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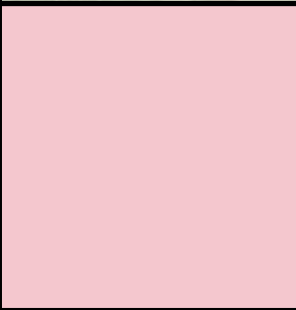
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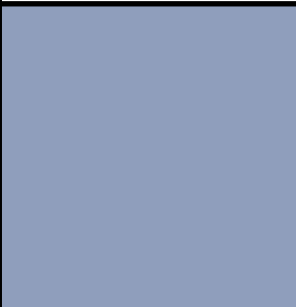
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# Seasons' Greetings



You are a jewel box with a treasure inside you. Your task, if you choose to pursue a creative existence, is to unearth that gem and go to town rejoicing in it – write the novel, restore the classic car, pack your bags and travel, or just get out there and live life with intention and curiosity. That, in a nutshell, is the message of Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Big Magic*, an inspiring (and very funny) exploration of how to quell fear and own your creativity.

Where did this bestselling author start to develop her knowledge, generosity and self-sufficiency? Right here in Connecticut. In anticipation of her appearance at the Connecticut Forum on May 13, *Seasons* examines her pastoral, local roots – and her refreshing take on creativity

– in “The Interview.”

Growth and change are hallmarks of spring, and of this edition of *Seasons*. In “Second Acts,” Theresa Anzaldúa highlights three people from our communities who have switched course and pursued rewarding mid-life careers. Ground-breaking, uplifting productions are thriving in our small-town and suburban theaters, as Lori Kase explores in “Off, Off, Off Broadway.” Personal growth can develop at the dinner table; in “Connecting With,” Theresa Sullivan Barger talks with local parents to see how they discuss issues of race and religion with their kids.

Spring means baseball and, as Len Felson shows, the sport has delightfully deep roots in Connecticut. Alycia Chrosniak, a rising star in the Instagram community, encourages us to create food-truck favorites at home. Matthew Dicks chronicles a warped sense of artistry in his essay, “Dance Recitals: The Horror and the Joy.”

*Seasons* was launched a decade ago by a Farmington Valley family who believed there was a place for a quality, local publication that explored people, places and topics that celebrate life in our communities. To this day, local illustrators, photographers, writers, designers and editors produce *Seasons* for you. We hope you’ll download the *Seasons* app and join our Facebook community. Thanks to our advertisers who have made it possible, after all these years, to bring this glossy magazine to you, free of charge.

Deb Berry, Editor



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SEASONS of the Farmington Valley™

# Spring 2016

“Despite the forecast,  
live like it's Spring.”  
– Lilly Pulitzer



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Dance Recitals: The  
Horror and the Joy

Written by **Deborah Geigis Berry**  
Photography by **Timothy Greenfield-Sanders**

The author of the bestseller, *Big Magic* tells *Seasons* how her upbringing on a Litchfield farm set the stage for a passionate, creative life

Elizabeth Gilbert believes there's treasure inside you. It could be a novel, poem or song, or a knack for gardening, raising goats, traveling or repairing things. Though some people are well-aware of their gifts, others may need to unearth them. "The hunt to uncover those jewels, that's creative living," she says in her bestseller, *Big Magic* (Riverhead Books, 2015).

Gilbert's life, indeed, has a magical quality. Her 2006 memoir, *Eat Pray Love*, about her journeys to Italy, India and Indonesia after a

## THE INTERVIEW: Elizabeth Gilbert

**CREATIVITY COACH:** In *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert encourages readers to embrace curiosity. "The clock is ticking, and the world is spinning, and we simply do not have time anymore to think so small," she writes.



divorce, has been translated into 30 languages, spawned a wave of spiritual tourism, and became a movie starring Julia Roberts. Her many other works of nonfiction and fiction have garnered honors, including a nomination for the National Book Award. In addition to embracing her own creative gifts, she's helped others tap theirs through a TED Talk about creativity (10 million views), touring with Oprah ("The Life You Want" tour drew more than 100,000 fans), and debunking the idea that worthy art can only be made by an elite group of geniuses. "The guardians of high culture will try to convince you that the arts belong only to a chosen



few,” she writes in *Big Magic*. “But they are wrong and they are also annoying. We are all the chosen few.”

In anticipation of her May 13 appearance (she will join actor Jeffrey Tambor and choreographer/dancer Bill T. Jones on the “Creative Artists” panel) at the Connecticut Forum, at The Bushnell in Hartford, Gilbert connected with *Seasons* about her childhood in Connecticut, the value of hardcover books, and how her Facebook page has led to moments of transcendence. Gilbert, who goes by Liz, emailed answers to *Seasons*’ questions from Tasmania, and the punctuation and capitalization are hers.

**Q: You were born in Waterbury, then moved to Litchfield and graduated from Litchfield High School, class of 1987. How often do you get home for family or class reunions?**

LG: Not as much as I used to! My parents now divide their time between the family Christmas tree farm in Litchfield, and a home outside of Philadelphia, which is very close to where my sister and I live. As a result, we don’t spend as much time together as a family up in Connecticut anymore. Philly has become the tribal gathering space. But Litchfield is very much my ancestral homeland. I think you can tell what your ancestral homeland is by what place in the world you dream about the most. Litchfield, the family farm, and the woods behind our house are still the major landscape for my dreams, and probably always will be. Especially those woods. Even as child, I was aware of a sense of that these New England woods were very beautiful, with their overgrown old stone walls, and babbling creeks. It always felt sort of mythic. I remember having a sense even as a ten-year-old that I was lucky to be surrounded by such loveliness and that sense has always stayed with me, no matter where I end of traveling or living.

**Q: You grew up on the Litchfield Christmas tree farm Bees, Fleas & Trees, which your parents still own and operate. How did growing up on the farm impact your creativity?**

LG: The greatest gift I ever had as a creative person was to have been raised by independent-thinking, independent-acting makers. My parents decided in 1973 that they wanted to move away from the suburbs and back to the land, and they created a life for themselves and their children that was everything that they dreamed — a big garden, a small farm, goats, chickens, beehives, and an old farmhouse that they renovated by hand. They didn’t ask anyone’s permission to do this; they just did it. And what I think was the best example for me was that they didn’t quit their day jobs to do all this. My dad still worked full time as an engineer, and my mother still worked part time as a nurse. They honored their financial



**WAY BACK WHEN:** Elizabeth, her sister, Catherine, and her parents, Carole and John Gilbert, at their Litchfield farm. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Gilbert

responsibilities by keeping their official careers, but in their free time, they created the world that they wanted to live in. It wasn’t easy; running a farm is a lot of work, but they loved it — and that love and passion gave them the energy they needed to create the life they wanted. What I grew up seeing was this lesson: What you do for a living does not have to be the same thing as what you do for a LIFE. It’s completely possible to both make a living in the real world and craft a creative and individualistic life for yourself in a dream world — side-by-side. Pragmatism and imagination are not enemies to each other, but natural partners in a kind of thinking that takes into account the fullness of what it means to be a human being. This is why I was never afraid to go out in the world and try to become a writer. When people asked me, “But how will you make a living?”, my answer was, “By having a job, of course.” I knew that writing didn’t have to pay my way in the world in order for it to become the most important thing in my life. What my parents taught me was that, as long as you are meeting your responsibilities in the real world, and keeping a roof over your head, what you do in your own time is nobody’s business but your own — and you can be just as wildly, independently free as your imagination and discipline will let you be.

**Q: Your parents promoted your development as a self-sufficient, independent thinker. You didn’t have a TV in the house, you bound your own books, and you washed your hair in a rain barrel. How can parents raising kids today in today’s screen-oriented, couch-potato climate help their kids tap their creativity?**

LG: I don’t have children myself, but a wise and creative


parent I know told me this, "Children will never listen to what you tell them, but they can't help imitating what you show them." Your children will most likely become, in other words, whatever you model to them. If you model couch-potato behavior to them, you will create future couch-potatoes. It doesn't do much good to tell your kids that they aren't allowed to spend their whole lives with their faces buried in an electronic screen, if you always have your own face buried in an electronic screen. It's the same thing I feel when I see women worrying about their daughters' body-image issues, but the mothers themselves are constantly dieting, constantly worrying about their own appearance, constantly comparing themselves against impossible ideals. Of course the daughters will see that, and imitate it...and this is how it spreads. If you want confident daughters, you have to show them what a confident woman looks like. If you want creative children, you have to show them what a creative adult looks like. My sister and I both became makers because our parents were makers. So the bigger question to me is not, "How do we help children tap into their creativity?", but "How do we help adults tap into their creativity?" If the adults are doing it, the children will follow – whatever it is. They won't be able to help themselves, except to follow.

 **A favorite book from your childhood, a 1784**

**edition of Captain Cook's *Voyages Round the World*, inspired your novel, *The Signature of All Things*. Why was Cook's book so magical to you? In an era of e-books, does a home library filled with hardcover books have a role?**

LG: I read e-books myself (as a traveler, it's HEAVEN not to have to pack a suitcase full of hardcover volumes) but there really is nothing like the magic of a gorgeous old book. I was lucky enough to grow up in a house with a lot of them. My great-grandfather had been an amateur book collector (he was constantly broke or in debt, but at least he always had books!) and that 1784 collection of Captain Cook was one volume that we inherited. It was the most valuable object in our house, always kept on a high shelf, away from little hands. So of course, my sister and I were constantly sneaking glimpses at it, the way a child would naturally do with any forbidden object. It was a fascinating book – full of incredible 18th century drawings of maps, strange plants, and aboriginal people. We couldn't stay away from it. So of course, forty years later, I ended up writing a novel that begins with Cook's voyages ... it all circles around eventually.

