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SUPPORTING THE UF SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND SCHOOL OF THEATRE + DANCE

THE ROARING TWENTIES

—
School of **MUSIC**

—
School of **THEATRE + DANCE**

WELCOME

Dear Splendor patrons,

This year's gala theme was intended to celebrate the *Roaring Twenties*, a decade rocked by a number of cultural and political shifts in the United States. We chose to celebrate a time enveloped in the eruption of fashion, the strides towards equality, and the boom of entertainment industries. Now, a century later, we are faced with questions and challenges both new and old. But we also have new opportunities and potential for progress—a time when the arts have a chance to make powerful contributions to what comes next.

As COVID-19 disrupted our lives and our work at the University of Florida, we leaned into our artistic practices and creative expertise to innovate. We knew the world and our students needed the arts now more than ever, as a way to cope, communicate, and come together.

Our studio faculty found new ways to teach online, from challenging students with scale exercises on social media to teaching students how to record acting audition tapes. Our researchers in the Digital Worlds Institute are creating mobile applications to help elementary education, and those in the Center for Arts in Medicine are advocating for the role arts and culture can play in reconstructing and fortifying wellness during public health crises—from global pandemics to racism.

While we know that experiential learning is key to our disciplines, we also know that the world is experiencing culture and the arts differently, and we must prepare our students for robust participation in emerging cultural realities and for ongoing paradigm shifts in the decades ahead. We must prepare our students to become the artists and change-makers that tomorrow demands.

Your support, year after year, at Splendor makes that possible. I would like to extend sincerest thanks to all our sponsors, advertisers, and individuals who donated your ticket cost. In a time of financial hardship for many, and especially our students, your unwavering dedication has been especially heartening. Even without a gala to celebrate, it is clear that this is the spirit of Splendor.

The view of the year ahead is still uncertain. Yet our mission remains clear. This year has illustrated our world's need for creativity and innovation more than ever, and we will continue to challenge ourselves and our students to utilize artistic practice and research to shape our society.

Thank you for your steadfast dedication and continued philanthropy to our mission at the College of the Arts.

Stay safe and well,



Onye P. Ozuzu
Dean and Professor, UF College of the Arts

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I'm fortunate to attend many events and performances by the talented students and faculty of UF School of Music. With each event and performance, I'm inspired and impressed anew. UF School of Music is doing so many wonderful things. They need and deserve our continuing and lasting support. Now more than ever we should stand together to recognize the importance of music and the arts and the essential role it plays in our lives. Joining the Friends of Music and attending events, like Splendor, are two significant ways to provide support and further the mission of the School of Music.

ANDREA WILLIAMS

President, Friends of Music

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Splendor is a high-quality annual event that has become one of the most anticipated evening on the Gainesville social calendar. Splendor is vital to providing funds for scholarships and student travel to workshops and competitions. It also allows the Gainesville community to visit the beautiful Nadine McGuire Theatre and Dance Pavilion and see our talented UF students perform. Being involved in Splendor as well as the Friends of Theatre and Dance provides an opportunity for me to give back to the university and college that educated and developed my two beautiful and talented artist daughters. Being involved in Splendor as well as the Friends of Theatre and Dance allows me to support two things I love: the University of Florida and the Arts. It also allows me to raise funds that will help develop the artists of tomorrow.

STEVEN PLISKOW

President, Friends of Theatre and Dance



DR. KEVIN R. ORR

Director, School of Music

On behalf of the over 400 students of the UF School of Music, I extend deepest gratitude for the generous and sustained commitment you've afforded our program in these unprecedented times. None of us could have predicted the circumstances that would force the cancellation of Splendor 2020, our most significant scholarship fundraising event each year. Your kind support sustains opportunities for current and new student musicians to thrive within our many programs. What would we do without you?

Interest in the UF School of Music remains strong across Florida, nationally and internationally. This fall, we welcome 106 new students across bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. The new Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) program, launched in 2019, is at capacity enrollment in just its second year.

