

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

NATIONAL COWBOY &amp; WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Cowboy craftsman Cary Schwarz made this 3/4 Hermann Oak leather saddle to commemorate his 40th year as a saddler.

## FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

## Celebrating North America's Cowboy Arts

The 'Traditional Cowboy Arts Association Exhibition & Sale' at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

## LORRAINE FERRIER

Idahoan Cary Schwarz puts his heart into saddle making—a lifelong student keen to improve and perfect his work.

Now in his fourth decade as a saddler, Schwarz is surely a master craftsman, but that's something that he'll never call himself, he said in a telephone interview. Schwarz sees "becoming a master" as a byproduct of perfecting his craft, whereas "being a master" denotes arriving at the summit of a craft, an idea that he believes could inadvertently bring complacency and dampen creative growth.

"What gets me up and going in the morning is the challenge of learning something new," he said. With each new project, Schwarz pushes himself to work in an area that he's never been before, crossing new creative frontiers.

"There's a tremendous amount of [creative] energy that can take place right on the edge of your abilities. ... When you're challenged right at the edge of your abilities, and you're able to push that envelope just a little further each time, you derive a little bit of a therapeutic benefit from that."

He happily admits that he's a perfectionist, a gift he inherited from his German ancestors. Many people see being a perfectionist as a negative trait, but Schwarz believes that perfectionism only becomes a problem when it's used as a stick to beat yourself with.

**This year's show features 55 pieces in steel, silver, leather, and rawhide.**

Saddler Cary Schwarz, like all TCAA members, is an ambassador for the cowboy arts and the cowboy way of life.

### Celebrating 40 Years of Saddle Making

Schwarz developed his leather making skills while working at gun holster companies, and then when he studied saddle making in college.

Many leather carvers are indirectly using design concepts and elements that have been around for centuries, such as Baroque and Victorian era architectural ornamentations, he said.

He decided long ago that no two of his designs would be the same, although he uses the same basic concepts for designing the flowers and stem work on each saddle.

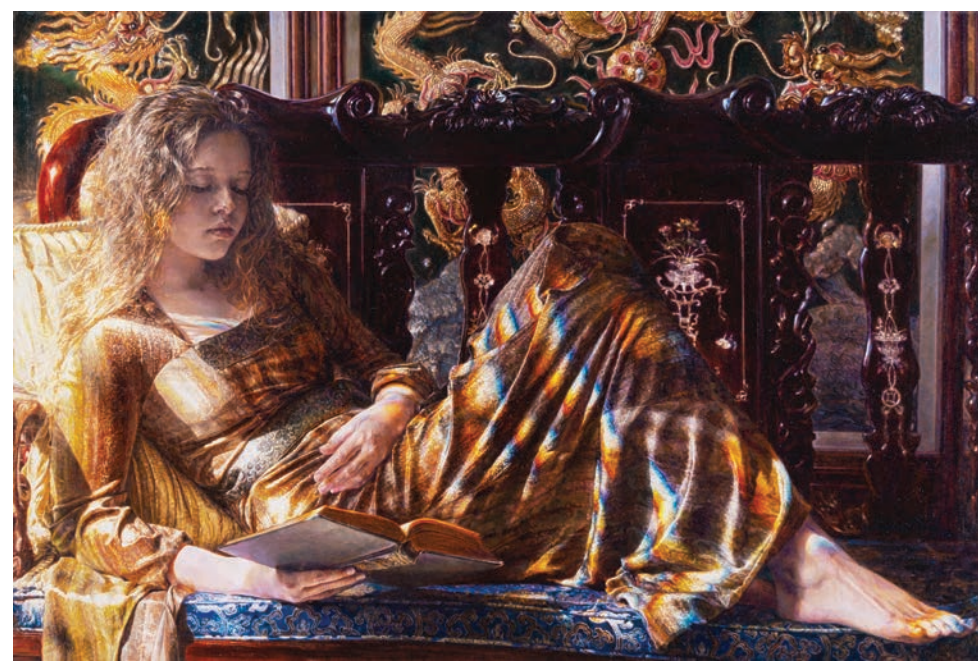
Schwarz tackled his first 3/4-size saddle to commemorate his 40 years as a saddler. It took him around 200 hours to make, over a two- or three-month period in between his commissioned works.

He first designed the saddle on paper with a series of motifs that commemorate his 40 years of saddle making. A sea of syringa flowers, the flower of his home state, Idaho, dominate the design. He colored the flower petals red rather than their natural white, purely because the spirit-based leather dyes he favors don't have a white color.

*Continued on Page 4*

ART SCHUMER





Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

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POETRY

## A New Year's Hope for Our Troubled Times: Tennyson's 'Ring Out, Wild Bells'

JEFF MINICK

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.  
Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

So begins Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Ring Out, Wild Bells," the last part of his long poem "In Memoriam A.H.H.," an elegy honoring the young poet and essayist Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's deceased friend and his sister's fiancé.

"Ring Out, Wild Bells" marks a shift in the lengthy poem's mood from grief and doubt to hope and acceptance as Tennyson (1809–1892) writes of church bells ringing in the new year. These verses became the lyrics for a hymn, often sung around New Year's Day, and have inspired other musicians as well to set Tennyson's words to music.

Though it appeared in 1850, this poem has a particularly pertinent message for Americans today as we step into 2023.

That last line cited above—"Ring out the false, ring in the true"—becomes the theme for the rest of the poem. At one point, Tennyson asks the bells to "Ring

in the nobler modes of life, / With sweeter manners, purer laws." In the next stanza, we find "Ring out the want, the care, the sin, / The faithless coldness of the times." Next, he summons the bells to ring out "the civic slander and the spite" while ringing in "the love of truth and light" and the "common love of good."

In the last stanza, Tennyson asks this of the bells:

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



Portrait of Lord Alfred Tennyson by George Frederic Watts.

Tennyson does not forget the dead, his friend Hallam and others, asking the bells to "Ring out the grief that saps the mind / For those that here we see no more." Yet in the rest of the poem he takes the familiar New Year's adage "Ring out the old and ring in the new" and refashions it into "Ring out the false" and ring in the noble, the true, and the good.

In no way does the poet advocate pitching out all the traditions and virtues of the past. No—by summoning to memory those customs and habits located in the "nobler modes of life," Tennyson calls instead for a restoration of an earlier integrity, dignity, and morality. In the line "The faithless coldness of the



Tennyson asks the bells to "ring out the false" and ring in the noble, the true, and the good. "The Young Lady Bellringer," 1875, by Otto Piltz. Oil on canvas.



Coming at the end of a long poem, "Ring Out, Wild Bells" shifts the mood from grief to hope as Tennyson writes of the church bells ringing in the new year. "Abbey Church in Winter," 19th century, by Carl Julius von Leybold. Oil on paper.

times," he clearly indicates that the age in which he lives is inferior to a brighter past.

### It's Time for a Renewal of Goodness

One of the gifts of the greatest works of art, and a quality that renders them classics, is their relevance to all peoples and times. They are like notes in a bottle, cast by their makers into the sea of time to later wash up on the shore with a message as fresh and as human as if they had been created that very day.

And so it is with "Right Out, Wild Bells." Given the tribulations of the last three years in our own country, from the disasters of the COVID pandemic to our disputed elections, from cultural upheavals to skyrocketing inflation, Tennyson's ringing bells, with their hopes of revival and restoration, echo our own yearning for a renewal of goodness, truth, and beauty.

