

## savannah's colorful palette of

# emerging artists

story by meaghan walsh

photos by christine hall & geoff l. johnson

Savannah may not quite be a bustling hub of avant garde galleries, all-night philosopher cafes and screaming underground punk, but a lot more creative energy than meets the eye is sitting just below the surface in this port city.

The early days brought sailors, tradesmen, merchants, scalawags, immigrants and planters. Today, Savannah is still attracting a wide range of artists, musicians and craftsmen. We spoke to just a few of them who are on track to show everyone else what Savannah is made of.

### Lauren LaPointe

A self-proclaimed "eastern Canadian," Lauren LaPointe came to Savannah on vacation to meet up with a friend. She ended up meeting her future husband, and eight months later she was living here. For the first three years, it was typical day-job, but "I was exposed to people who were working in a creative field. That was new for me. And life is too short not to try."

The too-familiar cry of a lack of a thriving music scene was somewhat of a blessing for LaPointe. She found herself in a smaller place where she could be heard. Now she tours full-time, an accomplishment she finds satisfying.

LaPointe has a refreshing view on being a performer. She says, "Your role is to entertain them. It's not all about you. I have to reach a balance of expressing myself and resonating with the audience." Her music is always in flux.

She sings and plays acoustic guitar now but has a "million different ideas," which may include a band someday. Her newest CD, "Butterfly," presents a mix of styles including folk, country, blues and pop rock.

"I just don't want to limit myself. I'll just see where it takes me."  
[www.lauren1.com](http://www.lauren1.com)

PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]



LaPointe





**Jim Reed**

Probably best known in Savannah as the music editor of *Corbett Savannah*, a Charles Morris product, Jim Reed claims his true interest is not any one art form but instead playing a role in helping people enjoy their lives, whether it's in art, music or film. His first love was film, and he briefly pursued a career in it until he became disillusioned with much of the politics surrounding it. Although, he said, "As time has gone by, ironically, now there are aspects I like better."

He began the Psychotronic Film Society when he perceived a void in the cultural offerings of Savannah. "It's war around to see

if someone fills it. But I realize that no one will, I feel obligated to do it."

He is always on the outp of some "cockamamie scheme," like bringing films to Savannah that are unlikely to have been seen by anyone here unless it was at home on his/her couch. The Psychotronic Film Society is "designed to combat the DVD culture of sitting at home."

Reed arranges screenings of odd, outish and basically unseen (sometimes almost unwatchable) films in public venues.

Sometimes he goes for really good films that never made it to wide release; other times he goes for dreadful movies that have no business appearing in a public setting (until now, perhaps). Either way, he says, "I look for things that are really good examples of whatever they are. They haven't been test-marketed. They are uncompromised. ... Let's say bizarre films that fall between the genres."

Films are screened every Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the Serrano Bean cafe. Special screenings occasionally are held at the Jepson Center for the Arts and The Lucas Theatre. [www.mysticx.com/psychotronicfilms](http://www.mysticx.com/psychotronicfilms)

**Bottles & Cars**

This bluesy funk band has been together and performing full-time in Savannah since 2004.

Bottles & Cars' sound is not easy to define. "It's a good time. It's not uptown, B.B. King," from man Ray Lundy said. "I compare it more to that Delta sound, a brutal sound. But if you like blues, it's accessible."

The band tries to go back to some older songs that have gotten lost along the way — and then add ideas and expand upon them. "There's such a rich library that never gets used," Lundy said.

The band is made up of Mike Walker, a bassist for more than 20 years and an artist with "endless imagination," according to Lundy. Jason "Noodles" Gecik has been played drums since he was little. Lundy is the guitarist and singer who isn't what people expect. "I just don't look the way I sound," he said. Harmonica player Marty Ellis is a veteran, who is now a firefighter/EMT. Lundy said the four of them really love what they do, and "we entertain ourselves. We encourage, push each other. We don't even need to speak in full sentences."

The band can be seen all over town, and all they need in order to play is for the doors to be open. They continue to play as much as possible. Lundy said the only thing they haven't done yet is record a CD.

"I can't complain about anything." And, he grins, "I see us going a lot further."

[www.bottlesandcars.com](http://www.bottlesandcars.com)



BOBBI L. JOHNSON



## emerging artists

### Peter and Quynh Shannon

Peter and Quynh Shannon are a formidable pair in the stabilizing classical music scene in Savannah.

