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Hudson Valley Explore

Spring in the Valley 2022

*This is the
time for
birders!*



Live at Shadowland

*Theater's back in Ellenville,
including Tom Hanks world premiere*

by Frances Marion Platt

REJOICE, PILGRIM! SUMMER theater is returning to the Hudson Valley after two years of virus avoidance. Guided by the policies of Actors Equity, Shadowland Stages in Ellenville has announced that neither masks nor proof of vaccination will be required of attendees this summer and fall – except that one performance of each of the 2022 season’s six shows will be reserved for people who need extra precautions for being immunocompromised or having a child too young to be vaccinated at home. “This year we feel like we’re back,” says managing director Elena Holy.

Shadowland put on a limited season in the late summer and autumn of 2021, notably including the inaugural show at the Studio, a black-box performance

.....

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come on out and
see a live show?**

.....

space at 14 Market Street, around the block from the MainStage at 157 Canal Street. That production – a two-woman play by Eleanor Burgess titled *The Niceties* – should’ve been a bigger deal, publicity-wise, considering that renovations of the former Richie’s Hardware store to create this flexible new space had been under way since 2017. The Studio has already been used for several years for rehearsals, and to host acting classes for children and adults under the aegis of the Academy. But the lingering spectre of Covid-19 meant that the launch of



LAUREN THOMAS

Artistic Director Brendon Burke.

the studio as a public stage would have to be low-key.

This year’s loosening of social-distancing protocols will allow for a more festive introduction of the new performance space. It’s easy to see the possibilities that

the Studio presents. Though telescoping risers are built into one side of the 5300-square-foot space, the rest of the seating is entirely modular, allowing a variety of different configurations.

The *Niceties*, for example, was pre-



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Shadowland's managing director Elena K. Holy and artistic director Brandon Burke.

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sented in the round. Up to 130 audience members can be seated in the black box, depending on how the seats are arranged. There's a green room and a utility room with a shower. One wall of the black box sports a big barn door that can be opened to let the sunshine spill in, making it an appealing space for special events. "It's transformative," Holy says enthusiastically.

Some renovations were made in the main building during the pandemic shutdown as well, but they were largely invisible, according to artistic director Brendan Burke — stuff like a new sprinkler system and HVAC system updates to improve ventilation at a time when audiences worry more about what sort of air they're breathing in enclosed public spaces. Otherwise, the MainStage and lobby still exude their familiar vaudeville-era charm.

The 186-seat Art-Deco theater is justly celebrated for its excellent sightlines and acoustics. Its wide but shallow, slightly curved dimensions allow even patrons seated in the back row within 35 feet of the stage.

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37th season, besides a second unveiling of the black box? The biggest buzz will undoubtedly surround the world premiere of *Safe Home*, a play based on three short stories by actor Tom Hanks, co-written for the stage by Hanks and director James Glossman. It was Glossman who orchestrated the US premiere at Shadowland in 2018 of *Bang Bang!*, John Cleese's translation/adaptation of a 19th-century French farce by Georges Feydeau, starring Sean Astin. This time around he set his sights on Hanks, after seeing the stage potential of his stories.

Glossman's adaptation of one of Hanks' stories first saw light in a virtual reading streamed by Shadowland in 2020, featuring David Strathairn. He then adapted two more, and last summer Shadowland hosted a live



LAUREN THOMAS

reading of all three, again, with Strathairn among the presenters.

"But they were not necessarily unified," Burke relates. "Then

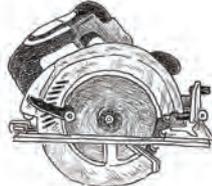
This time around he [Glossman] set his sights on Hanks, after seeing the stage potential of his stories.

Tom Hanks said he wanted to join on as co-playwright. One story is about time travel, and

Shadowland's Managing Director Elena K. Holy.