May the bells of 2023 ring out the darkness of our land and ring in a new and gleaming light on our country and its people.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."



Tennyson's ringing bells echo our own yearning for a renewal of goodness, truth, and beauty. "The Evening Bell," 19th century, by Bernhard Stange. Oil on canvas.



Armed with courage, we can overcome everything that challenges reaching our goals. "God Speed!" 1900, by Edmund Leighton.

LITERATURE

## The Courage to Endure

KATE VIDIMOS

The standards that we set for ourselves and our lives can be extremely daunting and depressing, and seemingly impossible. Yet with courage, we can achieve and reach them all, measure by measure.

In her short story "The Preliminaries," Cornelia A.P. Comer follows Oliver Pickersgill as he strives to obtain the consent to marry Ruth Lannithorne. Comer demonstrates that, with courage and endurance, we can conquer the challenges that loom over us.

The first difficulty Oliver must face is that Ruth's father, Mr. Lannithorne, is currently in prison. The requirements that Oliver must follow in order to marry into the family of a convict prove to

be difficult and complex.

### Getting Permission

When Oliver first proposes to Ruth, he is surprised when she passionately responds, "I will never marry anyone who doesn't respect my father as I do!" He is shocked. He expected her to be concerned about their disparity in their social status. Now he is faced with the task of respecting her father, a convict. Nevertheless, he promises to visit her father.

Oliver first visits Ruth's mother, Mrs. Lannithorne, to gain her consent. Again, he is surprised. Mrs. Lannithorne challenges him. She asks if he can sufficiently support a family as she wants her daughter to be secure.

Mrs. Lannithorne outlines the many

hardships, sorrows, and perils of marriage. Marriage is serious, and she would hate to see her daughter placed into such unnecessary hardship by marrying.

Yet she says, "Go ask Peter Lannithorne if he thinks his daughter Ruth has a fighting chance for happiness as your wife."

Bewildered, Oliver realizes that he does not possess the independent means of supporting Ruth. He is in business with his father and relies on him. But if his father rejects him, Oliver will have very little money and no job.

Discouraged, Oliver heads to discuss things with his father, Mr. Pickersgill. However, his father's response is not much better—his father is disappointed.

His father emphasizes how Ruth's social status and situation, especially with a criminal father, will ruin Oliver's security and the inheritance that Oliver will give his children. Should Oliver marry into a family with a criminal father, that inheritance will be tainted.

Nevertheless, he says, "Ask Peter Lannithorne what a man wants in the family of the woman he marries."

### Courage

Dejected and now scared of marriage, Oliver sets out to the capital penitentiary to face Mr. Lannithorne.

Apprehensive, Oliver is shocked when he hears Mr. Lannithorne say that "courage is security." For, he says, courage gives us the strength to endure, and "endurance is the measure of a man."

Through Oliver's trying interviews, Comer shows that prudence dictates we seek security. We have a responsibility for ourselves and those around us. Measure by measure, we strive for security. Yet we can never truly attain that security we all desire.

Comer says that "it is life that is the great adventure. Not love, not marriage, not business." If we have courage, we have the endurance to face this adventure with all its hills and valleys. If we measure ourselves by our courage, we can live, endure, and thrive.

Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor's degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children's book.



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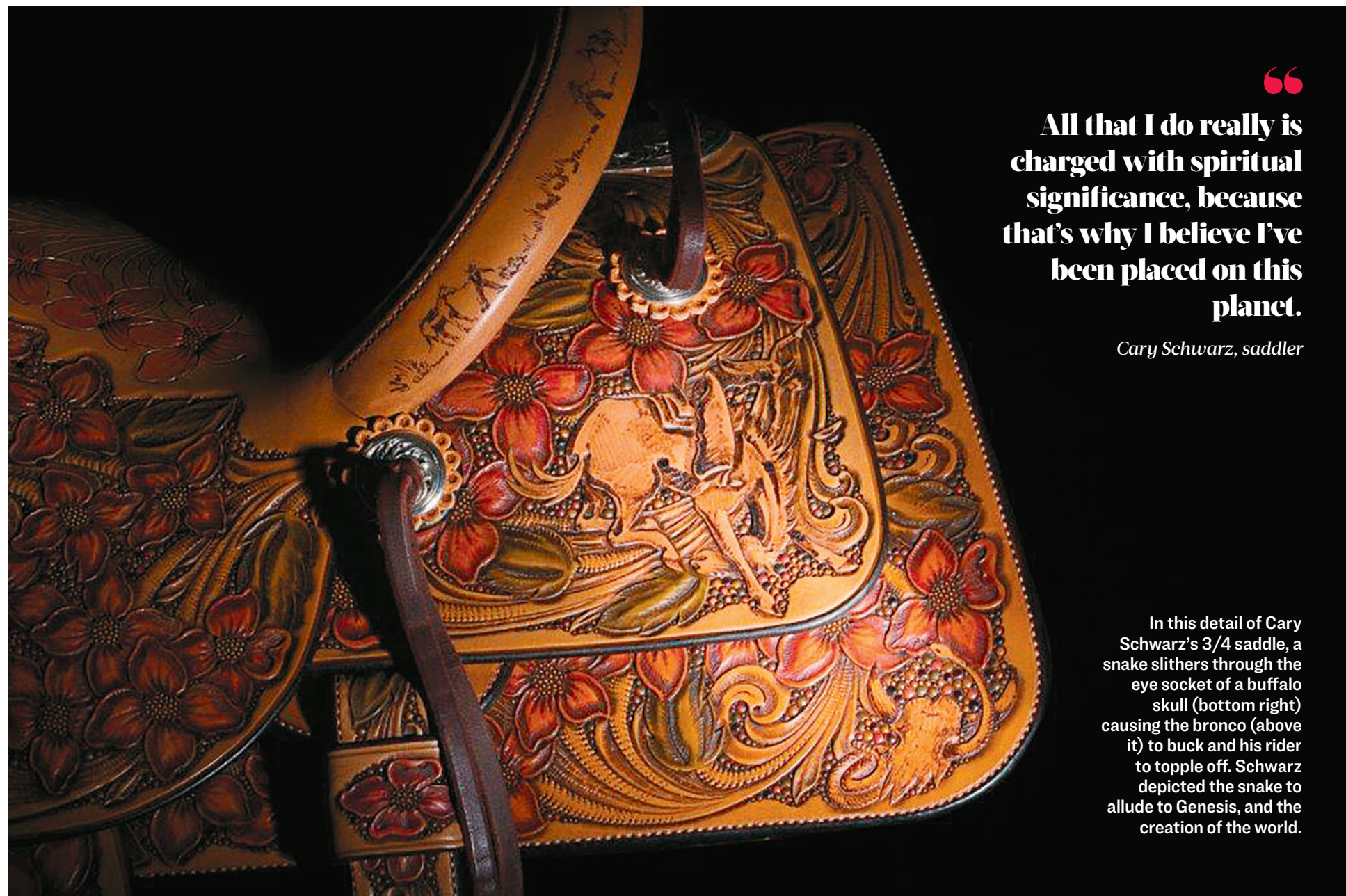
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“  
All that I do really is  
charged with spiritual  
significance, because  
that's why I believe I've  
been placed on this  
planet.”