Quynh is originally from Vietnam, where she began her piano studies in an unusual way. "Near my kindergarten there was a music studio. I would run out of class down the street to listen to them playing."

When her father found out about her escapades, he bought her an old French piano, and she took lessons at that same studio for a time. Her professional abilities landed her in Karlsruhe, Germany, in an orchestra recently given to Peter to conduct.

Peter, originally from Cork, Ireland, gave up pursuing a singing career when he realized he wanted to conduct. He was accepted at the Franz List-founded Weimar Conservatory, just after the Berlin Wall came down.

"It was a very Russian school," he said. After graduating with a degree, he went on to do his post-graduate studies in Karlsruhe, where he was given the task of conducting and being the artistic director of Collegium Musicum in Heidelberg, where he stayed for 10 years.

He was only 26 when he took on the daunting task of improving the

offerings of the oldest university in Germany (the third founded by the Holy Roman Empire in 1386). For 10 years he worked with the symphony and chorus — and met and eventually married Quynh.

But the Shannons are not the type to sit still for very long. "There is a need in me to always be pushing myself," Peter said. He is busy here developing the Savannah Choral Society. "I was attracted by an organization that was interested in moving up a rung. And they give me carte blanche to do what I do best."

He insists that Savannah has such a great historical reputation that he feels "a warmth and needs a parallel in the classical music agenda."

Peter's accomplishments in his short time in America include a more than sold-out performance of "Elijah," performed at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist last fall, and a nearly sold-out performance of the opera "La Traviata" at the Lucas Theatre in April, proving there was more than enough talent and energy to sustain classical offerings.

Both were met with considerable acclaim, as were Quynh's solo recitals. So far she has done five in Savannah and says it's going well. "The only difference," she said, "is that in Germany, it is always full. Always. Here it is really difficult to get people to come to a concert."

But the Shannons have done quite a job getting Savannahians out of the house and experiencing an exciting aspect of music, and Quynh's philosophy in life supports that: "Never do anything that you hate."

[www.savannahchoralsociety.org](http://www.savannahchoralsociety.org)

[www.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.uni-heidelberg.de)

CHRISTINE HALL





### David Sherriff

Users meeting this energetic and spontaneous young man, it is hard to imagine him not bounding his way across a stage.

David Sherriff's theatrical career began when his family moved down the Eastern seaboard. He knew no one at his new school, and his parents encouraged him to become involved in the drama department. He auditioned in seventh grade and requested to have a small part, insisting he was only becoming involved to meet people. He was granted his request, but when the lead dropped out one weekend of the show, he was asked to fill in.

"I realized I'm comfortable up there, and I like playing off a live audience." His hallmark has become his physical prowess — stage combat and physical comedy. He has attended national workshops to hone his skills in the craft of making the audience "afraid for the character, not the actor." In terms of physical comedy, he feels it is something he used enough. "It makes sense to me. It is a tool to tell the story."

His most recent achievement was a performance of the one-man show "21A," in which he played eight different characters. He chose it because it "was a challenge. I don't think I'm that good at monologues." The play calls for several quick changes, distinct personalities and a layered, unfolding plot. All of this requires a gravity of presence and a shift touch at the same time, both of which he managed brilliantly.

Sherriff realizes the daunting task ahead of him — having a job in the arts. But he is optimistic, and he encourages people "to see more theater and arts. The more they come, the more — and the better — product we can bring them."



### Tracy Clark

Tracy Clark was 5 years old when she began doing unusual things with yarn.

"I would play with it, tying endless knots together. I'd cover up books and make pom-poms," she laughed. Her first lesson was from a neighbor three doors down who knew how to make granny squares. "That's all I knew how to do."

Her interest in fibers was set aside for music for many years, before she moved to Savannah from Cleveland.

"A couple of years before I moved, I went into a knit store, and they told me it takes one-third the amount of yarn to knit versus crocheting, and I sat there while they showed me. Of course, I forgot my lessons by the time I got here and had to start over."

Clark's relearned process may be what makes her pieces so unique. She didn't have the patience to translate the patterns, so she made up her own. Then she discovered needle felt — a process that adheres shrunken felt to wool pieces — and that has become her obsession. Clark likens it to painting with the needle, and she said, "I do exactly what the instructions tell me not to, to get my own effect."

This fall, Clark will be featured on HGTV's "That's Clever." Her works reflect an innate artistic sensibility. Clark does custom and commissioned items as well and insists for her it's all about the art. "It's my need to create something. It used to be music. Now I use color and shape. You can paint with fibers."

