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Anonymous 4 *love fail*

A Hancher Commission
by David Lang

October 11, 2012
St. Mary's Catholic Church



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Composer's Note

W

hy is it that people still like the story of Tristan and Isolde? It has been told repeatedly for almost 1000 years in many different versions, with all manner of strange details added or changed. "The greatest love story ever!" But why? Of course, there is excitement, drama, love, lust, shame, death, dragons. I think the real reason is that the love of Tristan and Isolde begins by accident—they drink a love potion. They didn't mean to drink it, and they didn't mean to fall in love. They drink and—BAM!—it starts. It is almost a laboratory experiment into what love might be like without any of the complications of how real love begins or works—without the excitement, embarrassment, frustration, guilt, or competition present in the courtships of ordinary people.

I thought I might learn something about love if I could explore this in a piece, putting details abstracted from many different retellings of Tristan and Isolde next to texts that are more modern, more recognizable to us, more real. First I scoured the literature and took my favorite weird incidents from the originals; for example, in Marie de France's version, Tristan carves his name on a stick for Isolde to find. She sees it and immediately knows what message Tristan means to convey, and that message, incredibly, is many, many pages long. Another example: Tristan and Isolde drink the potion, thinking it is wine, and Gottfried von Strassburg dramatically writes that it isn't wine they are drinking, but a cup of their never-ending sorrow. (This near the chapter in which Gottfried lists all of the other Germanic poets working in the 12th century, and then tells you how he rates among them.) I compiled the oddest incidents from these versions of their romance, took out all the names or technological information that would make the texts seem ancient, and put them next to stories by the contemporary author Lydia Davis. These stories are oddly similar to the Tristan stories—they are also about love, honor, and respect between two people, but they are much more recognizable to us.

I based my words on scraps of the text I found on the internet—thank you, Google Translate! I do want to acknowledge the translations of Robert W. Hanning & Joan Ferrante, A. T. Hatto, and Alan S. Fedrick, whose versions of these texts I consulted more than once.

love fail is dedicated, with love, to Joe Melillo.

—David Lang, composer

love fail

Composed and Directed by David Lang

Commissioned by:

The Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2012 Next Wave Festival
The International Festival of Arts & Ideas
The John F. Kennedy Center Abe Fortas Memorial Fund
The Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA
The Secrest Artists Series at Wake Forest University
Hancher at the University of Iowa

love fail made its world premiere on June 29, 2012 at the International Festival of Arts & Ideas in New Haven, Connecticut, with support from Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven.

1. he was and she was (*words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg*)

break #1 (*words by David Lang, after Beroul*)

2. dureth (*words by Sir Thomas Malory*)

3. a different man (*words by Lydia Davis*)

4. the wood and the vine* (*words by David Lang, after Marie de France*)

5. right and wrong (*words by Lydia Davis*)

6. you will love me (*words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg*)

7. forbidden subjects (*words by Lydia Davis*)

8. as love grows stronger (*words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg*)

break #2 (*instrumental*)

9. the outing (*words by Lydia Davis*)

10. I live in pain (*words by David Lang, after Beatriz, Contessa de Dia*)

11. head, heart (*words by Lydia Davis*)

break #3 (*words by David Lang, after Thomas of Britain and the Yom Kippur Liturgy*)

12. mild, light (*words by David Lang, after Richard Wagner*)

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*the wood and the vine was commissioned by The Newman Center for the Performing Arts at University of Denver, The University of California at Riverside, and the Santa Fe Concert Association in Santa Fe, NM.

I live in pain, in a different version, was originally written for "The Crossing;" Donald Nally, conductor.

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"The Outing" from *Almost No Memory* (Picador, 1997). Copyright © 1995 by Lydia Davis.

Program

1. he was and she was

(words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg)

he was a blessed man
he was an understanding man
he was an ecstatic man
he was a joyful man
he was a delightful man
he was a free man
he was a studious man
he was a masterful man
she was so wise
she was so fair
she was so shining
she was so lovely
she was so studious
she was so versed
she was so young
she was so fair
he was a persevering man (he was so persevering)
he was a learned man (he was so learned)
he was a skillful man (he was so skillful)
he was a strong man (he was so strong)
he was a skillful man (he was so skillful)
he was an excelling man (he was so excelling)
he was a fortunate man (he was so fortunate)
he was a rare man (he was so rare)
she was so masterful
she was so diligent
she was so refined
she was so polite
she was so accomplished
she was so lovely
she was so excellent
she was so dexterous
he was a fair man
he was a blessed man
he was an admirable man
he was a successful man
he was a noble man
he was an excellent man
he was a worthy man
he was a cherished man
she was so sweet
she was so soft
she was so secret
she was so wondrous
she was so charming
she was so lovely
she was so good
she was so young

break #1

(words by David Lang, after Beroul)

three years
three years after it started
it ended

2. dureth

(words by Sir Thomas Malory)

the joy of love is too short,
and the sorrow thereof,
and what cometh thereof,
dureth over long