Cary Schwarz, saddler

In this detail of Cary Schwarz's 3/4 saddle, a snake slithers through the eye socket of a buffalo skull (bottom right) causing the bronco (above it) to buck and his rider to topple off. Schwarz depicted the snake to allude to Genesis, and the creation of the world.



A close-up detail of Cary Schwarz's 3/4 saddle shows a sea of syringa flowers, and on the saddle dish a rider attempts to tame his bucking bronco.

## FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

## Celebrating North America's Cowboy Arts

Continued from Page 1

He antiqued the saddle leather, which muted the red petals to pink and lightened the green leaves and yellow flower centers.

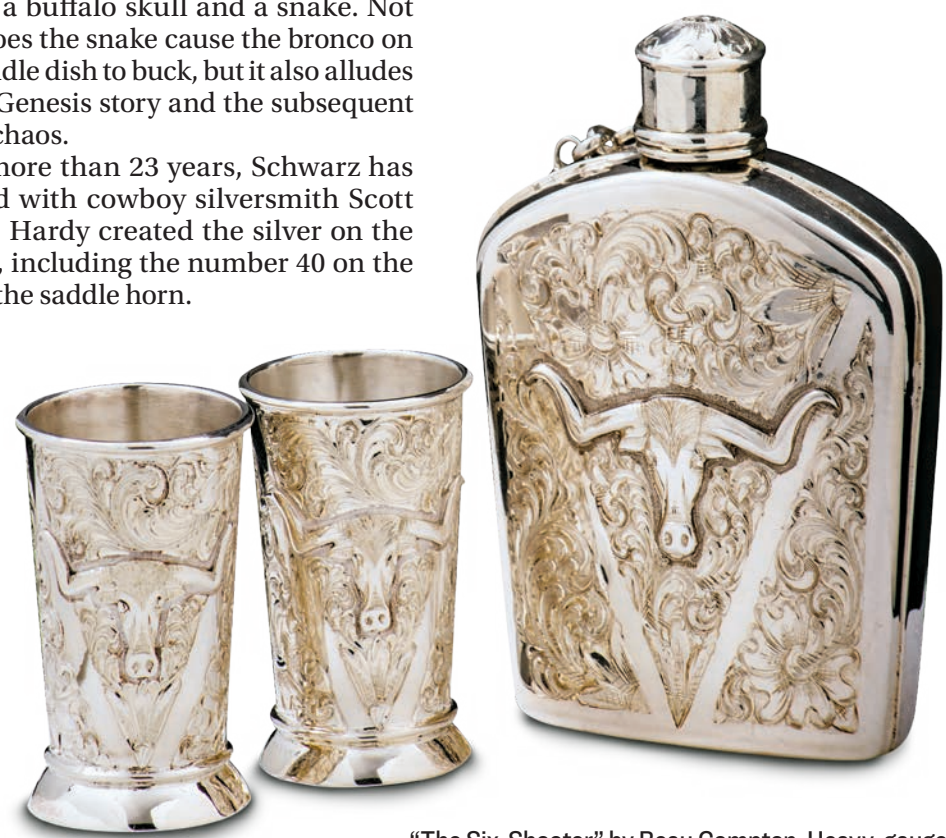
Bronco figures—one of the most well-known symbols of the American West—feature throughout the saddle. “[In the American West] we would say that there's only two types of cowboys—one who has been bucked off and the other one who will be,” he said. Schwarz sees the bucking bronco as a metaphor for life: When

our lives get hard or messy, we all try to stay upright, but ultimately, at one time or another we all fall.

Schwarz notes that most Western artists depict cowboys successfully riding their broncos, but on the saddle dish he's chosen to depict a rider who's about to fall. Nearby on the lower back part of the saddle, he's added a buffalo skull and a snake. Not only does the snake cause the bronco on the saddle dish to buck, but it also alludes to the Genesis story and the subsequent world chaos.

For more than 23 years, Schwarz has worked with cowboy silversmith Scott Hardy. Hardy created the silver on the saddle, including the number 40 on the cap of the saddle horn.

**Traditional Cowboy Arts Association**  
Both Hardy and Schwarz are founding members of the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association (TCAA), which was formed in 1998 by a group of cowboy master craftsmen and enthusiasts to uphold and protect the American Western traditions of silversmith-



“The Six-Shooter” by Beau Compton. Heavy-gauge silver with relief sculpture and bright cut engraving.

All Traditional Cowboy Arts Association members are dedicated to preserving and honoring the cowboy arts they love.

ing, saddle making, rawhide braiding, and bit and spur making.

Anyone can apply to join the TCAA, even international masters of the cowboy crafts, but they must be proficient in making American Western-style works. Currently, there are a dozen TCAA members: four saddlers, two silversmiths, four rawhide braiders, and two bit and spur makers. Each member has established himself in his craft, with commissions booked years in advance, and with each member willing to pass on his expertise to students, TCAA CEO J. Kent McCorkle said in a telephone interview.

A big part of the TCAA mission is to show the brilliance of Western craftsmanship and for bona fide experts to teach the trades. McCorkle explained that when the TCAA was first founded, many Western products were mass produced overseas, and aspiring young apprentices had only a handful of places where they could learn Western crafts.

There was also a veil of secrecy surrounding the disciplines, where some established craftsmen were reluctant to pass on their skills, and in some instances even hid their work. That veil of secrecy meant that the quality and expertise in the cowboy disciplines was diminishing at a rapid rate, and the TCAA wanted to prevent those disciplines from being lost.

The association provides a mixture of educational support that includes scholarships, peer-to-peer gatherings, and fellowships opportunities.

“My work improved by leaps and bounds after we founded the TCAA,” Schwarz said. It's through the association that he's been able to spend time around craftsmen he's long admired, and in doing so he's learned so much. He even got the chance to take a fellowship to France, along with TCAA member and saddler Pedro Pedrini, to learn from a French saddler who freelances for the French military.

**Crafting Cowboy Art**

For 23 years, TCAA members have exhibited their work in the “Traditional Cowboy Arts Exhibition & Sale” at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. This year's show features 55 pieces in steel, silver, leather, and rawhide—including encore pieces, which are selected works from previous shows that demonstrate the progress of the craftsmen.

Every exhibit in the show has a functional aspect to it. But McCorkle says that the time, energy, and the level of expertise that each craftsman has put into these pieces make them works of fine art.

The show is a chance for exhibition visitors, collectors, and young aspiring craftspeople alike to see the beauty and elegance of Western craftsmanship, and it also enables TCAA's members to “literally shoot for the moon in what they can do,” McCorkle said.

**Meet Some of the Members**

Many TCAA members have been inspired by their Western upbringing, and all are dedicated to preserving and honoring not only the cowboy arts that they love but also the cowboy way of life itself.

Silversmith Scott Hardy, a fifth-generation stockman from Longview, Alberta, Canada, said in the sales catalog: “Embellishing horse and rider with precious metal is a tradition as old as man on horseback, and deserves the respect of being done by hand one piece at a time.” Hardy hand sculpted, filigreed, and engraved 14 pieces of heavy-gauge sterling silver pieces for a bridle set that's in the sale. Cary Schwarz lined and hand stitched the chocolate-brown leather, and Wilson Capron made the steel bit with a French gray finish.