 **You've mastered many forms of communication, from Twitter and Podcasts to TED talks and old-school novel writing. There's**




**ELIZABETH GILBERT -**  
**LIZARD GEEKBERT**

Let me tell you... JEN... ABBY... FWANK  
NATHAN... SUE... DENISE... LENOX FOLK... IAN  
ROB AND JON... AMY... "SHE'S DEAD NOW"... CYG  
EXCUSE ME, MR. BAT... "IS THAT HOLY WATER?...  
FORCA... UNCLE MUWWEY... SAFETY PUP SAYS...  
DOVE... YALE... ROW 4... THE WILTONS... GUIDING  
A-MAZ-ING... MICHELLE AND MARSHA... FROM 85:  
YOUR FINGERS ARE GROWING SHORTER... MR. BUCKLIN  
MERCEDES... TERRY... THE WILSONS... CONCERTS...  
"I COULD VIC DAT?"... THE THOUGHT CREW:  
JENNY Z., GIVE ME A "FA", IMPROVS W/ NATE,  
JEN, DENISE AND PETE...  
WINKIN' PINK... BOWL O' MEAT

TURIP... SAL... USSR: TWIST AND SHOUT TOUR... A-MAZ-ING...  
SHAKE AND BAKE STEAK ROASTS... STUMBLIN' IN... K-MART W/  
BIG B... YES THEY DID... RAMBOING AND THE MAD BIKER... HAVE  
ANOTHER... SCRUMPING... LIMPID... NICE LANGUAGE... RHULLEY?...  
CLAMATO (I'M GLAD EVERYONE'S GLAD)... BUELL RD. HORROR MOVIES...  
FRANKLIN'S TOWER... D.C. DEAD-DYLAN... CSN... ALL RIGHT...  
MR. FRED... TALKING HEADS... JCS: ROB... NYC EXCURSIONS...  
"DENISE, I THINK JEN WANTS TO GO HOME"... OH, PLEASE... I'm  
PRETTY... PIZZA, POTATOES, PASTA AND POPCORN... LOOSE LIFTER...  
MOM AND POP: THE REAL, LIVE X-MAS TREE GROWERS... OH HI. No REALLY.

OH, WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG DID YOU QUESTION ALL THE ANSWERS?  
CSN




**CLASS OF 1987:** Gilbert's Litchfield High School yearbook write-up reveals an inquiring mind.  
Courtesy of Oliver Wolcott Library, Litchfield




**a special place in your heart for your Facebook community, who you thank in your new book, *Big Magic*. Tell us about your Facebook forum.**


LG: I resisted social media for a long time, because I tend to be a “last adapter” of all new technologies. It’s not that I’m a snob about these things, but that I just feel like a dummy, when I don’t understand how things work. But about three years ago, I was finally convinced by my publisher to start a Facebook page, and it has honestly become one of the most important touchstones of my life. I’d had this misconception that social media was a place of bullying and dumbed-down conversations, but that’s only true if you make it true. (After all, the Internet is nothing but US, writ large.) What I discovered on my Facebook page was a gathering of sensitive, intelligent readers — mostly women — who wanted to talk about real things, day after day. I’ve fallen in love with that community, and it’s a big part of my life now to ponder quite seriously every day the question, “What should we discuss right now?” One of my favorite things is to get a conversation going about some real-world, challenging emotional or social issue, and then see how the conversation blossoms throughout the day on Facebook, as more and more voices chime in — adding wisdom, perspective, and grace from all over the world. It’s beautiful, and it’s a means of communication that never could have occurred even ten years ago. I’m honored to be part of it.

** In *Big Magic*, you present the idea that a gifted person is not a genius, but has a genius — “a guardian deity....the conduit of your inspiration.” How does one know where their genius is speaking to them?**


LG: I think our geniuses speak to us through our curiosity. Curiosity is such an underrated virtue, especially in a society that has made a fetish out of more grandiose words, like “passion” and “certainty”. Curiosity is a quieter impulse. If passion is the great burning tower of flame on the mountaintop, curiosity is a tiny tap on the shoulder, gently asking you to turn your head a quarter of an inch and look a wee bit closer at some almost-invisible thing that has caught your attention. It’s so easy to ignore these tiny impulses — especially when you are searching for passion or certainty — but I believe that the creative journeys almost always begin with such miniature hints. It’s a whisper; not a great booming voice like Charlton Heston’s. For me, my sacred commitment to creativity means never ignoring those tiny hints, and to trust that — no matter how strange and random — my curiosity is always trying to tell me something, always trying to communicate the next move.

** It’s been 10 years since the publication of *Eat Pray Love*. Do you plan to mark the anniversary in any particular way?**


LG: Funnily enough, I am answering these questions on the exact day [February 16] of the anniversary of publication! And I’m doing it in the back of a car that’s traveling across Tasmania. I’ve been in Australia for the last month, and I’ve been seeing all sorts of amazing corners of this part of the world that I’ve never seen before. So I guess you could say that I’m honoring the anniversary by continuing the journey — by still seeking out new adventures. But the really cool (and more public) tribute is what my publisher is doing to honor the anniversary. They’re publishing a wonderful new anthology called *EAT PRAY LOVE MADE ME DO IT*, in which people all over the world shared their stories about what *EAT PRAY LOVE* inspired them to change about their lives. The book will be published in March, and I can’t wait for it. It was such a moving experience to read those essays, and to see the impact that my book had on people’s own senses of what might be possible for transformation in their own lives.

** You’ve traveled all over the world — any places you haven’t been to yet that you want to visit?**


LG: It seems like the more I travel, the bigger the world becomes — in other words, the more places it seems I HAVEN’T seen. Next up on the list are Wales, Scotland, South Africa, Iceland, Japan...oh, the list will never end!

** In spring, what kind of plants are you most thrilled to see sprout in your garden at home in Frenchtown, NJ?**

LG: There’s nothing like the glimpse of the first snowdrops to make you feel like winter has, once again, been survived.

** In this issue, we’re running a story about second acts. If you decided to stop writing for whatever reason, what would you do instead?**

LG: Can a person make a career somehow out of karaoke? If so, that’s my next move.

For tickets to “Creative Artists: An Evening with Storytellers, Creators and Entertainers” on May 13 at the Connecticut Forum, go to [www.ctforum.org](http://www.ctforum.org). The event will begin at 8 p.m. at The Bushnell. For more about Liz Gilbert, go to [www.elizabethgilbert.com](http://www.elizabethgilbert.com). 

*Deborah Geigis Berry is editor of Seasons.*

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2014  
WINNER  
10 YEARS  
IN A ROW!**



# A Spectacular Makeover is in the Works for Farmington's Village Green

The Farmington Garden Club Invites  
One and All to Its "Outdoor Celebrations" Fundraiser

Written by **Theresa Anzaldúa**

**F**armington residents have endured years of heavy traffic and construction delays while going through town on Route 4. As we jockey for position at the intersection at Route 10, we can take a peak at our Village Green, but there's not much to it. During the holidays, three lighted pine trees and a menorah can be seen from the road, but the green has the potential for so much more. Thanks to a movement spearheaded by the Farmington Garden Club, the two-acre green, owned by the non-profit Farmington Village Green and Library Association (FVGCLA), is going to be transformed into a visually prominent, beautiful park, all with private funding.

The Garden Club is working on the project's beginning stages with Lisa Johnson, Executive Director of Stanley-Whitman House, which is also owned by the FVGCLA and oversees the Village Green.

Plans for the makeover are kicking off with the Garden Club's fundraiser, "Outdoor Celebrations," on June 10 and 11. The event's co-chairs are Kathy Lindroth and Ann Mullen.

The fundraiser's self-guided tour includes three home gardens in the village, two on Old Mountain Road and three in Devonwood, as well as two boutiques selling plants and home and garden products. The June 9 preview party at Farmington Gardens includes an auction, cocktails and bites to eat. Gather up some friends, enjoy the events, and once Route 4 is widened and you breeze through the Route 10 intersection, you can remember that you played a part in transforming the Village Green.

The Farmington Garden Club celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this year. The Club is very active and eagerly welcomes new members. For more information about the Club or for tickets to Outdoor Celebrations, call 860-409-0610. Tour tickets are \$25 in advance and Preview Party tickets are \$75. ■





A SEASONS ROUNDTABLE

# Talking to Children about Race and Religion

Parents from *Seasons'* readership area break bread together to discuss how they talk to their children about racial injustice, political rhetoric and religious intolerance

**SHARING PERSPECTIVES:** Journalist Theresa Sullivan Barger (far right) met with panelists at the Avon Old Farms Hotel. They include (clockwise from Barger's right) Florence Hull, Ola Ghoneim, Mike Meheran, Dave Peniston and Chaker Dridi.



## MEET THE PANEL:

**Chaker Dridi**, of West Hartford, a world language teacher at Avon High School, was born in Tunisia and has lived in five countries. He has lived in West Hartford since moving to the U.S. 18 years ago with his American wife and obtained his citizenship in 2001. A founding member of the Farmington Valley American Muslim Center, he and his wife have two sons, 11 and 14.

**Ola Ghoneim**, of Avon, assistant professor at the University of Saint Joseph School of Pharmacy, is married with 17- and 20-year-old sons. Born in Egypt, she has lived in three states in the U.S. and serves on the Board of Trustees for the Farmington Valley American Muslim Center, Inc. in Avon.

**Florence Hull**, of Glastonbury, a vice president with HSBC Bank in New York City, is divorced with two sons, 17 and 10, and a daughter, 7. She has lived in more than 20 countries and moved to the U.S. two years ago. Hull, who is Christian, is a member of the Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative.