[www.tracyclarksavannah.com](http://www.tracyclarksavannah.com)





## emerging artists

### Tom Coleman III

Originally from Savannah, Tom Coleman III's foray into the theater dates back to building sets and props, "just to help out a friend" in high school, but it seems he never was able to shake the bug. He attended college to become an English teacher, but within six months he was ensconced in the drama department. From there he ran the Little Theatre of Savannah and The Young People's Theatre before heading north to run the Athens Creative Theatre for 20 years.

"I was getting ready to retire in Athens, and I thought, mistakenly, there was nothing going on here in the community theater scene. I got back, and people started popping up."

He is now the executive director of Savannah Community Theatre, which produces primarily repertory pieces throughout the year. They also have a weekly murder-mystery dinner show at the Prater House, "Who Wants to Kill A Millionaire?"

Coleman admits that it may seem as though he has a fixed company, but he encourages people who are interested in auditioning to do so. "We prefer to put a couple of seasoned actors on stage with a few new ones until they become the seasoned ones. But it's not a closed thing."

Next year the theater plans on expanding its season to have at least four shows outside of its home venue on Victory Drive.

Coleman stresses the importance that community theater can provide.

"For me, it was a place to go in the evenings. I felt like I was a part of something. I got a family and lifelong acquaintances out of it."

[www.savannahcommunitytheatre.com](http://www.savannahcommunitytheatre.com)

### Paul Tilley

Paul Tilley's most recent notoriety has come from a stellar performance as Frank in "The Rocky Horror Show," which was staged by Cardinal Repertory Theatre (formerly known as Savannah Actor's Theatre) in October and reprised at the Lucas Theatre in February. Yet his ability to walk in 5-inch-heeled, thigh-high boots, get his hair to stand up on end (making him more than 7 feet tall, tip-toe) and to make every girl jealous of his figure in a corset is only one area of talent.

His primary artistic skill lays in animation. He has been drawing since he was a little kid but didn't get into acting until high school.

"I think that's why I like animation. It is drawing acting." He points out that animation literally means "to give life to." He says of his characters, "It's a weird but cool feeling to watch it come to life. It seems to be acting and thinking on its own."

His current project is his senior thesis at the Savannah College of Art and Design, called "Window Pains," which he wrote based on a character he created for a 3-D animation class several quarters ago (it features an older man dealing with his computer frustrations).

After graduation, he plans to send his short films to festivals and apply for jobs at animation studios big and small. But, he says, "In my spare time, I would like to keep doing independent theater. I don't want to let it go."

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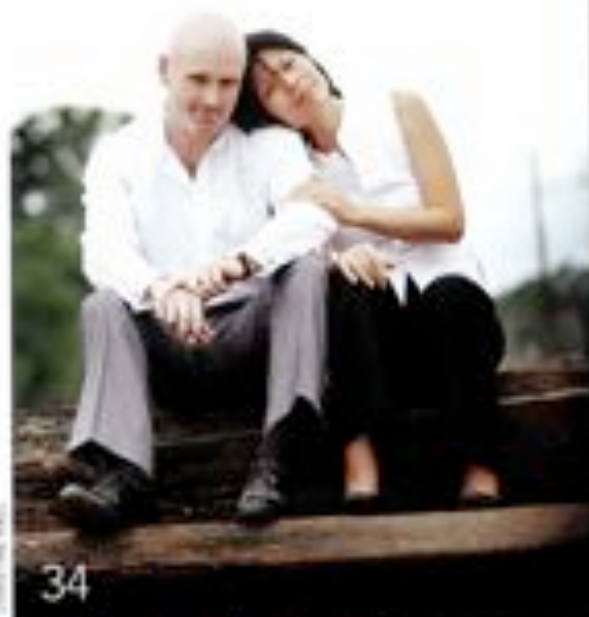
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Local photographers and artists provide pet portraits as valuable mementoes of our furry and feathered family friends.



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In only 31 years of existence, the Savannah College of Art and Design has become the largest art school in the United States and has energized Savannah's Historic District in the process. The college has given new life to more than 50 old buildings; has been the impetus for the establishment of numerous galleries and shops; and has brought to town a plethora of cultural programs, presentations and festivals.

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While growing up, Erik Puljung dreamed of being an architect and living at the beach. Today he works for Hansen Architects and delights in entertaining family and friends at the circa-1940s Tybee Island cottage that he lovingly restored.