Silversmith Beau Compton was raised in the ranch and rodeo tradition and now lives with his wife and two children on his in-laws' family cow-calf ranch in Tombstone, Arizona. He feels blessed to raise his children as the sixth generation on the family ranch and to perpetuate the Western lifestyle and values, he said via the catalog. For the sale, Compton created a pocket-sized, heavy-gauge sterling silver, six-shot flask and two glasses. He handmade each piece, decorating the pieces with bright cut engraving. One side of the flask has a sculpted head of a Texas Longhorn, and the other has the TCAA logo.

Rawhide braider Jay Adcock's grandfather inspired him to work with rawhide and leather from an early age. He honed his craft by working on ranches across the U.S. West after working with Oregon rawhide braider Frank Hansen. Adcock now lives with his daughter on a cow-calf ranch in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. He made a headstall (the part of the bridle that goes over the horse's head) and Santa Ynez-style reins braided with Corriente-yearling rawhide. Santa Ynez-style reins comprise multiple strands that gather near the bit end. Adcock created each rein with three individual eight-strand braids (over the top) that transition into a 16-strand braid (over an eight-strand core). Schwarz made the curb strap, and Compton made the buckle for the Santa Barbara-style spade bit (made by Ernie Marsh). Pedro Pedrini made the popper, which is a flat piece of leather used to move cattle that “pops” when it hits



Saddler Cary Schwarz loves to make fully functional fine art saddles.

a surface. The popper is attached to the end of the 20-strand romal (a braided thong attached to the reins, used to move cattle.) Adcock decorated the bridle with 178 rawhide buttons.

Bit and spur maker Wilson Capron grew up in a ranching family in far West Texas. He took an apprenticeship with bit and spur maker Greg Darnall. He was also influenced by his father, artist and cowboy Mike Capron. Capron created a Santa Barbara bit for the show, with 24-karat gold roadrunners darting amid the rich scrollwork and fine silver inlay. Capron's silverwork on the bit harks back to the high-relief engravings found on high-end shotguns, where ducks, geese, and pheasants weave through the scrollwork.

Schwarz's 3/4 saddle is also on display. He gets immense satisfaction when his work puts a smile on somebody's face. Schwarz approaches all of his work from a biblical perspective, putting the essence of “love

thy neighbor” into practice by serving his customers the best that he can. “All that I do really is charged with spiritual significance, because that's why I believe I've been placed on this planet,” he said.

He feels blessed that he can keep learning and perfecting his saddle making. “I can't even imagine life without it,” he said. Schwarz may not have to imagine life without his craft, as thanks to the work of the TCAA, the Western disciplines of silversmithing, saddle making, rawhide braiding, and bit and spur making are having a renaissance. And to use the metaphor of the bronco—at the moment, they're in the saddle and riding well.

The “Traditional Cowboy Arts Exhibition & Sale” runs until Jan. 2, 2023, at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. To find out more, visit [TCAA.NationalCowboyMuseum.org](http://TCAA.NationalCowboyMuseum.org)



A bridle set by silversmith Scott Hardy. Sculpted, filigreed, and engraved heavy-gauge sterling silver. Leather work by Cary Schwarz. Steel bit with a French gray finish by Wilson Capron.

Santa Barbara bit, by bit and spur maker Wilson Capron. Steel with silver and 24-karat gold inlays.

A bridle set by rawhide braider Jay Adcock. Corriente-yearling rawhide and 178 rawhide buttons. Curb strap by Cary Schwarz. Silver buckle by silversmith Beau Compton. Santa Barbara-style spade bit by Ernie Marsh. Popper by saddler Pedro Pedrini.

## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

# A Bucket List for Book Lovers

A rich reference volume from a true aficionado of literature

ANITA L. SHERMAN

I've mentioned before that I am a bibliophile. I like to read and I like to collect books—not as a hoarder, although my overflowing bookshelves might say otherwise. I do pass on books that I know family or friends might enjoy. Since I was a young child, I've been fascinated with books and all the places that they can take you, from flights of fancy to heady histories.

Over the course of my reading and reviewing a variety of books for The Epoch Times, several readers have reached out recommending James Mustich's "1,000 Books to Read Before You Die: A Life-Changing List."

On the cusp of a new year, with all our resolutions and good resolve, perhaps reading more can be added to the list. This volume is an inspirational place to start.

## In the Company of Books

Author James Mustich cofounded and was the guiding force for two decades of the acclaimed mail-order book catalog "A Common Reader: Books for Readers With Imagination." Also a book lover from an early age, he has surrounded himself with countless readers. He was a bookseller for some 40 years.

Fourteen years in the making, the book's pages will feed a diversity of reading appetites and satisfy every kind of reading devotion.

Mustich makes no claim that this is a comprehensive list; rather, it contains entertaining essays that he hopes will invite discussion and perhaps inspiration to pursue new interests or reinvigorate old ones. He's all about encouraging fresh reading and stimulating new ideas.

It's a personal compendium that will no doubt inspire hours of browsing and encourage a lifetime of reading. It's a tome for sure, but open it at any point and readers will be pleasantly surprised at what they might find. There's much serendipity just in how the selections are designed and presented.

Entries are arranged alphabetically by author. So as an example, you'll find Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" opposite "The Compleat Angler" by Izaak Walton. A curious juxtaposition but it works, and there are many of these. Another example is "All Passion Spent: A Portrait of the Artist as an Old Woman" by Vita Sackville-

West sitting next to "The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence" by Carl Sagan.

However, when it comes to William Shakespeare, he has his own section, which takes up several pages. There's no getting around how influential Shakespeare is to the literary world—familiar texts that can forever offer readers new truths for hearts and minds.

## Pick a Page

When I first opened the book, sort of as a preview of coming attractions, I landed on the page with "The Poems of Catullus" by Gaius Valerius Catullus, a Latin poet of the late Roman Republic. I was brought back to my college days, for what is not to like about this poet who wrote much about human emotions? In more than two dozen of his poems, he speaks of a woman whom he adores.

Sitting opposite Cormac McCarthy's "The Road," where a father and son face an apocalyptic world, is one of my favorite children's books: "Make Way for Ducklings" by Robert McCloskey. This mallard couple is searching as well, but in their case they are searching for a place to start their family of adorable ducklings. Both of these selections, landing opposite each other due to their authors' last names, curiously share similar themes: bonding, caring, and searching.

It's these kinds of serendipitous arrangements that make Mustich's collection so delightful and savory. Another childhood favorite of mine is Hugh Lofting's "The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle," which sits opposite Jack London's "The Call of the Wild." Certainly, there are conversations with animals in both.

St. Augustine's "Confessions," exploring the story of a soul, is followed by "Meditations" by Marcus Aurelius, exploring an emperor's enduring wisdom. Then, readers will move right along into a section on the beloved books of Jane Austen.

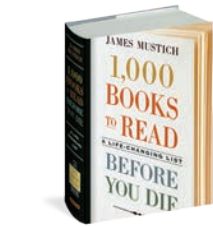
Not limited by the 1,000 choices, Mustich, a true book aficionado, adds suggestions of other works by the same author and/or recommendations of similar themes after each entry. More than 6,000 titles by 3,500 authors are recommended.

The first essay is "Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness" by Edward Abbey,



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**Serendipitous arrangements make Mustich's collection delightful and savory.**



**'1,000 Books to Read Before You Die: A Life-Changing List'**

**Author**  
James Mustich

**Publisher**  
Workman Publishing Company, Oct. 2, 2018

**Hardcover**  
960 pages

an American author, essayist, and environmental activist who died in 1989. The last essay is "A Part of Myself: Portrait of an Epoch" by Carl Zuckmayer, a German writer and playwright who died in 1977. His older brother was the composer, conductor, and pianist Eduard Zuckmayer.