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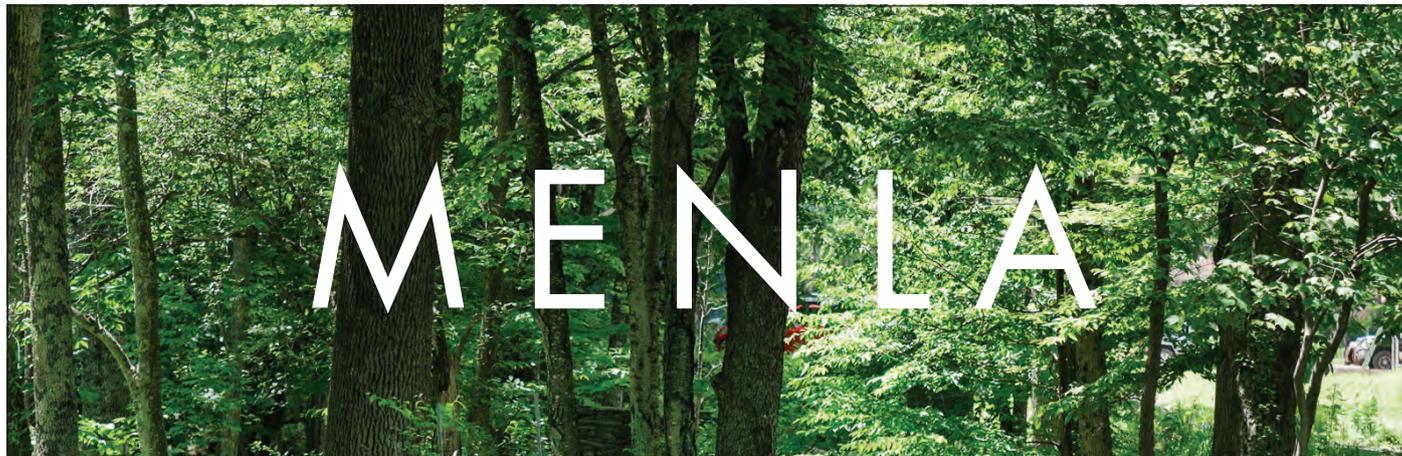
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that became the connective tissue.” The storytelling style is “unique,” Burke says, with the characters speaking in both the third and first persons.

Safe Home by Hanks and Glossman will run from July 15 to August 7 on the Main-Stage. Says Hanks about this premiere production, “Shadowland Stages is the ideal venue for *Safe Home*: a safe home for a new play. The possibility to come back to the theater, to the fine hands of the ensemble, is fresh, thrilling and due!”

The Shadowland crew are keeping their fingers crossed for a live appearance from the superstar himself; says Burke, “He’ll be in town.”

Shadowland’s 2022 season kicks off with the regional premiere of *Airness* by Chelsea Marcantel, also on the Main-Stage, running from June 3 to 19. Burke,

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who's directing this show, explains that "airness" is one of the qualities on which contestants are scored in air guitar competitions – the subject of this play. Yes, there's such a thing as competitive air guitar, and "They take it really seriously," Burke says, describing the subculture as "WWF meets rock 'n' roll." To promote the show, Shadowland ran a fake social-media post on April Fool's Day advertising air guitar strings and picks among its merch sales, according to Holy.

Another world premiere, *The Crossword Play (or Ezmeranda's Gift)* by Donna Hoke, will relaunch the Studio, running from June 24 to July 10. The audience is invited to join an expert at a crossword puzzle-making workshop, where she guides us through the creation of a brand-new puzzle, this one aimed at rekindling an old flame. Will her words woo him back? Or leave her puzzled about the past?

From August 12 to September 11, Shadowland will carry on its long tradition of one music-themed show per season with *Almost Heaven: Songs of John Denver*.

Conceived by Harold Thau and featuring songs by John Denver and others, with orchestrations and vocal arrangements by Jeff Waxman, *Almost Heaven* is a musical tribute and intimate celebration of the late singer/songwriter's life and career, told through numerous hits such as "Rocky Mountain High," "Sunshine on My Shoulders," "Annie's Song" and "Leaving on a Jet Plane." It will be performed on the MainStage.

This year's second show in the Studio is also the work of a celebrity more widely known as an actor than as a playwright. Danai Gurira played two famously feisty females in fantasy franchises: Michonne in eight seasons of *The Walking Dead*

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The Studio, Shadowland's new black box performance space at 14 Market Street.

and Black Panther's elite bodyguard Okoye in the Marvel cinematic universe. But Gurira is also the award-winning author of several plays, including an Obie, an Outer Critics' Circle Award, a Helen Hayes Award and a Pulitzer Prize nomination for *In the Continuum* and a Tony nomination for *Eclipsed*.

In the Continuum by Gurira and Nikkole Salter, directed by Jammie Patton (who directed *The Niceties* in the Studio last year), will run from September 16 to

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The summer/fall season at Shadowland ends with *The Lifespan of a Fact* by Jeremy Kareken, David Murrell and Gordon Farrell, based on a book by John D'Agata and Jim Fingal. Running from October 7 to 23 on the MainStage, this pointed comedy follows Fingal, a fresh-out-of-Harvard fact-checker for a sinking, once-heralded literary magazine. His editor assigns him to check an article by a prominent literary powerhouse, secretly hoping to change the magazine's fate. Hard facts battle emotional truths in this high-stakes showdown based on actual events.

