic and folk traditions, and the unique nature of the orchestra. Shen Yun's composers use classical composing techniques, guided by principles of goodness and divine inspiration.

We know that many Western composers like Bach, Handel, and Mozart believed their music was inspired by God. The ancient Chinese composers also held that their works were guided by heaven. They paid special attention to the harmony between heaven, earth, and the human body. “In the past, there was this concept of elegant music that nurtured virtue,” said Jing Xian, one of the composers, in the video “The Music of Shen Yun.” According to her, this is also the aim of Shen Yun's music, and we can feel that through its peaceful, joyful, and vigorous sounds.

Shen Yun is embarking on its 2020 tour with a new program of dance and music. As we get ready for the new year ahead, we can only wonder what inspiration we will find in its performances this year.

For more information, visit ShenYun.com

ing it is difficult to translate that to the piano, which is very much a Western instrument.

The tonality of Western music and Chinese music tends to be different, for one, so the note intervals between the tones on a piano and those used on the erhu, a two-stringed ancient instrument, are naturally different. Luckily, the piano is a versatile instrument, often said to contain a whole orchestra.

“Sometimes you really need to use the tone colors to mimic another instrument, a Chinese instrument,” Qin Yuan said. “For instance, when I'm accompanying an erhu, sometimes it's ideal for the soloist if you can make the piano sound like a guzheng, or a pipa, to accompany the erhu. The tone colors here are a bit unique.”

During the 2018 touring season, Qin Yuan did just that accompanying the erhu solo piece. The music was written by Shen Yun Artistic Director D.F., an expert in ancient Chinese music.

Qin Yuan had a particular inter-

pretation of the three movements of the piece.

“We were conveying the music from a society during which people's hearts were still pure, and through the piano and erhu, painting a picture of that life, through music. There are three parts to this piece; there's a slow movement first, as the pace of life for these people was not the hectic pace of modern-day life. There's a bit of that feeling you get from Chinese landscape paintings.”

“Then there is a fast movement, almost celebratory, thanking the gods for their blessings. The third movement, having received blessings, there's a feeling of reverence,” Qin Yuan said.

“There were parts in the music where I thought of my left hand as playing the guqin [a kind of Chinese zither], I'm thinking of it that way and playing it as such, and I'll let the piano create sounds as if it was a guqin; that way it can express the sound of that image of ancient China,” Qin Yuan said.

Another piece Qin Yuan performed

that season was accompanying soprano Min Jiang in the operatic piece “Coming to Pass.” It speaks of a culture five millennia deep, a legend coming to pass, and the benevolence of the divine.

Qin Yuan described the deeply philosophical lyrics that she reflected on as she wrote the piano accompaniment for this piece, mulling over some particular lines and the way the soprano would sing them. She remembered playing the portion of the music where the lyrics encompassed the message of the piece; in order to better help the audience grasp the meaning of the poetic and lofty words, Qin Yuan wanted to imbue the tone colors with the same meaning. She had to write the part so that the music itself was bright and powerful, full of restorative energy, and then imbue each performance with that energy herself.

“I was always thinking, with each performance how can I better convey this to the audience? How can I play this so that the audience understands,

and can feel the meaning behind the music?” Qin Yuan said.

Music is something that speaks from the heart and to the heart, Qin Yuan said.

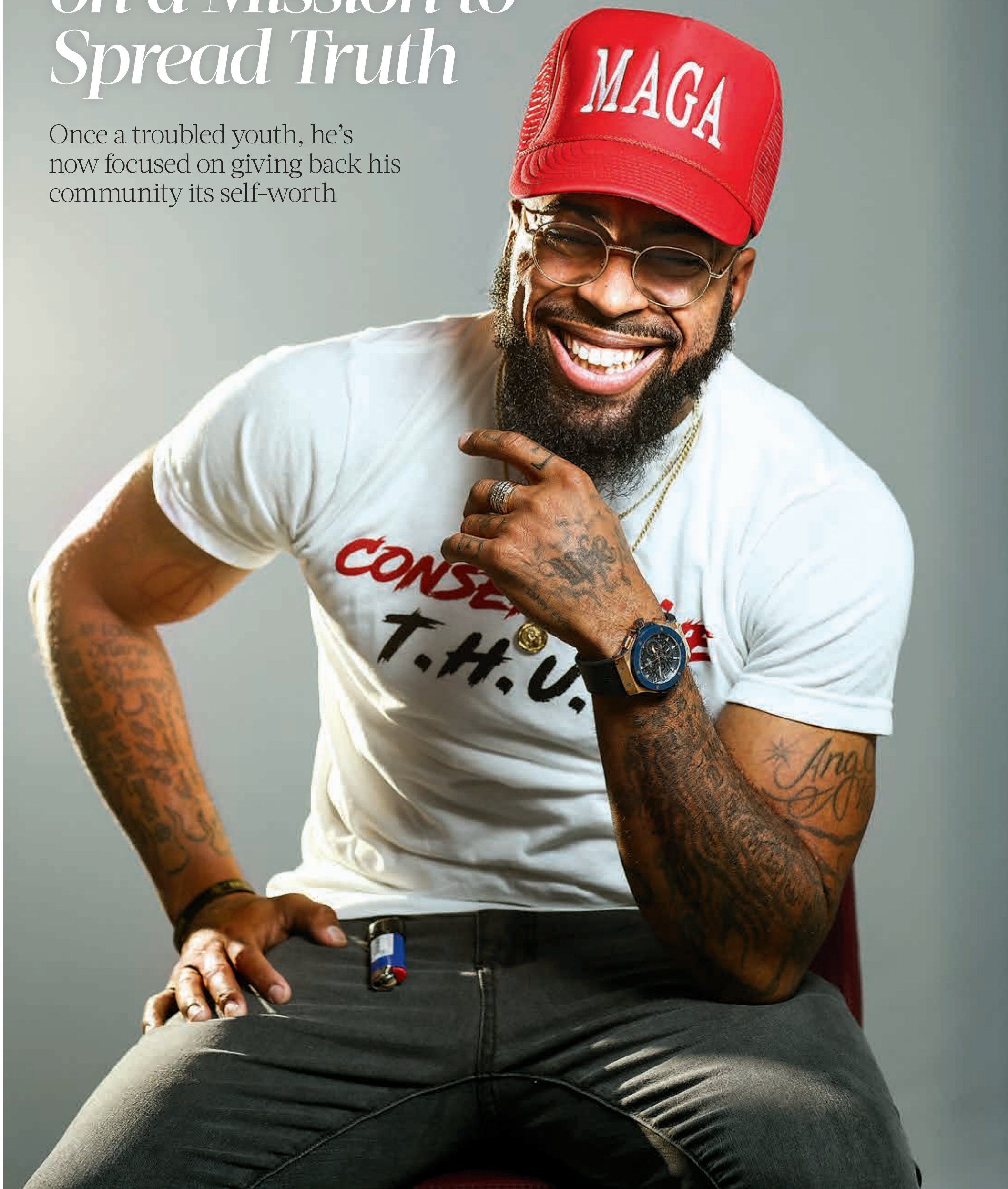
As a Shen Yun accompanist, Qin Yuan accompanies the soloists each touring season and the regular dance rehearsals—it's all Chinese music, full of a deep sense of tradition. And mastery of Shen Yun's unique style of music is no small feat.

“You need to have a tremendous grasp of traditional Chinese culture, you really do need a deep understanding of the culture in order to express the depth of the cultural content, through your fingertips, on the keys,” Qin Yuan said. “This is the most crucial and perhaps the most difficult part. You do need to accumulate that experience of understanding in order to really interpret this music; it's not something you can grasp in a day or two of intensive study or by immersing yourself in the culture for a few days. It's a deep study.”

KingFace: on a Mission to Spread Truth

About 10 years ago, politics didn't mean anything to KingFace—they didn't seem to affect his life in a neighborhood rife with crime and poverty. But as he started thinking for himself and asking questions, he saw that politics could actually have a big effect on his community.

Once a troubled youth, he's now focused on giving back his community its self-worth



Teaching Kids How to Think Like a CEO

ANDREW THOMAS

Ever since Leah Remillet was a child growing up in Seattle, she's had an entrepreneurial spirit.

At age 8, she was selling stationery door to door. She would also host lemonade stands, and sell candy to other kids. One time, when her parents were gone, she and her sisters made the executive decision to hold a garage sale.

In her early 20s, while in college, Remillet started her own photography business. Though she had never picked up a professional camera, she was confident. She sold her laptop and purchased a used camera. Within 18 months, she had earned six figures. Her expertise wasn't in photography,

but she understood business and was skilled at creating an experience for her customers.

Remillet, 38, now has three children, and business and entrepreneurship are often the topics of dinner conversations.

When her daughters were 8 and 10 years old, they started looking for gumball machines at garage sales that were about \$10 each, took them apart, and spray painted them gold. Remillet helped advertise the gumball machines on Etsy, and her daughters were selling the products for \$125 apiece, making a \$115 profit on each unit.

As part of their homeschooling, each of her children started their own business.

One started a babysitting business, another started an Etsy shop that sold wristlets and scrunchies for American Girl dolls, and the third started a drone photography business. Remillet taught them how to think like an entrepreneur and realized that other children could learn, too.

In 2018, she founded The CEO Kid, an online course to teach children business, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and problem-solving skills, and how to think like a CEO.

THE EPOCH TIMES: When you were running your various businesses growing up, what lessons did you learn early on about business and entrepreneurship?

LEAH REMILLET: The power of experience. The experience that you create for your customers or around your product makes all the difference between how much they're going to talk about the product or about you, and how much they are going to be willing to pay. Understanding the power of brand perception. Understanding that you can use what you have right now to earn money was also a really big insight.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What were some of the obstacles you encountered or mistakes you made while you were growing up and running these businesses, and how did you learn from them?

MS. REMILLET: One of the things that I really love about entrepreneurship and business for kids is that it is an opportunity to make mistakes when the stakes are really low. It's such a great time to try things and to learn that setbacks don't have to be defeats.

One time with the stationery, I lost the order form, so I had gone around, I had gotten all these orders, and then I lost the order form. I didn't know who had ordered what, I didn't know who to deliver to, so that was obviously a huge mistake, and one that I felt so embarrassed by. That lesson, it hurt. I can still remember it because it hurt, and so it helped me forevermore to be much more careful about where I put things that were important. I definitely was a whole lot more careful with important things from that point forward, and making sure I knew exactly where I put them.

CATHERINE YANG

KingFace can't walk two blocks without being stopped and recognized, either by a social media follower, or just for openly sporting a MAGA hat in the middle of New York City.

"I'm not here to convince anybody to be a Trump supporter or a Republican, I just want to share the truth," he said. "Trump just so happens to be the truth; if it wasn't the truth I wouldn't support him, I wouldn't defend it. But being that he is, I have no choice but to defend the truth."

Now a public figure, KingFace, who is based in Queens, New York, said it really all happened by accident. He likes President Donald Trump's policies and openly defends them often because the hat he's worn every day for the past three years is a "conversation starter."

One of his videos went viral. Since then, he's been invited to the White House for the recent Young Black Leadership Summit and spoken on stage at the Atlanta Blexit event. A few years ago, he never would have thought he'd set foot in these places.

About a decade ago, politics meant nothing to him because they didn't affect his life in a neighborhood rife with crime and poverty. Now he's talking to people in the spot he once was in, and his reach has extended far beyond that.

"I was being a follower, not understanding that I'm a leader," he said. "When I realized that I was a leader, I changed my mentality, which is the first thing that's important. Once you change the way you think, then your life will change."

"For me, changing the way I think, I was invited to the White House. I met the president. That's a positive thing for people to see."

Community

KingFace was born Larry Henry, in Florida. When he was 3 months old, his mother gave him to his father to raise. He and his father then moved to Brooklyn.

"I was a troubled youth. I was getting involved in stuff that I shouldn't have gotten involved with, like gangs, and catching gun charges, getting kicked out of school. I was basically a nuisance and basically a problem in society," he said.

He was looking for acceptance, and in the Brooklyn neighborhoods he lived in, the clear path to success was to run with gangs and work for drug dealers.

"I wasn't thinking for myself," he said. He really only became part of a gang by being "guilty by association." Since everyone already thought he was part of a gang, he joined one. KingFace was, and still is, a member of the Bloods, though he's inactive. He wasn't interested in fighting other gang members; in fact, he was the only one in his neighborhood who wasn't a Crip.