**Mike Meheran**, of Canton, a maintenance worker at Hartford Hospital, is married with three daughters, ages 25, 22 and 17, and a son, 21. He is Roman Catholic and his wife is Jewish.

**Dave Peniston**, of Glastonbury, a workers compensation auditor with Travelers, is married with a 17-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son. A Christian, he is a member of the Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative.

**Moderator Theresa Sullivan Barger**, a freelance journalist, lives in Canton. She and her husband have two sons, 24 and 17, and a daughter, 21.

**O**n Dec. 3, 2015, a sold-out crowd attended the Connecticut Forum's discussion at The Bushnell in Hartford about race and racism. By the end of the evening, moderator Michele Norris still had many questions for the panelists – civil rights advocate Morris Dees, author Wes Moore, former Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and actress Jessica Williams – and encouraged attendees to continue the discussion in their communities. In this story, *Seasons* follows through on that idea by hosting a roundtable for parents in our readership area. Theresa Sullivan Barger, a longtime reporter and Canton resident who attended the Forum, led the discussion, at Seasons Restaurant in Avon. The two-hour exchange, held on Feb. 6, has been edited for clarity, cohesion and space.

**S:** What are some of the events in the news that have started conversations with you and your children, that you use as teaching moments to get the conversation going about racism and Islamophobia?

**DRIDI:** Actually, [Donald] Trump was a trigger, what he said. He came out swinging against Mexicans, after that against Muslims, and it triggered fear, especially with my older one. I kept telling him that '[Trump] is looking for the Republican nomination. He doesn't even represent 50 percent of the United States,' so that calmed his fears.

**GHONEIM:** I always tell my son there are good people and bad people in every race, religion, group and ethnicity. So having ISIS claim they are the Islamic State, that's their claim. Nobody voted for them. Number-wise, how many are they and how many Muslims are there in the world? So we're having bad people in the news all the time because bad people usually [make] the news and good people don't. I told him there are billions and billions of Muslims out there. There are very good Muslims, so be a role model and this will speak for itself.

**HULL:** Here, after the Ferguson crisis, [in which a white police officer fatally shot a black, unarmed teenager,] I sat my oldest son down and said, 'You have to understand you're different.' He said, 'Well, I don't feel different.' I feel like it's my job as mom to make sure that he understands the danger that he is in. I do actually feel he's in danger because society will not wait for him to explain himself. So I take full

**'You must be conscious every single minute of what you're doing. You must choose to do the right thing every day. You can't afford to be silly. You can't afford to make a stupid mistake because you might not get another chance.'** – Florence Hull

responsibility to educate my child and say to him, 'You must be conscious every single minute of what you're doing. You must choose to do the right thing every day. You can't afford to be silly. You can't afford to make a stupid mistake because you might not get another chance.'

**PENISTON:** My son had a very similar play [pellet] gun like that poor black kid in Cleveland [Tamir Rice, 12, was fatally shot by police less than two seconds after they responded to a 911 call of a black male with a gun in a park]. After burglaries [in Peniston's neighborhood,] the police were knocking on doors. My son, who was 12 at the time, was playing around [in the house] with the toy gun. I had to tell him, 'Put that away.' Unfortunately, with minority youth, we don't get the benefit of the doubt. My kids know that there are good and bad people in all walks, police officers too. They just know that the police, their main job is to protect and to just get home safely. If I look at both sides of the situation, for example, the Ferguson situation, some of my black friends got upset with me because I went back and looked at the Ferguson story where they actually interviewed black people. There were like eight or nine that said the police officer did do everything he could. Sometimes there are certain situations where you're dealing with a bad kid. Now, does he deserve to be shot? No. The one thing that I tell my kids is you have to use respect and if you don't respect police, you're not going to get that benefit of the doubt that other groups might get.

**S:** **Mike, you mentioned that you didn't know what to say to your elementary-school age children after 9/11, when they asked why al-Qaeda militants attacked the U.S. You said that, in the years since, you've tried to educate yourself and learn about other faiths and cultures. How have you done that?**

**MEHERAN:** My wife actually started a committee, a 'faith club' she called it. I didn't know what the Muslim faith was about. I knew what the Catholic faith was about. I did not know much about Judaism either. She had a Jewish person, a Muslim and a Catholic lady come over to our house and have lunch every week. The similarities are unbelievable. Our discussions at our table were more like, 'Why did [al-Qaeda] do that?' Hitler was white, and look what he did. Idi Amin was black, and look what he did. That's what I try to stress to my kids. Our conversations are, 'There are just bad people and bad thinking.' My point is the more you know about it, the less fear you have. My discussion with my family is, 'Just keep an open mind.'

**GHONEIM:** I call it lack of knowledge, lack of awareness. We need to know more about each other. I love, in this country, the diversity. Take a snapshot any time from any angle. You are going to see people from all over the world.

**S:** **Chaker, you're an immigrant who came to the U.S. in 1998 and became a citizen in 2001. What has your journey been like when it comes to feeling like you are welcome and understood in the United States?**

**DRIDI:** I share what Flo feels regarding police [racial profiling] behavior when I'm going through the custom service at the airport. You feel that you are different. I mean, they make you go through the hoops. They look at you. They make you slide your passport again. Flo, you are telling your children you are different. You are a mother, so you are moving to protect your children. I feel the same way. My job as a father is to protect my children, but also knowing that they're going to have a life here in this country. So I ask them to claim America as much as anyone else because deep down, they don't feel anything but American.

**S:** **How do you raise your children to be tolerant of various races, religions and cultures?**

**PENISTON:** I think one thing that is the benefit of your children growing up in a predominantly white town is that, in Glastonbury, and I'm sure all your kids, they deal with the racism but they also deal with a lot of nice and good white people. So they see all sides.

**DRIDI:** I lived and studied in France. In France they ask you to strip yourselves of any religion. The French idea comes first. Meanwhile, I come to this country and nobody asks me to drop my name or say United States first. Everybody has their own religion. You are Jewish; you are who you are. I am Muslim; I am who I am. You are Christian; you are who you are. We are welcomed with open arms.

**MEHERAN:** I can almost say with my kids, 'I know where Trump is coming from [regarding Mexicans crossing the border illegally]. I don't agree.' One point that came up was when the white woman tourist in San Francisco who got killed by an illegal immigrant that had seven felonies and was sent back to Mexico several times. What do you tell your kids? All of a sudden, send all the illegal immigrants back? I mean, I got two sides to me. Part of me, the fear builds up and says, 'What is this person doing in the United States?' Now, on the other side of the coin, I have a friend from Lithuania that just got his citizenship. It took him seven years to become a citizen. Why do these people not have to do that and they can just come to America? Then you have the El Chapo thing with all the drugs coming in. I go back to: there's one illegal immigrant; there's probably 10 of them for every one who just wants to make a living, and Mexico is not the place right now you want to live. Do we open the borders and let anybody in? So I'm on the side of the coin where there's got to be a middle ground.



**DRIDI:** I'm Muslim. I'm Arab. I'm supposed to hate Jewish people. I have friends who are Jewish and every Thanksgiving for the last 12 years, we go and spend Thanksgiving with them. We have the Jewish, the Catholics, the Christians, the Muslims. Everybody starts the meal with a prayer. It doesn't happen in any other country. My guess, if we can build on that with education and tolerance, this is really the way to go. I mean, we live in a civil society. This is one of the best things about this country. It offers the opportunity to everyone.

**S: What do you think can be done to address racism and xenophobia?**

**HULL:** I just feel like it should be everybody's responsibility to learn a little bit more. I think integrating schools is phenomenal because that's the beginning of learning. I think America is one of the greatest places in the world because it equalizes everybody. You don't have that in most countries. Most countries, it's still a ruling majority and everybody else is a subject. I also think that America is in the greatest position to learn and be a very progressive nation; progressive not just in science or technology, but in people skills because we have people from everywhere. Everybody can teach you

something different. We should be a healthier nation, if only we can integrate a little bit more. If only we cannot feel threatened.

**GHONEIM:** My 20-year-old has autism. Right now when I say something like this, everybody knows what I'm talking about. This country has done an outstanding job including and integrating these kids from kindergarten. So our kids' generation, for them, this is very normal. If we can do the same thing but now with religions and diversity and different cultures – let's talk about it. If all of those young generations talk about it openly, stereotypes will disappear because now you know everything about everything and you enrich all of our kids. So if you do the same thing with relations in different race, different ethnicity and a different culture, we will be in a better world. ■

*Theresa Sullivan Barger is a frequent Seasons contributor and lives in Canton with her husband and two of their three children.*

*Todd Fairchild, of West Hartford, is a longtime contributor to Seasons. For more about Todd, go to [shutterbugct.com](http://shutterbugct.com).*



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# Off, Off, Off

**HISTORIC STAGE:** The 19th-century Ivoryton Playhouse has a venerable heritage. "This is the first stage that Katharine Hepburn performed on, and the last stage that Marlon Brando performed on," says Jacqueline Hubbard, the theater's executive artistic director. Photo by Caryn B. Davis



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# Broadway

Written by **Lori Miller Kase**

The third smallest state in the nation, Connecticut is a star on the national theater scene, scooping up Tony Awards and launching the careers of actors including Michael Douglas. Here, *Seasons* shines a spotlight on some of the theatrical institutions in small towns and suburbs that enrich Connecticut's reputation as an artistic tour de force

Bordering one end of the idyllic campus of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford are a series of candy-colored cottages named for some of the playwrights and actors who got their start here along Connecticut's shoreline: Wendy Wasserstein, August Wilson, Michael Douglas. "I like to call us the launch pad of American theater," says Preston Whiteway, executive director of The O'Neill. "This is where plays and musicals begin their lives before they go on to Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, London and around the world."