3. A Different Man

(words by Lydia Davis)

At night he was a different man. If she knew him as he was in the morning, at night she hardly recognized him: a pale man, a gray man, a man in a brown sweater, a man with dark eyes who kept his distance from her, who took offense, who was not reasonable. In the morning, he was a rosy king, gleaming, smooth-cheeked and smooth-chinned, fragrant with perfumed talc, coming out into the sunlight with a wide embrace in his royal red plaid robe...

4. the wood and the vine

(words by David Lang, after Marie de France)

now I'll tell you a story
that is also the truth –
it is the truth
the wood and the vine
we all know this story
We have heard it before
it was told to us by everyone
and everyone told it to you
a man and a woman
they loved so much
and were so true
and they suffered so much
and on a single day, they died.
their love was forbidden
he went back to the place
where he was born.
but being apart made him
sick with despair.
don't be surprised -
a lover grieves
when love is far away
sadness can make us all
sick with despair

he stayed there for years, until, at last,
 he went back,
 to get, to try, to hope
 to get a message to his love
 he hid in the woods
 by where she lived
 and found a path
 where she might walk
 he cut a branch and, on it,
 he carved a single word -
 his name -
 and left it on the path
 where she might find it.
 then she would know the message
 and she would know just what the message meant.
 later she came along the same path
 and saw the piece of wood
 she knew exactly what it was
 she saw the single word carved upon it
 and she knew.
 this is what she knew:
 "dearest love
 this is my message
 I send it to you
 I have waited for you
 I have waited to see you
 even now I am waiting for you in the woods
 I cannot live without you
 I cannot live without you
 "you and I -
 we are like the vine that winds itself around the branch
 it twines and pulls and digs into the flesh,
 so tight that the two of them become one
 the two become one
 if someone pulls the two apart then both will die.
 so it is with us, my love, so it is with us.
 you cannot live without me.
 I cannot live without you.
 I cannot live without you.
 you cannot live without me."
 she went a short way into the woods
 and found him
 and they wept.
 they wept with joy when they were together
 and they wept with sadness when they left.
 later he remembered the joy and the sadness
 and he wrote this song:
 "the wood and the vine"
 every word is true.
 all true.

5. Right and Wrong

(words by Lydia Davis)

She knows she is right, but to say she is right is wrong, in this case.
 To be correct and say so is wrong, in certain cases. She may be
 correct, and she may say so, in certain cases. But if she insists too
 much, she becomes wrong, so wrong that even her correctness
 becomes wrong, by association. It is right to believe in what she
 thinks is right, but to say what she thinks is right is wrong, in
 certain cases. She is right to act on her beliefs, in her life. But she
 is wrong to report her right actions, in most cases. Then even her
 right actions become wrong, by association. If she praises herself,
 she may be correct in what she says, but her saying it is wrong, in
 most cases, and thus cancels it, or reverses it, so that although
 she was for a particular act deserving of praise, she is no longer in
 general deserving of praise.

6. you will love me

(words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg)

you will love me
 me, alone
 above all others
 above all other things
 you will love me
 we will live one life
 we will die one death
 we will share one joy
 we will share one sorrow
 it is not wine
 it is our lasting sorrow
 it is not wine
 it is our never-ending anguish
 and we drink it
 we drink it

7. Forbidden Subjects

(words by Lydia Davis)

Soon almost every subject they might want to talk about is associated with yet another unpleasant scene and becomes a subject they can't talk about, so that as time goes by there is less and less they can safely talk about, and eventually little else but the news and what they're reading, though not all of what they're reading. They can't talk about certain members of her family, his working hours, her working hours, rabbits, mice, dogs, certain foods, certain universities, hot weather, hot and cold room temperatures at night and in the day, lights on and lights off in the evening in summer, the piano, music in general, how much money he earns, what she earns, what she spends, etc. But one day, after they have been talking about a forbidden subject, though not the most dangerous of the forbidden subjects, she realizes it may be possible, sometimes, to say something calm and careful about a forbidden subject, so that it may once again become a subject that can be talked about, and then to say something calm and careful about another forbidden subject, so that there will be another subject that can be talked about once again, and that as more subjects can be talked about once again there will be, gradually, more talk between them, and that as there is more talk there will be more trust, and that when there is enough trust, they may dare to approach even the most dangerous of the forbidden subjects.