Attacking each other on sight, based on color, is exactly what's happening with identity politics in the culture today, he added. "I wanted to see the end of that, so that's what led to my changing my mentality."

"I realized as I was looking at what was going on in my community, it was just damaging. In one year, I lost over like 30 of my friends to murder, and they didn't even get a chance to be 18 years old, so they don't even know what it's like to be an adult. Seeing that, it hurt me. I'm human. As much as I can seem tough and stuff like that, I'm human, and it hurts to see people that you care about die."

Foray Into Politics

KingFace actually grew up a Trump supporter. "I've always liked Donald Trump, since I was a kid," he said. Trump was referenced in rap all the time. He was a household name. "He was always considered the American dream." But he doesn't defend the president because

What he was looking for was acceptance, and in the Brooklyn neighborhoods he lived in, the clear path to success in view was to run with gangs and work for drug dealers.



“Everything about what I'm doing is about mentality. Because once we change the mentality, then we'll actually start to see some change.”

KingFace

he likes him as a personality; today, he's far more interested in Trump's policies.

"What he's accomplishing now, he's been saying for 30 years," he said.

"You've seen the passion of how much he loves this country, and how much he wants to save it. He wants to help Americans—which includes blacks," he said. "I hate it when black people think just because you say American, it's not including them. Black people have the same right to be an American as anybody else. We've died for this country, we helped build this country."

"For me, it doesn't matter if it's a Democrat or Republican in office, as long as you're doing the best for the country."

In fact, KingFace had voted for Barack Obama.

"I thought it was a great opportunity to show my people that there should be no excuses now because we have a black president," he said. He noticed that people in his community had bought into the victim mentality, believing some imaginary oppressor had told them they could never accomplish certain things in their life because of their color. With a black president in office, KingFace thought people might see that now there was no excuse—they could accomplish anything they set their minds to.

Once he voted for Obama, though, he started looking into what the Democratic Party stood for, and found that it was almost single-handedly responsible for all the negative things that had happened to his community, such as the welfare state and identity politics. This caused him to become interested in politics.

"Poverty, lack of education, safety, crime—I see a lot of that in our neighborhood. I've learned that politics can have a major effect on the changes in our community," KingFace said.

When Aristotle wrote that man was a political animal, he was by no means saying we'd be happiest as legislators; rather, that we are social and live and thrive in cities and societies.

KingFace espouses a similar philosophy—he lives in a community, so of course he has an interest in how it works, where he stands, and how it can be made better.

He has seen big government create the sort of dependency that's taken away people's can-do attitudes. The result is the opposite of a virtuous cycle. He sees young women with low self-worth dressing and behaving promiscuously, getting pregnant, and raising children without fathers—children who have low self-worth because one of their parents didn't want them. These are the girls who repeat the cycle and the boys who go on to commit crimes.

"I think these things are important because it is part of the development of life and how you look at yourself," he said.

"Because they don't care about their own lives. So why would they care about yours? So these things are important. I think we try to ignore it, act like it doesn't mean anything, but it does because it's part of the cycle of the dangers in our community, especially black on black crime."

Economic policy is also at the heart of many issues. Everyone is looking for peace of mind, he said, and a lot of people in his community don't have that because they're worrying about how to pay their bills.

KingFace believes giving his community back their self-worth is far more important.

"Everything about what I'm doing is about mentality. Because once we change the mentality, then we'll actually start to see some change," he said.

Becoming the Solution

KingFace mentioned he recently invited Jesus into his life and has peace knowing he's walking a righteous path. He noted that he doesn't call himself a Christian.

"Jesus did not hang with the rich and popu-

lar and successful. He was around the no-good people, the criminals, the thieves, you know, because that's who he wants to reach," KingFace said.

"I believe these are the people that are most important to reach, because they're the people that really affect a normal citizen's life," he said. Most people going about their lives doing the right things won't affect much. But people doing the wrong things end up disproportionately affecting everyone "because now you can get robbed by these people, home invasions, crime."

These are people in KingFace's neighborhoods, and often they're just following what they see.

"I think it's important that people get to see different options," he said. "If I show a young black man that you don't have to sell drugs to drive a Benz, I drive a Benz and I don't sell drugs—what's the option? Oh, you could do this, you could get into politics, you could get into public speaking, you could get into other things other than selling drugs. Because in our community, that's the only option we see for success. We don't see the doctors and teachers driving around in our neighborhood with a lot of money, we see the drug dealers like that."

"I've got an eighth grade education but that didn't stop me from learning. That didn't stop me from reading. That didn't stop me from researching," he said. He can cite statistics on any area of policy that may affect his community, and can tell you more about local and national legislation than some newspapers can. Defending Trump has given him plenty of practice.

And people listen because he is part of their community. He speaks their language, which is more than just words. It's also how you dress, where you come from, how you hold yourself. People in his community don't want to listen to someone else who also has nothing, and they also don't want to listen to a man who has never done wrong and won't understand why people do certain things, he added.

"I don't really want to dwell on the negatives [I've done in my past], but I'm not ashamed of it, because if I didn't go do those things I wouldn't be able to speak and relate to the people in my neighborhood," he said.

"I don't want to ostracize them. I don't want to leave [gang members] behind. That's what most people do when they get in a certain position. They leave the people behind. No, I want to bring you with me. But if you're going to come with me, we're going to do it the right way. We need to help fix our community."

Many are reluctant to leave gangs, for instance, for fear of losing ties to people, and KingFace doesn't see this as a bad thing. He says he is a Blood for life.

"Blood" stands for Brotherly Love Overrides Oppression and Destruction, and although the gangs don't necessarily stand for that, that's what KingFace signed up for, and that's what he intends to have the gangs really do.

"Let's do something different, more positive. Let's do this gang stuff that was originally about our community and uplifting our community, let's really live up to that," he said. "Instead of making it negative, let's just turn it around and make it a positive."

KingFace says his mission is to spread the truth.

"I think my purpose, which should be everybody's purpose, is to save souls. At the end of the day, the day I go I want to be able to say, 'God, look, I saved these people from damnation. I've opened their eyes.' I want to be able to bring souls back with me when I see my maker," he said.

"It's not about money, a lot of people think this is about money—I can make money, I was making a lot of money living an illegal lifestyle. Money is the easiest thing to make. I could go outside and put my hand out and I could get money. We make money seem like it's so important," he said.

"I'm focused on changing people's minds and waking them up to what's really going on."



COURTESY OF THE CEO KID

Leah Remillet is the founder of The CEO Kid.

how to do well at a job interview, or to build a really good résumé. These are things that we all need.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How is The CEO Kid changing the way we

turning to something where they are consuming content, they can be utilizing their own creativity and building their own experiences that they can be really proud of.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What advice do you have for teachers and parents of kids who want to become entrepreneurs?

MS. REMILLET: The No. 1 thing is to first let them do hard things. When we take the opportunities away from our kids to learn hard lessons, to do hard things, then they miss out on seeing how powerful they are. Don't swoop in. Help them build their resiliency muscles by focusing and encouraging them through setbacks, through adversity, through hard things, by telling them, "You can do this. I believe in you. Keep pushing. Keep working. I love seeing how hard you're working. It's amazing seeing your effort."

prepare kids for the future?

MS. REMILLET: At this current stage, it's about bringing The CEO Kid into homes, and giving kids an opportunity when they're bored. Instead of turning to a device and

FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

POPCORN & INSPIRATION: FILMS THAT UPLIFT THE SOUL

'12 Angry Men'

A Prime Example of Not Bowing to Peer Pressure

MARK JACKSON

If you look up "courtroom drama," the definition has a photo from "12 Angry Men" next to it, illustrating the genre. I'd never seen this quintessential entry. I needed to see it. If you're looking for an example to show your kids of how to resist peer pressure—look no further.

On the hottest day of the year, an all-male juror team parses, debates, and decides the fate of a young minority of uncertain ethnicity, who's been charged with murdering his dad with a switchblade. Where? New York City. Where else did switchblades exist in the 1950s, especially those way-bladed, serpentine types that have Chinatown written all over them?

The whole hour-and-a-half film claustrophobically plays out in black and white, in a downtown jury room, and basically schools the audience about the principles of reasonable doubt, innocent until proven guilty, fair trial, civic responsibility, moral stature, composure, impartiality, and so on. It plays like theater. It uplifts and reminds us of our duties as free—and free-thinking—ethical human beings living in a democracy. They don't make them like this anymore.

Introductions

The camera starts a journey from atop the black, defunct electric wall fan, which shouts: Hottest day, no air conditioning—these men are literally hot under the collar!

Then, as the room fills with the titular 12 angry men, it slowly swoops down and introduces them, finally coming to rest on Juror 8 (Henry Fonda). Something about Fonda's face nagged me. Then I realized what it was: Fonda was to Clint Eastwood what Robert Redford was to Brad Pitt—the first edition of that particular archetype. Model 1.0.

This is the 1950s, when prejudice and ignorance were rampant. However, it must also be said that the 1950s were also largely considered to be the last decade of moral decency. That said, 11 out of 12 men's knee-



Juror #8 (Henry Fonda) stars as the only free-thinking juror in "12 Angry Men."

jerk reaction is that it's an open-and-shut case. Because who wants to sit in that sauna and debate a case nobody could care less about?

Number 8 cares, to the immediate and severe aggravation of the rest of the herd. Fonda glows white-hot with righteousness and moral indignation at the collective complacency, and yet remains so balanced with humility, honesty, and openness that what would normally grate—doesn't. "We're talking about somebody's life here. We can't decide in five minutes. Supposing we're wrong?"

The men debate the case every which way, evidence and exhibit material are requested, and re-enactments are staged, such as whether a limping man could get from his apartment to the hallway in 15 seconds. No! He would have needed way more time!

Could imminent-homicide shouting be heard over the infernal din of that L-Train? Did that older female witness, who wasn't wearing glasses during the trial but nevertheless had those indentations on her face that spectacle wearers have—would she have been able to see a murder happen across a train platform, in the middle of the night? Through moving train windows? Especially when she (as in "The Night Before Christmas") ran to the window "in a flash, tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash," and clearly wouldn't have put on her glasses?

Evidence is so painstakingly debated that

11 out of 12 men's knee-jerk reaction is that it's an open-and-shut case. Because who wants to sit in that sauna and debate a case nobody could care less about?



(L-R) Jack Warden, Edward Binns, E.G. Marshall, John Fiedler, Henry Fonda, Ed Begley, Robert Webber, Jack Klugman (foreground), George Voskovec, Martin Balsam, and Joseph Sweeney in "12 Angry Men." (United Artists)

we start to feel like we know as much as this jury knows. Votes are taken throughout, and what started as 11 to 1, gradually flip-flops to the exact same count, in reverse.

One Star Pitcher, Great Teamwork

It being the 1950s, references to America's favorite pastime abound. The schlubby, crass, Noo-Yawkisms-spouting baseball fan, Juror 7 (Jack Warden) needs to get to a ballgame later. He cares way more about his precious game than the life of the kid on trial and advantageously flips his verdict just to expedite the proceedings. When it looks like the debate will be protracted, it's referred to as "going into extra innings."

Henry Fonda is the sole high-wattage star (and partially financed the film out of his own pocket), but the rest of the jury are the Hollywood A-list character-actor heavy hitters (here's a baseball reference) of the day.

The cast includes a pack of classic, 1950s hat-and-briefcase white-collar types, and ready-to-punch blue-collar-type males. They all have two things in common: They all smoke, and they're all manly. There's the wisecracking Madison Avenue adman (Robert Webber); an emotionless, logic-bound, glasses-wearing stockbroker (E.G. Marshall); a vociferous blowhard (Lee J. Cobb, looking like a cross between Paul Newman and Rodney Dangerfield), whose deep issues with his son drive his desire to send the convict in question to the electric chair.

When Juror 7 changes his vote in order to

get to his game on time, Juror 11 (George Voskovec), a watchmaker and an immigrant, who has until now been cowed by not feeling he belongs, erupts with righteous indignation, asking No. 7 where he gets off playing with a man's life like that. He reminds us all, from the immigrant perspective, of how remarkable—and to be cherished—democracy is.

Juror 10 (Ed Begley) finally can't take it anymore and launches into a vitriolic, racist rant. As he continues to spew hatred, all the rest of the men, one by one, stand up and turn their backs on him.