Connecticut may be only a stone's throw from the Great White Way, but theater fans do not need to travel to New York to find quality theater. Our tiny state boasts five Tony Award-winning theaters, including the only two regional theaters in the country to have won two Tonys – The O'Neill and The Goodspeed. "Connecticut is culturally and theatrically very very rich – especially for such a small state," says Mike Stotts, managing director of Hartford Stage, another Tony winner. "Many larger states don't have nearly the artistic output we have here."

Connecticut cities, of course, offer an abundance of theatrical options, like Hartford Stage, TheaterWorks and The Bushnell in the capital, and Yale Repertory Theater, Long Wharf Theatre and Shubert Theatre in New Haven. While TheaterWorks serves up mostly contemporary plays in a smaller, more intimate setting, often producing pieces recently seen in New York, Hartford Stage provides everything from Shakespeare to newly-commissioned plays to musicals like the four-time Tony-award winning "Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," which it premiered (in 2012) and then exported to Broadway in 2013. The Long Wharf and Yale Rep, the two other major urban producing theaters, are also known for staging and commissioning new work. And most national tours of Broadway shows pass through The Bushnell or the Shubert.

Yet beyond the state's urban centers, tucked into rural Connecticut towns and suburbs, are several smaller, often historic, theaters that are also attracting big talent and producing – and even originating – important works. Proximity to New York means access to top talent – all of the professional theaters in the area cast both locally and in NYC, which means Connecticut theatergoers are able to see Broadway and Off Broadway performers in their own backyards. Here, *Seasons* takes a look at some of the rural and suburban theaters playing leading roles in the state's thriving theater scene:

### The Goodspeed

Perched on the edge of the Connecticut River in East Haddam, the picturesque Goodspeed Opera House has been showcasing new – and newly revived – musicals for more than half a century. "We have had for our entire history a singular

mission," says Michael Gennaro, executive director of the theater: "to produce, refresh, and reinvent American musical theater."

Since opening in 1963, the Goodspeed has mounted 250 musicals, including more than 70 world premieres. Many of these, including "Annie," "Man of La Mancha," "All Shook Up" and "13" have gone on to Broadway. And Broadway has come to the Goodspeed as well: Idina Menzel, Kristin Chenoweth, and Sutton Foster are among the big-name musical theater divas who have graced The Goodspeed's stage.

The Goodspeed is also dedicated to developing musical theater talent, according to Gennaro, through its Festival of New Musicals, its Johnny Mercer Colony for musical theater lyricists, composers, and script writers, and writers' residencies. "I think part of our responsibility in line with our mission is to create the next generation of musical theater artists," Gennaro says.

The Goodspeed mounts performances in two different spaces – the Victorian-style Opera House, its main stage, and The Terris Theater in Chester. This season blends what Gennaro calls "tried and true classic musicals" and new works. Among the theaters' offerings this summer: two classic musicals – "Anything Goes" and "Bye Bye Birdie," and two new musicals. "We're producing five shows, but probably working with and developing another 20 every year," notes Gennaro.

### Sharon Playhouse

A small theater nestled in the Northwest Hills is also doing its part to contribute to the musical theater landscape. The historic red barn that houses the Sharon Playhouse has served as a theater since the 1930s, but the works being produced on its stages today hew toward the contemporary. "Theaters tend to take on a little bit of the personality of the artists who inhabit them, and my personal directing passion is new musicals," says John Simpkins, the theater's artistic director for the past five years. "We've helped develop a few of those that we haven't taken into production, and once a summer we take a new musical all the way into production."

Simpkins says he wants Sharon Playhouse, which predominantly presents summer stock, to "be a home theater for people who live in our region." He is committed to presenting a variety of shows to appeal to all his patrons. This season, for example, includes the classic Stephen Sondheim musical "Gypsy," "Quartet," a play about aging opera singers, and "Judge Jackie Justice," a relatively new musical comedy by the up-and-coming musical writing duo Michael Kooman and Christopher Dimond.

Simpkins, who taught musical theater at New York University for 14 years and now heads up musical theater at Pennsylvania State University, says that education is also an





**HEAD FOR THE HILLS:** In summer, Sharon Playhouse lures theatergoers to Northwest Connecticut for contemporary musicals. Photo courtesy of **Sharon Playhouse**

integral part of Sharon's mission. He likens the Playhouse to a teaching hospital: "We are a teaching theater that gives really great theater and really great training." In that spirit, the theater offers internships to students pursuing degrees in design and technical theater, and hosts a collegiate company that performs in the ensembles of the bigger musicals. The rest of the casts are comprised of a mix of professional actors from New York and local talent.

"We want to be a place on the national landscape where theater artists know they can come and be respected as artists and for the work they make," says Simpkins. "There is something very special about the vibe of the Playhouse. We've had a bunch of really credentialed Broadway folks come and play with us in the summer."

### **Ivoryton Playhouse**

Stepping into the Ivoryton Playhouse, located in the tiny Essex village of Ivoryton, is like stepping back into theater history. Black and white portraits of the many stars who have appeared on the Ivoryton stage over the course of the past century adorn the walls of the 19th-century revival-style theater, among them, Helen Hayes, Art Carney, Alan Alda, and Shelley Winters. "This is the first stage that Katharine

Hepburn performed on, and the last stage that Marlon Brando performed on," notes Jacqueline Hubbard, the theater's executive/artistic director. "Bringing people in here is not about just keeping theater alive – it's about keeping an important part of Connecticut history alive."

The oldest continually-running self-supporting summer theater in the country, The Ivoryton evolved into a year-round theater during Hubbard's tenure. "When I came to Essex I had two young children," recalls Hubbard, who had previously been an actress and an English teacher. "I saw that this place was empty for nine months of the year, and I knocked on the door and asked if I could start a children's theater." Over the years, the children's theater Hubbard started grew into a couple of community musical productions a year. She started adding cabarets – "just to see if people were interested and would come out during the year." They were – and they did. Hubbard eventually joined the Ivoryton's board of trustees, was named artistic director several years later, and in 2006, the theater began producing a year-round season (April to November) of professional theater under her direction. "The main thing for me was to make sure that the theater was high quality, affordable, and what people wanted to see," she says.

The challenge? To engage all different patrons. “We have come up with a sort of template that works for us: People want musicals – so we do the big musicals in the summer when we have the biggest audiences, and our older patrons really like the bio kind of shows, so we do those during the year. If I want an element of drama, I have to have something else in it – this year I chose ‘Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks,’ a poignant story between an older widow and younger dance instructor, which includes dance.” Summer musicals include “Chicago” and “Rent,” and “bio” shows about musicians John Denver and Rosemary Clooney will bookend the season.

Another challenge for the theater is housing – most of the theater’s cast members come up to Ivoryton from New York. “By the good graces of this town, we have actors stashed like sardines all over the place.” But Hubbard says she makes sure her actors have a positive experience at Ivoryton – in fact, she says, many have worked there more than once and are “cheerleaders” for the Playhouse back in the city. She said that seeing a show at a intimate theater like the Ivoryton is a special treat for audience members as well.

“When we take a big musical and we reduce it down onto a small stage, you will get a completely different experience,” says Hubbard. “I had so many people who came to see Memphis last year who had seen it on Broadway and said that the performance here resonated with them in a totally different way – because instead of it being a spectacle that they were watching, they felt a part of the experience.”

### Playhouse on Park

At seven-year-old Playhouse on Park in West Hartford, a relative newcomer to Connecticut’s professional theater scene, each of the theater’s 160 seats is close to the stage. “Our mission is to fully immerse the audience into the world of the play, having them experience the play through perhaps a different lens than they have previously, because our space is very intimate,” says Sean Harris, artistic director. “You’re seeing the actors sweat, and you’re seeing them cry. You can see subtly in their performances.”

Harris says he and his co-founders – co-artistic director Darlene Zoller and executive director Tracy Flater – do not believe in casual theater; they want audience members to leave the theater feeling that they have been engaged. “I don’t want anyone leaving saying ‘That was okay,’ or ‘I don’t know how I feel about that.’ Harris explains. “They don’t have to say ‘That was great’ (even though we get that a lot) – it would be great if they said ‘I was so angry’ or ‘That was so unsettling.’”

Harris, who teaches theater at Hall High School, says he had always dreamed of opening his own theater, but admits that when Playhouse on Park first opened in 2009 in the shadow of Hartford Stage and TheaterWorks, someone told



**FIRST ACT:** Many well-known actors, including Meryl Streep, began their careers at The O’Neill. Photo by A. Vincent Scarno

him the theater was doomed. Still, he believes that the theater fills a special niche in the region.

“We are creating a performing arts theater,” he says. “We are one of the only regional theaters in the country that has a dance company in residence, we have improv nights, comedy nights, a burlesque show, an education program and a [four to six] play reading series.” Of course, they also offer up a healthy dose of plays and musicals to round out their season, which runs from December through June and features a mix of New York and local actors. Coming up this spring and summer: the musical “A Chorus Line,” the Pulitzer-prize winning play “Wit,” and the children’s show “Junie B. Jones.”

Harris says the Playhouse is committed to keeping its ticket prices low (between \$10 to \$45), because they want shows to be affordable and accessible for everyone. Playwrights on Park, the play-reading series, is one of the theater’s newer initiatives, and is “all about the development of the play,” Harris says. By presenting staged readings of new work by emerging and established playwrights, Harris hopes to both focus attention on the writers behind the works and incorporate audiences, who are able to provide feedback, in the development process. “It’s probably our most important choice in programming, because if we don’t support new work, we aren’t supporting new playwrights, and we are just rehashing the pieces that have been done for years.”