8. as love grows stronger

(words by David Lang, after Gottfried von Strassburg)

as love grows stronger
love holds us closer
as love grows stronger
love holds us tight
as love grows stronger
as love grows stronger
we become more beautiful
to each other
this is the seed
from which love grows
from which love never dies
until....
until....
as it ever was
as it ever is
as it ever will be

break #2

(instrumental)

9. The Outing

(words by Lydia Davis)

An outburst of anger near the road, a refusal to speak on the path, a silence in the pine woods, a silence across the old railroad bridge, an attempt to be friendly in the water, a refusal to end the argument on the flat stones, a cry of anger on the steep bank of dirt, a weeping among the bushes.

10. I live in pain

(words by David Lang, after Beatriz, Contessa de Dia)

I live in pain
for someone I once had,
for someone I once wanted
for someone I once knew
for someone I once loved, without measure.
I see now that he left me
because I did not give him all my love
I see now I was wrong
and now I sleep alone
I want to hold him
in my naked arms
I want to lie beside him
in my bed
I want him more
than any long-forgotten lovers ever loved before
I want to give him everything
my heart
my love
my senses
my sight
my life
good friend, kind friend, fearless friend
when will I have you?
when will you lie beside me?
when will I give you my love?
you know how much I want you.
promise me
you will do what I say
please.
do what I say

11. Head, Heart

(words by Lydia Davis)

Heart weeps.
Head tries to help heart.
Head tells heart how it is, again:
You will lose the ones you love. They will all go. But even the earth will go, someday.
Heart feels better, then.
But the words of head do not remain long in the ears of heart.
Heart is so new to this.
I want them back, says heart.
Head is all heart has.
Help, head. Help, heart.

break #3

(words by David Lang, after Thomas of Britain, and the Yom Kippur liturgy)

if I have to drown, I know, that you will drown
if I have to burn, I know, that you will burn
if God wills it
if I have to bleed, I know, that you will bleed
if I have to be devoured, I know, that you will be devoured
if God wills it
if I have to starve, I know, that you will starve
if I have to thirst, I know, that you will thirst
if I have to wander, all my days, I know, that you will wander, all your days
if I have to suffer, I know, that you will suffer
if I have to be impoverished, I know, that you will be impoverished
if I have to be degraded, I know, that you will be degraded
if God wills it
if God wills it, so be it.

12. mild, light

(words by David Lang, after Richard Wagner)

mild, light
see him smile
see his eye, open –
do you see it?
he shines so bright
like a star, rising
do you see it? oh, yes, I see it
do you hear his heart?
do you smell his sweet breath?
do you? yes, I do
am I the only one
who hears this music?
oh, I hear it
it is so soft
it is so sad
it comes from him
through me, and up
and rises all around me
I hear it, I breathe it in
I drink it, It is so sweet
will we just fade?
buried in the raging storm?
buried beneath the ringing sound?
drowned
engulfed
unconscious
so sweet

The Artists

Ruth Cunningham
Marsha Genensky
Susan Hellauer
Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatek



Four women got together for a music reading session one afternoon in the spring of 1986; they wanted to hear what medieval chant and polyphony would sound like when sung by female voices. Twenty-five years later, Anonymous 4 has performed for sold-out audiences at major concert series and festivals throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and has made 19 recordings for harmonia mundi usa, selling over two million copies.

Anonymous 4's programs have included music from the year 1000; the ecstatic music and poetry of the 12th-century abbess and mystic, Hildegard of Bingen; 13th- and 14th-century chant and polyphony from England, France, and Spain; medieval and modern carols from the British Isles; American folksongs, shape note tunes, and gospel songs; and works newly written for the group. Their recordings have received France's prestigious Diapason d'Or, *Classic CD's* Disc of the Year, *Classic FM's* Early Music Recording of the Year, several *Gramophone* Editor's Choice awards, Italy's Antonio Vivaldi Award, and *Le Monde de la Musique's* Choc award. The group has also twice been voted one of *Billboard's* top classical artists. Anonymous 4 recently returned to the *Billboard* charts with the release of *Secret Voices* (2011), music from the 13th-century Spanish Codex Las Huelgas.

Composers who have written for Anonymous 4 include David Lang (*love fail*, a full-evening-length work that premiered in June 2012), Richard Einhorn (*Voices of Light*, an oratorio with silent film, and *A Carnival of Miracles*, for vocal quartet and two cellos), John Tavener (*The Bridegroom*, for Anonymous 4 and the Chilingirian String Quartet), Peter Maxwell Davies (*A Carnival of Kings*), and Steve Reich (*Know What is Above You*).