In between, there are hundreds of worthy selections for children, teens, and adults. They range from the illustrious to the semi-forgotten, all chosen with care by Mustich for the reader's pleasure. Start at the beginning or open at any part; it's a treasure trove of authors, plots, and characters sure to entertain and inspire.

This is a rich reading reference volume, a bucket list for book lovers to cherish, and a must-have on your library shelf.

Mustich's expansive scope and keen eye for surprise details will leave readers with little doubt of what to read next.

Happy New Year! Happy Reading!

*Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. She can be reached at antajusturite@gmail.com*

This book is a personal compendium that will no doubt inspire hours of browsing.



Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) and Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) fleeing their jungle home for an ocean-based lifestyle, in "Avatar: The Way of Water."

**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.

# A Mostly Outstanding Adventure

MARK JACKSON

The biggest cinematic mistake I made this year was getting impatient, and watching "Avatar: The Way of Water" in 2D. Do not do this! I need to watch it again, in its natural habitat of 3D and IMAX. And if I feel compelled to see a film twice, in a short period of time, it gets an automatic 4.5 out of 5 stars. So 3D will put "Avatar" at a solid 5 stars.

Let me just quickly say at the outset that, while the movie is amazing in terms of the magic cinema it has to offer, I have an issue with one of the story's themes: its let's-kill-humans-and-save-the-planets narrative. More on this later.

## Ambition: Oscar

That said, if there was an Oscar for pure ambition, director James Cameron's rivals might as well just forget about it. His original "Avatar" (2009), a 3D action epic about 9-foot-tall, blue-skinned, tiger-striped, green-eyed extraterrestrials, remains, by some measures, the most successful movie ever made.

"Avatar: The Way of Water" (it's definitely a franchise now) throws every kind of popular appeal up against the wall to see what sticks—and it pretty much all sticks. The paradoxes inherent in its themes automatically provide enough tension to make it riveting. That is, it's family-friendly but violent, militaristic but pacifistic; and it pays homage to the beauty of nature by showcasing overwhelming, gut-churning, government-mandated, capitalist rape and exploitation of pristine planets.

James Cameron is modern cinema's greatest advocate of the power of big-screen spectacle. And "Avatar: The Way of Water" runs the gamut of a visual feast of sublimely colored fantasy landscapes, the rousing action-spectacle of tribal versus U.S. military battles on sea, air, and land, and fantastic beasts of all of the above environments—all nailed down with the kind of trippy hyper-realism that only a hyperambitious manic-obsessive artist with an operating budget of nearly half a billion can pull off.

What's most impressive about "The Way of Water" are the nature-appreciation themes, and the honoring of the lost traditions of the human community and tribal life. And while the wondrous world of Pandora can be taken as utopian and idealistic, Cameron grounds all of the above in life's inherent messiness, as well as the bonds we all form, while at the same time reminding us of how simple it is to achieve happiness.

## Quick Recap

Underlying their science fiction trappings,

**What's most impressive about 'The Way of Water' is the honoring of the lost traditions of the human community.**



Kiri (Sigourney Weaver) is Jake Sully's adopted daughter, in "Avatar: The Way of Water."

## 'Avatar: The Way of Water'

**Director:**  
James Cameron

**Starring:**  
Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang, Kate Winslet, Cliff Curtis, Jamie Flatters, Britain Dalton, Jack Champion

**MPAA Rating:**  
PG-13

**Running Time:**  
3 hours, 12 minutes

**Release Date:**  
Dec. 16, 2022

★★★★★

the "Avatar" films are basically an extended romantic adventure tale about a colonizer who "goes off the reservation" and "native," a tradition that's as long and venerable as the art of storytelling itself.

By the end of the first "Avatar" film, former Marine Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) had abandoned his human body to live an avatar life as a Na'vi (aforementioned blue aliens), who live in tribal harmony with nature on Pandora, an idyllic, lush, triple-canopy jungle moon situated a galaxy away from Earth, where all the flora is luminescent and all the fauna have two sets of eyes. In the 13 years between the films, Jake Sully and his Na'vi mate Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) have raised four children.

Jake then leads a band of Na'vi insurgents against the resource-hoovering "Sky People" (human invaders). Jake's former commanding officer, Miles Quaritch (Stephen Lang), the first film's villain, returns as an even bigger threat because now he's got his own Na'vi avatar body (with memories and personality uploaded)—all the better to infiltrate the natives. His transformation, however, is strictly camouflage; in his heart he remains a semper fi, gung-ho jarhead with the sole mission of ending Jake Sully.

Is that perhaps some ridiculous pseudoscientific silliness? All of the "Avatar" franchise is pure pseudoscientific bunk. So are the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the DC Universe, and most movies ever made. Who cares? What's important is that Stephen Lang's powerful performance will make you forget all that.

## On the Lam

Jake and his family are forced to flee, and eventually they take refuge with an ocean-dwelling clan known as the Metkayina. This is where one almost expects to see plaques like at New York's Museum of Natural History: "Metkayina, a subspecies of Aquatic Na'vi." They're turquoise-skinned, have more tribal tats and bigger muscles, plus marine adaptations such as a finned tail, and broad, fin-like forearms.

But before Colonel Quaritch arrives, there's plenty of time for the family to get situated in their new digs, go exploring, and for all the combined tribal kids to make friends (and rivalries) and take us with them on adventures.

Each of Jake's four kids play a pivotal role. While Jake may no longer be human, he's still the kind of powerful Southern military father whose kids show respect and call him "sir." However, younger son Lo'ak (Britain Dalton), unlike his older brother, is not his dad's pride and joy and has trouble adjusting to aquatic life and marine hunting grounds, and feels like a n'er-do-well in his dad's eyes.

Lo'ak is the movie's emotional core. His loneliness and his eventually finding sanctuary in the ocean, with its exciting creatures, is as touching on an emotional level as the underwater sequences and visuals are truly gorgeous.

## More on the Kids

Sigourney Weaver plays a dual role here, in flashbacks as Dr. Grace Augustine of the first "Avatar" and also as Kiri, who was born of Grace's Na'vi body (talk about pseudoscience). While it's a bit of a stretch for 73-year-old Weaver to play a 14-year-old teen, she turns in such a highly convincing, youthful performance that one can't imagine anyone else in the role.

Then, there's Colonel Quaritch's kid, Miles (Jack Champion), who was too young to be transported back to Earth and was raised on Pandora with the Na'vi and the handful of human scientists allowed to remain on



Lo'ak (Britain Dalton) swimming with his giant new whale friend.

Pandora. Quaritch's avatar is not technically Miles's (now nicknamed "Spider") dad. Spider is like one of those hopping kittens raised in a rabbit litter.

But there's an undeniable bond between father and son. Their relationship is powerful and conflicted as father-son bonds tend to be, and further complicated by the fact that Quaritch is a mission-obsessed, merciless killer-Marine, but also undeniably human and actually surprisingly relatable.

## Overall

The calm first hour of "The Way of Water" is worth sitting through to get to the action-packed climax (which puts all Marvel and DC equivalents to shame), not to mention the sheer beauty of the colors and creatures. It builds excitingly throughout, and peaks in its final hour with probably the best action sequences of Cameron's career.