Not even the jurors who deem the young man (who could be Greek, Spanish, Italian, Iranian, Palestinian, Jewish, Indian, Arabic, Mexican, Native American, mixed race, and so on—basically a brown human) guilty, refuse to acknowledge the torrential hate speech. While many of them had used the phrase "these people," after his mirroring their various degrees of prejudice back to them, the phrase is never used again. It's a scene to restore faith in humanity.

Essence and Accolades

We never see the trial itself, just a quick scene of the bored judge instructing the jury, and a quick epilogue. It's never said whether that young brown man is guilty or innocent.

"12 Angry Men" is 100 percent about extracting reasonable doubt from the evidence. There's no action; it's basically logic, decency, integrity, impartiality, authentic-

ity, and compassion—up against emotion and prejudice. And yet, regardless of a lack of action, it moves.

The conflict is high throughout, and whereas the film could have easily slipped into soapbox preaching and proselytizing, the human foibles of a toxic father-son relationship, and toxic prejudice, are presented as just that—let her or she who is without those things cast the first stone. Juror 3's projection of anger regarding his estranged son eventually demonstrates the fact that anger is a secondary emotion. Buried underneath are powerful feelings of betrayal and being hurt to the quick by the physical altercation he had with his son and the subsequent irreparable rift.

In the end, it's Fonda's character's forbearance—in the face of overwhelming opinion, daring to be unpopular, speaking his truth and not backing down—that allows each man, in his own time, to have a moment of enlightening to a truth that resonates with him and engenders doubt in his soul.

"12 Angry Men" puts the full range of human virtue and vice, good and evil, on display. It posits that, ultimately, the universe is benevolent and that our job, regarding each other, is to attempt with our best effort and greatest compassion to elucidate and clarify the truth.

"12 Angry Men" didn't do well at the box office back in the 1950s, but it's currently listed at No. 18 on IMDb's 100 all-time best movie list.

Evidence is so painstakingly debated that we start to feel like we know as much as this jury knows.

'12 Angry Men'

Director Sidney Lumet

Starring

Henry Fonda, E.G. Marshall, Lee J. Cobb, Jack Klugman, Ed Begley, Martin Balsam, Jack Warden, Robert Webber, John Fiedler, Edward Binns, Joseph Sweeney, George Voskovec

Running Time 1 hour, 36 minutes

Not Rated

Release Date April 10, 1957

★★★★★

Believing in a Beggar

DARREN KE

My mom and dad own a restaurant in the Bronx, New York. They are busy most of the day, especially during lunchtime. They are normally very nice to all of their customers, but on certain days when it is very busy, they are usually not lenient toward people asking for food or other things. I remember a certain beggar that said he was homeless, but nobody believed him. After all, he had pretty nice sneakers and was wearing nice clothes. He kept pleading for food, saying he didn't have much to eat these days. My parents were reluctant to give food to him, but they eventually did when he kept pleading for help.

A few months passed without him coming to the restaurant. One day, my parents and I decided to travel to Manhattan to shop for some new school apparel. While we were walking to a clothing shop, there he was, the beggar that had come to our store! He apparently hoped he could make more money begging in Manhattan than in the Bronx. However, we saw people relentlessly making fun of him and mocking him. Instead of his previous appearance back in the Bronx, he now looked sad and disheveled, with a ripped shirt, sandals with ripped soles, ragged pants, and a dirty face, and a cup to collect change. The cup only had about two dollars' worth of change in it.

The homeless person recognized my parents and waved at them, trying to get their attention. My parents simply looked the other way, but I recognized him immediately. I waved to him, and he smiled at me. Without my parents seeing, I dropped a five-dollar bill into his cup. He looked at me with the most sincere and grateful look in his eyes; I will never forget it. On my way back to the Bronx, I thought about him and

COURTESY OF THE LOUKOUMI MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOUNDATION



Darren Ke.

wanted to try to find a way to help him.

A year passed, and now I was eight years old. One day I went to the supermarket to get some groceries, and I saw the same homeless person in ragged clothes, with a dirtied face, and a cup that was about to fall apart. I immediately gave him some money again. I bought my groceries, and when I came outside, he asked if I knew of any jobs nearby. I said, "Maybe," and I ran home to ask my parents if they would hire another person in their restaurant. My parents said yes, but the person would only get minimum wage. I relayed this to the homeless person, and he jumped for joy.

This homeless man worked at my parents' restaurant for two years. By then he had saved enough money to buy a house for his family. To this day, my parents still don't remember that he was the beggar they gave food to. I am happy that I was able to make a difference in the life of someone, and I look forward to helping more people in the future.

Excerpted from "Inspiring Stories That Make A Difference by 75 Kids Who Changed Their Worlds" by The Loukoumi Make A Difference Foundation (Hybrid Global Publishing)

Good Deeds: Kids Making a Difference in the World

ANDREW THOMAS

NEW YORK—Nick Katsoris, a native New Yorker and career attorney, has helped 100,000 children in the United States and Canada give back to their communities and make a positive impact in the world. Interestingly, the entire movement started from a piece of Greek candy, and a desire to write a children's book.

Loukoumi Is Born

Katsoris was in his kitchen one day with his wife, and they had just received a box of candy called loukoumi from friends who had been on vacation in Greece. The Greek delight is a jelly candy dusted with powdered sugar. After a moment, he looked at his wife and asked if Loukoumi might make a nice name for a character in a children's book.

A year later, their son was born, and Katsoris decided to write a book series about a lamb named Loukoumi who does good all over the world. He self-published "Loukoumi," which was No. 4 on the Barnes & Noble bestseller list. A second



Nick Katsoris with Loukoumi.

book, "Growing Up With Loukoumi," urges them to follow their dreams.

Kids and Their Dreams

After writing the book, Katsoris was inspired to create a program that could help kids achieve their career dreams, so he

started Loukoumi Dream Day. Children submitted short cellphone videos describing what they want to be when they grow up and why.

The first winner, a 9-year-old girl, wanted to be a Mars rover engineer. Katsoris called NASA and was told she was welcome to watch the Phoenix spaceship land on Mars from the mission control room on Memorial Day Weekend 2008.

"We were able to make it happen, and it was unbelievable," Katsoris recalled.

In another instance, the program was able to arrange for a child to play football with Eli Manning and the New York Giants.

"There's always a point, when these Dream Days are happening, what I tell those kids is, 'If you don't follow your dream, it will never happen,'" Katsoris said. "But even if you follow it, on that path, you never know where that road is going to take [you]. You may want to be an actor and it may be tough, but along the road, you may decide you want to be a screenwriter, or a director, or a make-up artist."

Good Deeds Bus

Eventually, Katsoris started the Good Deed Bus, which began in New York in 2013. The school bus stopped at an animal shelter to donate supplies, a homeless shelter to donate food, and a park to help clean up.

Ten years later, 100,000 children in the United States and Canada are involved in the movement. This year, there were four Good Deed Buses in New York, Boston, Chicago, and Gander, Newfoundland. The goal is to have 10 Good Deed Buses next year.

"It's just a great day because the kids have fun doing all kinds of good deed projects, and they're there with their friends, and it makes them realize that doing good or being a little junior philanthropist can be fun and it makes them feel great about themselves," Katsoris said.

'Come From Away'

Katsoris's most recent book, "Inspiring Stories That Make A Difference," was inspired by his previous work and the musical "Come From Away," which tells the story of the airline passengers who were stranded when U.S. airspace was closed during the



The Loukoumi Make a Difference Day Good Deed Bus in New York.

terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

One of the producers from the musical, Judy Abrams, had visited Katsoris to ask him a legal question, and had learned about the Loukoumi Foundation, which Katsoris founded after his numerous independent projects. The producer suggested to Katsoris that they needed to do something together, because the theme of kindness in the musical is at the heart of the Loukoumi Foundation's mission.

The book is a collection of 75 essays by kids all around the world who are trying to make a difference in their communities. Throughout his work, Katsoris has been able to gather a multitude of stories

from children.

"I've heard these stories, and experienced a lot of these things that these kids have been doing, and I wanted them to be heard," he said. "I was inspired by what they were doing and I knew that other people would be inspired."

Visiting Gander

The week the book was released, Katsoris went to Gander, Newfoundland, where the musical "Come From Away" takes place.

"When I saw the play, I thought to myself, 'How great can this town be? How kind can these people really be?' And it's all real," Katsoris said.

When he arrived, most of the school he was going to work with was there to greet him. They had planned a Good Deed Bus of their own, with nine stops along the way.

Since these students weren't born yet at the time of the 2001 terrorist attacks, they went to all of the places where their parents and grandparents had done good deeds for the stranded airline passengers, and performed their own acts of kindness.

Katsoris and the students went to an animal shelter to donate supplies, a hockey arena to donate equipment for kids who couldn't afford it, and the Salvation Army to donate canned goods.

"At each stop, there was a person who had experienced 9/11 back in Gander, and they came on the bus and they spoke to the kids about what had happened up there," Katsoris recalled.

The most emotional experience of the day was when they visited a peace park just outside of Gander. While the students were there, they planted a tree in memory of those who had perished in the attacks and to thank the residents of Gander for helping the stranded airline passengers.

"They painted sayings about kindness on rocks and placed them around the tree. Right next to the tree was a large piece of steel from the north tower of the World

Trade Center.

"So now, we have this symbolic tree right next to this piece of steel that just means so much, and it was just a great, emotional day," Katsoris said.

"What we're doing is we're trying to encourage them and planting the seeds in them that will last throughout their lives, so that they'll learn how to be compassionate, and how to be kind, and how to deal with philanthropy, because they're going to be the leaders of the future," he said.

Inspiring Kids

Katsoris has also created a Loukoumi curriculum that is featured at more than 300 schools across the country. Each month, students read one of the Loukoumi books and then create a good deed project of their own, based on the theme of each book.

"If we can instill in kids to be better people, and more importantly to want to be better people, and to enjoy being better people for others, then it becomes effortless, and then it becomes a way of life for these kids because they'll be adults before you know it," Katsoris said.

"They're changing their worlds with their good deeds, and if you start changing enough of their worlds, you'll change the world."



Holiday Gift Guide

No-Fail Presents

BARBARA DANZA

It's the most wonderful time of the year. The time when we stare down at our list of loved ones and ask ourselves, "What on earth am I going to get them?" Some people are easy. Aunt Sylvia loves adding to her teaspoon collection. Grandpa always needs a new shirt. Mom just wants a vacation in the Caribbean. (Just kidding. I put that there in case my family's reading this.) Others on the list aren't as easy to pin down. There are those who seem to have everything, those who have embraced minimalism, those you're connected to only professionally, those in your community you're trying to show appreciation for but whom you don't know well, and so on. This gift-giving business can get tricky. Well, we've got you covered. While personal and meaningful is the best way to go whenever possible, choosing a gift that practically everyone would love is the next best thing. Here are a few suggestions for those hard-to-buy-for recipients on your list.

CHOCOLATE

Chocolate is an almost fail-proof gift—though you have to watch out for food allergies, people on a diet, and the rare (unfathomable) person who actually doesn't like chocolate. Otherwise, though, a high-quality gift of chocolate is a delight to receive. Mr. Chocolate himself, Jacques Torres of "Nailed It!" fame, offers some decadent options. The 25-piece Happy Holidays Jacques' Choice (\$54), with a variety of chocolate bonbons, offers something for every taste. For a simple, but cozy selection, the Classic Hot Chocolate (\$22.50) is super; and a holiday mug like those of Rachel Allene (\$20) would pair nicely with it.



SAMPLERS

If chocolate doesn't feel quite right, try a sampling of different foods along some themes. For example, a basket of Italian cooking ingredients (like quality olive oil from your local Italian market). A seasonal idea is a baker's basket with stylish baking tools, an oven mitt, and some decorative supplies. Check out the healthier offerings from Supernatural for gorgeous sprinkles like Christmas Sequins (\$7.99) and 100% Plant-based Food Colors (\$9.99). If you'd rather someone else do the gathering for

you, look no further than Universal Yums. This subscription box program is educational, enriching, and delicious. In every box, you receive a generous sampling of snacks from a specific country, along with a booklet that guides you through the items in your box. I received the Holiday Adventure box, which featured snacks from 13 different countries and provided information about holidays around the world. It was a total delight to everyone who encountered it! Subscriptions start at \$13.75 per box—no passport required.

GIFT CARDS

When in doubt, pick up some gift cards and pour yourself a cup of hot cocoa in celebration of checking off your list. Gift cards truly are a great option. People appreciate receiving them more than most like giving them. Find a store that offers a wide variety and check off your list lickety-split; or let the gift cards come to you with a few clicks around the internet.