Anonymous 4 has recorded and toured with the Chilingirian String Quartet, fabled harpist Andrew Lawrence King, and newgrass stars Darol Anger (violin) and Mike Marshall (mandolin, guitar). The group also has a new collaboration project with indie rock band The Mountain Goats, featuring songs by John Darnielle with vocal arrangements for the quartet by Owen Pallett. ♦

The Composer

David Lang

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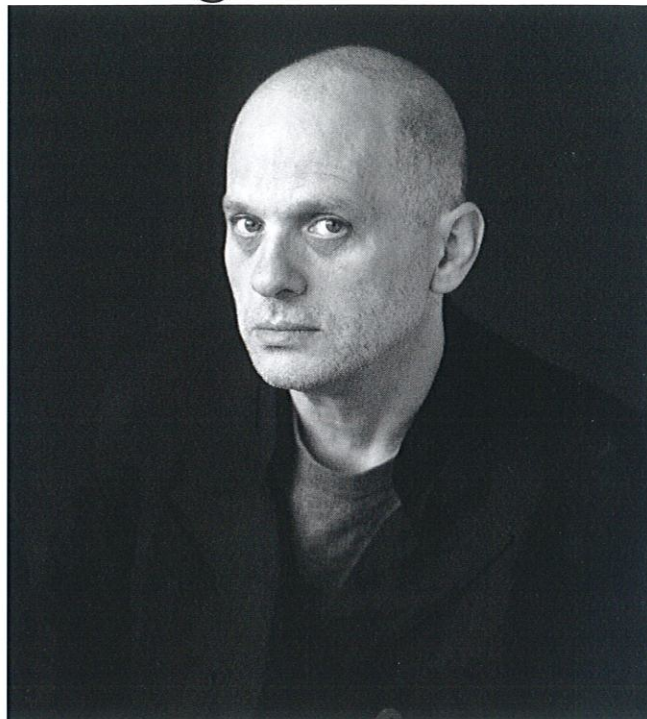
assionate, prolific, and complicated, composer David Lang embodies the restless spirit of invention. Lang is at the same time deeply versed in the classical tradition and committed to music that resists categorization, constantly creating new forms.

In the words of *The New Yorker*, "With his winning of the Pulitzer Prize for the little match girl passion (one of the most original and moving scores of recent years), Lang, once a post-minimalist enfant terrible, has solidified his standing as an American master."

Many of Lang's pieces resemble each other only in the fierce intelligence and clarity of vision that inform their structures. His catalogue is extensive, and his opera, orchestra, chamber and solo works are by turns ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling, and very emotionally direct. Much of his work seeks to expand the definition of virtuosity in music — even the deceptively simple pieces can be fiendishly difficult to play and require incredible concentration by musicians and audiences alike. the little match girl passion, commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Paul Hillier's vocal ensemble Theater of Voices, was awarded the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for music. Of the piece, Pulitzer-juror and Washington Post columnist Tim Page said, "I don't think I've ever been so moved by a new, and largely unheralded, composition as I was by David Lang's little match girl passion, which is unlike any music I know."

Other recent projects include: (concerto) world to come, premiered by cellist Maya Beiser and the Norrlands Operans Symfoniorkester; darker, premiered by Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles; plainspoken, a new work for the New York City Ballet; writing on water, for the London Sinfonietta, with libretto and visuals by English filmmaker Peter Greenaway; the difficulty of crossing a field, a fully-staged opera for the Kronos Quartet; loud love songs, a concerto for the percussionist Evelyn Glennie; and the oratorio Shelter, with co-composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe, at the Next Wave Festival of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, staged by Ridge Theater and featuring the Norwegian vocal ensemble Trio Mediaeval.

Lang is one of America's most performed composers. "There is no name yet for this kind of music," wrote Los Angeles Times music critic Mark Swed of Lang's work. However, audiences around the globe are hearing more and more of it, in performances by such organizations as Santa Fe Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Boston Symphony, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Kronos Quartet; at Tanglewood, the BBC Proms, The Munich Biennale, the Settembre Musica Festival, the Sidney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival and the Almeida, Holland, Berlin, and Strasbourg Festivals; in theater productions in New York, San Francisco and London; alongside the choreography of Twyla Tharp, La La La Human Steps, The Netherlands Dance Theater and the Paris Opera Ballet;



and at Lincoln Center, the Southbank Centre, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Barbican Centre, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Lang is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, the Rome Prize, the BMW Music-Theater Prize (Munich), and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1999, he received a Bessie Award for his music in choreographer Susan Marshall's *The Most Dangerous Room in the House*, performed live by the Bang on a Can All-Stars at the Next Wave Festival of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The *Carbon Copy Building* won the 2000 Village Voice OBIE Award for Best New American Work. The recording of *The Passing Measures*, on Cantaloupe Records, was named one of the best CDs of 2001 by *The New Yorker*. His recent CD, *Pierced*, was praised both on the rock music site Pitchfork and in the classical magazine *Gramophone*, and was called his "most exciting new work in years" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The commercial recording of the little match girl passion, released on Harmonia Mundi, received the 2010 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance.