The film is a refreshing ode to traditional family values, and while the whole story line about settling into a new home has an enjoyable 1950s' vibe, the scale is ultimately grand, the stakes immense, and the final sea battle filled with incredible moments and even humor.

As mentioned at the outset, "Avatar: The Way of Water" is the one film you absolutely must see in 3D and IMAX. And while this ocean-going version of Pandora is unquestionably the film's greatest character in the same way the jungle version was before it, and while the Sully family is captivating, and things don't wrap up as cleanly as in the original (it's gotta set the stage for the third chapter), this episode still feels complete and totally satisfying.

If for nothing else, see the film to enjoy this smorgasbord of visual marine delights, bequeathed to us with love by the director who digs the sea so much that in 2012, he spent a record-breaking six hours in a submersible, diving 2.3 miles down in the pitch-black ocean all by himself to the notorious Mariana Trench. Talk about your thorough research.

In conclusion, while this film is lots of fun, the main problem with the "Avatar" movies is that they're couched in Cameron's hippy-ish ethos of planet saving, as well as hammering on the fact that this is capitalism gone wrong (as in government-backed), and makes the military look absolutely heinous. Add to that the fact that this "Avatar" links the military exploitation with a fictitious, Aussie-led, super-techno-sophisticated whaling outfit on planet Pandora, and a truly excruciating whale-hunt scene such that "Avatar" will have you hating the U.S. military.

That's just not good. And so I'm giving "Avatar: The Way of Water" a 5 out of 5 for movie magic, and a 2.5 out of 5 for subversive themes that are ultimately destructive to society. I do applaud its family values, though—too bad it's not humans with those human values.

*"Avatar: The Way of Water" is in cinemas from Dec. 15.*

## LITERATURE

# Righting Our Wrongs

Peter Christen Asbjornsen's fairy tale

KATE VIDIMOS

As the year draws to a close, we have a chance to reflect on all of our mistakes. The disappointment and despair that can accompany such reflections can be overwhelming and discouraging. Yet we must strive to find our inner strengths and right our wrongs.

In his short story "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," Peter Christen Asbjornsen follows a young girl as she sets out to win back the prince she's lost. Asbjornsen shows that courage and perseverance can overcome wrongs and put them to right.

## The Story

One day, a large white bear appears and asks the girl's father for her hand, promising riches and prosperity to her poor family in return. After some hesitation, the lass decides to go with the bear to give her family the good fortune and riches they need.

## The Mysterious Man

During her stay with the bear, she realizes that a man comes and sleeps next to her every night. She is agitated, wanting to know who this mysterious man is. But the bear warns her not to be curious.

Finally, in an attempt to discover this mysterious man, she lights a candle. And there, in the bed, is a most handsome prince.

However, her wondrous discovery awakens the prince and he is livid. "What have you done?" he cried; 'now you have made us both unlucky, for had you held out only this one year, I had been freed.'" His stepmother had cursed him to be a bear by day and a man by night.

He tells the lass that he must now leave her and wed a "Princess, with a nose three ells long." The girl's curiosity and disobedience parts them; he must now go to the castle "east of the sun and west of the moon."



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The white bear carries his intended on his back. An illustration from "The Blue Fairy Book," 1889, by Henry Justice Ford.

**Asbjornsen shows that we must never stop trying to better ourselves.**

## Redemption

The lass pleads for forgiveness, but the prince can do nothing. She begs to go with him, but he denies her pleas. Finally, she says that she will search until she finds him again.

The next morning, she sets out to win back her prince. However, it is not easy to find "east of the sun and west of the moon." She journeys to seek answers from one guide to another, each guide knowing a little more than the last, but none knowing exactly how to reach the castle.

After meeting three hags—the East, West, and South Winds—she finally meets the North Wind, who knows where the castle is. The North Wind carries her "east of the sun and west of the moon."

At the castle, she is presented with more challenges. The princess with the long nose lets her into the castle only at night, so the prince never sees her. Nevertheless, the girl

perseveres, desiring to right her wrong.

Through her, Asbjornsen shows that, despite our many grievous faults, we must persevere to right our wrongs. No matter how difficult or repetitive our troubles and how many times we fail, we must never stop trying to better ourselves.

With difficult circumstances barring our way and the dreadful memory of the mistakes we have made, it might seem sensible to give up.

As we face a new year, we must not let our mistakes prevent us from bettering ourselves and rise. When we overcome our flaws, we gain a better reward and better future than before.

*Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor's degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children's book.*



"The Lamp"

The girl holds up the lamp and sees the handsome prince. An illustration by John Batten for Joseph Jacobs's "Europa's Fairy Book," 1916.

## FINE ARTS

# Mountaineer in a Misty Landscape

One man gazing at the vast unknowable

CHARLES TIMM

If the periods of art ever put forth their most iconic works, Romanticism would surely include “Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog,” the oil painting, circa 1818, by German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich.

Like the Romantic period itself, this painting is often called sublime: a word meaning “elevated in dignity” but also “to pass from solid to vapor and back, bypassing the liquid state.” It would be a magically unreasonable experience that Friedrich seems to share with us, as the wanderer atop his mountain beholds an unfolding oneness of jagged peaks and formless fog below.

As an artist of the Romantic aesthetic, Friedrich was working against Enlightenment values (logic, reason, order) that some saw as at least partially contributing to the bloody, monarch-toppling French Revolution. Instead, the Romantics exalted individuals with strong emotions who could find release only in wild, unbridled nature.

In “Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog,” also known as “Wanderer Above the Mist” or “Mountaineer in a Misty Landscape,” the artist exemplified the aesthetic: one man gazing at the vast unknowable. With the midpoint of the painting at his chest, the man’s “heart is the center of the universe,” noted art historian and Harvard Univer-

One can almost hear Friedrich’s wanderer gasp upon seeing those mists of inspiration.

For more arts and culture articles, visit [TheEpochTimes.com](https://www.theepochtimes.com)



“The Painter Caspar David Friedrich,” circa 1808, by Gerhard von Kügelgen. Oil on canvas. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

sity professor Joseph Koerner.

We can’t be certain who Friedrich used as the model for the Rückenfigur (figure seen from behind). Friedrich painted in his studio, helped by his own sketches of Swiss and German landscapes, and it’s easy to imagine the dapper fellow in green jacket and boots leaning upon his cane to be Friedrich himself.

But in his 1990 book “Caspar David

Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape,” Koerner concluded that the depicted figure was the high-ranking forestry official Col. Friedrich Gotthard von Brincken. At the time, von Brincken was a volunteer ranger for King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia’s war against Napoleon.

Koerner wrote, “Von Brincken was probably killed in action in 1813 or 1814, which would make the 1818 ‘Wanderer Above the

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Sea of Fog’ a patriotic epitaph.”

And did it also subtly celebrate a victory over the French, and the larger stories of Prussian unification and German nationalism?

Whoever Friedrich placed amid that landscape, the artist noted, “The painter should paint not only what he has in front of him, but also what he sees inside himself,” makes us ask what part of the wanderer’s view was Friedrich’s inner vision.

Skating one boyhood winter day, Friedrich fell through the ice on the Baltic Sea, and his brother died saving him from drowning. Such personal history surely helped form that inner vision of tension between impulse, natural beauty, and terror that the wanderer reveals was within him. One can almost hear his wanderer gasp upon seeing those mists of inspiration.