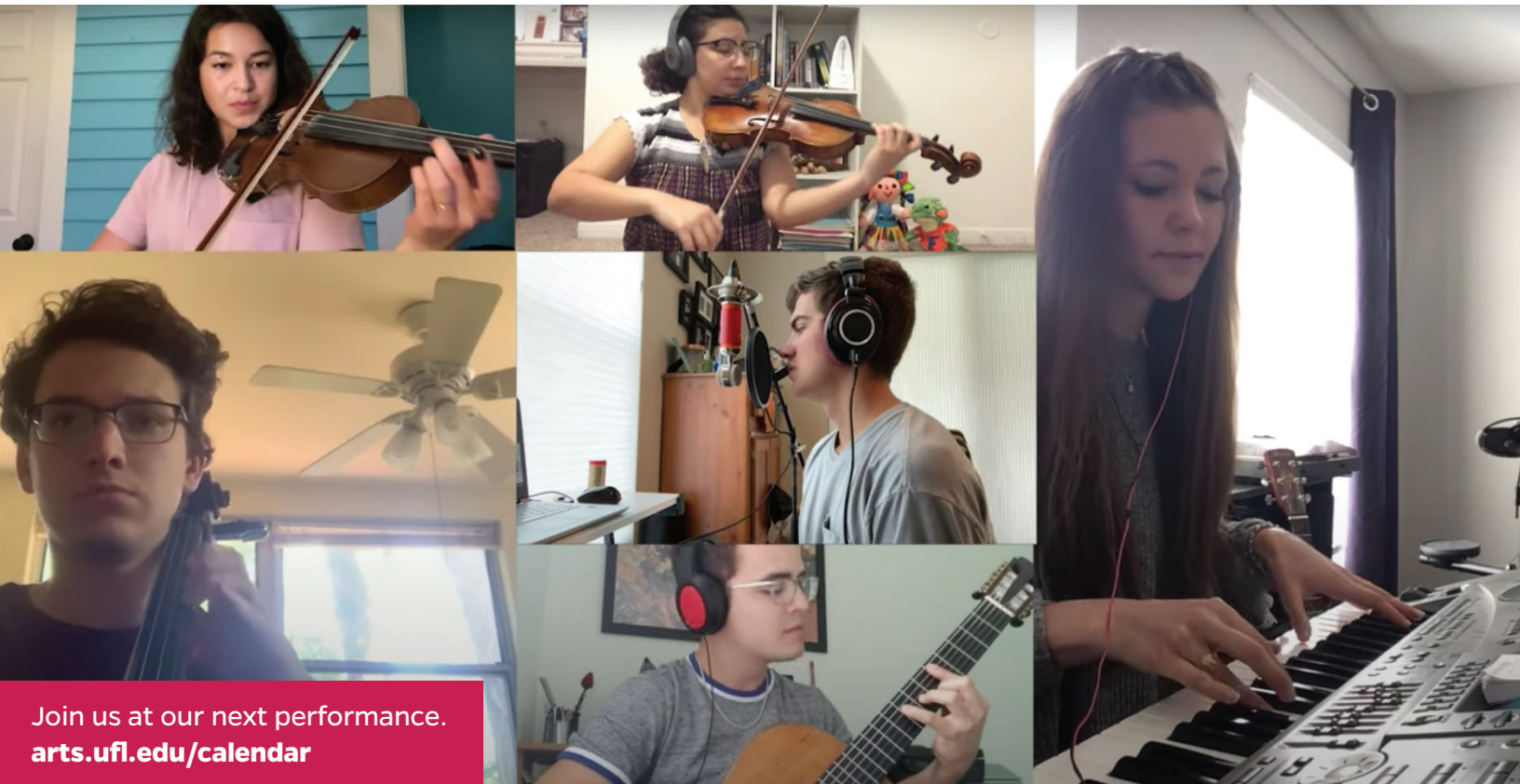
Upon the completion of summer renovations, students and faculty return this fall to a music building with a functioning and clean heating/cooling system. Other updates from the renovation include new lighting and glass enclosures in some areas of the building to mitigate weather intrusion.

I look forward to sharing future updates with you and celebrating together again in the concert hall and at the Splendors ahead!

YOUR SNAZZY SUPPORT

With your generosity, the Friends of Music have helped support:

- Undergraduate student scholarships, which are critically important in attracting the best musicians to pursue their studies at UF
- Festivals and special events that offer community engagement and educational experiences to musicians near and far



Even while separated, music students and faculty experimented with recording technologies to perform together. Students, led by alumnus Jordan Castillow, formed a **virtual orchestra** (top), and faculty continued **lessons** (middle) and **ensembles** (bottom) online.

SOME BEE'S KNEES NEWS

STUDENT AWARD Doctor of Musical Arts candidate Lanjiabao Ge received the Platinum Award in Piano Solo and the Best Baroque Performance Award at the World Piano Teacher Association International Music Competition, Singapore on November 3, 2019.