Lang is the co-founder and co-artistic director of New York's legendary music collective Bang on a Can. His work has been recorded on the Sony Classical, Harmonia Mundi, Teldec, BMG, Point, Chandos, Argo/Decca, and Cantaloupe labels, among others.

His music is published by Red Poppy Music (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by G. Schirmer, Inc. ♦

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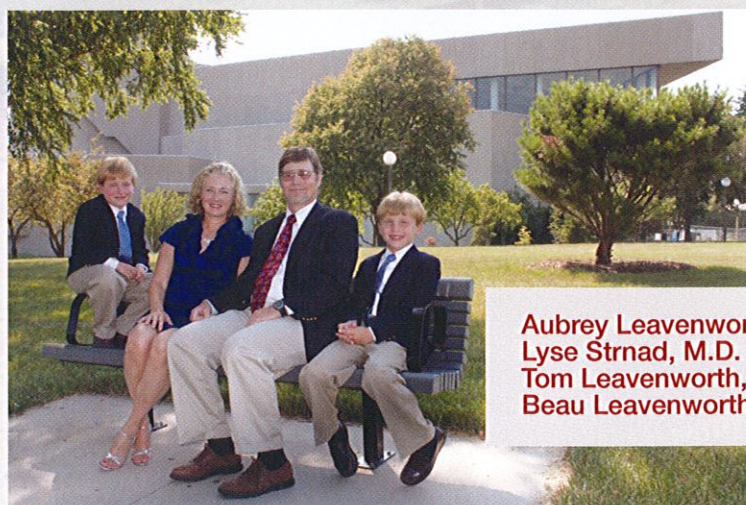
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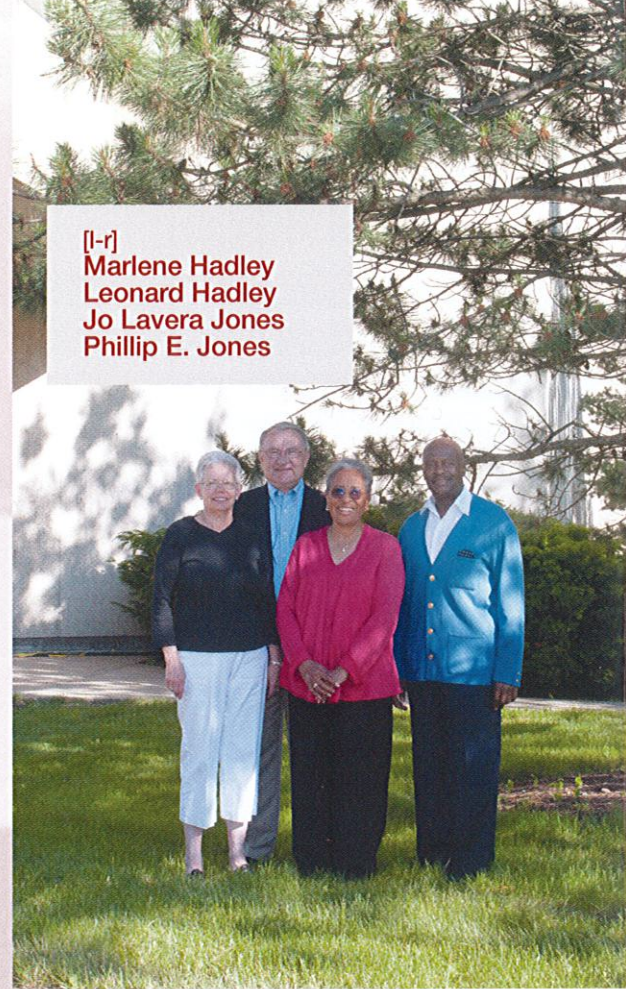
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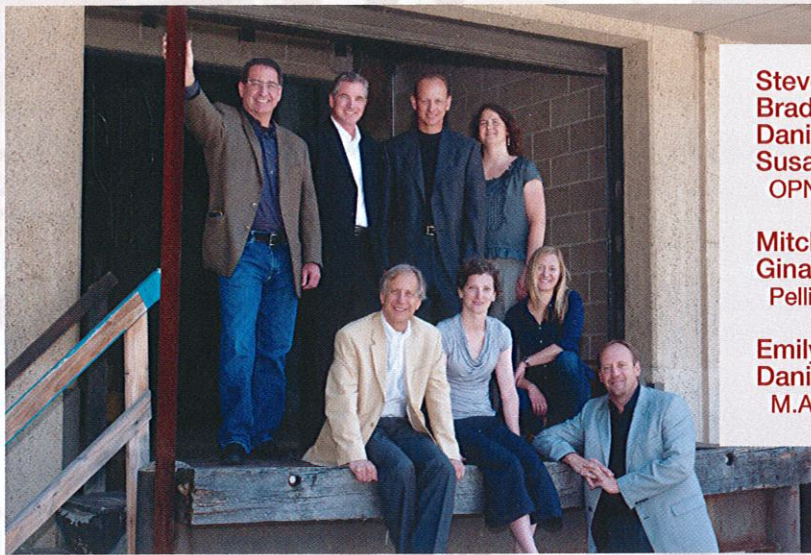
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Jeff Disterhoft
 University of Iowa Community Credit Union
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Don Heineking