If you're stressing over your holiday gift list, aim for simple solutions—your friends and family will be thankful you thought of them. The most precious gift you can give the people on your list is your time. So keep the focus there, and have yourself a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukkah, or a joyous time celebrating whatever tradition you keep this time of year.

BATH FUN

If you're not sure what some of the little ones on your list are into these days, I can guarantee they take baths. Well, maybe they've graduated to showers, but even so, they'll revert back just to enjoy the fun bath products from Tubbubble. These bath products are made with natural ingredients, soften and clean skin, but most importantly, make bath time way more fun than it used to be. Their Bath Volcano (\$6.50) is



super fun as it foams and crackles and turns the water in the tub orange. Other items turn different colors, crackle, foam, and basically bring delight to bath time. Even older kids will enjoy it.



WATER FILTER

Perhaps you're looking to give something a bit more practical—something everyone needs. Well, needs don't get more basic than water, and Zero Water is a game-changer in the water filtration space. They offer a water filtration pitcher (or dispenser) that leaves zero dissolved solids in your water and is certified to reduce lead and chromium. As water contaminants become an ever-growing concern, great-tasting and safe water is a gift anyone can appreciate. It improves the taste of coffee and tea, is great for boiling or steaming food, and improves your peace of mind when it comes to the water your family (and your pets) consume. I recommend the 10-cup Pitcher (\$34.99) and Replacement Water Filters (\$29.99) as a practical gift for literally anyone.



CLASSIC TOTE

Few things are as useful and versatile as a sturdy tote bag. They're good for the beach, a picnic lunch, carrying books to the library, or even toting holiday gifts. L.L.Bean's canvas tote bags are legendary

for being virtually indestructible and simply classic. They offer a variety of sizes, colors, and materials, but the Boat and Tote, Open-Top is the one that started it all. Their medium bag is \$29.95. For a personalized touch, you can have it monogrammed.



MOVIE TICKETS

Another gift just about anyone can enjoy are movie tickets. If you can pinpoint what kind of movie theater those on your list frequent, you can easily purchase gift cards from sites like

Fandango, AMC Theaters, or the like. If you're a Costco member, they offer great discounts on movie tickets. Pair your gift with some gourmet popcorn for an extra touch.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Carol From 'Wind in the Willows'

by Kenneth Grahame
Villagers all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though winds may follow, and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;
Joy shall be yours in the morning!

Here we stand in the cold and the sleet,
Blowing fingers and stamping feet,
Come from far away you to greet—
You by the fire and we in the street—
Bidding you joy in the morning!

For ere one half of the night was gone,
Sudden a star has led us on,
Raining bliss and benison—
Bliss to-morrow and more anon,
Joy for every morning!

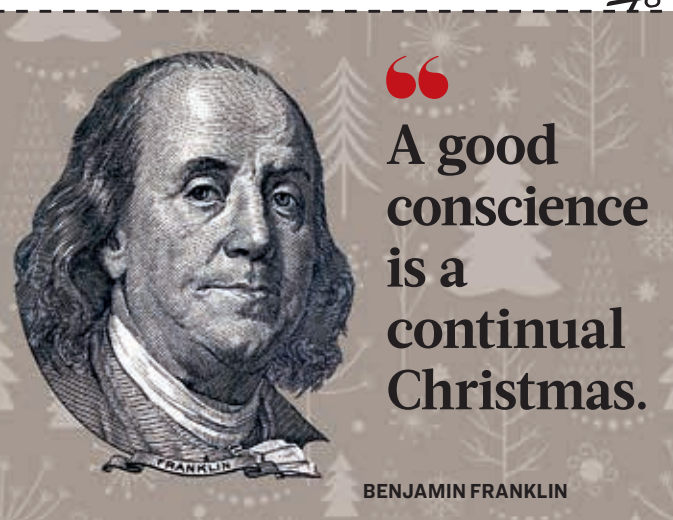
Goodman Joseph toiled through the snow—
Saw the star o'er a stable low;
Mary she might not further go—
Welcome thatch, and litter below!
Joy was hers in the morning!

And then they heard the angels tell
"Who were the first to cry NOWELL?
Animals all, as it befell,
In the stable where they did dwell!
Joy shall be theirs in the morning!"

WHY WAS RUDOLPH UPSET ABOUT HIS REPORT CARD?



BECAUSE HE WENT DOWN IN HISTORY. ©POINTSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

This Week in History

NEW ZEALAND IS DISCOVERED



On Dec. 13, 1642, Dutch navigator Abel Tasman discovered what is now known as New Zealand. Working for the Dutch East India Company, he was also the first European explorer to reach Tasmania (note the name) and to set sight on the Fiji islands. After exploring what is now known as Tasmania, he intended to head north but was forced east due to unfavorable winds. This led to the Dec. 13 landing in New Zealand. Several of his men were attacked and killed by Maoris.



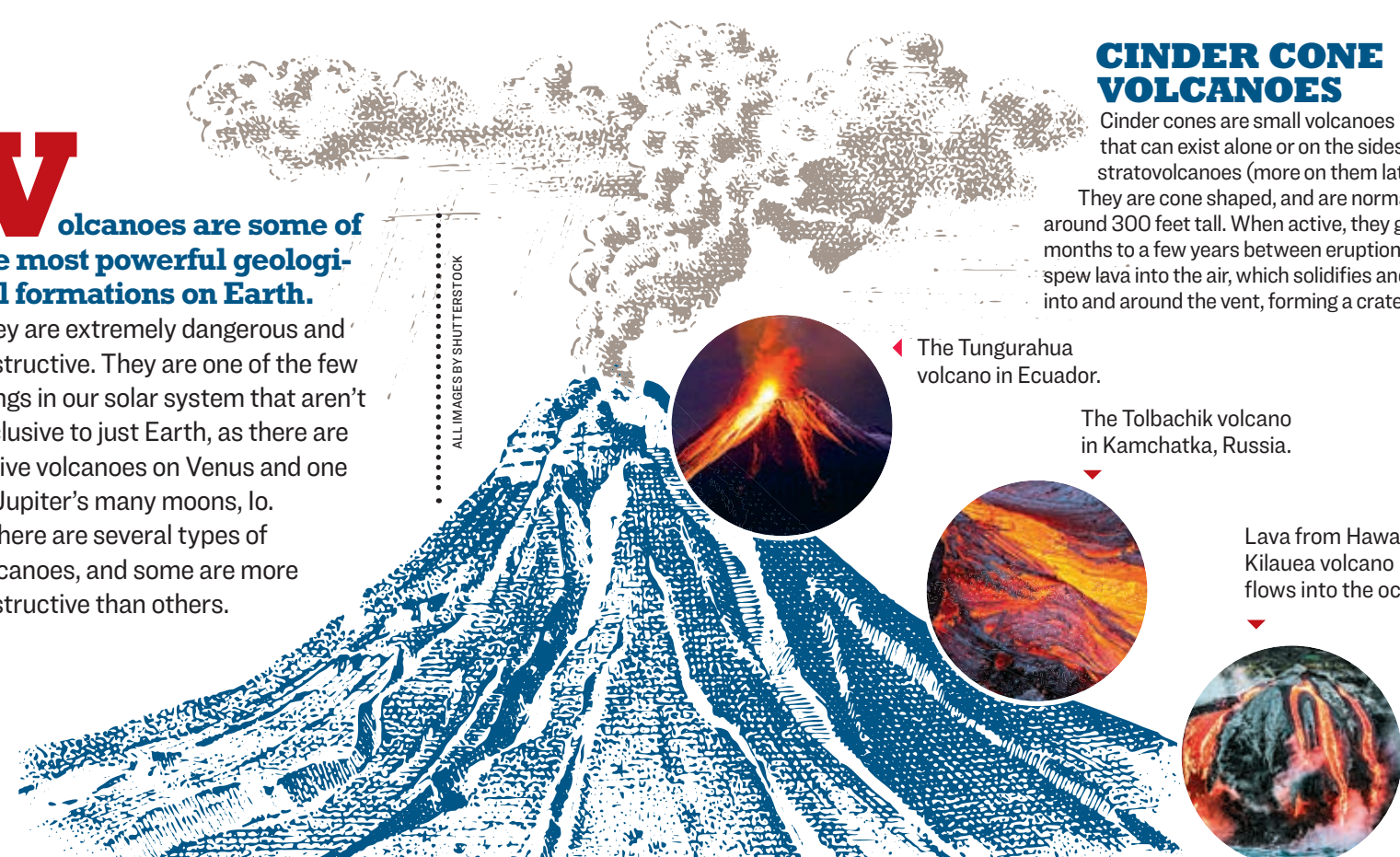
Maori traditional mask. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

"A view of the Murderers' Bay, as you are at anchor here in 15 fathom," a drawing made by Abel Tasman's artist Isaac Gilsemans on Dec. 18, 1642. PUBLIC DOMAIN

By Aidan Danza, age 13

NATURE CORNER: VOLCANOES

Volcanoes are some of the most powerful geological formations on Earth. They are extremely dangerous and destructive. They are one of the few things in our solar system that aren't exclusive to just Earth, as there are active volcanoes on Venus and one of Jupiter's many moons, Io. There are several types of volcanoes, and some are more destructive than others.



CINDER CONE VOLCANOES

Cinder cones are small volcanoes that can exist alone or on the sides of stratovolcanoes (more on them later). They are cone shaped, and are normally around 300 feet tall. When active, they go months to a few years between eruptions, and spew lava into the air, which solidifies and falls into and around the vent, forming a crater.

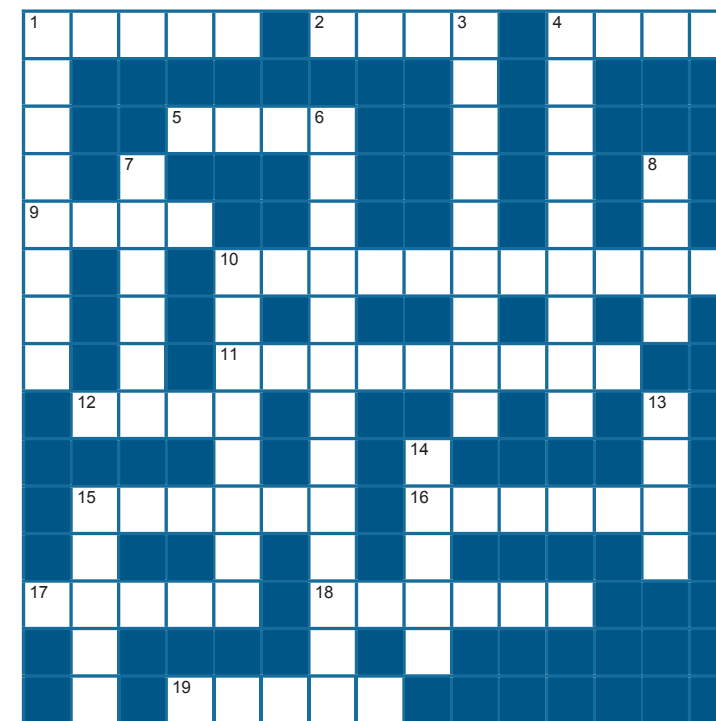
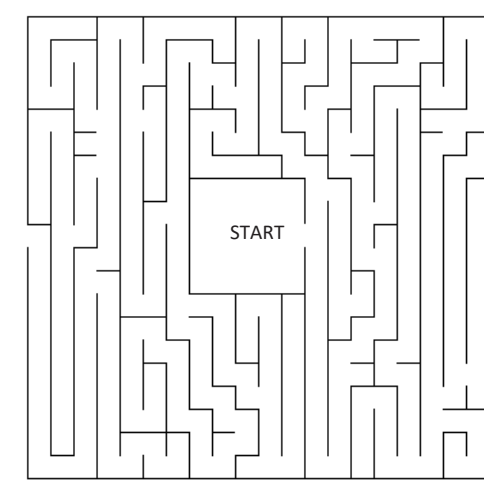
STRATOVOLCANOES

Compared to cinder cones, stratovolcanoes are large, and can be 8,000 feet tall. They are considered the most destructive volcanoes, because of their way of erupting. Instead of spewing ash and lava from one vent, like cinder cones do, or just bubbling up and flowing lava, like shield volcanoes do, they explode! Inside a stratovolcano, there is a lake of magma (what lava is called underground). Under immense pressure, gases create a chemical reaction that dissolves them into the magma, making even more immense pressure, which causes the magma to build up to the volcano's many vents. When they get there, the pressure causes the vents to explode, and lava spews from all of the vents, releasing all of the pressure. This can flatten forests within a very large area, as Mount St. Helens did in 1980, and cover the sky with ash.