### The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center

Home to the National Playwright Conference and the National Musical Theater Conference, The O’Neill is also devoted to discovering new works and new artists for the



stage. In fact, the historic theater, which is over 50 years old, was the first to focus entirely on the development of plays, and originated the model of staged readings, which is now standard practice in theaters across the country. The O'Neill was also the model for Sundance, according to Whiteway. "Robert Redford came here to create for screenwriters what we do for playwrights."

Theatergoers are invited to the campus every June and July to see plays and musicals in their earliest stages of development. "Every reading has an audience, and the audience is the key vital element in the growth of the work," says Whiteway. "It's how the writer discovers what is working and what is not working. The writer oftentimes will completely rewrite a whole act or scene or several musical numbers between readings." Actors perform without costumes, with scripts in hand, and with minimal sets; the focus is on the work itself.

"You as an audience member coming to The O'Neill will never have heard of these shows, and often the actors are new to you," Whiteway says. "But two years from now, you will see these shows in New York and these actors in New York or on television." The Tony Award-winning musicals "In the Heights" and "Avenue Q" both premiered here, as did plays by renowned playwrights like August Wilson, Sam Shepard

and John Guare. The conferences are cast professionally out of New York and Los Angeles, but new acting careers are launched here as well – Meryl Streep landed her first professional acting gig at the Waterford theater when she was fresh out of Yale.

The O'Neill also hosts the National Puppetry Conference and the Cabaret & Performance Conference during the summers, and operates a year-round National Theater Institute, which is like a semester abroad for undergraduates devoted to training in acting, writing, directing, design, movement and voice. National Theater of the Deaf was born at The O'Neill; alumni also formed Hollywood-based Deaf West Theatre, which just premiered a highly acclaimed production of "Spring Awakening" on Broadway (the show was double cast so that each role had one actor signing and the other speaking and singing).

"When you look at the big picture: the conferences, and Deaf West, and Sundance and play-reading series all over the country," says Whitehead, "the O'Neill's roots and legacy can be felt around the world and in every discipline of theater."



*Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.*



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**CYCLE OF LIFE:** Maureen Callahan founded Rosie's Laundry Company, in Avon, after a long career at ESPN. "If you embrace change, you can make a lot happen," she says. Photo by Seshu Photography



# Second Acts

Maybe your chosen profession isn't as satisfying as it used to be, or you're feeling there's no time like the present to pursue your calling. As the following three stories of mid-life reinvention demonstrate, it's never too late to change career gears – and transform your life in the process

**C**avon resident and business owner Maureen Callahan has entrepreneur spirit in her blood – her great-grandfather immigrated to the U.S. from Italy and went to work for himself. He sold peanuts just outside of New York City during the early 1900s. Callahan opened her thriving business, Rosie's Laundry Company, in 2012. Previously, she had worked in an entirely different field, as a satellite technologist for ESPN and then for Major League Baseball International. When new technology made her job obsolete, Callahan at first dusted off her resume but then decided to try something completely different.

"I thought about getting back into the corporate world," Callahan says, "but then I realized that I didn't want to work for someone else anymore. I wanted my own business."

The pursuit of a second act – a new venture seemingly unrelated to a first career – can bring a lot of joy and energy into a person's life as they reach their older years, according to Carol Breese Deegan, of Farmington, a career coach for more than 20 years. "I

work with people who are making career transitions and life transitions, such as learning to live alone," she says. "If you embrace change, you can make a lot happen. If you're afraid of change, you get stuck. By changing, you stay young."

Second acts can allow people to pursue a calling and have a life that they truly love. Richard H. Wells, Ed.D., a professional educator in West Hartford, says mid-lifers often have the wisdom to structure their work life around their interests. "People who are happy and successful design the lifestyle they want to lead – how they want to live day by day – and then choose a job that fits into that lifestyle," Wells says. "Too often people take the path of choosing the job first and letting the job dictate what kind of life they will lead. This can lead to unhappiness and can even have tragic consequences. We're all given the dignity of choice in our lives, and lifestyle is one of the most important choices we can make."

Daryl Capuano is the Chief Executive Officer of Career Counseling Connecticut and the author of "Career Path of Abundance" (The Learning Consultants, 2015). Capuano has been astonished by the number of people in their 40s and 50s – who account for half of his clientele – who seek counseling on changing careers.

"Most of those who contact me are doing so in a proactive, empowered way," says Capuano. "They are employed doing something that has been practical but has not really been meaningful or purposeful or soul inspiring or merely enjoyable. Of all the work I've done, my greatest satisfaction has come from helping someone mired in an unhappy career path move to one that is more fulfilling."

On the following pages, you'll learn more about Callahan's path to her second act, and meet Debra Dean-Ciriani, of West Hartford, and Steve White, of Mystic, all of whom turned childhood interests into fulfilling and joyful mid-career reinventions.

## MAUREEN CALLAHAN

### Sports to Suds

Like many others who find themselves on an entirely new career trajectory at midlife, Callahan's second act, operating Rosie's Laundry, stems from a childhood interest. "When I was a kid, I always thought I would have my own business one day," she says. "It's a family tradition."

Callahan was born and raised in Bristol, Conn., and when she started work at Bristol-based ESPN in 1986, cable TV was new and so was ESPN. "The station didn't really have much programming back then, so they'd get creative. They'd take the secretaries away from their desks and film them doing calisthenics. Then they would air that as an exercise show. I thought it was so funny to see girls I went to high school with on TV doing exercises," Callahan says. ESPN was small then, employing about 200 people, and everyone at the company knew one another. Callahan worked as manager of satellite network traffic, travelled a lot and left the company when her daughter Julia, now a high school student, was born. A former ESPN colleague then offered her a job managing satellite feeds for Major League Baseball International, which allowed her to work from home. Eventually, MLB installed a new, fiber-optic system of feeds, and Callahan's job became obsolete.

Callahan researched different business opportunities, but discovered her new calling while running errands. One day she took her bed comforters to a laundromat and realized that she could improve the business model. "I thought, wow, this place is old, dirty and depressing, but people are still here doing their laundry. I can build a laundromat that is so much better," Callahan says. She spent a year researching the industry, taking online seminars and joining the Coin Laundry Association (though Rosie's machines don't take coins – customers just swipe a card). Callahan's vision came to be, and Rosie's is a bright, cheerful place where customers have their own personal spaces and individual televisions. Unlike most laundromats, Rosie's was designed by a



professional retail designer, Ni Design of Farmington, Conn., and the place has a fun, retro look. Rosie's, named after Callahan's mother, also caters to customers who want to just drop off their clothes and have them returned clean, folded and wrapped in neat packages. "Most laundromats don't offer wash and fold services, but then most are owned by men, and men don't usually like to do laundry! I love doing laundry," Callahan says.

## STEPHEN C. WHITE

### Back to the Sea

Stonington resident Steve White's childhood love for the sea led to his second act. After a career as an English teacher and Headmaster of Fay School, a junior boarding school outside of Boston, Mass., White was chosen to be President of Mystic Seaport, the nationally acclaimed maritime museum. White is delighted to be working in a field related to the sea, his childhood love.

White's second career came about after he decided to





**SEA CHANGE:** Stephen White, president of Mystic Seaport, was once a private-school headmaster. “There are great similarities between the two roles,” he says. “Both have at their core the care and nurturing of a community of people and ideas.”  
Photo by Kiernan Photography

get back to his childhood passion for the ocean. About nine years ago, White was planning his retirement after 18 years as Headmaster at Fay School, serving students in Pre-K through grade nine. He and his wife, Maggie, who had many duties as a headmaster’s wife, had built a house on Cape Cod and planned to spend the rest of their lives there, by the ocean. “I had grown up in Maine, and I have a passion for the sea and for sailing,” White explains.

At about the same time that White was planning his retirement from boarding school life, the Board of Directors of Mystic Seaport was searching for a new president. Mystic Seaport, located on over 19 acres on the Mystic River in Mystic, boasts a 41,000-square-foot collections center with more than two million artifacts, a working shipyard,

several formal exhibition halls and more than 500 historic watercraft, including the oldest commercial ship in the country. Visitors can also stroll through Mystic Village and learn about what it was like to live in a 19th-century shipping village from the museum’s historians, storytellers, crafters and musicians.

An acquaintance of White’s who was involved with Mystic Seaport thought the museum ought to consider White for the president’s job. “I presented as a non-traditional candidate, not having a museum background but an educational expertise,” White says, “which is exactly what the board wanted. The board wanted someone who could bolster the museum’s educational programs.” Seaport programs run the gamut from sailing lessons and school field trips to



**ENCORE PERFORMANCE:** Debra Dean-Ciriani, a former opera and cabaret singer, is now a licensed marriage and family therapist. "I loved being a singer, but I think everyone has more than one stone to overturn," she says. Photo by **Seshu Photography**

college programs and graduate seminars. More than a quarter million people visit the museum each year to take part in these educational offerings, learning about sailing, the sea and America's maritime history.

White notes that his previous career as a headmaster has dovetailed perfectly with his second act. "There are great similarities between the two roles. Both have at their core the care and nurturing of a community of people and ideas. The content of the work is different, but the process of nurturing the community that the non-profit organization serves is quite similar," White says.

White accepted the position of president eight years ago. He and his wife sold their house on Cape Cod and plan to

spend the rest of their lives enjoying what White describes as the "allure and beauty" of the Mystic-Stonington area. "Those of us who are sailors revere Mystic Seaport," he says. "I couldn't ask for a better place to work."

#### **DEBRA DEAN-CIRIANI** **The Singing Therapist**

West Hartford resident Debra Dean-Ciriani also made a second career choice influenced by a childhood passion. After working for 30 years as an opera and cabaret singer, Dean-Ciriani switched gears completely, becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist. While the move was a big change, it was not completely out of the blue for her.