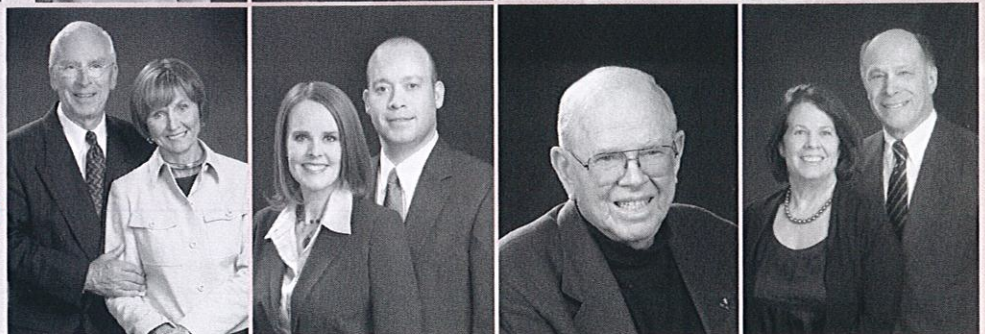


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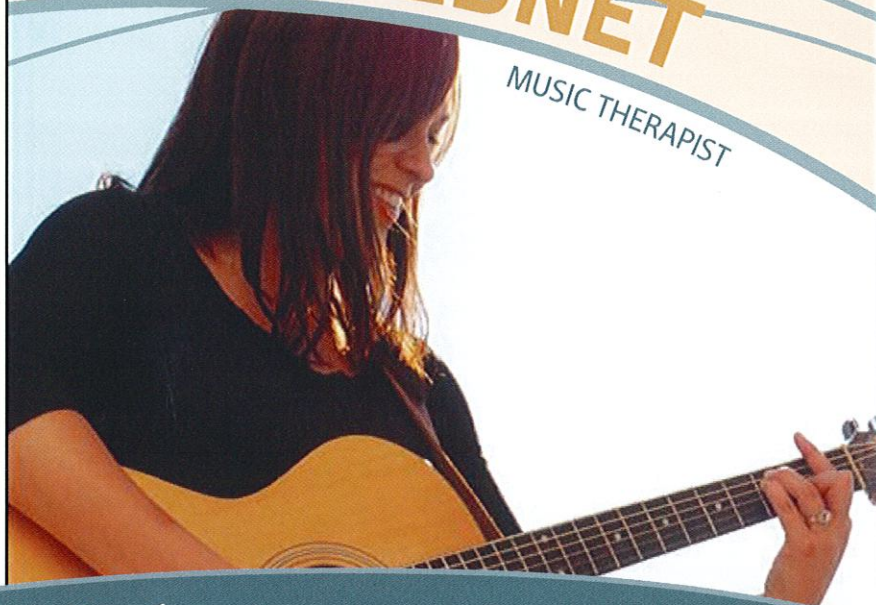
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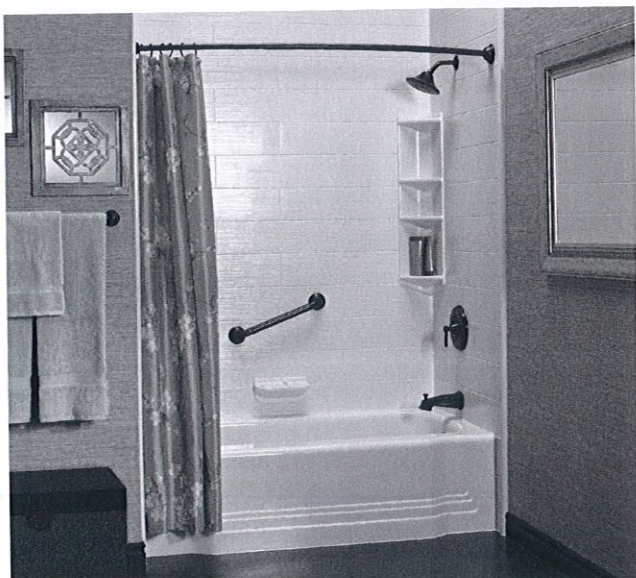
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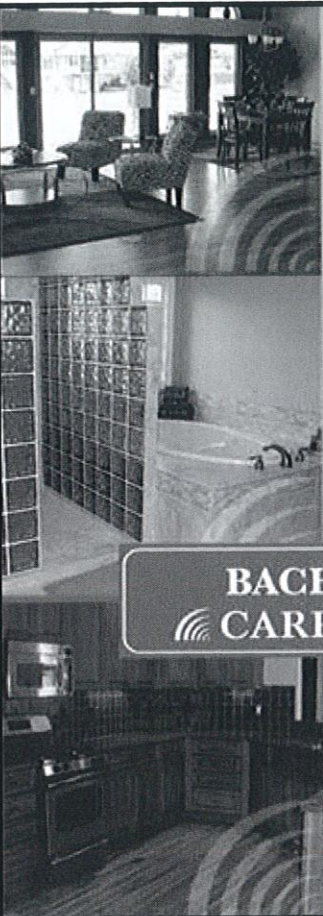
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Glaucoma and Cataracts