SHIELD VOLCANOES

Shield volcanoes are volcanoes that slope very gently. These volcanoes do not explode, like volcanoes are often imagined doing, but instead overflow lava out of the top of the volcano. Mauna Loa, in Hawaii, is the world's largest volcano as well as a shield volcano. It is 13,679 feet above sea level. Kilauea, which erupted this year, is also a shield volcano. It is the most active volcano in the world.

AMAZING ESCAPES!



- Down**
- Windy (9)
 - Christmas decoration site (9)
 - Observe (9)
 - He comes down the chimney (13)
 - Holiday decoration (6)
 - Stocking stuffer for naughty kids (4)
 - Friendliness (8)
 - Christmas carol (4)
 - Rulers (5)
 - St. Nicholas's nickname (5)

USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1	Medium puzzle 1	Hard puzzle 1																												
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Solution For Easy 1 1 + 01 = (1 - 2)	Solution For Medium 1 11 + 11 = (2 + 2) 11 + 2 = 2 x 11	Solution For Hard 1 17 - 1 = 02 + 52																												

- Across**
- Reindeer noisemakers (5)
 - Christmas time (4)
 - Season's greetings are sent with one (4)
 - Dec. holiday (4)
 - To grandmother's house we go! (4)
 - Edible house material (11)
 - Tree hangings (9)
 - Winter toy (4)
 - Santa's ride (6)
 - Christmas tree decoration (6)
 - Celestial messenger (5)
 - Holiday decoration (6)
 - Traditional Christmas food (5)

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Jones is trying to re-create what he finds fascinating about Renaissance paintings.

ARTIST PROFILE

DAVID OWAIN JONES'S Innate Curiosity About True Art

David Owain Jones in his studio in Auckland, New Zealand, on March 28, 2019.

LORRAINE FERRIER

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND—As he paints, David Owain Jones sometimes feels he's trying to figure out exactly why he is so fascinated with figurative and representational painting. And why he's so driven to paint year after year. Once he's resolved that enigma, maybe he'll stop painting, he laughs. Whether he's joking is hard to tell. What is clear is that Jones is constantly curious about art, and through self-study, the halls of traditional

learning, and now through atelier teaching, he continues to reflect on what makes great figurative and representational art.

This fascination has enthralled him since childhood. He remembers borrowing art books from the family bookshelf and poring over the pages of old masters' paintings from museums around the world. For Jones, it's "an innate interest" that has "never really lessened."

Before the age of smartphones, Jones spent a lot of time as a teenager researching art on the inter-

net, which was an unusual way to do research at the time. There, he found people working in the entertainment industry—in film, video games, and book illustration—who were making all kinds of figurative artwork and making a good living from it.

"That was the first time it occurred to me that it was something I could do as an adult as opposed to something that you did and you grew out of, which is mostly how it had been presented to me," he said.

Jones taught himself as much as he

could to prepare for university training. Most of the study seemed to be by chance. He would stumble across a few pieces of advice on how to kick-start his learning process: certain books to read or artists to look at. The self-study proved invaluable.

Soon after he started taking an illustration course at Massey University of New Zealand's Wellington campus, Jones realized it was different from what he had read online about traditional illustration.

Continued on Page 16



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LITERATURE

Lessons and Carols

Sir Gawain, a Green Knight, and Us

JEFF MINICK

Many of us approach the holiday festivities with high expectations, rose-colored visions of the pleasures the festivities might afford us.

Those who celebrate Christmas, for example, imagine parties with friends, a fir glowing with lights and ornaments, a hillock of presents beneath the boughs, a meal shared around a table laden with traditional holiday foods, a family gathering to watch "It's a Wonderful Life" or to listen to Christmas music. In the mind's eye, we paint a picture of our Christmas celebration worthy of the brush and palette of Norman Rockwell.

In reality, of course, things often go awry. The cat knocks a family heirloom from the tree and breaks it beyond repair; Johnny throws an hours-long tantrum when the toddler pitches his new race car down the basement stairs; your visiting niece, a college student, spends the dinner lecturing you and her parents about the glories of socialism; a power outage on Christmas Day sends everyone to an early bed, with you and your spouse feeling as if you've been hit by a bus rather than blessed by a birth.

A Long-Ago Yule Offers Revelry
Take heart. If we really want a look at a Christmas where the celebration took an unexpected turn for the worse, we have only to hop aboard that time machine known as literature, head back to the Middle Ages, and visit the court of King Arthur during a fortnight of festivities.

In the opening of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," written by that most prolific of authors, "Anonymous," the king, his good knights, and the royal court's glamorous ladies have gathered for Christmas. Just for fun, let's first step into the past with four lines as originally written in this Yuletide tale:

This kyng lay at Camylot upon Krystemass
With mony luflych lorde, ledes of the best,
Rekenly of the Rounde Table alle tho rich brether,
With rych revel oryght and rechles merthes.

Which is rendered in modern English by writer Simon Armitage as:

It was Christmas at Camelot—King Arthur's court,
where the great and the good of the land had gathered,
all the righteous lords of the ranks of the Round Table
quite properly carousing and reveling in pleasure.

In Arthur's court, bejeweled, as Armitage puts it, by "the most chivalrous and courteous knights known to Christendom/the most wonderful women to have walked in this world," the feasting and festivities resemble our own. With the exception of political disagreements, we no longer joust as those knights did with "leveled lances," but we still hope to have our homes "lit with happiness" and our visitors and family to be "luminous with joy." Just like today, bountiful banquets mark Christmas and Christmastide in Arthur's court, and "Noel" rings through the king's hall as it does through our churches. On New Year's, the knights present gifts to the ladies, and the banquet following that ceremony brings "flavorsome delicacies of flesh" and "the freshest of foods."

Enter a Stranger
These descriptions end with the arrival of the mysterious Green Knight. He challenges any of Arthur's knights to strike him with an ax if that same knight will take a return blow from the Green Knight in a year and a day.

Goaded by the stranger's taunts and fearing that Arthur himself will throw down his glove, Sir Gawain elects to

swing the ax, whacks off the Green Knight's head, and like everyone else, is shocked beyond belief when the intruder remains on his feet. The Green Knight picks up the head and mounts his horse, and the head speaks, reminding Sir Gawain that he must keep his part of the bargain and meet him at the Green Chapel "just as January dawns" for his own test of courage.

The following year, after a long journey and many adventures, Gawain arrives at the castle of Bertilak de Hautdesert on his way to the Green Chapel. Bertilak assures Gawain that he is within an easy ride of the chapel and invites him to spend Christmas in his castle. Once again we are treated to a medieval Yule, where "banquets and buffets were beautifully cooked," where "they drank and danced all day and the next," and where "There was feasting, there was fun, and such feelings of joy/as could not be conveyed by quick description."

The Bargain and the Green Chapel
Bertilak plans three days of hunting, but enjoins the travel-weary Gawain to rest and recover his strength at the castle. He then strikes a bargain with the knight, pledging to give him what he brings back from the hunt for whatever Gawain gains while in the castle.

When he returns, Bertilak gives Gawain venison and Gawain gives him in return a kiss, delivered to him by Bertilak's seductive wife, though Gawain keeps her identity a secret. The following day, two kisses are exchanged for a boar. On the third day, Gawain bestows on Lord Bertilak three kisses for a fox, but he conceals the additional gift of a magic green belt, which can keep him from harm, given to him by Lady Bertilak.

When Gawain arrives at the appointed time at the Green Chapel, the Green Knight appears, tests the knight's fortitude three times with swings of the ax, allowing only the third to scratch Gawain's neck. He then reveals himself as Bertilak, and accuses Sir Gawain of failing to honor their bargain by not telling the truth about Lady Bertilak's gift of the belt, hence the cut of the ax on the third swing.

The two part as friends, but the shamed Gawain returns to Arthur's court and vows to wear the green girdle till his death, a sign of being "tainted by untruth." All the other knights then decide to honor Gawain by wearing such a belt as a sign of solidarity and a reminder always to be honest.

Lessons for Us
So what can we moderns take from this bizarre Christmas tale?

Besides the delight we may discover in stepping into a world so different from our own, we find in that distant past a reverence for truth and for the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, temperance, and courage—as well as for the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Yes, "Sir Garwain and the Green



The first page of the only surviving manuscript of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," anonymous, circa 14th century.



(Left) "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," from the original manuscript, circa 14th century.



(Right) Medieval merrymaking at Christmas. "Every two had dishes twelve" by George Woolliscroft Rhead and Louis Rhead from Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," 1898. The British Library.

"Knight" is fiction, a poem to entertain and educate a medieval audience, but it reminds us, as it did those knights and ladies of so long ago, that we, like Sir Gawain, can honor and practice these virtues.

Moreover, the poem celebrates festivity and revelry. The nannies of our age—politicians, certain commentators and bloggers, environmental activists, and some ministers—decry Christmas as too commercial. Though I agree to an extent (Black Friday riots at Walmart boggle my imagination, and I avoid chain stores and malls in December), part of our commercial bent has to do with the exuberance of the season. Like the knights and ladies of King Arthur's court, we derive great pleasure from celebrating a season of light in the dark of winter.

The lords and ladies of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" relish the good cheer of Christmas, and their example should keep at bay those who wish to make our own holidays as dour and gray as the winter landscape.

So raise a glass, be of good cheer, and in a spirit of tradition link hands with those long-ago revelers.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

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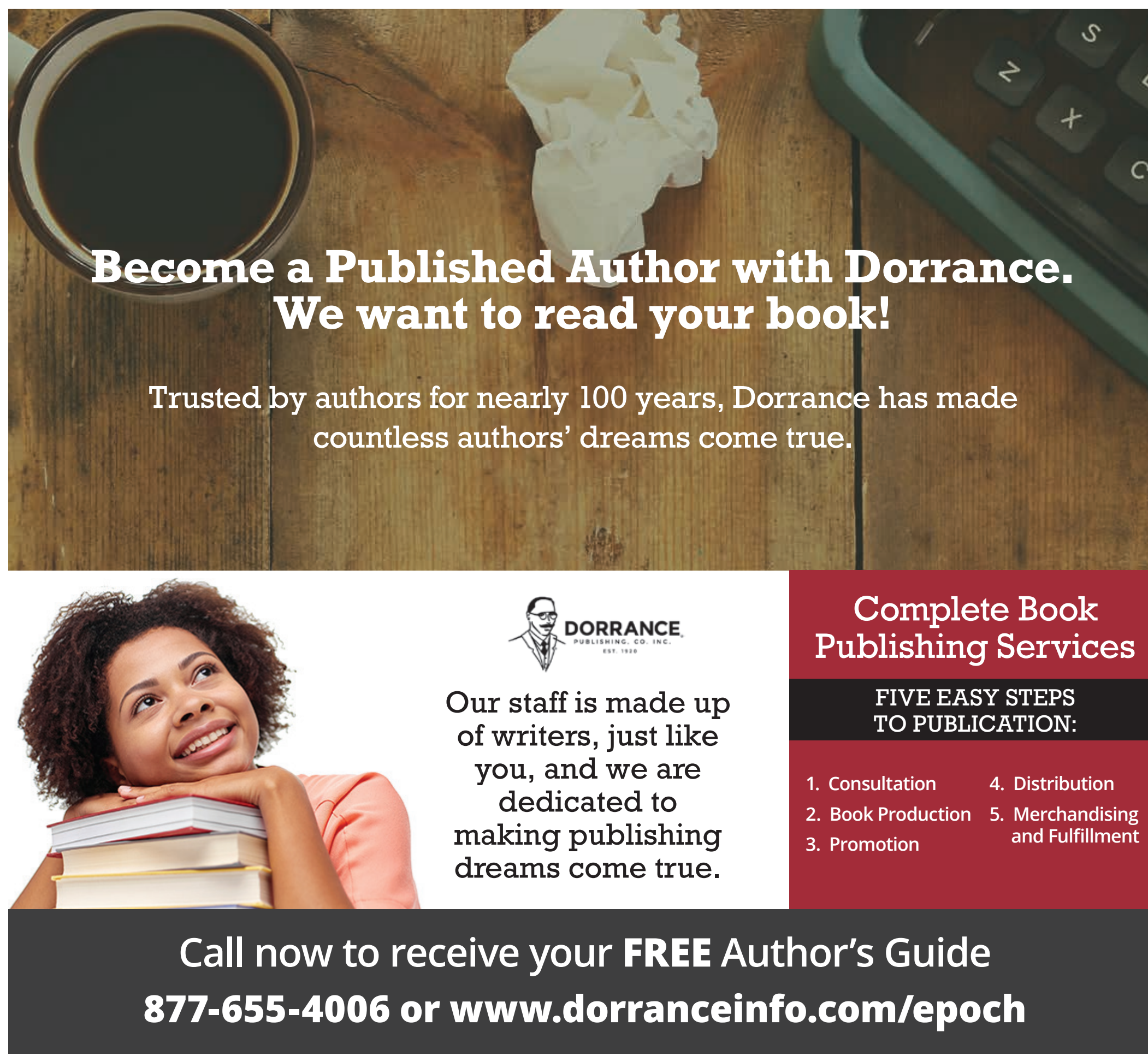
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ARTIST PROFILE

DAVID OWAIN JONES'S Innate Curiosity About True Art

Continued from Page 13

The course definitely leaned toward the American illustration tradition, studying the likes of Norman Rockwell. But Jones found that the course was conceptually focused. Art theory and art history were taught, but art practice was left for students to discover for themselves.