When she was young, Dean-Ciriani had been interested in psychology and minored in the subject in college.

Dean-Ciriani started singing at age 11, in coffee houses near her home in St. Cloud, Minn. The audiences were “beatniks” – members of a counter-culture movement that believed in self-expression through art – and the repertoire was folk music, along the lines of the singing group Peter, Paul and Mary. Her father drove her to her gigs. Dean-Ciriani found her love for opera while attending Stephens College in Columbia, Mo., and realized her dream of becoming a professional opera singer after college when she signed with an agent in New York City and began getting roles. Her career spanned more than 16 years and included three year-long stints in Germany. One day, on one of her European opera tours, she was singing for friends at a party in Munich. An Italian engineering student named Giovanni heard her and walked into the room so he could see who was singing. “That’s how I met the love of my life,” Dean-Ciriani says.

After getting married, having her daughter, Anna, and moving to where her husband’s career took the family, Dean-Ciriani found herself singing less and less. After eight years in Italy where Dean-Ciriani taught English, the family settled in West Hartford. “I realized that I had found teaching so fulfilling because I enjoy helping people,” Dean-Ciriani says. In her late 50s, she decided to return to college

and pursue her interest in psychology and train to become a therapist. “When I was making the decision, I went to Central Connecticut State University and spoke with Dr. Ralph Cohen and asked him what he thought of someone my age studying to become a therapist,” she says. “I would be sixty years old when I got my degree. Dr. Cohen told me that the profession needs seasoned people with life experience.” She was the oldest person in her class and was diagnosed with breast cancer while she was a student. She underwent treatment and never missed a single class. Dean-Ciriani became a licensed therapist in 2012 and finds her second career deeply rewarding. As she describes it, “My mission is to help families, and helping others, giving back, is so much better than receiving. I loved being a singer, but I think everyone has more than one stone to overturn. I’m a huge advocate of second careers.” ■

*Theresa Anzaldúa is enjoying her second career as a corporate lawyer turned writer and is the author of We Had A Job To Do – A Basic History of World War II Through The Eyes of Those Who Served. The book is available for \$13.95 at Amazon.com, and a premium edition is available at Harvard.com for \$17.95. To make more time for writing, Theresa drops her laundry off at Rosie’s for the wash and fold service.*



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Chief Brody's Frittata Banh Mi



Whey Station's Bacon Marmalade  
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Mercado's Duck Fat Potatoes





**A CUT ABOVE:** Mercado's Duck Fat Potatoes get their zing from Bacon Chimicurri, a green sauce made from herbs, jalapenos and bacon, topped with a fried egg.

## Food Truck Favorites

In spring, it's a tradition to feast on food truck fare and enjoy it on a park bench, with lots of napkins. But when the truck isn't where you are – or inclement weather dampens your plans – there's a solution: make food-truck staples at home

**F**ood trucks aren't just about grabbing a quick bite to eat outside the office anymore. They're about people following their passion, promoting local ingredients and fostering community. Connecticut is lucky to have a vibrant food truck community. Diners can find food trucks specializing in curbside classics, such as cupcakes, donuts, and tacos, as well as more exotic offerings, such as banh mi (Vietnamese baguette sandwiches), arepas (Latin American corn cakes) and poutine (fries, gravy and cheese).

The three food trucks featured here are run by local couples who followed their culinary dreams and have a loyal fan base. They are true community partners, promoting farmers markets and purchasing

ingredients from local farms. Most importantly, they all make delicious food. While I'd love to immediately jump in my car the minute they post their location of the day, it's not always practical. Sometimes it's raining and I don't want to go out, but I still really want that bacon marmalade grilled cheese, ya know? For that reason, I asked the chefs for the recipes of some of their most famous menu items so I can make them at home, and you can, too. 🍴

*Alycia Chrosniak is the founder of CT Eats Out, your guide to the best eats in the state. For more information on Connecticut food and the food truck scene visit [cteatsout.com](http://cteatsout.com).*

## BACON MARMALADE

### WHEY STATION FOOD TRUCK

Known for their mouth-watering grilled cheeses and “truck made” soups, the Whey Station Food Truck is a fan favorite around Hartford County. While the truck changes locations often, diners can usually find it at lunch-time in Hartford or serving late-night bites in Middletown. Run by a husband and wife team, Jillian and Josh Moskites, Whey Station is entering its fifth year. Here, the Moskites share the recipe for their famous bacon marmalade. To recreate their Bacon Marmalade Grilled Cheese at home, spread the marmalade on bread, top with cheese and tomato slices (and a fried egg if you dare), and grill.

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#### Ingredients:

**3 pounds bacon**  
**4 large yellow onions, sliced**  
**8 cloves garlic, chopped**  
**3/4 cup cider vinegar**  
**1/2 cup pure maple syrup**  
**1/4 cup packed light-brown sugar**  
**2 tablespoons instant coffee powder**  
**Salt and pepper to taste**

#### Instructions:

Chop up bacon into one-inch strips. In a large pan over medium-low heat, render down the bacon until it begins to crisp. Remove some of the drippings; retain 1/4 cup in the pan.

Add the sliced onions and garlic and cook until soft.

Turn the heat down to low. Add the vinegar, maple syrup, brown sugar and coffee powder. Cook uncovered, stirring frequently. If the mixture gets too dry add a little water. Cook until onions are broken down and soft, about 45 minutes to an hour.

Using a food processor or stick blender, process mixture until spreadable but still chunky.

The marmalade can keep refrigerated for up to 3 weeks.

*Tip: Cutting the bacon into small pieces and cooking it low and slow allows the fat to melt more quickly and prevents burning.*

## DUCK FAT POTATOES

### MERCADO FOOD TRUCK AND CATERING

After more than a decade in the restaurant industry, Glastonbury residents Roy and Heather Riedl founded Mercado Foods as a full-service catering business focusing on local, seasonal tapas. Soon after, they converted a trailer to make it easier to cook at events. They began parking at farmers markets and quickly cultivated a following. With a full-sized food truck launching this spring, Mercado and their “Span-ish” cuisine is growing even more popular. Here, the Riedls share the recipe for a beloved dish. Serves 2

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#### Ingredients:

##### Duck Fat Potatoes

**8 ounces fingerling potatoes**  
**1 cup rendered duck fat**  
**1 farm fresh egg**

##### Bacon chimichurri:

**1/8 cup bacon, cooked and chopped**  
**1 bunch parsley, chopped**  
**1 bunch cilantro, chopped**  
**1 tablespoon chopped garlic**  
**1 jalapeño, seeded & chopped**  
**1 tablespoon cider vinegar**  
**1/2 cup olive oil**  
**Pinch salt**

#### Instructions:

Cut potatoes on a bias into 3 or 4 pieces. In a pot, cook potatoes in rendered duck fat on medium low heat until potatoes are cooked through. Remove from fat and let cool on rack.

Combine all ingredients for Bacon Chimichurri in a bowl and stir. Set aside.

In a frying pan on medium heat, cook the egg sunny side up. At the same time, fry the previously poached potatoes until golden brown and crispy. Remove the potatoes from the heat with a metal strainer. Toss the potatoes in the Bacon Chimichurri and season with salt. Place sunny side egg on top.

*Tip: Find rendered duck fat at stores like Whole Foods, Williams Sonoma and Sur La Table. Or, ask your local butcher.*



## FRITTATA BANH MI CHIEF BRODY'S BANH MI TRUCK

West Hartford resident Greg Martell discovered the banh mi back in the early '90s while working in kitchens in New York City. A few years later, after he and his wife, Erica, had a wonderful experience dining at a food truck, he decided he had to have his own. In 2015, Chief Brody's Banh Mi Truck was born (yes, it is named after the Jaws character). Specializing in French-Vietnamese cuisine, the truck is a staple at breweries, on the streets of New Haven and at private events. Martell shared the recipe for one of his most popular sandwiches; to make this a vegetarian recipe, skip the pate. Serves 6



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Ingredients:

For frittata:

**1 dozen fresh farm eggs**

**½ cup whole milk**

**Good quality olive oil**

**Salt and pepper**

For banh mi:

**6 fresh individual baguettes, toasted**

**6 tablespoons pate**

**1 cucumber, thinly sliced**

**1 cup pickled carrots and daikon**

**Aioli**

**Sweet soy glaze (a sweet-and-sour sauce of sake, mirin, soy sauce and spices)**

**2 fresh jalapenos, thinly sliced**

**1 cup kimchi**

**1 cup sweet pickled mango**

**1 bunch of cilantro**

**Furikake seaweed (a Japanese seasoning)**

Instructions:

To make the frittata:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

On stove top, heat up a cast-iron pan to medium high.

Whisk together eggs and milk vigorously in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper.

Add olive oil to pan to coat it. Add whisked eggs and milk to the pan.

For about two minutes, slowly scrape the bottom until

the frittata begins to firm up. Place pan in oven and bake for 8 to 9 minutes. Turn heat up to 425. Bake for an additional 3 minutes, until frittata rises and begins getting golden brown.

To compose banh mi:

Split open toasted baguette. Spread a thin layer of pate on bread. Add thinly sliced fresh cucumber, pickled carrots and daikon. Add sliced frittata. Add aioli and sweet soy glaze. Add fresh jalapeno, kimchi and sliced pickled mango.

Finish with fresh cilantro and furikake seaweed.

*Tip: If you can't find the ingredients at your local market, try one of the area's Asian grocery stores.*



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"Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer for both men and women, but women are harder to diagnose, carry many more risk factors, and have worse outcomes. If we can make the risk factors go away, we can improve the outcome in women."