According to the website of the Hamburger Kunsthalle in Hamburg, Germany, the “Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog” has resided there since 1970, within reach and still current ever since its creation 200 years ago. Over the years, there have even been some extreme efforts to make it contemporary. In a 1975 book titled “Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko,” scholar and author Robert Rosenblum attempted to connect Friedrich with abstract expressionism. This mid-20th-century American art movement abandoned all conventional representation in favor of spontaneous, formless imagery. While famed critic Hilton Kramer called the idea “brilliant hokem, amusing hokem, but hokem all the same,” such attempts surely show the desire to have the wanderer—and his spirit—stand with us today.

Why does this painting persist in the hearts and minds of so many? Perhaps it’s because there is something inherently soothing in the notion that nature—as nearer the divine—is greater than the cultures and empires of men, and that we are wise enough, ultimately, to let ourselves rise above the notions of being trapped by human constructs and choose that freedom.

Charles Timm is a creative writer from New Jersey who enjoys writing about fine art and traditional culture.



“Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog,” circa 1818, by Caspar David Friedrich. Oil on canvas. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Jack Benny: King of Classic Comedy

STEPHEN OLES

Many of our country’s most beloved entertainers started out in vaudeville, a national network of theaters offering bills of miscellaneous acts: singers, dancers, comedians. For Americans, it was television before there was television. TV variety shows, in fact, with hosts like Ed Sullivan and Carol Burnett, were vaudeville’s final encore.

Performers known for one skill in vaudeville sometimes became stars later doing something completely different. Funny man W.C. Fields began in vaudeville as a juggler. Comedy legend Jack Benny began as a musician.

## Dry Humor Makes a Star

Born Benjamin Kubelsky in Chicago in 1894, Benny helped out at his father’s dry goods store while studying the violin. By age 17, he was good enough to score gigs in vaudeville. Joining the Navy’s entertainment division in 1918, Benny discovered his talent for comedy and demoted the violin to a prop, which he deliberately played badly for comic effect. After the war, he returned to vaudeville, this time as a comedian.

Instead of imitating the knockabout clowning of The Three Stooges or the verbal sparring of the Marx Brothers, Benny forged his own uniquely dry, self-deprecating style. Though Benny was kind and generous in real life, the character he played onstage was vain, malicious, and ludicrously stingy. It was all part of the act and audiences loved every minute.

Benny’s appeal stemmed in part from his running gags and catch phrases. He insisted he was 39 years old—for decades. He maintained a “feud” with fellow comedian Fred Allen. He scolded audiences with “Now cut that out!” or a frustrated “Well!” His exasperated fingers-to-cheek gesture was endlessly imitated, and nobody did deadpan or the “slow burn” better. Benny’s flawless timing, sly pauses, and comical vanity would influence comedians right down to the present day.

Jack Benny was also the king of one-liners: “When another comedian has a lousy show, I’m the first one to admit it.” “I’m an old newspaper-man myself, but I quit be-



cause I found there was no money in old newspapers.” “I don’t deserve this award, but I have arthritis and I don’t deserve that either.” “My wife Mary and I have been married for 47 years and not once have we had an argument serious enough to consider divorce. Murder, yes, but divorce, never.”

## Benny and Anderson

Beginning in 1932, “The Jack Benny Program” reigned for 20 years as one of the most popular programs on the radio. His supporting cast included his real-life wife as a wisecracking secretary, and Eddie Anderson as “Rochester,” Benny’s valet, who could outwit his employer and always had a quip to burst Benny’s bubble.

The great Mel Blanc voiced additional characters, as he would go on to do for Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and more than 400 other cartoon personalities.

Eddie “Rochester” Anderson was the first black actor to land a regular role on a national radio, and later television, program. Although he’d been in movies since 1932, he became famous as Benny’s gravel-voiced sidekick. Benny and Anderson’s humorous partnership delighted listeners and viewers for almost three decades. In later years,

Comedian Jack Benny (L) in a 1977 skit with Eddie Anderson, who played Benny’s sidekick and valet, Rochester.



Jack Benny and his wife, Mary Livingstone, who performed as his secretary in his radio shows, in 1944.

Anderson bought and trained racehorses while still appearing in movies and on TV.

Benny and Anderson were close friends on and off the screen. Benny refused to stay in hotels that didn’t admit Anderson, and he didn’t let his writers use racial slurs or demeaning stereotypes.

## Into Filmed Media

Besides radio, Jack Benny appeared in many movies. Ernst Lubitsch’s “To Be or Not to Be” (1942) cast the comedian as an actor who impersonates a Gestapo officer to foil a German spy and get his troupe, including his wife (Carole Lombard), safely out of occupied Warsaw.

Today, the film is acclaimed as one of Hollywood’s finest comedies, but at the time not everyone was amused. Some felt that setting a farce in war-torn Poland, which Hitler had invaded only three years earlier, was in bad taste. Bosley Crowther wrote in The New York Times: “To say it is callous and macabre is understating the case.”

In 1950, “The Jack Benny Show” migrated to television. Loyal to his radio family, Benny brought them along. With typical generosity he gave Rochester, Mary, and the rest most of the punchlines. The beloved regulars and a parade of famous guest stars—everyone from Bob Hope to Jayne Mansfield—kept the sketch comedy show running for 15 years.

In a 2020 interview, Benny’s daughter, Joan, remembered her father as “a truly nice man.” The feeling was general among those who knew and worked with him.

His shows are remembered as “a high-water mark in 20th century American comedy,” and possibly no comedian ever earned more respect and affection from his peers. British comic Benny Hill even took his stage name from him.

In the words of Carol Burnett, Jack Benny was “a timeless kind of funny.”

Stephen Oles has worked as an inner city school teacher, a writer, actor, singer, and a playwright. His plays have been performed in London, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, Calif. He lives in Seattle and is currently working on his second novel.

## MUSIC

# A Woman’s Journey Through Love and Life

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

“Since first seeing him, I think I am blind, Wherever I look, Him only I see.” These words open one of Robert Schumann’s greatest song cycles for voice and piano, “Frauenliebe und Leben” (A Woman’s Love and Life). From this initial phrase, the whole emotional climate of the cycle is set.

This song cycle, composed of eight German art songs known as Lieder, German songs for solo voice and piano, is an expression of love. It follows the love journey of a woman for a man, from the first meeting, to marriage, through motherhood, and ending in her beloved’s death.

But it’s so much more than that. It’s the story of Schumann’s love for pianist Clara Wieck.

## Touching Origins

At 30 years old, Schumann was madly in love with Clara but needed to persuade his future father-in-law that he was financially stable. As a result, Schumann composed with frenzy in the year leading up to his marriage, producing no less than 138 songs for voice and piano. This would be known as his “Liederjahr” (“year of song”), during which songs flowed from the Romantic composer at a quasi-miraculous rate.

“Frauenliebe und Leben” was the last cycle he wrote before his marriage, in just two days, on the 11th and 12th of July, 1840. The cycle took inspiration from eight poems by Adelbert von Chamisso, aimed at middle-class German-speaking women in the mid-1830s. The lyrics take us through an emotional experience, and Schumann’s music illustrates this journey.

The composer presented different phases of a woman’s life. Young love is illustrated in “Since I saw him” as the enchanting moment of the first meeting between a boy and a girl; “He, the Noblest of All” reflects falling in love; “I Cannot Grasp or Believe It” is the

moment the young man she loves chooses to be with her.