He explains that before going to the university, his self-study unveiled for him that American illustration is similar to the Renaissance art tradition, which focuses on a lot of visual education: learning how to effectively see as an artist and then correctly convey this scene in a picture. For example, students would learn how to create successful compositions and "how to create emotion through visual means rather than through literary allusion," he said.

The lack of structured studio time in the course wasn't what Jones expected, and he left after a short time, disappointed but not discouraged. He continued to teach himself and moved from commercial arts to a more fine arts approach in his artwork.

Years later, Jones returned to school believing a degree would be useful, and pursued a Design and Visual Arts degree at Auckland's Unitec Institute of Technology. The visual arts component of the degree at Unitec is the school's equivalent of a fine arts degree. Again, he felt that students were largely left to their own devices.

Staying True to Tradition and Himself

In his own art, Jones is trying to re-create what he finds fascinating about Renaissance paintings. He

recalls how he loved Renaissance paintings before he knew anything about that period in history. And when he viewed the paintings, he felt compelled to know who the people in the painting were, what they were doing, and who commissioned the art.

"There's something beyond the verbal that was in there; that's the most important thing for me," he said. As such, he adds nondescript titles to his works and rarely adds descriptions, often to the amusement of his friends. He wants viewers to bypass their brains and simply experience his paintings by looking.

Jones's self-portrait, from around 2011, seems to sum up his art. In the painting, he places his hand firmly on his chest in a gesture that shouts: "I am who I am." Jones explains that it's a gesture seen in the historical paintings he was studying at the time: from the late Renaissance, early Baroque, and Venetian painters such as Titian and Giorgione in particular.

His gesture is a strong statement, fitting for what he was experiencing. "I was quite insecure about doing the painting," he said. No one he knew had an interest in traditional figurative art. That style of painting was "extremely out of place" compared to what his peers were painting.

Throughout his art education and conversations with contemporary artists, he came across a lot of assumptions that were being made about traditional artworks. Different bits of history were being grouped together that didn't really belong together. He also felt that some of the authors on art theory, who were often quite famous critics or historical writers, "hadn't



"Still Life With Coffee Pot," by David Owain Jones. Oil on panel; 16 inches by 12 inches.

Jones is trying to create what he couldn't find as a teenager—a supportive teaching and mentoring community for figurative and representative artists.

really looked at the history of [traditional] painting that closely, or had looked quickly and made assumptions. And those assumptions were now being passed on to young artists as literal, ... about a certain period of art."

He therefore suggests that we educate ourselves on traditional art, and maybe spend more time looking rather than reading.

Nurturing Artists

When Jones teaches, it forces him to stop and reflect further on what makes a painting great and why, rather than to just keep on producing paintings, which can sometimes happen as a professional artist.

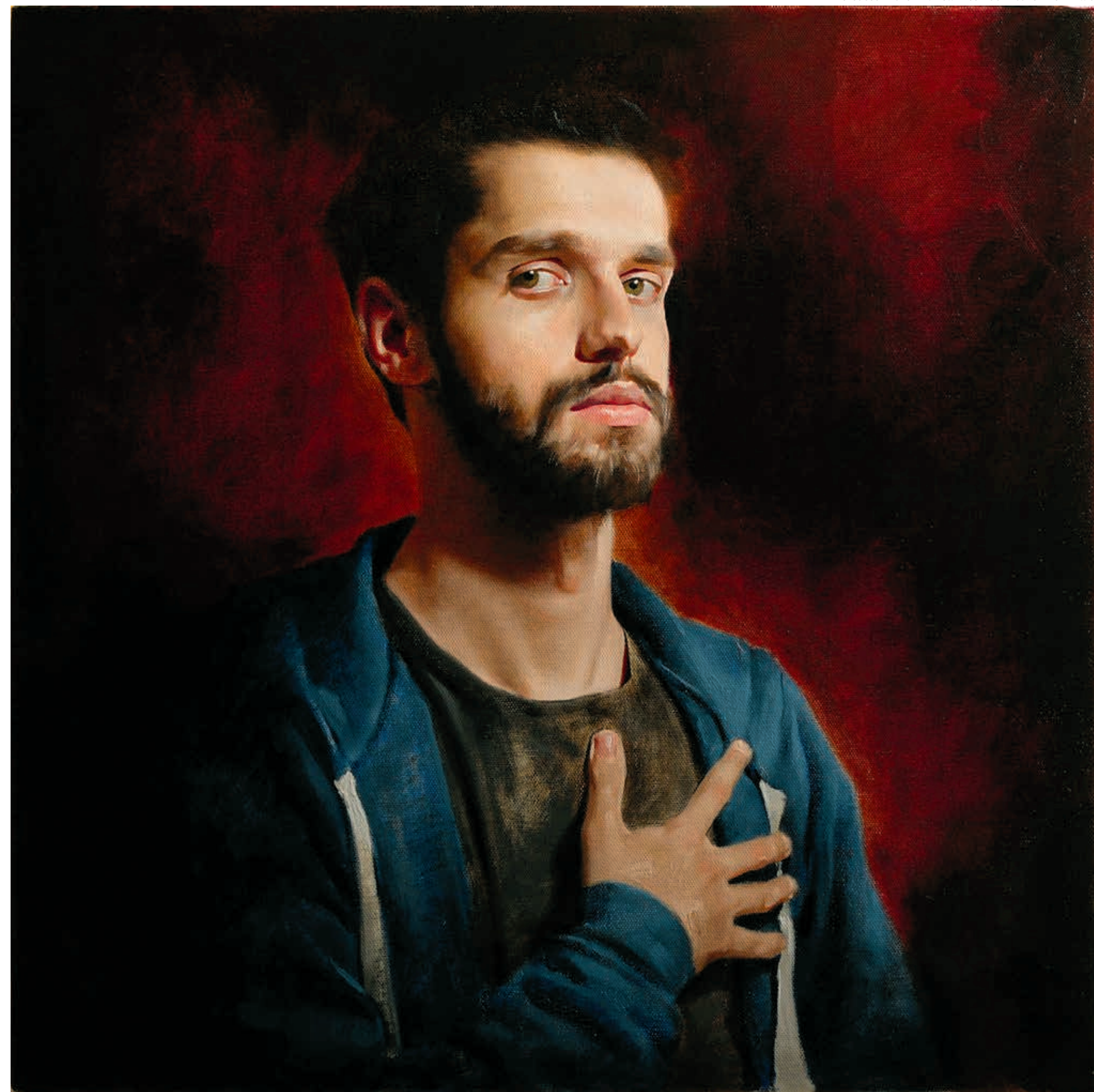
As a teacher, he understands that each student needs to be met where they are in terms of skill and their learning expectations. "It's really hard to teach," he laughs. "You can't always critique everybody to the standard you critique yourself as an experienced artist," he said.

Jones believes anyone can draw, but not everyone can be a great artist. He explains, "Assuming you are interested, have patience, and some diligence, you can definitely learn, and probably to a reasonably high standard."

In the past, Jones taught basic drawing, but now he's devised more formal instruction. He teaches portrait painting during the week and a foundation in drawing class on the weekends. In the latter, he begins by teaching the basics: what materials to use and how to use them. Then students learn how to copy a master drawing, flatwork (a drawing of a relief or sculpture), and geometric 3D forms, for example. Once the basics are understood, figure drawing will be easier.

Often, Jones finds that new drawing and painting students underestimate how much knowledge and understanding is needed before they can effectively apply pencil to paper or paint to canvas. He's also seen how some self-taught artists, or those who have only copied from photographs, struggle in the more advanced classes if they haven't had a good foundation in the basic techniques and theoretical principles: for example, techniques like how to hold a pencil, how to blend something, or how to make different strokes; and theoretical principles like proportion or perspective, which come more from the mind rather than the hand.

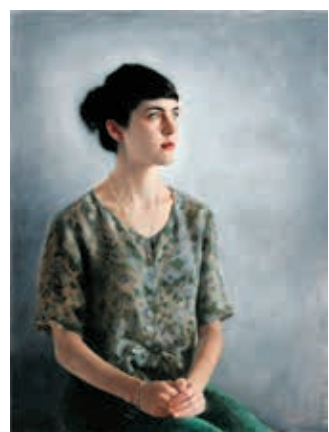
Jones teaches his classes as part of the recently formed Auckland



Self-portrait by David Owain Jones. Oil on canvas; 20 inches by 20 inches.

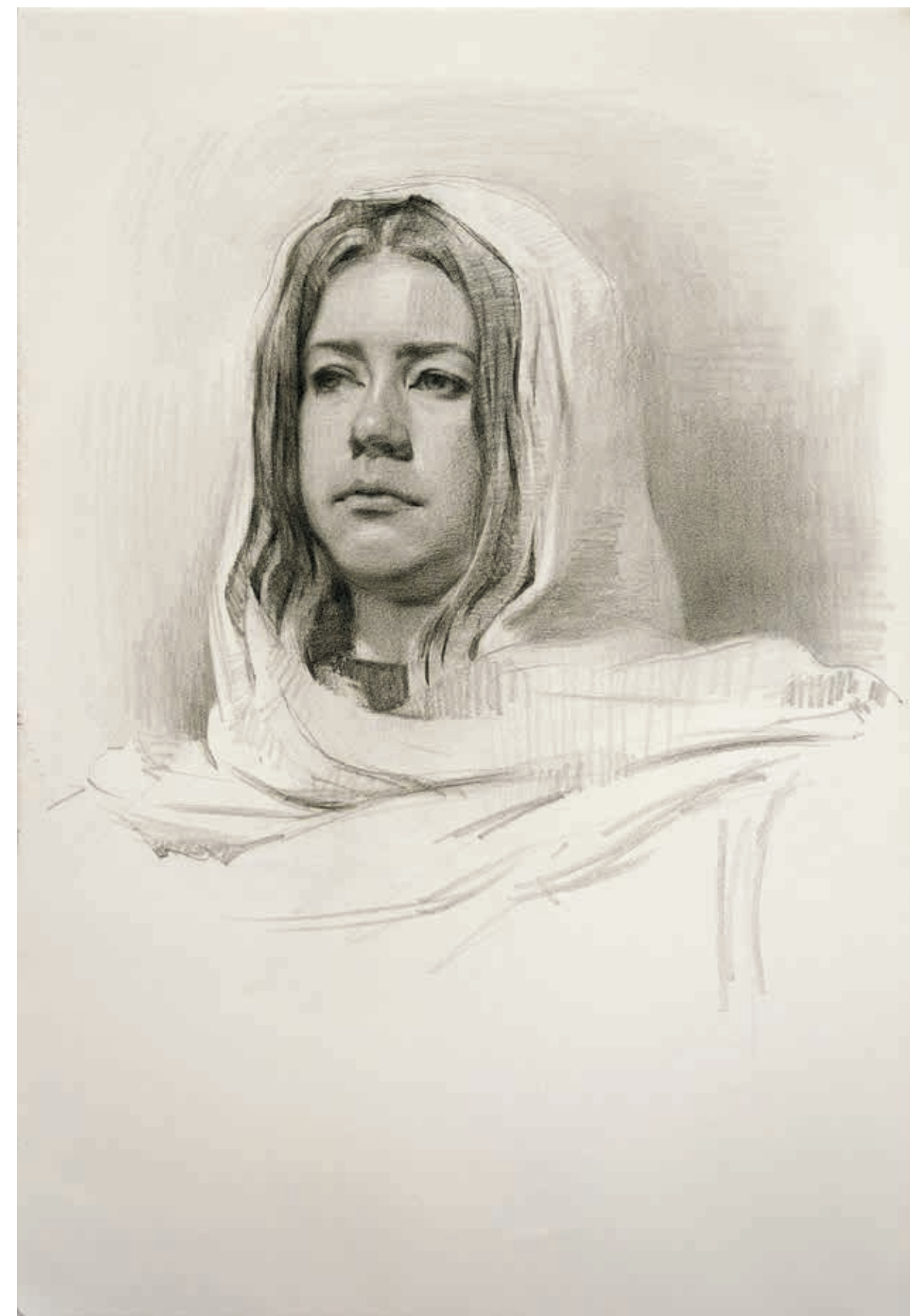


"P.M.," by David Owain Jones. Oil on canvas on panel; 23 5/8 inches by 31 1/2 inches.