– Saint Francis cardiologist Anita Kelsey



# Anita Kelsey, M.D.

The Saint Francis cardiologist is on a mission to educate women about how to prevent cardiovascular problems

**S**aint Francis cardiologist Anita Kelsey walks briskly on the treadmill as she studies images of her patients' hearts in the hospital's echocardiography lab. The "treadmill desk" was a gift from her senior cardiology fellows – the doctors-in-training she teaches. "I practice what I preach to a crazy fault," admits Kelsey, director of the Women's Heart Program at The Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, who urges her patients to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. "Walking while I work makes it much easier to hit my 10,000 steps per day goal."

Kelsey, as a cardiologist, is intimately involved in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. She is also on a mission to educate women about how to prevent cardiovascular problems through her work with the Women's Heart Program, a free program designed to help women aged 18 and over to take a proactive approach to their heart health. "Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer for both men and women," notes Kelsey. "But women are harder to diagnose, carry many more risk factors, and have worse outcomes. If we can make the risk factors go away, we can improve the outcome in women."

## The Perfect Organ

Kelsey came to cardiology by way of biomedical engineering, her major while an undergraduate at Duke University. "We learned about electrical, thermo, and fluid dynamics, and about sound waves and physics – I loved it," Kelsey recalls. "The heart seemed like the perfect organ for me, because it had all of that – an electrical system, a

mechanical system and a fluid system."

The Simsbury native, who comes from "a long line of engineers," says that engineering is a way of thinking that is well-suited to doctoring. "Engineering is trying to use the tools you have to answer complicated questions, which in retrospect, is a lot like medicine," she says. "You have certain tools, and someone comes in and sees you and you try to figure out what is wrong with them and then you try to fix them."

Kelsey says she always knew she wanted to be a doctor. "My pediatrician, Dr. Raymond Schipke, used to let me look at slides in his office – he was my inspiration," she says. Kelsey studied medicine at UConn, where she is now an associate professor of medicine, and returned to Duke for her cardiology training, before coming back to Connecticut to work at Saint Francis. "I was born in this hospital," she notes. "My mom always said I was meant to come back here and she was right."

Kelsey wears several hats at Saint Francis: Not only does she run the Women's Heart Program and teach cardiology fellows from UConn and echocardiography students at the hospital's School of Cardiac Ultrasound, but she also heads up echocardiography, which is a non-invasive way of diagnosing cardiovascular problems using sound waves to evaluate how the heart is functioning. According to Kelsey, an echocardiogram can show how well the heart squeezes and how well it relaxes, whether the heart valves are blocked or leaky, and whether a patient has suffered a heart attack, in which case the heart muscle won't be working as efficiently.

Kelsey's goal as director of the Women's Heart Program is to educate women about how to keep their hearts in working order so that she won't have to see them as heart patients.

### Preventing Heart Disease

The heart, a small muscle that is about the size of a clenched fist, is responsible for pumping about 2,000 gallons of nutrient-rich blood – and oxygen – through the body each day. Clogged vessels can impede the passage of blood to a portion of the heart muscle, killing that portion. This is a permanent loss of that portion of the pump, and can impair the ability of the heart to deliver oxygenated blood to the body. A heart attack can also disrupt the carefully orchestrated rhythms that govern the heart's contractions, leading to arrhythmias or irregular heartbeats. The term cardiovascular disease typically refers to conditions involving blocked or narrowed blood vessels that can lead to chest pain, a heart attack or a stroke. Conditions that affect the heart's muscle, valves, or rhythms, like congestive heart failure or atrial fibrillation, are also considered heart disease.

"Heart disease is harder to detect in women, and they do worse than men," says Kelsey. "If a woman under 55 has a heart attack, her chance of surviving hospitalization is half that of a man of exactly the same age and exactly the same risk factors." Typically, however, women carry more risk factors than men: They're more likely to have high blood pressure, more likely to be obese, and more likely to smoke, Kelsey says. "But those are all modifiable risk factors," she adds.

The Women's Heart Program is designed to assess a woman's risk, and educate her about how to reduce that risk by making lifestyle changes like improving diet, developing a regular exercise routine, and quitting smoking. A multidisciplinary team, including Kelsey, registered nurses, an exercise physiologist, and a registered dietitian, evaluate and educate patients, develop individualized plans and follow up with them to monitor their progress. Since the program started in 2006, more than 10,000 women have participated in the program.

"What we're finding, especially in under-served communities and with the uninsured or underinsured, is that they carry a lot of risk factors that are undiagnosed or undertreated, like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high blood sugar," says Kelsey. Kelsey and her team recently published a study in *Connecticut Medicine* in which they followed a group of high-risk patients through the

### Heart Health by the Numbers

You are much more likely to make the effort to reduce your heart disease risk when you know what that risk is. Here, according to Dr. Kelsey, are the numbers to strive for:

- **Blood Pressure:** The top number (systolic BP) should be below 120; the bottom number (diastolic BP) should be over 80
- **Total Cholesterol:** Less than 200
- **Triglycerides:** Less than 150
- **HDLs:** Greater than 50
- **LDLs:** Less than 100
- **Body Mass Index (BMI):** Less than 25
- **Fasting blood sugar:** Less than 100

"The other numbers everyone should know are 30 minutes, five times per week," Kelsey says.

"Physical inactivity is one of the most important risk factors and regular exercise is enormously successful in reducing heart disease risk.

Whatever your starting point, you can make your risk significantly lower."

program. She and her staff would periodically text or email encouraging messages to the patients like "Did you eat your veggies today?" to help them stick to their plans. "We found that media messaging them support made a big difference in improving their outcomes," says Kelsey. "Ninety-seven percent of them made lifestyle changes like eating healthier and exercising more."

The Women's Heart Program website points out that "In a bit more time than it takes to get a spa mani-pedi, you could save your life." It's never too early for women to start taking steps to protect their heart, says Kelsey. "There's evidence that plaque starts to form in some women very early on, and lifestyle changes made while you are young are easier to maintain long term." ■

*Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.*

*Tony Reynolds, of West Hartford, is a storyteller with a lens, capturing that decisive moment with artistic flair and a personal vision.*



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# THE HISTORY OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL IN CONNECTICUT



**HEAVY HITTERS:** Mayor Richard J. Kinsella welcomes Babe Ruth to Hartford in 1918, the year the Red Sox won the World Series. By 1919, Ruth was playing for the New York Yankees.



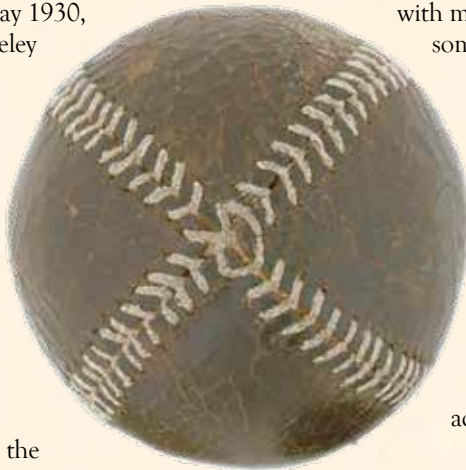
Written by **Leonard Felson**  
Photography courtesy of **Gary Goldberg-O'Maxfield**

When the Hartford Yard Goats take the field this spring, it will mark the return of minor-league baseball in Hartford for the first time since 1952. Connecticut's storied baseball legacy, however, stretches back to the 1860s, when the Charter Oak Baseball Club played in Bushnell Park

**O**n a spring day in late May 1930, 6,000 fans packed Bulkeley Stadium in Hartford's South End to watch the World Champion Philadelphia Athletics battle the minor league Hartford Senators in an exhibition game. Playing at the 6,500-seat ballpark had become a tradition for the Athletics and its legendary manager Connie Mack, who got his start in Hartford as a catcher.

That day's game ended with the Senators winning, leaving the visiting team enough time to make their 7:12 p.m. train out of Hartford's Union Station to New York, where the next day they would face the Yankees.

Throughout the early 20th century, similar scenes played out at minor-league baseball parks in cities across Connecticut. Because the train was the major mode of transportation, Major League baseball teams including the Philadelphia A's, the Yankees, the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Braves, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the St. Louis Cardinals would often make a stopover in Connecticut on their way from one major league city for an exhibition game



with minor leaguers whose caliber in some cases was minor in name only.

In fact, for much of the 20th century, Bulkeley Stadium was the Hartford equivalent of New York's Yankee Stadium and Boston's Fenway Park.

Many future Hall of Famers, including Lou Gehrig, Hank Greenberg, Leo Durocher and Warren Spahn, played as minor leaguers at the Hartford ballpark before achieving stardom.

#### **A NEW CHAPTER**

This spring, Connecticut's baseball legacy continues when the Hartford Yard Goats, the Double A minor league baseball team affiliated with the Colorado Rockies, start playing in downtown Hartford. There hasn't been a team in the state's capital since 1952, when the Hartford Chiefs, a Double A affiliate of the Boston Braves, left for Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (that same year, the major league Braves moved to Milwaukee, later to Atlanta). The Chiefs had played in Hartford since 1938.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The name Yard Goats harkens back to the Hartford and New Haven Railroad when the train was king. A “yard goat” refers to locomotives used to move cars from one track to another in rail yards. That nod to Hartford’s heritage marks a new chapter in the state’s long-standing baseball tradition. Minor league baseball goes back to 1862, when Gershom Hubbell created the Charter Oak Baseball Club of Connecticut. Athletes played in Hartford’s Bushnell Park, below where the State Capitol now stands. Fans watched from a hill and along the banks of the Park River, which ran behind the field, long before it was buried as part of a flood control project.

Connecticut’s geographical location made it an ideal baseball hub, says baseball historian Gary Goldberg-O’Maxfield, a Hartford native and member of the Society of American Baseball Researchers. He’s writing a book on the history of baseball in Connecticut.