The phase when a man and woman marry begins with a woman’s engagement. “Your Ring Upon My Finger” is a touching tribute to the engagement ring as a dream come true; “Help Me, Sisters” tells of the joy of getting married and leaving childhood behind, and “Sweet Friend You Gaze” sings of the wedding night.

Raising a family is presented in “At My Heart, At My Breast.” Finally, losing one’s partner in life is sung in “Now You Have Caused Me Pain for the First Time” as it closes the cycle and the woman seeks refuge in her memories.

## A Marriage of Poetry and Music

Schumann’s composition unites the poem and the music in a cycle of songs as closely as a man and woman in a marriage.

The final song returns to the opening accompaniment of the cycle, following the last words of the lyrics: “Silently I withdraw into myself / The veil falls / There I have you and my lost happiness / You, my world!”

Once the interpreter sings these final words, the piano accompaniment repeats the accompaniment of the first song. This repetition gives the cycle a circular structure, and the piano’s melody brings the audience back in time, recalling the first memories of love.

What is perhaps notable in this combination of verse and music is that the piano presents remarkable independence from the voice. It manages to reveal the essence of each poem, reflecting the poet’s inner emotions. Schumann manages to paint the text with his composition, depicting emotions through the accompaniment.

Schumann used other compositional techniques, such as the use of dotted rhythms (longer notes alternating with shorter notes). These are used here to give words more significance; for example, in “Since first seeing him,” “him” is sung on a dotted note, giving this word more emphasis.

The various keys reflect the mood of the woman in love. For example, the first and last songs have a change of keys: The first one is in the major key (representing happiness) and the last one is in the minor key (representing sadness).

Chromaticism, the use of the 12-tone scale, is used to increase introspection

“Frauenliebe und Leben” is a reflection on love and its many interpretations, possibly mirroring Robert’s passionate love for Clara. Lithograph of Robert and Clara Schumann in 1847.



The pure beauty of Schumann’s imaginative music takes the audience through a poignant emotional experience.

and reflects not only Schumann’s unmatched style, but the woman’s inner thoughts. For example, the irregularity of the chords’ rhythm in the first piece creates an unsteady feeling, shifting between voice and piano, mimicking the girl’s heart. As for the piano’s simple chords in this first song, they are quasi-hypnotic, as if the girl was caught in a daydream.

One thing is clear in this musical cycle: It’s intense. Both text and music offer an evolving perspective on love and life and the joy and pain that goes with it, offering a range of feelings. The pure beauty of Schumann’s imaginative music takes the audience through a poignant emotional experience, marrying poetry and music.

It’s not only the listener who experiences this; it’s also the performer who requires both an emotional and technical intensity. Most of the songs are set in a “declamatory lyrical” (speech-like singing as in opera) range, giving the cycle an operatic style.

This monument of German Lied, which sets poetry to classical music to create a piece of polyphonic music, takes us through a powerful journey transcending time. It’s a reflection on love and its many interpretations, possibly mirroring Schumann’s passionate love for Clara.

Ariane Triebswetter is an international freelance journalist, with a background in modern literature and classical music.



Robert Schumann composed “Frauenliebe und Leben” in just two days. “Lithograph of Robert Schumann, 1839, by Joseph Kreihuber.

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## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

# 'Pocketful of Miracles': An Entertaining Comedy for the Holidays

IAN KANE

'Tis the season to be merry and for getting together with friends and family to watch charming Christmas movies. Of course, the usual titles invariably pop up, such as "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946), "White Christmas" (1954), and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (1964).

There are also a number of other films that may not specifically be Christmas-y films per se, but evoke a similar spirit of cheer and goodwill. And that's exactly what I thought about after watching 1961's "Pocketful of Miracles," directed by Frank Capra and starring Glenn Ford, Bette Davis, and Peter Falk (who made me want to see the film since I'm a huge fan of the "Columbo" TV series).

This film is actually a remake of another movie that Capra had directed back in the 1930s titled "Lady for a Day." (The original screenplay was written by Robert Riskin.)

The story takes place in 1930s New York, and Ford plays an unusually thoughtful and gracious gangster named Dave the Dude. The Dude frequently drops in to visit an older, bedraggled alcoholic street vendor named "Apple Annie" (Bette Davis). He routinely buys apples from her because he believes that they possess magical properties that bring him luck.

Falk plays Ford's snide right-hand man Joy Boy, and Hope Lange is Ford's girlfriend Elizabeth "Queenie" Martin, who eventually wants to marry and settle down. But the Dude has enough ambition for 10 men and is moving in on a big deal with big-time gangster Steve Darcey (Sheldon Leonard), coincidentally nicknamed "Mr. Big."

Things get interesting when Annie doesn't turn up at her usual spot one day and the Dude feels compelled to track her down. When he finds Annie, he discovers that she has recently received a letter from her daughter (Ann-Margret), who lives in Spain and is engaged to a Spaniard named Carlos Romero (Peter Mann). Louise is planning on bringing Carlos and his father, Count

**Ford does a good job as Dave the Dude, the well-intentioned gangster, while Davis is always splendid to watch no matter what film she's in.**

### 'Pocketful of Miracles'

**Director:**  
Frank Capra

**Starring:**  
Glenn Ford, Bette Davis,  
Hope Lange

**MPAA Rating:**  
G

**Running Time:**  
2 hours, 16 minutes

**Release Date:**  
Dec. 18, 1961

★★★★☆



Dave the Dude (Glenn Ford) and Apple Annie (Bette Davis), in "Pocketful of Miracles."

Alfonso Romero (Arthur O'Connell), along with her to meet her mother, Annie.

There's only one problem: Annie has been posing as a fictitious, well-to-do New York socialite by the name of Mrs. E. Worthington Manville. The only reason Annie has been able to send money to Louise is because of money coming in from the gaggle of beggars she manages, as well as the Dude's generous support.

Queenie eventually convinces the Dude to help Annie out of her predicament by setting things up for her to be able to continue the charade. He also wants to continue receiving the perceived good fortune he receives from Annie's apples.

The silly plan that the Dude and Queenie come up with involves enlisting his Broadway chums to get Annie all gussied up like the character she's been pretending to be all along, and also set her up in an out-of-town friend's posh pad as if she lives there. As you can probably guess, this entire well-meaning yet cockamammy scheme leads to many unforeseen consequences, many of which are sure to elicit a chuckle or two.

Overall, I thought that this film was pretty entertaining and had some funny comedic bits when everything came together. However, it also felt overly long, as some of the scenes seemed to drag on to the point of fizzling out when they could have been much more effective were they shorter.

Ford does a good job as Dave the Dude,

the well-intentioned gangster, while Davis is always splendid to watch no matter what film she's in, even though this isn't one of her better roles. However, Falk basically steals every scene he's in, a consummate actor who wholeheartedly steps into every role, no matter how small that role is.

I'd recommend checking this movie out if you're looking for something a little different over the holiday season. It's entertaining and features an interesting storyline, capable acting, and has some good messages.

*Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality. You can check out his health blog at [IanKaneHealthNut.com](http://IanKaneHealthNut.com)*



Joy Boy (Peter Falk, L) in one of the film's humorous scenes with Dave the Dude (Glenn Ford), in "Pocketful of Miracles."



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