Shadowland Stages also plans to mount a holiday show, title and theme yet to be announced, on the MainStage from December 2 to 18. Stay tuned for updates. Prices for single tickets to shows at Shadowland range from \$34 to \$42, and full-season subscription packages are also available. They can be purchased online at <https://shadowlandstages.org> or by calling 647-5511.

Isn't it high time to come on out and see a live show? As Elena Holy puts it, "It's going to feel like a cork coming out of a champagne bottle!"

Hudson Valley Explore

Spring in the Valley

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BIRDSONGS AND MATING dances are in flight right now as migratory birds flock to the region and resident birds tease out a breeding

companion. “The last week of April through the first three weeks of May are really the peak times for birders,” said Steve Stan, a retired specialist from the Department of Environmental Conservation, an avid birder, and a resident of New Paltz

whose home borders a bird sanctuary.

Stan explained that late April signifies “the tail end of the waterfowl migration,” including the arrival of Canadian Geese and Wood Ducks and even the small, blocky Green-Winged Teal Duck, “a beautiful little bird that will likely nest a little further north.”

Wood Ducks love a marsh area, where they can find tree cavities made from rot or from Pileated Woodpeckers attempting to nest right now. “The ducklings are so downy and fluffy that apparently they just get pushed out of the nest and float in the air and then their mom takes them to the water,” says Stan. “There’ll be two dozen of them all clumped up behind the mother duck in June.”

Red Wing Blackbirds and Grackles, both of which have been in the area for several weeks, are now starting to establish their territory along the marshlands.

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Winter backyard birds including the Black-Capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren are still here, singing and flapping their wings to attract mates.

“Birders are really starting to look for the arrival of the early warblers,” said Stan, including the Yellow-Rumped Warbler, the Palm Warbler, the Louisiana Water Thrush, and Black and White Warbler.

Stan said that In birding circles, Stan said, the Yellow-Rumped Warbler is often referred to as the “Butter-Butt Warbler” because of its bright yellow backside.

Megan Napoli, a research ecologist at the 8000-acre Mohonk Preserve, agreed

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that the Yellow-Rumped Warbler is a common migrant species fairly easily spotted at this time of year, along with the Tree Swallow and House Wren.

What birds are the most colorful? Both Stan and Napoli mentioned the Scarlet Tanager, a medium-sized songbird with fairly stocky proportions and thick, rounded bills that help them catch insects and eat fruits. Their plumage is fiery red and their wings and tail black. The female Scarlet Tanager is a creamy yellow with olive-hued wings. These dazzling songbirds can be seen in mixed hardwood forests.

Other bird with unique color patterns, according to Napoli, include the Cerulean Warbler, a bird the color of a smoky blue sky that flies high through the upper



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canopy of Eastern forests. The males have a cerulean neckband and streaks down the side, the females a dusky hue of blue-green plumage.

According to Napoli, these birds can be found in oak forests and steep slopes. Added Stan, “They can be seen in areas like Breakneck Ridge and Storm King, places where there are rocky outcrops and deciduous forests and more steep slopes for nesting.

Tree Swallows are attracted to riparian areas and grasslands.

Baltimore Orioles, Goldfinches and Woodcocks will soon display dramatic courting flights which will have them circling higher and higher into the spring sky, making twittering sounds with their wings until they reach a crescendo, cease flying and dive back down to the ground, where they make a sound that Stan can only describe as a nasal exhalation.

This is also the time when Hawks are migrating, Great Blue Herons are returning to their watersheds of choice, and they will be followed by the smaller Green Herons. “Peregrines and Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles are all nesting right now,” said Stan, and various climbing routes and trails at the Preserve are closed to make sure that the Peregrine nesting sites are not disturbed.

While loss of habitat is the greatest threat to these lovely songbirds, waterfowl and Hawks, Napoli did note that “no matter where you are birding, it is always important to stick to designated roads or trails so you are not disturbing any potential nesting areas. Birds nest in grasslands, cliffs, trees and

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shrubs, so they're found in almost all wild habitats."

Stan and Napoli recommend the Cornell ornithology website www.allaboutbirds.org where amateurs and veteran birders alike can learn about the shape, size, color, songs, sounds, habitats of almost any bird species. Napoli "highly recommends the Sibley and Merlin bird apps for your smartphone," as well as noting that the Preserve offers birding programs throughout the year, including the upcoming "Hike with a Naturalist — May Migrants," on May 12 and "Early Morning Bird Walk," on May 15. To register for Preserve programs, visit <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/events/>.