“The best teams in the country came to play in Connecticut,” he says.

Teams, traveling by train, would stop at Hartford’s Union Station, take a city tour, which included a stop at the cutting-edge Colt Armory, then play ball in the afternoon. In the evening, the home team would host a banquet at a downtown hotel, Goldberg-O’Maxfield says. James G. Batterson, founder of the Travelers Insurance Company, provided return train rides to the visiting team to ensure their safe return home.

Though Connecticut cities have hosted an array of minor league teams, it even had a major league baseball team for one year, in 1876. Morgan G. Bulkeley, who served as Hartford mayor and later as Connecticut’s governor and a U.S. senator, and for whom the stadium is named, owned the Hartford Dark Blues, a charter member of the National League. Bulkeley was also the National League’s first president. But he moved the team to Brooklyn a year later, in 1877, and named the team the Brooklyn Hartfords.

Despite the loss, minor league ball has always flourished in Connecticut. Since the late 19th century, Waterbury, Bridgeport, Meriden, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Stamford and Hartford all sported teams. Because players couldn’t survive on their meager salaries, major employers, including gun manufacturers, brass mills and precision toolmakers hired them and gave them time off to play ball. Local families would house the players since hotel rooms were unaffordable. “It was a true community effort,” says Goldberg-O’Maxfield.

With roots dating back to 1921, Bulkeley Stadium was originally built as Clarkin Field, after James Clarkin, who owned the minor league Hartford Senators, a team that operated more or less from 1902 to 1934 in various leagues. In 1945, after retiring from the major leagues, Babe Ruth made a cameo appearance at Bulkeley in an exhibition game for the local semipro Savitt Gems, owned by local merchant Bill Savitt.



**BEFORE THE YARD GOATS:** The Charter Oak Baseball Club, circa 1865, played in Hartford’s Bushnell Park.

## STAR POWER

Affiliates of major league teams have come and gone over the decades, all producing future stars. The West Haven Yankees, for example, were managed by Bobby Cox in one of his first steps to the Hall of Fame.

The Boston Red Sox sported minor league teams in Bristol and then New Britain, before moving to Trenton, New Jersey. But New Britain maintained a minor league affiliation with the Minnesota Twins, becoming the New Britain Rock Cats, where such future stars as Tori Hunter and David Ortiz played in the Hardware City.

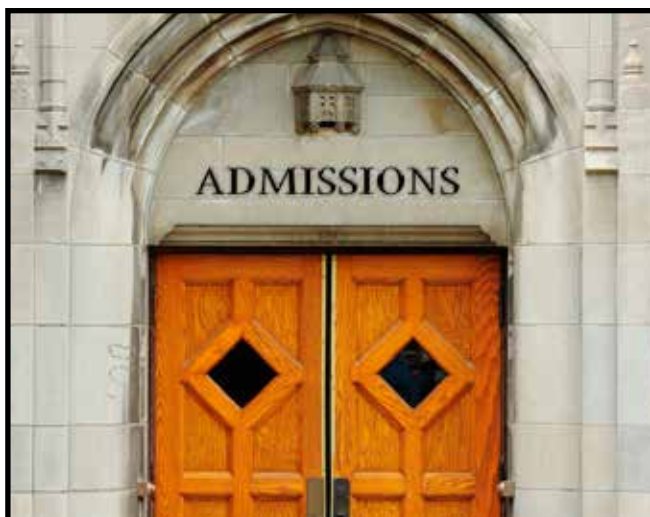
When the Yankees had their affiliate in West Haven, the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry was strong against the then-Bristol Red Sox, whose team included future standouts Fred Lynn and Jim Rice.

In 1985, another star in the making, Bernie Williams, played a handful of games in the Hartford Twilight League; at 16, he was too young to sign a professional contract. In the early 1990s, Williams joined the World Champion Yankees. For such a small cold-weather state, the flow of Connecticut players to the big leagues is remarkable, says Dom Amore, a sports reporter for The Hartford Courant.

Other minor league affiliates over the years have included the Connecticut Tigers, based in Norwich, an affiliate of the Detroit Tigers. Waterbury’s baseball heritage began in the 1890s; the city’s teams have included the Authors, the Invincibles, the Finnegans, the Champs, the Spuds and the Contenders. In the 1940s, Bridgeport and New Haven also had teams, and the Bridgeport Bluefish, an independent team in the Atlantic League, still play at the Ballpark at Harbor Yard. ■

*Leonard Felson, a regular contributor to Seasons, is a magazine writer whose passion for local history began at a young age. For more about him and his work, see [www.leonardfelson.com](http://www.leonardfelson.com).*





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## Dance Recitals: The Horror and the Joy

In a couple weeks, I will be sitting in a packed auditorium, leaning forward in my seat, staring at an illuminated stage, as dozens of dancers perform like they never have before.

This is partly because many of these dancers have never actually performed before. They are children – mostly girls – taking the stage for the first in what will undoubtedly be years of dance recitals.

Many will still have never performed by the time the show is over. Despite the weeks of instruction and hundreds of dollars spent on lessons, a sizable number of these tiny ballerinas and tap dancers will stand on the stage and never execute a single dance move.

Some will peer into the audience in search of parents who have been waiting for hours just to see their child move with something resembling rhythm.

My daughter did a lot of this at her first recital.

Some will cry upon seeing the audience, and for perhaps the only time in their life, will be left to weep as hundreds of adults point fingers, coo and even laugh at their despair without offering an ounce of comfort.

Some – including my daughter – will engage their fellow dancers in conversation, as if they are part of some coffee klatch that has somehow landed onstage.

A few will actually dance. These will not be the future ballerinas and hip hop sensations of the world. These are inevitably the children who follow directions well or fear the heavy hand of a fascist dance instructor. These are little girls with tiger moms in the audience, wielding professional-grade video cameras in hopes of capturing footage that will one day be included in the supplementary material of their college entrance packet.

Older girls – and a sprinkling of boys – will dance, too. If your older child is a member of a sane dance company, he or she will be wearing a costume that covers most of their body. Your child

will look like an actual child. You will be able to pick your child out of a line of similarly sized children and think, “Look. It’s my kid.”

If you have instead chosen a dance studio run by a lunatic, your child will be dressed in a costume made from enough material to almost cover your thumb. If your child is a girl, she will be wearing more makeup than she will ever wear at any other time in her life save Halloween. She may frighten you as she appears onstage. You may wonder if there is some reverse Benjamin Button device backstage that has aged your nine-year old in the span of minutes. You may wonder for a moment if you have accidentally entered a staged performance of *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

None of the dancing will be very good. Oddly, the youngest children who dance the worst are the most entertaining. They are like watching an adorable train wreck: so cute yet so capable of disaster at any moment. You can’t help but glue your eyes to them.

The older girls will execute more competent dance steps with falsetto smiles and terror in their eyes, but at this age, you only want to see your own child or a legitimate prodigy dance.

Your average twelve year-old dancer just isn’t very entertaining.

The best dancing of the night will actually be performed by the owner of the studio, often accompanied by her teachers, who inexplicably think this audience of parents wants to see them dance. Oftentimes they will open and sometimes even close the show. This is the worst moment of any dance recital. Watching grown adults dance in front of an audience waiting to see their children is perhaps one of the saddest and most desperate acts that I have ever witnessed.

It has been argued that these women dance in order to model for their students, but couldn’t this modeling have been accomplished during the 27 previous weeks of lessons? Besides, when Boy Scouts are asked to build fires as

part of a competition, the adult leaders don’t build their own fires beside the Tenderfoots. When Girl Scouts sell cookies door to door, mothers don’t go ringing doorbells on their own, demonstrating marketing tactics for their little ones. When a baseball team takes the field, the coach doesn’t take a turn in the lineup, showing the Little Leaguers how to hit a 23-mile an hour fastball from a player half his size.

**Yet despite the agony of the process, I will also experience flickers of joy. Three to be exact, each lasting about three minutes over the span of 193 agonizing minutes. I will watch my little girl dance – or not – and my heart will double in size.**

I always feel the urge to leap upon the stage when these women have finished their routine and embrace them, assuring them that it’s okay. They don’t need to steal the spotlight from little children. They are loved. “And please,” I’d whisper into their ears, “Don’t ever do this again. It’s so hard to avert my eyes for so long without seeming so obvious.”

There will be other moments of amusement throughout the afternoon.

The parents who complain that their doubly left-footed child was not positioned in the front line often enough.

The parents with the iPads who will stand in the midst of a routine to

record their child’s performance, even though a professional videographer is also recording the show. This recording will cost you \$192, but you will pay every penny and watch exactly once.

There will be the trophies, awarded based upon time served rather than merit. Trophies that should truthfully go to parents for all the money and schlepping and lost recital weekends that they have been forced to endure over the years.

Then there is the strategically designed finale, which includes all the dancers from the show. The purpose of the finale is not to impress or end with a flourish but to merely keep all the butts in their seats for the duration of the show, forcing parents with children in the third and fifth songs to stay put for the remaining 84 songs.

Yet despite the agony of the process, I will also experience flickers of joy. Three to be exact, each lasting about three minutes over the span of 193 agonizing minutes. I will watch my little girl dance – or not – and my heart will double in size.

Briefly. Still, it might be worth it. ■

*Matthew Dicks is a West Hartford elementary schoolteacher and author of the new novel, The Perfect Comeback of Caroline Jacobs, as well as Memoirs of an Imaginary Friend, Something Missing, and Unexpectedly, Milo, which have been translated into 25 languages worldwide. For more about Matthew, go to [www.matthewdicks.com](http://www.matthewdicks.com).*

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