Lila Downs

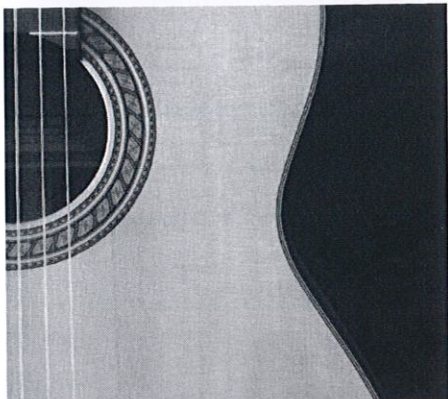
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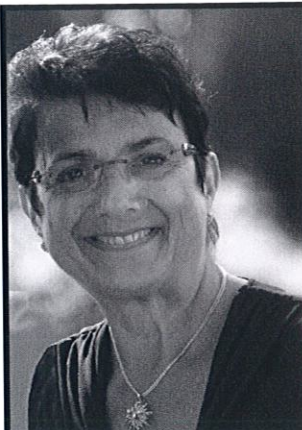


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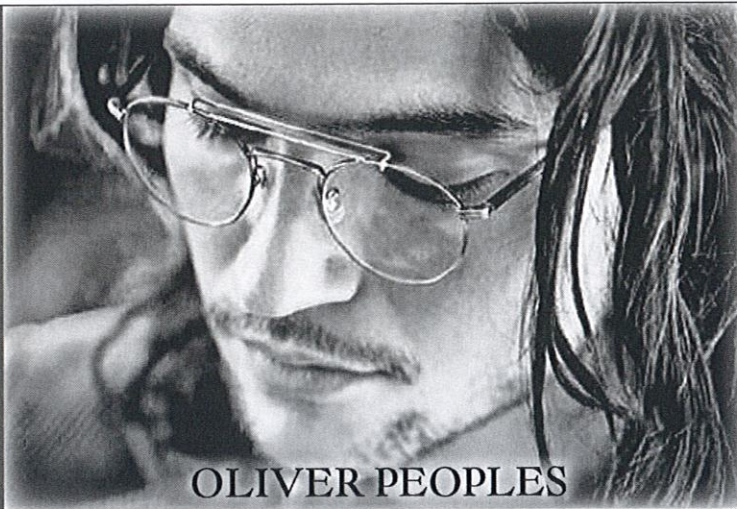
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