"This is the time for birders," said Stan. "In a few weeks you can probably count 30 different species of birds in one walk!" For more information on the Preserve's

Peregrine Watch program, visit <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/what-we-do/>

[conservation-programs/conservation-science/peregrine-watch-updates/](https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/conservation-programs/conservation-science/peregrine-watch-updates/).

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Catskill Animal Sanctuary



Ulster County Animal Sanctuary

Text and photos by Dion...

COVID-19 has changed life severely, including upending large industries.

Ulster County has two animal sanctuaries: the Catskill Animal Sanctuary and the Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary. Both are open to visitors this May.

For the past two years, the sanctuaries closed their doors while scrambling to figure out how to survive. The organizations have been open whenever possible, with the goal of preserving the lives of the lucky critters who found their way to them. This is through the hard work, dedication, and volunteers that have been able to survive through these difficult times.

Both sanctuaries will reopen for Mother's Day. Visitors are encouraged to make reservations to support the sanctuaries.

The residents are expected to be curious to see visitors again.

With thanks to the Catskill Animal Sanctuary, Kat from Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary, photographed a few of the animals and their tails.

For information on the tours they offer or to book a tour, go to:

<https://casanctuary.org>
<https://woodstockfarm.org>

Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary

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A grand reopening

Saunderskill Farms celebrates its 342nd springtime

by Theo Sassano

A RESIDENT OF NEW YORK CITY, I visited Saunderskill Farms while in the Hudson Valley during my spring break. Looking out into the vast and open farm land, I was able to feel an immediate sense of tranquility, a welcom-

ing respite from the city's traffic noises and crowded sidewalks. In both a literal and figurative sense, I experienced a breath of fresh air, a respite from the constant commotion of the city. The stillness of the atmosphere along with the general friendliness of the staff were captivating to me. So were the delicious sandwiches and soups I tried

out that day. The decadent homemade cookies, their top-selling baked goods, did not disappoint.

No wonder Saunderskill Farms is a hotspot for those new to the Catskills area — such as visitors like myself from the city — to unwind and to get a taste of all that this alternate realm of New York has to offer.

Saunderskill Farms, home to one of Hudson Valley's most historically rich places of interest, officially reopened its doors for the season on April 6. The family-owned acreage, granted by Dutch colonial governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1680, has maintained its high standards for agricultural goods through eleven generations and now its twelfth. On the same rich lowland soils of the Rondout Valley granted to the first Schoonmaker in exchange for military service, it continues to carry on the traditions of the Schoonmaker family.

The farm is one of the few to receive the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Tricentennial Award. The stubborn Schoonmaker vision visible in a stunning bucolic landscape has displayed extraordinary endurance, a trait recognized by

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PHOTOS BY THEO SASSANO

The nursery at Saunderskill Farms.

those who visit. The farm reopening is always well anticipated by a multitude of families around the region.

Featuring 300 acres of abundant, nutrient-rich land, Saunderskill Farms, open Tuesdays to Sundays from 8 a.m.

to 5 p.m., immediately catches the eye of the passerby. Its grounds typically hold a multitude of visitors at any time. “Our history, being a generational farm, is what got them here,” explained store manager Ryan Shea, a part-owner of the

farm. “They’re looking for [both] the food and the atmosphere.”

Building sturdy relationships with customers is important in running today’s successful farm: “The friendliness of our

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staff is, I think, first and foremost, on their minds.”

While pick-your-own produce is not yet in season, the market already draws an

abundance of visitors. The fresh products range from freshly cultivated apples, pears, and blueberries to pre-cooked meals, as well as the favorite homemade baked goods.

Ryan says that baked goods are one of the farm’s staple products, bringing back many of its most loyal customers. “I would say that our baked goods, [notably] our homemade cookies, are most popular,” he said. “Also, our sweet corn, when that comes into season.”