FACULTY PERFORMANCE Professor of Organ and Carillon, Dr. Laura Ellis, was recently featured on the nationally syndicated radio program "Pipedreams." Distributed by American Public Media, the weekly broadcast reaches over 120 radio markets throughout the United States.

FACILITY UPDATE A new School of Music building, with suitable rehearsal and performances spaces and acoustic considerations, remains a UF priority. Strategic discussions have continued on donor identification and next steps to develop a detailed feasibility study.





DR. PETER CARPENTER

Director, School of Theatre + Dance

My first year at the University of Florida was certainly an adventure. Despite the sudden changes brought on by COVID-19, the School of Theatre and Dance had a very productive year. We hired a number of new faculty to begin tenure-track appointments beginning Fall 2020—in Acting, Contemporary Dance, Costume Design, and Costume Technology.

In the summer, we conducted a virtual staged reading of the new stage play, *Coherence*. This was a co-production with John Pinckard of Pinck Productions. We have had a six-year producing relationship with John, and despite moving to a virtual setting, our students had the benefit of working with New York-based director Travis Greisler and his Los Angeles-based writing partner Mathew Francis.

Thank you to everyone for your unwavering support of our students and programs. Even in new circumstances, you are helping our students and faculty remain resilient and continue creative pursuits of excellence.

I await the next time we all gather to celebrate you and our students in a fashion as grand as Splendor.

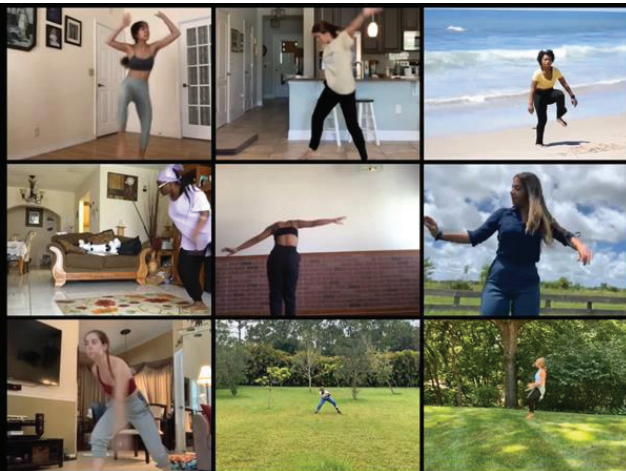
THE SPIRIT OF SPLENDOR

With your generosity, the Friends of Theatre + Dance have helped support:

- The virtual production residency for the presentation of *Coherence*
- The UF Actor Showcase in New York on March 2nd
- Travel related expenses for five graduate students for conferences and internships



Be in the audience for the next production. arts.ufl.edu/calendar



During the summer, the School of Theatre and Dance hosted three virtual productions, including the new stage adaptation **Coherence** (top and bottom), a devised play **Remove Before Flight**, and the annual **Swamp Dance Fest!** (middle).

BIG-TIME HAPPENINGS

STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENT BFA Theatre Production student Amber Smith received an online internship at the Smithsonian Institute in museum lighting.

ALUMNI AT WORK Recent BFA Dance graduates Maria “Mercy” Lopez and Chadwick Gaspard had choreography selected for *Here and Now 2020*, a commissioning and presenting project for emerging artists in Miami.

FACULTY CASTING Assistant Professor Monika Gossmann was cast in a major role in David Fincher’s forthcoming movie *Mank* with Gary Oldman.



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PHOTO BY SUZANNA MARS

"Lose yourself here and welcome to a world no longer your own!" rang through your ears as you cautiously walked through the doors of the Nadine McGuire Pavilion.

Standing in the lobby, prior to entering the Black Box Theatre through a very large and realistic lion's head, dancers in eccentric costumes invite you to take photos and have your fortune told. Within seconds, you become completely immersed within the world of the "sir-kus" and are ready to take on whatever awaits you on the inside.

Assistant Professor Elizabeth Johnson and Visiting Assistant Professor Dante Puleio, the ringmasters of this dark and whimsical concert, envisioned *Dance 2020: sir-kus* as an incredibly immersive experience that steered away from the typical proscenium style of staging and spilled into pre-show activities.

"Dance, especially contemporary, is not always approachable," Johnson said. "This is a big enticement. A way to welcome people into a space that might be unknown and challenging."

"And you can be comfortable," Puleio added.

"Or uncomfortable," Johnson said.