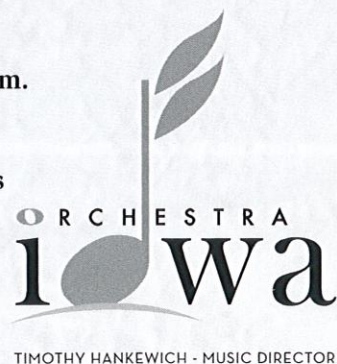
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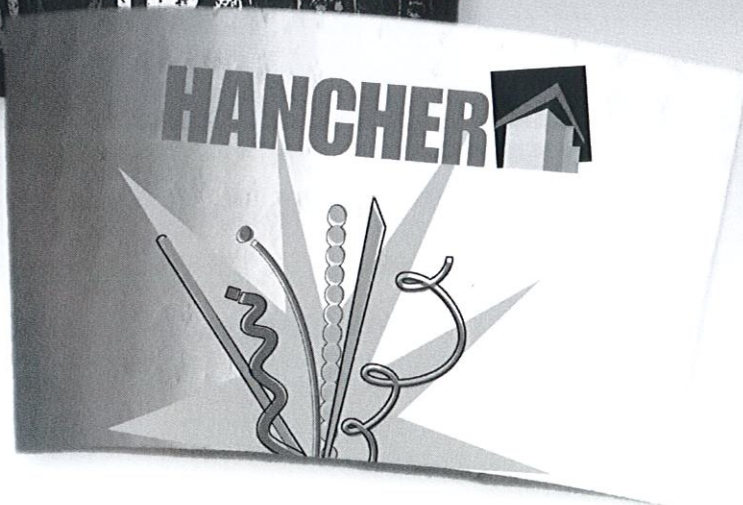
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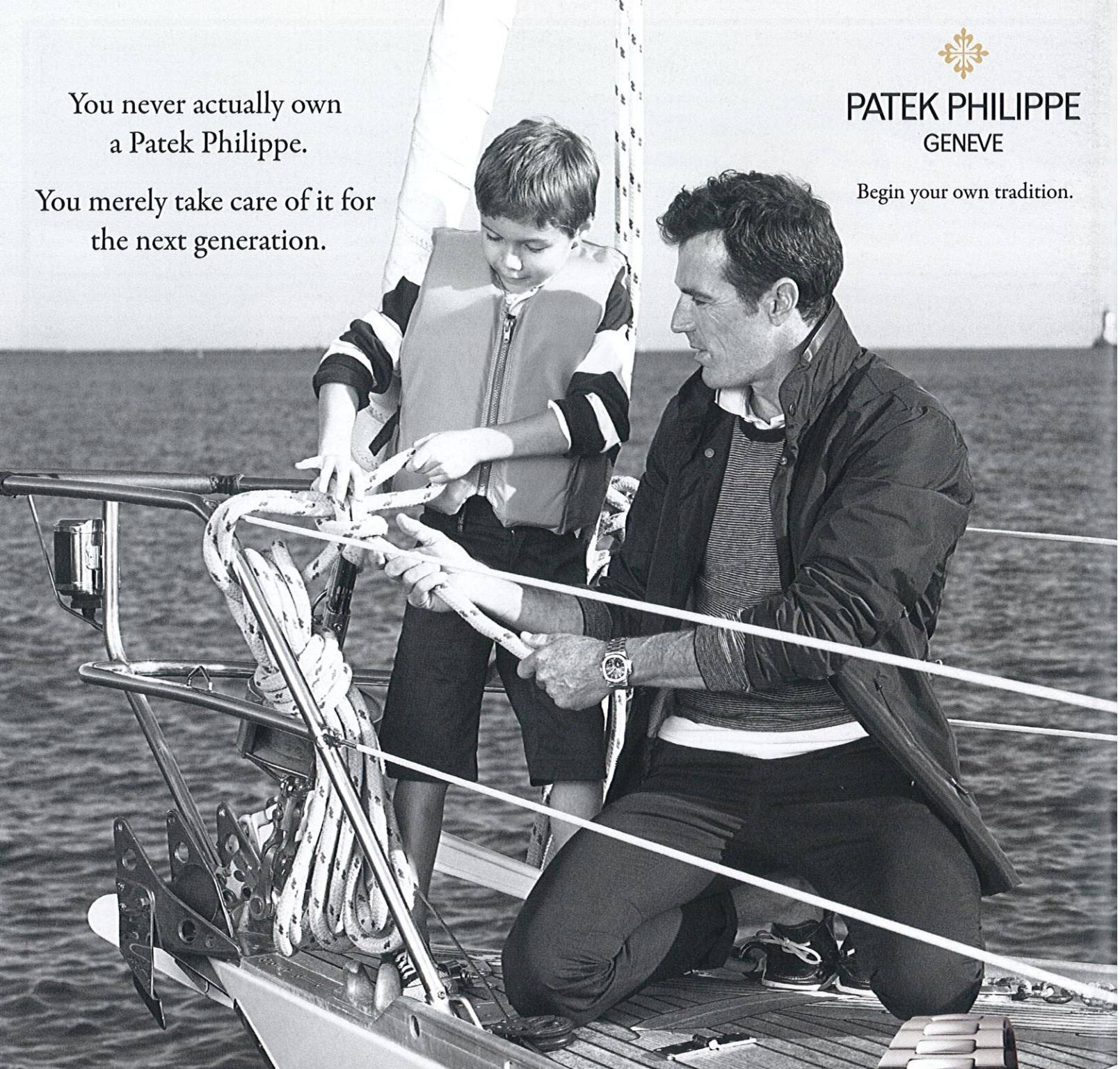
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