The distinctive quality of these items is apparent to customers. They achieve

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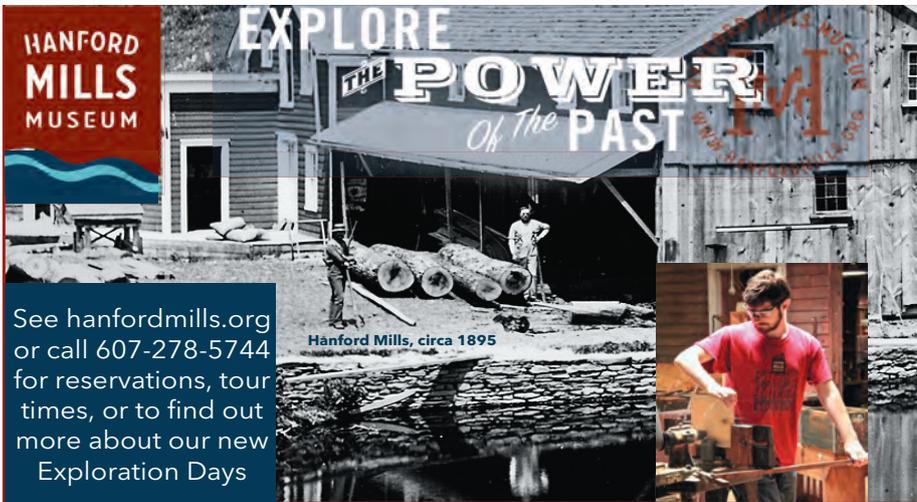
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ries will be available. Customers will be able to hand-select the quality fruits of their choosing. The interactive nature of pick-your-own produce provides for a bonding experience for families seeking summertime activities.

The products are not limited to produce, however. The farm also includes a greenhouse featuring a diverse selection of annuals, perennials, and vegetable plants, along with tools and appliances for them. Come this fall, the greenhouse will be offering an even larger selection, including pumpkins, corn stalks, gourds, hayrides, and more. The farm will also



DAVE HOLDEN

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open its abundant corn maze for all visitors to experience free of charge.

Saunderskill Farms hosts events throughout the seasons for visitors of all ages. On April 30, the place will hold a free event with the Hudson Valley Draft Horse Association, featuring horse-related activities perfect for the whole

family. “The draft-horse event [is] always a great one for younger kids since there’s a petting zoo,” Ryan explained. There will also be numerous activities to keep adults entertained, including wagon rides and a performance from the Ben Rounds Band.

Several more events will be coming up this fall, including pumpkin-picking, a



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Cherry blossoms droop under the weight of a spring rain.

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fall corn harvest, and an antique tractor pull, Details are available on <https://saunderskill.com/events/>. The farms’ reopening this spring signifies only the beginning of far more to come.

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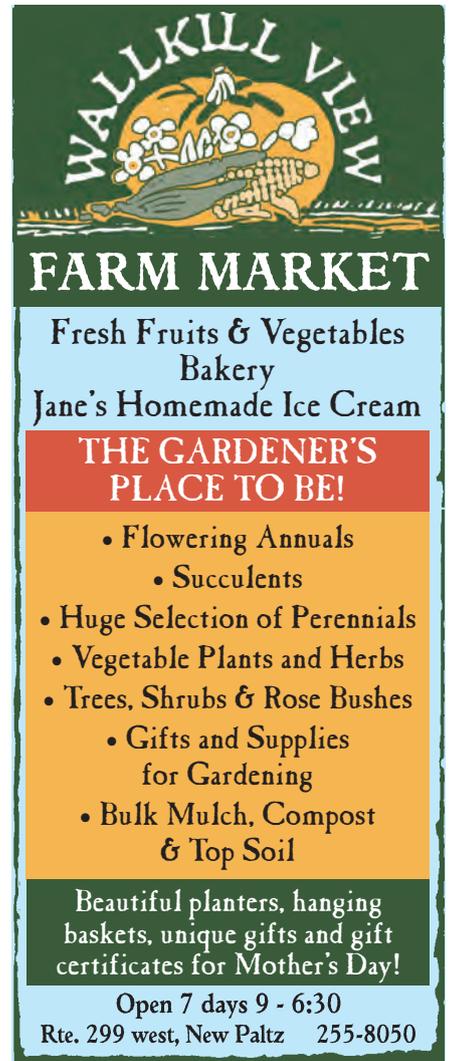
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Music without moving mouths

A new labor of love from a local improvisational trio



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL JOYCE

NEQ: Todd Nelson (guitar), Kyle Esposito (bass), and Manuel Quintana (drums).

by John Burdick

ON NEQ'S NEW record *Nevertheless*, this trio of A-list mid-Hudson Valley players explores the dimensions, the challenges, and the unique expressive opportunities of a highly marginalized genre: instrumental rock and fusion. In the process, they grapple with some fundamental questions about the place of instrumental music in today's musical marketplace and in the hearts and minds of listeners.

Can music without moving mouths really connect with popular audiences and popular taste, offering something like the emotional identification, the personality, and the catharsis of song? Or is instrumental rock music — as beautiful

and exhilarating as it can often be — generally consigned to a small cognoscenti audience of players, intellectuals, and the ogling spectators of shred?