The sir·kus came to town with Dance 2020

BY NOA FRIEDMAN (BFA ACTING '22) AND MARISSA SECADES (BA THEATRE '18, BA ENGLISH '18, MAMC '20)

A strongly thematic concert with a concentrated effort towards continuity among the choreographers—including dance faculty Jason Aryeh, Isa Garcia-Rose, Augusto Soledade and Trent D. Williams, Jr., as well as Johnson and Puleio—was an unexplored but exciting endeavor for the annual concert. Student designers were tasked with breathing life into this sinister circus in the areas that dance couldn't on its own.

Peta McKenna, a third-year MFA candidate in scenic design, was intrigued by the challenge to create two individual but related design concepts—one for the Nadine McGuire Pavilion and one for inside the Black Box Theatre—in the time she typically had to create one.

With help from the School of Theatre & Dance's set shop, McKenna also constructed multiple interactive cutouts where audiences could step right up and take photos in popular circus vignettes with a menacing twist.

"With Instagram and Facebook, everyone wants to take pictures, so I thought, 'Well that's fun!' [If you] put that out there, people will interact," she said.

The ticket booth was another opportunity to blur the ordinarily strict line of when a concert begins.

"With the ticket booth, I wanted you to physically go up to something to get your ticket, like you felt like you were a little kid going to a circus," she said.

Inside the Black Box Theatre, the set design needed to complement each distinct dance piece while staying true to the overall foreboding feel. McKenna achieved this by centering the design on one main event: a large, weathered circus tent that appeared to have seen better, brighter days. With functioning drapes that opened at the start of each act, the tent anchored its top with a screen for video and photo projections offering transitions, warnings, or other visual information to audiences. Inspired by McKenna's research into creepy circuses often found in frightening forests, a dark starry background enveloped the tent and lit up like the night sky.

Fellow graduate student and costume designer Matthew Limerick also pinned their research on circuses from time's past.

"What I did was thematically look at each piece, the story each piece was telling, and I went historically with a lot of things," they said.

Limerick looked towards P.T. Barnum and the American circus craze that blanketed the early half of the 20th century for references, while also combing through Instagram to help modernize these historical styles.

"We had a lot of inspiration that we had to pull in and unify because we are also putting ninety-six costumes on fifty-six people, so we needed a combined throughline that went together to help tell the story visually," they said.

When it came time to sketch, Limerick sat down with co-designer Helen Peterson and listened to each dance piece's music as the pair brainstormed ideas and drew initial sketches.

"It just kind of came to us," Limerick said.

"With dance, a lot of times you're visually telling a story and there is not a lot of speaking or there is not a lot of narrative that comes. There is a ton in the movement but nothing necessarily spoken," Limerick explained. "Helen's and my focus was making sure that we could tell the story for each number but still have some combined elements for all of them."

The fluid motion that comes with the nature of a dance concert presented unique challenges when constructing the costumes. To ensure that dancers had a full range of motion, leggings were custom printed with more of a

yoga cut and better stretch than typical pants. This customization also allowed for their fit to complement the different body types seen onstage.

Limerick and Peterson's designs provided dancers with options to match the fit and comfort level of each dancer.

"Everyone is wearing more or less the same thing, but there are little variations here and there so that we are fitting the body types, and we are fitting everybody's comfort levels as well," Limerick said.

This kind of costume design and construction strengthens dancers' individual agency so that they are more than just models of a design. Instead, they are active participants in what they are wearing by having the designs fit to them rather than being fit into the design.

This sense of agency harmonized with the immersive nature of this concert, as dancers were pushed in rehearsals and out their comfort zone to interact and guide audiences through an active and eerie experience with dance. Grounding a dance concert in this dark fantasy of an underground circus asked dancers to be even more vulnerable than they may have been accustomed to, but it encouraged them to experiment and play with characterizations and interactions.

As Elizabeth Johnson said, "Circus is play."

"We are at a point where theatre and dance are putting more body types and gender identities onstage, which is amazing, and we want to honor those people as much as we can," Limerick said.

Read more stories. arts.ufl.edu/news



GRAMMY® Award-winning musician trains students to seize business world

PHOTO BY AARON DAVE / UF ADVANCEMENT

BRANDON MCKINLEY (BMUS BSPR '17)

Why does the world need another guitarist? Why does the world need another conductor?

These are questions that Dr. José Valentino Ruiz asks his music students.

“The world doesn’t need those roles,” he tells them, “but they need you expressed in those roles.”