David Owain Jones's former studio was shared with up to 20 other artists within the community space of a central Auckland church.

To find out more about David Owain Jones, visit DavidOwainJones.com



"Untitled," by David Owain Jones. Oil on canvas; 12 inches by 16 inches.

"N.M.," by David Owain Jones. Graphite on paper; 11 inches by 15 inches.

Atelier based at Takapuna Arts Supplies, the art shop and studio owned by U.S.-born couple Jim and Sandy Auckland.

Jim is an experienced illustrator and fine artist of some 40 years. He runs several long-standing untutored life drawing and painting workshops, although many students come for his "untutored" advice. Jim also saw the need for more structured support for artists, and over the past year or so, they created the Auckland Atelier.

The aim of the atelier is to offer that hands-on support that Jones couldn't find: not only teaching "the fundamental principles of visual art" but also nurturing "a deep understanding of the craftsmanship and critical thinking central to traditional art practice," according to the website.

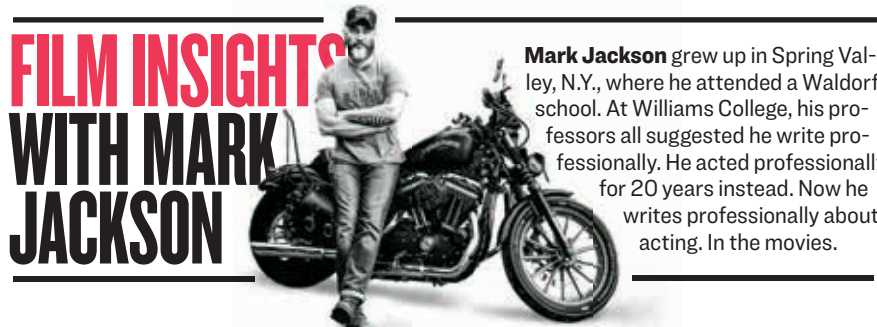
As part of the atelier, Jones is trying to create what he couldn't find as a teenager—a supportive teaching and mentoring community for figurative and representative artists. And now it looks like he has some like-minded artists to help him figure out just why he keeps on painting.

Jones ends with a sincere request: He encourages us to look at traditional painting with fresh eyes, to consider it more carefully, and without any preconceived notions.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID OWAIN JONES UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



LORRAINE FERRIER/THE EPOCH TIMES



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

Blowing the Whistle on DuPont and Teflon's Toxic Chemicals

MARK JACKSON

Were you aware that your body—and the body of almost every living creature on the planet—has been infected by the toxic chemical components in Teflon? The gray, nonstick plastic stuff? And that it's been undeniably isolated as the cause of six different kinds of fatal illnesses?

The Epoch Times is all about whistle-blowing: If I put an amplifier next to the computer of any journalist in our newsroom, you'd hear "fweeeeeeeee!!!!"

The highly toxic fluorocarbon PFOA is now everywhere; it's labeled a 'forever chemical,' and it's contaminated the planet.

Normally we blow the whistle on the Chinese Communist Party, but I'm very happy to be reviewing "Dark Waters," the title of which refers to poisonous chemical runoff and dumping in the waters of West Virginia, and the story of which is based on an article by The New York Times.

Did you also know that Teflon's manufacturer, the DuPont chemical giant, knew all about this fact and hid the truth? Sound familiar? Like "Erin Brockovich," "The Report," "The China Syndrome," and "Spotlight"? These are all

movies based on true stories about whistle-blowers, that are not only entertainment—they're one of the best forms of enlightening the general public to hazardous situations.

Longtime environmental activist and actor Mark Ruffalo read the New York Times Magazine article and pursued the rights to the film, eventually becoming a co-producer. Which makes him a major whistle-blower himself.

Hulk, Esquire

I would have happily paid to see Hulk hulk-smash the DuPont corporation, but Mark Ruffalo here sheds his Avenger character's big green muscles and purple shorts to play Robert Bilott, a mild-mannered corporate lawyer turned environmental activist who entered into a decades-long legal jiu-jitsu match with DuPont, trying to get them to tap out and own up to their sneaky wrongdoing.

And tap DuPont he did, in regard to the lethal effects of the chemical Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). He furthermore got the iconic American company to pay restitution to many thousands of people in a class-action lawsuit.

Ironically, Bilott starts his career as a lawyer working for a Cincinnati-based law firm that specializes in defending chemical companies, which, naturally, includes DuPont.

We meet him just as he's been made a partner, and, in a thunderbolt of destiny, his first big meeting is interrupted by one Wilbur Tennant (Bill Camp), a cattle farmer from Parkersburg, West Virginia. It's a small-town, can-you-help-a-neighbor-out thing; Tennant knows Bilott's grandma, and



Wilbur Tennant (Bill Camp, L) wants to know why his cows are dying, and environmental lawyer Robert Bilott (Mark Ruffalo) is going to find out why, in "Dark Waters."

farmers an area near where Bilott used to spend idyllic childhood summers.

At first, Bilott wants no part of it, doesn't want to make waves at his firm, but after taking a look at the box of VHS tapes Tennant brings him, which are like a cow-pocalypse of grisly footage of blackened teeth, giant tumors, bloated organs, and the terrifying tendencies of rabid-acting cows charging their owners—he's given pause. In a flashback of seeing a neighborhood girl grinning happily at him with blackened teeth like a scene from a horror movie, he knows he must act.

Farmer Tennant, with the wisdom that comes from working in nature, knows DuPont is the culprit, pointing out to Bilott the ghostly, pale stones in his creek that have been bleached white by chemicals in the water. Who else would it be? DuPont owns the massive plant upstream from the creek.

In a scene reminiscent of one in the 2010 documentary about fracking, "Gasland" (which Mark Ruffalo was an advocate of), where a real-life farmer invites the journalist into his kitchen, strikes a match and ignites an explosive, three-foot flame from the water coming out of his tap, Bilott visits Tennant's farm and sees another real-life horror story: a field dotted with 190 burial mounds of poisoned cattle. The farmer explains that his cows are like family to him.

This would be where the Hulk starts loosening his tie, breath-

ing erratically, turning green, and growing large. Indeed, the Hulk's very existence is a meditation on the effects of chemicals gone wrong.

Bilott is a quiet man of high moral stature. He's not going to sit idly by. The cosmic law is that in order to gain, we must lose; the people employed by DuPont in this neck of the West Virginia woods are, naturally, not happy with Bilott's attempt to liberate them from DuPont's toxic reign/rain. His boss (Tim Robbins) is not particularly happy either.

Neither is his wife, Sarah (Anne Hathaway), an attorney herself who, instead of the marital teamwork she was counting on, gets the short end of the stick, cleaning diapers while he takes years working his way through the oceanic stack of documented evidence (much like the sheer paper-tonnage dumped on the protagonist in "The Report") with the same defensive objective—drown the legal offensive team with paperwork.

Slow But Intense

It's not easy to make the slow accumulation of legal factoids, endless paperwork, circling of dates with pens, highlighting, and number-crunching maintain a high level of tension. But "Dark Waters" manages to do just that, to the point where there were three instances where the audience applauded loudly at the legal equivalent of Bilott getting DuPont in a rear naked choke.

Bill Pullman shines as a comi-

cally inclined Southern lawyer on Bilott's trial team, who gets in a few verbal arm-bars and triangle chokes against DuPont's legal team himself.

Toxic Slogans

The other reason the audience clapped at DuPont's takedown is because we are informed that the highly toxic fluorocarbon PFOA is now everywhere; it's labeled a "forever chemical," and it's contaminated the planet. The sheer, bold-faced lying inherent in DuPont's classic slogan "Better Living Through Chemistry" reveals itself to be right up there with Nazi Germany's Auschwitz concentration camp's "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Sets You Free).

'Dark Waters'

Director
Todd Haynes

Starring
Mark Ruffalo, Anne Hathaway, Bill Camp, Tim Robbins, Bill Pullman, Victor Garber, Mare Winningham

Running Time
2 hours, 6 minutes

Rated
PG-13

Release Date
Dec. 6

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FILM REVIEW

Decent, Cop Actioner Will Appeal to Genre's Die-Hard Fans

IAN KANE

When it came to action cinema, the 1980s crime thrillers were part of the defining zeitgeist of that decade. Screenwriters and directors came up with highly creative ways to tell their stories. From the crude comedy that somehow worked in "48 Hours" (1982), to the unusually structured storyline in "To Live in Die in L.A." (1985), the decade marked a fascinating time for these types of films. Neo-noir films were in full swing.

Of course, many of them had dopey scripts and far-fetched plotlines, but at least they didn't have the mean-spirited, torture-porn drivel that you see in action cinema these days. And if the old films did approach these topics, they were usually purposeful and artistically done.

None of this is lost on director Matt Eskandari and screenwriter Paul Da Silva, who seem to have channeled the aforementioned era with their new action thriller "Trauma Center."

Bruce Willis plays police Detective Wakes, who is on a quest for vengeance. He'll stop at nothing to get revenge on those who killed his partner as well as a valuable informant.

The heroine of the film is Madison Taylor (Nicky Whelan), who happens to witness the murders and is struck by a bullet in the leg by the assailants. But there's a big problem looming: The

murderers happen to be crooked cops—Sergeant Tull and Detective Pierce (Texas Battle and Tito Ortiz, respectively).

Madison winds up in the isolation ward of a hospital, which happens to be empty, and although Detective Wakes vows to protect her, he assigns a single uniformed policeman to guard outside her door and promptly disappears to investigate the two murders. Since the two dirty cops have compounded their problems by leaving alive a witness to their killings (they killed Wakes's partner because he had dirt on their illegal dealings), they set out to track Madison down and eliminate her, thereby tying up the lone loose end.

The bulk of the film revolves around Madison playing a lethal game of hide-and-seek with the two would-be murderers, who stalk her through the darkened halls and rooms of the forlorn hospital. With a minimum of resources at her disposal, will she survive the night in the stark, soulless, dimly fluorescent lit hallways, or will she succumb to the dastardly designs of her pursuers?

Could Use More Bruce

One of the first things that struck me about this film was that, although both the cinematography and directing were pretty standard, the set design was well-done. The hospital looked truly spooky and lent a sense of gloom to the proceedings.

Madison Taylor (Nicky Whelan), a wounded witness to a crime, and Det. Wakes (Bruce Willis), in "Trauma Center."

'Trauma Center'

Director
Matt Eskandari

Starring
Bruce Willis, Nicky Whelan, Steve Guttenberg

Running Time
1 hour, 27 minutes

Rated
R

Release Date
Dec. 6

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Many of the usual tropes of the genre are utilized here, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, it is a crime action-thriller and you have to stick to certain norms. And that's exactly what you get—in other words, they're not trying to reinvent the wheel here.

Many of the usual tropes of the genre are utilized here.

Unfortunately, Willis doesn't appear in the film that much, which is kind of a drag since he's such a charismatic actor and would have given much more heft to the film. It becomes gravely

apparent as the film lumbers on that Whelan, Battle, and Ortiz can't carry the film by themselves. If Willis had been creeping through the dim halls of the hospital along with Whelan, or at least been somewhere in the building, it could have been a much more intriguing film.