It's sad to say that the marketplace itself ruled on this matter long ago. Instrumental music is, with the rarest of exceptions, commercial poison, and those who would commit themselves to its disciplines had better plan to make most of their living as teachers and music-store clinicians.

Even jazz — America's great instrumental music — hasn't been true chart-topping pop since the swing era, after which bebop chased away most of its casual audience in much the same way that Arnold Schoenberg and other modernist composers sent classical fans scurrying for the comforts of the past. Fittingly, the economy of jazz has more and more

come to resemble that of classical music — an economy of grants, fellowships, residencies, tenure-track positions, and prestigious French awards.

While they bristle at the very sound of the word “shredder,” Todd Nelson (guitar), Kyle Esposito (bass), and Manuel Quintana (drums) absolutely flex their formidable skills as players all over this record. They're all in-demand local sidemen who have registered nationally as touring and studio players as well. This deeply collaborative project is a labor of love.

They shine individually and collectively. But what is so giddily refreshing about *Nevertheless* is how they stretch themselves as producers, sound designers, and arrangers — how seriously they take the challenge of telling stories and conjuring

moods, evoking places and eras, and connecting to the imaginations and emotions of listeners, all while honoring the well-honed improvisational power trio at the heart of the enterprise

It is quite a balancing act. On eleven witty, stylish, and referentially playful compositions plus one remix, NEQ make the case that theirs is music for the people. While the song forms are indeed long and the solos are indeed many, NEQ treat every song as its own world, full of surprise, thematic development, immersive texture, and plenty of elegant



Todd Nelson (left) on guitar; Kyle Esposito (center) on bass; Manuel Quintana on drums (right).

and adventurous melody courtesy of principal writer Nelson. I would argue that anyone who has ever enjoyed a Morricone soundtrack, a surf record, or the genius of Jobim or Piazzolla should be able to find some delights here.

Starting with the winking, stylized bossa rock of track one, “Dune Buggy,” NEQ treat every song as a *sui-generis* studio construction. With a wheezy electric organ, an utterly disarming timbale solo out of nowhere, and an oblique, swanky jet-set pop melody over super-hip chord changes, “Dune Buggy” establish-

with cheeky stylistic references. It’s all about live ensemble chemistry and Nelson’s expansive harmonic imagination.

So it goes across the record. For every stylized *noir* Latin tune, stumble blues, or cinematic mood piece like the stunning ballad “Albatross,” there’s a straight up, live-feeling workout like “Camoplaid” or a wicked groove tune like “Threshold,” playing to the band’s core strength.

That the album should groove hard will surprise no one who has heard this group live in the local venues over the years. The surprise may come in how well-considered and developed this record is on the compositional and arrangement level, how much a piece of studio art it is.

“It was a conscious evolution in Todd’s writing that lent itself to a more composed approach to the arranging during the recording of the songs,” says Esposito. “Though I don’t recall ever talking about it, We all were ready to break out of the ‘head — solos — head, gotta be able to

es the rules that will prevail the rest of the way. This buggy will go anywhere it wants. Stay alert.

Dune Buggy will be followed by “Afternoon Map,” an unfussy and absolutely gorgeous piece of odd-meter post-rock that isn’t much bothered

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play it as a trio' tyranny that ran through our choices previously, though the material had always been eclectic and hard to pin down stylistically."

Adds Quintana, "We wanted all the recordings to be a representation of the song in its fullest form. We didn't want the song to be restricted or have any limitations in place, especially in the creative process. Limitations are good, too, but I personally prefer to give the song what it wants as much as possible even if it seems crazy. Like, if the song is crying out for a string section then we will get a string section (or brilliant keyboardist), regardless of how we will perform this live or whether it goes with vibe of the band or the rest of the songs. The goal was always the song. We didn't have any restricting concepts in mind when we started this."

"By 2018, the band for me had reached a point at which its approach had to change," explains Nelson, "We tried expanding the lineup for the last year of that period. But the new material we were doing was misguided on my part."

"The first new song I wrote for this record was 'Prime Time is Over.' I had just bought Apple Logic. And that song felt like a new direction for me. There's some prog rock elements, but it's really funky, too. The studio flourishes are mostly Manuel's. I tried to bring a variety of guitar sounds, and he and Kyle were enthusiastic about that."

"As for compositional diversity," Nelson continues, "it felt pretty normal to do it that way. There wasn't any angst about it that I remember. Once we agreed on that approach, we were freer to absorb everything. If all you write is songs for people to sing, then every melody has to be singable. If that's not a consideration, then many more types of melodies are possible."