As the UF School of Music’s first assistant professor in music business and entrepreneurship, Ruiz is helping students define their creative and professional identity.

By combining elements of business law, communication arts and music technology, Ruiz brings his personal experience as a successful artist—which includes a GRAMMY® Award, multiple GRAMMY® nominations and an Emmy® Award—into the classroom.

Upon arriving at UF this fall, Ruiz started teaching a new course for music students called Strategic Entrepreneurship Development for the Arts.

In class, students are learning how to establish their own music enterprises, which includes determining the tax codes for businesses and organizations they

hope to start, creating crowdfunding campaigns, and learning how to land endorsement deals.

Ruiz said the class is like a laboratory, with action- and project-based assignments that students collaborate on and present to each other for feedback.

Undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students all sit in the class, which allows for a diverse cross-section of learning. As undergraduates are establishing their first websites, doctoral students are presenting business plans for nonprofit organizations they lead.

“It’s all tailored based on what their aspired vocation of interest is going to be,” Ruiz said.

Ruiz isn’t the only faculty member in the school to hold prestigious awards and have a wealth of experience to pass on to his students. For years, the school’s faculty have been training students how to succeed as performers, educators and researchers. But the challenge was to find time to incorporate these lessons within an already packed curriculum.

When Associate Professor of Jazz Studies Scott Wilson returned to academia after a successful run as the

music director for Universal Studios Japan, the first thing he noticed was the lack of skills his students possessed to promote their own artistry.

“They could go to school for four to five years and never get a promo photo,” Wilson said.

In addition to conducting jazz ensembles, providing one-on-one applied lessons, and teaching jazz history and theory, Wilson was also pulling in his students to help them build their own websites and get promo photos.

“We have students that are superstars,” he said. “They just had no idea how to package themselves.”

With the university’s Faculty 500 initiative, the School of Music had the opportunity to create and hire new professorships. This also meant the chance to formalize coursework for students to experiment with business principles, seek professional and peer feedback, and refine their artistic identity.

“With José here, we have a real opportunity to help our students learn about the music business,” Wilson said. “And they’re learning from someone who has just been nominated for a GRAMMY®. That puts us on a whole different scale of accountability.”

But Ruiz recognizes that not all his students want to become award-winning musicians. Some hope to open their own personal studios or become artist managers. He also knows that many of his students will wear multiple hats throughout their career and that the skills taught in his course will make them more marketable in a variety of fields.

“Having options is a luxury,” he said, “and in today’s world as a creative artist, you have to have multiple streams of income, not just to make it and thrive, but also to express who you are as an artist. We’re no longer in an academic setting that tells us we have to specialize in one specific thing.”

At UF, Ruiz said he has noticed how much synergy and enthusiasm exists among the faculty, and both he and Wilson credit the school’s director Dr. Kevin Orr for curating a collaborative and entrepreneurial environment.

For Ruiz and Wilson, their teamwork started the day after Ruiz accepted his position last spring. Immediately, the two began a chain of thousands of texts that manifested in the new strategic entrepreneurship course and the start of a broader music business curriculum.

Now that Ruiz is in Gainesville, their partnership extends into their classrooms.

“The beauty of how Scott and I are collaborating together is that while I’m addressing certain aspects of documenting students’ creativity, he is cultivating their artist expression in applied lessons and jazz ensembles,” Ruiz said.

The new course in strategic entrepreneurship is only the beginning. He also teaches Introduction to Music Technology, where students are learning how to record their own singles, compose tracks for television ads and film, and aurally discriminate cover tunes to replicate anything they hear.

Ruiz is also at the helm of creating a new certificate in music business for students.

Future courses will include Foundations of Music Business, to address topics on copyright, licensing and artist management, and Music Production and Commercial Media, which may include students developing their own podcast.

Already, Wilson and Ruiz have students landing sponsorship deals with instrument companies and winning prestigious awards for collegiate music.

In the future, they hope to obtain a recording studio for the School of Music to raise students’ marketability even higher.

“With a recording studio, we can actually produce the world’s leading artists who are going to be contributing and influencing and inspiring society in a positive way,” Ruiz said.

In all this work, the two professors keep the students at the heart of their goals.

“The students all have innate potential,” Ruiz said, “and we’re here to just water the seed of creativity that they have and help them secure their identity, who they are, so that they can develop their purpose and express their purpose through multiple roles.”

Wilson said that, to some extent, he and Ruiz have lived their dreams as musicians and artists, and all he wants to do is let students have the same opportunities he did.