"Trauma Center" does evoke the crime thrillers of the '80s at certain junctures, and it's nice to see that the action here is pretty tame compared to the grotesque displays seen in much of today's cinema. But as it stands, it's a serviceable film that will probably please die-hard (pun intended) fans of the genre.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com

DO-IT-YOURSELF

MARRIAGE COUNSELING

WHILE VACATIONING IN ITALY

Popcorn & Inspiration: Films That Uplift the Soul

MARK JACKSON & SHARON KILARSKI

One might conclude that "Enchanted April" is a story about how two dismal marriages are miraculously rescued by balmy Mediterranean breezes and Italian-vacation sunlight, except that this conclusion might be much the same as Aristotle's deeply scientific declaration "The effect of sunlight upon mud produces frogs."

"Enchanted April," at first glance, is a movie about why the British should go on vacation more. There might not be enough sunlight in Merry England to manufacture enough vitamin D for happiness. I mean, look at Prince Andrew's current situation: He was a royal, with a vast allowance from the Queen mum—just needed to show up for events, look royal, and say royal things. But, no, he had to go cavorting about and get himself sacked. He must not have been happy. Not enough vitt-a-min D. Maybe the same adrenaline issue that allegedly shut down his ability to sweat also mixed his vitt-a-min D manufacturing ability.



Polly Walker as Caroline Dester enjoys the Italian sun, in "Enchanted April."

I've been traveling back in time and finding movies that are uplifting to the soul. "Enchanted April" is rather beloved on Rotten Tomatoes, with 84 percent of critics thinking it's (to use a term from 1992, when this movie came out) "the bomb." Let's find out why. For one, it's extremely pretty; it's got 1920s flapper fashion, women sunning themselves in full-length dresses, magical Italian country architecture, rustic waitstaff, and many flowers. If Monet was going to paint a movie, he'd paint this movie. Some scenes look basically like a Monet. Or maybe it's more of a Degas ... a Pissarro? One of those guys.

It put me off at first, due to what my modern thinking viewed as passive-aggressive, fake sweetness on display by women who are oppressed by overbearing, blowhard, cheating husbands.

Except that the only outspoken women in 1920s England were elderly matriarchal types. Actually, this is the case in most traditional societies. The wife may not dress-down and talk to the warrior husband with a disrespectful, sharp tongue, but the grandmother can say anything she pleases, and with tremendous acidity if she deems it appropriate.

The 1920s were not a time or place for saying exactly what you think. Society wasn't like that. Middle-class women couldn't just up and kick their husbands out the door, willy-nilly; they would have starved. Women never spoke on equal terms with men; people lived in hierarchies, much as the heavenly ranks are described, biblically. This was traditional womanhood.

No Joy

Lottie Wilkins (Josie Lawrence) is a London housewife who would like to be taken seriously by her husband instead of existing just to cook him meals and prop him up at parties. He's (Alfred Molina) sort of a slicked-back weaselly fellow, constantly on the prowl for new clients and looking to expand his business.

One day on the tram, Lottie sees an advertisement on the back of someone else's London Times, describing a dreamy vacation spot in Italy. There's a castle! Lakes! Wisteria! She feels a deep stirring. She must go. She can't deal with her husband for another minute.

She talks another woman into going with her. It's annoying to watch, but if you put yourself in her shoes, with that husband, you might also fall over yourself in a desper-



Four women become better human beings in "Enchanted April," with a cast of (L-R) Polly Walker, Josie Lawrence, Joan Plowright, and Miranda Richardson.

ate attempt to try to get someone to go with you and make the escape happen.

Come to think of it, this is the exact premise of "Thelma & Louise": Two women go on vacation to escape one of the all-time greatest screen idiots (Thelma's husband) and Louise's unenthusiastic boyfriend (she knows he's getting ready to propose). So this is a thing: Women going on vacation together to get away from stupid men. I need to find a third example and then I'll write a book.

A Bit of Joy

The woman Lottie convinces to accompany her is one Rose Arbuthnot (Miranda Richardson). Her husband (Jim Broadbent) writes mildly erotic books, to some acclaim, and has an irritating habit of impersonating a muted solo trumpet. He also—unbeknownst to her—is quite enamored of a much younger, well-to-do fashionista, who, it turns out, becomes the third woman to join the getaway duo, making it a trio.

This third woman, Caroline Dester (Polly Walker), is at her rope's end, getting endlessly pawed by "grabby" young men—yet another woman fleeing boorish males.

It's interesting to note that while Lottie and Rose seem, by modern definitions, passive-aggressive and unable to express themselves directly—wafting clouds of fake positivity about to hide their despair—Polly speaks her mind exactly. But she is so debonair, poised, exceptionally gorgeous, and unflappable in the face of insults that one doesn't notice immediately that she just said something disagreeable that went under the insult radar. Which is the more accurate definition of passive-aggression.

The most annoying (and confident) of the women is the oldest, Mrs. Fisher (Joan Plowright). She's outlived her friends, and now her friends are a dead poets society of daily reading. She likes to name-drop and brag about the fact that her Italian is not for modern usage, because it is the Italian of Dante. She's very aggressive with her walking cane, likes to swerve it about with alacrity, and comes close to smacking people in the face with it.

So that's your main cast. To make a long story short, Lottie tells her husband that she's going on vacation, and hubby blows his stack. Meanwhile, Mr. Arbuthnot is happy to let Rose go. And so off they go. So far so good.

More Joy

Arriving in Italy, the four get on each other's nerves a bit, and then they all settle down and have many languid sunbathing scenes. And you'd think they'd come to the decision to divorce their respective husbands.

But things weren't so easy for women back then, especially right after World War I. It's hard to imagine how devastating that war was to the tiny country of England, with so many men gone or irreparably damaged when they returned.

Looking Within

And so begins the true nature and gift of this film. Regardless of how much they'd like to point the finger and place the blame solely on their husbands, all this lying about in hammocks and on rocks beside tide pools is actually a showcasing of the fundamental building block of true spiritual cultivation: They are looking within themselves, and at themselves, for clues, answers, and solutions. This is an enchanted April environment that allows them the time, space, peace, and quiet to morally elevate themselves.

Their characters arc thusly: Lottie, an odd character, is somewhat dense and silly about

worldly things, but also almost prophetic. She comes to realize by looking deep within her soul that, as she explains to her new girlfriends, she has been stingy with love. She counted out her love, kept score, and was withholding if she wasn't loved equally in return. With this realization, her interactions with everyone undergo a shift. As she is coming from a place of love and compassion, even her self-serving husband later changes because of it. Lottie is the impetus for change in the other characters.

Miranda Richardson's character Rose, often likened to the suffering Madonna, has withdrawn from her husband. Who actually adores her. Is she perhaps a little self-righteous about the way her husband makes a living? Know anyone like that? She also thinks she's boring and unattractive. Low self-esteem is a considerable culprit in relationships. But that changes due to Lottie's encouragement, and her own deep desire to reconnect with her husband.

Gorgeous, debonair Caroline is very attached to her looks. She's aware that this ability to skate through life by looking good has become a problem, and she leaves England to figure out why her life is a mess, despite the fact that she has everything. But a shallow existence is not what she really wants. In a Shakespearean twist that pairs everyone off neatly, she ends up with the estate's nearsighted host who can't actually see (or be trapped by) her beauty.

Joan Plowright's character is trapped by pride and the need to look down on others because of an attachment to status and reputation. But Lottie's capacity for compassion and basking the old lady in kindness heals her hardened heart.

Instead of pointing a finger at your spouse, do a vision quest, a pilgrimage, a retreat, a men's or women's weekend—any place that facilitates looking within.

So Much Joy

As mentioned, the women send for their husbands to come and share in the wealth of sunshine. And due to having put in the challenging inner work of changing their hearts, love and amorous feelings are rekindled.

In Eastern energy practices, looking within and raising one's moral standard above and beyond standard human emotion can positively recharge one's energy field. And that changed energy field can affect the energy fields of others. Maybe that's why the men arrive on the scene and tumble head-over-heels back in love with their wives.

So, if you're considering marriage counseling, have a gander at "Enchanted April," and instead of pointing a finger at your spouse, do a vision quest, a pilgrimage, a retreat, a men's or women's weekend—any place that facilitates looking within—and find the things you hate about your spouse. Then, embrace the fact that your annoyance stems from the fact that these traits are exactly reflected parts of your own self, which are not really your true self—and learn how to let these notions go. You might not need that marriage counselor after all.

THEATER REVIEW

A Musical That Hits and Misses

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—When the character of Roxanne (Jasmine Cephas Jones) bursts into song in the opening moments of the musical “Cyrano,” something magical happens: A woman shares her hidden hopes and dreams. Here, the music and lyrics in this New Group production are perfectly in sync with the story. Sadly, such emotional highs are far too infrequent but do show the potential of Erica Schmidt’s adaptation of Edmond Rostand’s classic work “Cyrano de Bergerac.”

In 1640, Cyrano (Peter Dinklage) is a much respected swordsman in the king’s regiment. He’s also a poet, critic, and a man with a rapier wit. He once interrupted an actor on stage because he felt the performer was not up to the role.

Cyrano is also perennially without funds. He spends his money for reasons he considers just, rather than for practical items like food and clothes. He also refuses any aid—financial or otherwise—from his friends. Cyrano sees any such offer as charity, something his pride would never allow him to accept.

Cyrano is also desperately in love with Roxanne, his close friend from childhood, with whom he has recently renewed an acquaintance. Yet for all his bravery, Cyrano has never told her his feelings for fear that she will reject him because of the way he looks.

Interestingly, in the original story, the reason for Cyrano’s feeling of inadequacy is because of an oversized nose. Schmidt’s adap-



Handsome Christian (Blake Jenner, L) loves the same woman that Cyrano (Peter Dinklage) does, in the musical remake “Cyrano,” of the classic “Cyrano de Bergerac.”

tation removes this characteristic and pretty much all references to it—a fact that might upset purists but one that also opens up the character to new interpretations.

Cyrano’s hesitation has opened the door for someone else to enter Roxanne’s heart: a young man named Christian (Blake Jenner), newly assigned to Cyrano’s regiment.

While Christian is just as enamored with Roxanne as she with him, he finds himself tongue-tied whenever he tries to speak to her. Phrases of love and poetry that fall so trippingly off Cyrano’s tongue and through his pen are impossible for Christian to express. Yet so great is Cyrano’s love for Roxanne that he willingly gives his written declarations to

Christian. The new recruit thus is able to woo the object of his desire by passing off Cyrano’s words as his own.

“Cyrano” presents an age-old tale of unrequited love. Romantic illusions are only a temporary salve for those who attempt to stave off a reality they don’t want to face. This premise, along with a warning of the dangers pride can bring, is evident throughout.

When the songs (by Aaron Dessner and Bryce Dessner and lyrics by Matt Berninger and Carin Besser) allow the characters to reveal their inner thoughts, the show hits a proverbial home run. The scene in a pastry shop where Cyrano is writing a letter, while a group of workers knead bread in the background, is particularly

striking, as is a scene where forlorn Christian explains his inability to articulate what is in his heart. His inability to speak from the heart is somewhat ironic, as Cyrano has the same problem, albeit from a different root cause.

Also quite good is a number sung by the soldiers in Cyrano’s regiment as they go into battle.

The only place where this method doesn’t really work is a solo number by De Guiche (Ritchie Coster), the de facto villain of the piece, who also has eyes for Roxanne.

Schmidt, who also directs the production, stages these scenes quite well, with the choreography by Jeff and Rick Kuperman—much of it in slow motion—fitting in perfectly.

However, when songs are used simply to impart basic plot points, the action grinds to a halt. The numbers then elongate moments that could have been easily handled by a few lines of dialogue. This matter is a particular problem in the early part of the play.

Dinklage is excellent as the alternately arrogant and lovelorn Cyrano, whose exploits eventually earn him the grudging admiration of his enemies, even as his pride becomes his undoing. He also cuts a dashing figure when his bravado is on display.

Jenner does very well as Christian, a tragic figure in his own right. He has just as much capacity for passion as Cyrano, but due to his upbringing (his father feels that books have no place in the life of a soldier) lacks the where-withal to verbalize it. Christian is also the character who matures the most during the play.

Jones is fine as Roxanne. She is a character both willful and determined, yet also has a blind spot in matters of the heart. She does eventually realize that the beauty inside someone is far more important than what can be seen on the surface.

Schmidt’s adaptation stays faithful to the emotional core of the Rostand story, while allowing these characters to express their hidden passions on a completely different level. Despite being too uneven musically to succeed, it still rings true as often as not.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle.

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