In order to represent the material live, NEQ has added several players, including ubiquitous keyboard whiz Ross Rice, who plays several memorable parts on *Nevertheless*, and the producer and veteran guitarist Danny Blume.

"It's been really great having Danny and Ross for the live shows," says Nelson. "They have the technique to do required parts and the imagination to solo and put their own stamp on things."

NEQ's *Nevertheless* is available at all online outlets, and the band is currently gearing up for some spring dates.

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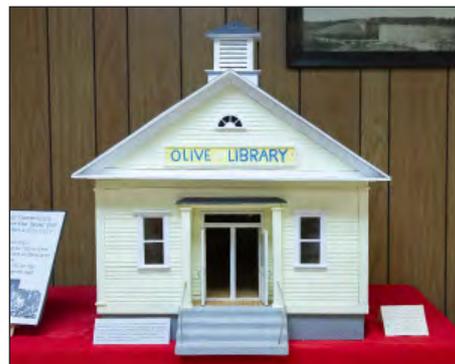
What a boon in our often overstimulating world!

by Violet Snow

WALKING THROUGH THE lobby, glancing up at its ornate rotunda ceiling, and entering the central room of the Adriance Memorial Library in Poughkeepsie, the first thing I noticed was the embracing hush. If you're seeking calm, there's nothing like the focused quiet of a library, and the Hudson Valley abounds in libraries, each one different, expressing the unique character



Olive Free Library.



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

of its city, town or hamlet. At Adriance, I broke the silence by tell-

ing the librarian at the desk, in as quiet a voice as I could manage, that I had memories of walking down a flagstone path to the back door where the children's books were located. "Oh yes, I remember that, too," she nodded. The children's room is now on the second floor, and its previous spot was incorporated into the main part of the building during one of its modernizations. Libraries change over time, and this splendid Classical Revival building has been open to the public since 1898, so it's undergone several renovations.

As one of the largest libraries in the region, Adriance has lots of stacks to browse, an under-appreciated pleasure, I find, in the days of online search and the immensely useful "hold" system. Not that I don't appreciate having access to over 1.3 million books available in the Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS), but there's nothing like touching and peeking into physical books as you search for the one you want.

Library services are changing, as we learned when the Phoenicia Library (in my present home town) was rebuilt after a devastating fire in 2010. The community so loved its library that several years of fundraising pulled together enough money to completely redesign and rebuild the structure, following guidelines based on the needs of modern patrons. When I first walked into the spanking new building, I was impressed by the



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Welcome to Gaby Lane set atop Hunter Village. Sold move-in ready and includes the adjacent buildable lot! This one-of-a-kind Adirondack style home is exquisite featuring awe-inspiring panoramic views of Hunter Mountain and beyond. The sophisticated bright interior is filled with beautiful wooden accents, high ceilings, meticulous décor, and abundant natural light. With three bedrooms and three full baths this home is designed for beauty & function, perfect for entertaining & everyday living! The fully equipped kitchen features polished granite countertops and plenty of workspace. After a day of adventure, cozy up by the heating stove in the great room with cathedral ceilings. Enjoy your meals in the dining room by the fire; followed by a relaxing evening on the deck accompanied by a bright starry night sky. Downstairs, you'll find a large family room with a billiards table and ample seating for a fun night in. Great investment!

Located across the street from Hunter Mountain and 2 hours to NYC.

MLS #140956 | \$1,250,000



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environmentally sustainable materials and energy-saving heat-pump regulation, a handsome circulation desk made of warm reddish-brown wood, a bank of new computers, a separate room for Phoenicia’s unique collection of books on fly fishing, and a large, bright activity room, perfect for the programs which are more and more in demand.

But to my surprise, there were no stacks. Instead of rows of bookcases in the middle of the rooms, all the walls were neatly lined with books, leaving space for study tables and the set-up of chairs for event seating.

The modern library’s role has increasingly extended to digital and social needs. With the sophisticated hold system, it’s easy to get a book from any MHLS library. In fact, the online catalog is much easier to search than the old card catalog. With no need to jot down Dewey’s organizing decimals, you just pop in a search term, and away you go. You don’t even have to leave your house, except to pick up the book when it arrives at the library in a couple of days. The catalog includes a description of each book, so although you can’t look behind the covers, it does resemble browsing.

With this efficient book distribution system, the building itself turns to other functions. At Phoenicia, you can check out a fishing rod or a ukulele. (Other locations with ukes include Olive, Ulster, Marlboro, Beacon, East Fishkill, and Chatham). As at many other libraries, in Phoenicia, you can consult with an expert about taxes or Medicare, and

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“By the way, you can get a library card if you live in the region full-time or own a second home. Just bring proof of address to your local library, and you’ll be set up.”