Ruiz simply agrees.

“My dreams are the dreams of the students,” he said.

Explore more stories. arts.ufl.edu/news



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SOPHIA YOUNG

School of Theatre + Dance | scholarship recipient



Thank you so much for supporting the Arts. We need support in order to continue working, and I am deeply honored for receiving this scholarship! I promise I will keep dedicating all my energy to making music, teaching, and researching, but now feeling I have more people supporting me and my colleagues.

DIOGO SALMERON CARVALHO

School of Music | scholarship recipient

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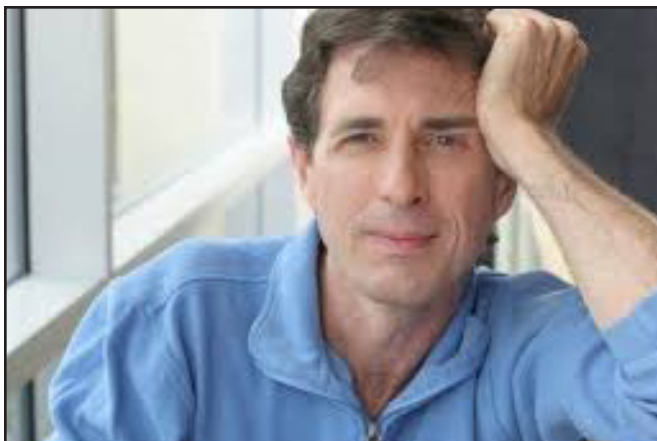
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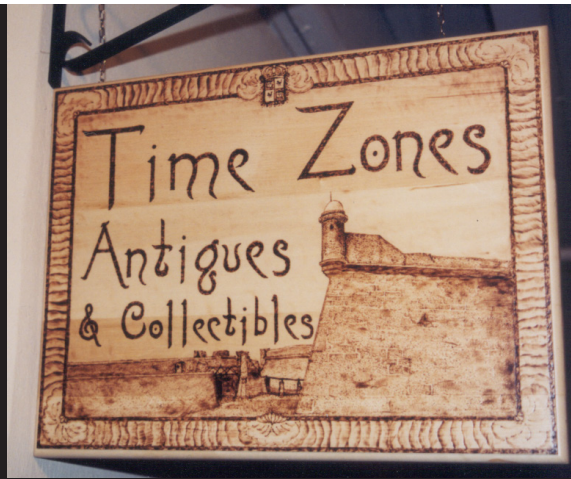
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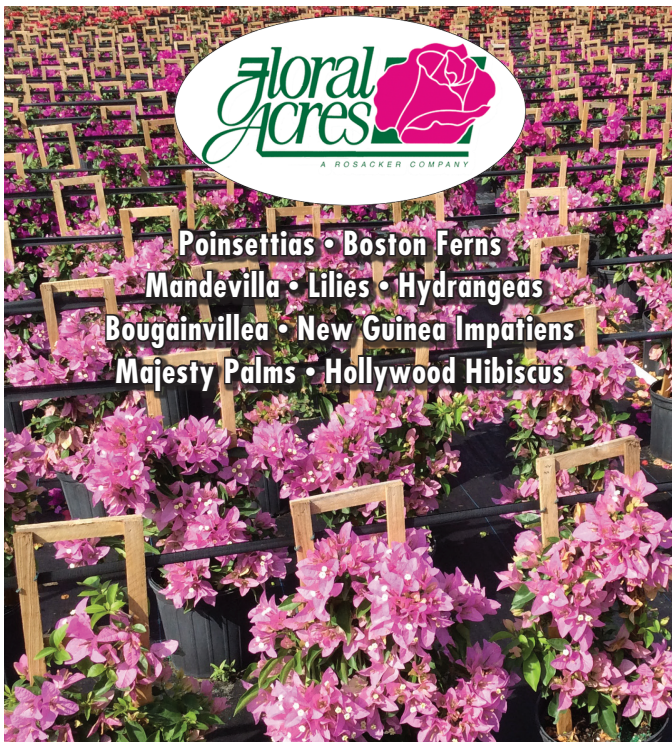
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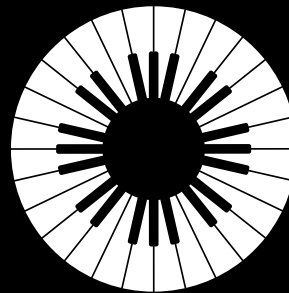


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