All libraries scaled back their activities during the pandemic, but some gatherings, such as writing classes, were moved online. As in other fields, the magic of Zoom continues to make such meetings accessible to a wider range of people than

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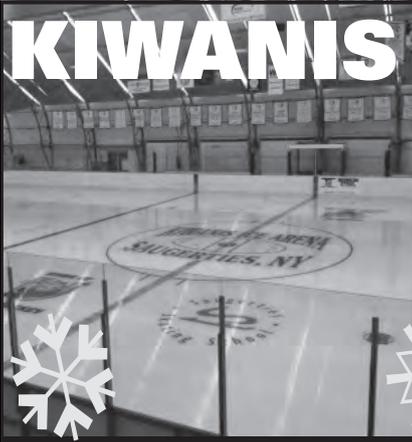
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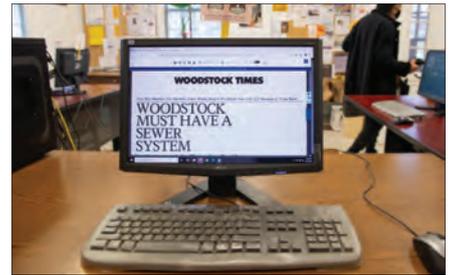
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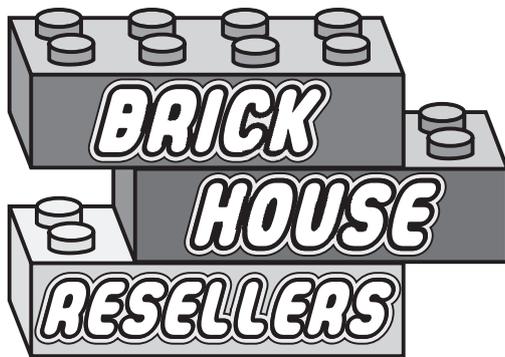
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ilities also lend out audiobooks, music CDs, and films on DVD. If you don't have a computer, or yours is on the fritz, the library's desktop computers are available for public use. Library websites offer connection to online resources from eBooks to language courses, for anyone with a library card.

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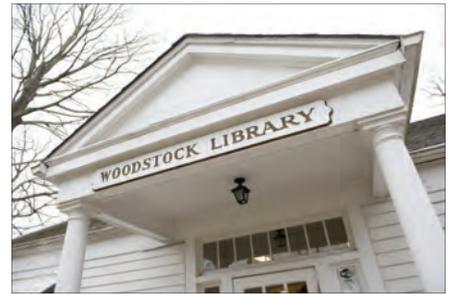
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dress to your local library, and you'll be set up. Public gatherings and activities, of course, do not require a card but are open to all.

If you have a hankering for stacks, most

libraries still have them. The Woodstock Library is unique because of its extensive collection of art books, a result of its history as a colony of the arts and its continued hospitality to artists. There's



The Woodstock Library, inside and out.

also a series of readings and lectures known as the Woodstock Library Forum.

The Stone Ridge Library is one of my favorites, reflecting vividly the history of the town. The Hasbrouck family home- stead was built in 1798 and turned into a public library in 1909. The architecture includes a two-section Dutch door, a pair of original fireplaces, and details of hardware and woodwork that date to the house's construction. There's even a room devoted to local genealogy.

At the Olive Free Library, just south of the Ashokan Reservoir, the base- ment contains a large meeting room. I have been there to see plays (such as a production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*), to hear classical piano concerts, and to attend community meetings about local issues.

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installed a hive behind glass in a back corner of the main-floor book room. Tubes communicated with the outdoors, so the bees could come and go, while visitors watched the hive activity through the glass. I don't know how many librarians would have the nerve to set up a bee colony in their building.

For kids and parents, the local library is an extremely valuable resource. It doesn't take long to read a picture book, so it's great to have a steady supply of new books. Many libraries offer story time, in which another person reads to your kids; play groups that give moms social time too; and craft activities. On a rainy day there is no better place to be — for adults as well as for children.

Although some library activities are interactive and noisy, there's always a room where you can go if you have a craving for quiet. What a boon in our often overstimulating world!



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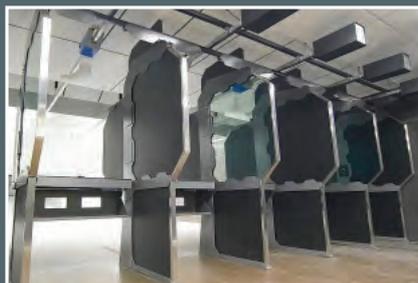
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