

TIMOTHY SEAMAN



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

MUSICIAN TEACHER ARTIST

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Timothy Seaman is an artist who paints with layers of sound rather than pigment. Tucked away in the deeply shadowed woods of Season's Trace, Tim's home is packed with his collection of diverse instruments. They range from the humble pennywhistle, flute, recorder, and drum, to a variety of stringed guitars, psalteries and dulcimers. The comprehensive display reveals that Tim's musical capabilities include most woodwinds and just about anything that can be strummed, plucked or hammered. The star of the show is a finely crafted Dusty Strings D600 extended-range hammered dulcimer, which Tim is using to illustrate a concept to his present audience of one. With a deft flick of the wrist, his delicate wooden hammers reach out to strike its strings, lifting a familiar folk hymn up, over, and beyond what the ear expects.

"Did you hear it?" he asks with excitement. "That's excelsior! It's no longer just a pretty tune." Somehow our afternoon meeting has become

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I love what I do. "There is nothing more pleasing than turning a house into a home that tells your story. Everyone's home should be as different as their personality and their history. In that way, those who visit can feel your embrace as they walk through the door." The greatest compliment paid to me by a former client was that her home did not look like I had been there. She noticed other designers had "left their stamp" on homes throughout her neighborhood, you could tell by "their" style. But I chose to leave her stamp, and reflect her style. After all, it was her "embrace" that visitors would be expecting. - Lori Bjorkman

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less of an interview and more of a dynamic, free-ranging conversation/concert/music lesson. Not only is Tim a multitalented composer and performer, he's also a philosopher, and at his core, a teacher. Tim has a keen compulsion to share his knowledge with others, to deepen the understanding and appreciation of his listeners.

This compulsion can be traced to influences during his childhood. "My dad was a natural teacher and theologian," Tim remembers. "He was someone who would analyze and narrate life as it was happening. Everything was observed and discussed. Dad grew up in Wheeling, a West Virginia steel city, fell in love with nature and became a government biologist." Tim was born in Charleston, West Virginia, but the family soon migrated to suburban Washington, D.C.

Both parents encouraged their son's early musical talent. "I started listening to classical music as a toddler," he says. "The structure and architecture of music has always been extremely important to me. I would put on recordings of symphonies and follow along intently from beginning to end."

Living in Northern Virginia meant he was also close to the nation's best live cultural of-

ferings. "My mom and I stood on the sidewalk outside Constitution Hall when Arthur Rubinstein was playing there, waiting for seats to become available," he remembers. "We scored a pair of no-show tickets and wound up hearing the concert from Lyndon and Ladybird's box!" Tim will always be grateful for his parents' love of music. "My personal theory is the very best way to ensure that our children grow up to be involved in the arts is to allow them to closely observe our own appreciation for them."

Tim came to Williamsburg in 1970 to study English at the College of William and Mary. As a student, he performed as half of a duo with folk/jazz/classical roots, and later formed a group called Springs of Joy, where he remained for a decade. "My wife Ro and I met through that group," he says. "She had such a beautiful soprano voice, a sweeter version of Joan Baez." The birth of two daughters, Karen and Laurie Jean, and the needs of their growing family required a dependable income. Ro (named after Ivanhoe's Princess Rowena by her romantic nuclear physicist father) is employed at Norge Elementary in the Bright Beginnings at-risk children's preschool program. In 1994, after 15 years spent at Williamsburg Christian Academy and 19 years of teaching, Tim was at

last able to take that great leap of faith required of a professional musician.

"Today is the first day of the third decade of my dedicated music career," Tim says with satisfaction and a touch of wonder. "Yesterday marked twenty years." Tim finds it a busy life, perhaps more of a scramble to keep moving forward than he had anticipated, but with enough rewards to encourage him in its pursuit. However, Tim feels the constraint of practicality affecting his artistry.

"When you run your own business and wear all the hats, much time is taken up with occupations other than music. Among other things, I'm a full-time marketer, booking agent, workshop teacher and recording engineer. I'm also the CEO of Pine Winds Studios and need to make decisions about what potentials ought to be followed and what should be tossed out," he says. "It's a constant choice: What is the appropriate use of my time? In the past five years I've done virtually no composing of new pieces, which doesn't make me very happy. Practically speaking, I need to have a commercial reason for just about everything I do."

An exception to that rule is Tim's service at Grace Covenant, a Presbyterian church where Tim often uses his pleasing baritone voice to

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lead his fellow congregants in worship music.

"I'm doing more leading because people in the music ministry keep moving away and having babies," he says with a laugh. "Truthfully, I'd rather be the accompanist, but on the plus side, it's the prerogative of whoever is leading to choose the music, so I'm having a good time with that. We're presently singing a lot of the old hymns, full of 'thee and 'thou's, but often with more contemporary tunes."

After twenty years, Tim's bearded face is by now familiar to many throughout the region and is becoming known on the Internet as well. Williamsburg residents might catch Tim at First Night, the Virginia Shakespeare Festival, or any number of Colonial Williamsburg events. As an organization that promotes Virginia destination products, CW is currently by far the largest commercial consumer of Tim's recordings. He performs both individually and in ensembles at numerous festivals and concerts, and in instructional videos uploaded and viewed on YouTube. Tim's love of music has taken him as far as locations in Hungary, the Netherlands and Germany.

The former English teacher also writes a blog, accessed through his website, www.TimothySeaman.com, where he connects with kindred spirits, those who have (like favorite

Christian author C.S. Lewis) "an inconsolable longing" for God and a transcendent world that is their true home. For Tim, great literature, the glories of nature, and the joy of music all assuage that longing.

Tim is pleased when I say I find his music "evocative." "Good word!" he exclaims with scholarly approval. "I'm not just trying to make music; I want to make statements and get under people's skins." Many of Tim's 15 different recorded discs are meant to evoke a particular place or time, from Celtic airs to Civil War themes and reflections of nature's beauty. An outdoorsman and former backpacking instructor, Tim's lifelong love of wide-open spaces and majestic vistas inspired a series of compositions that have become closely associated with Virginia State Parks. Imagine a Ken Burns documentary covering the region from the misty Blue Ridge to Jamestown's shore; Tim Seaman's compositions would be the perfect sound track.

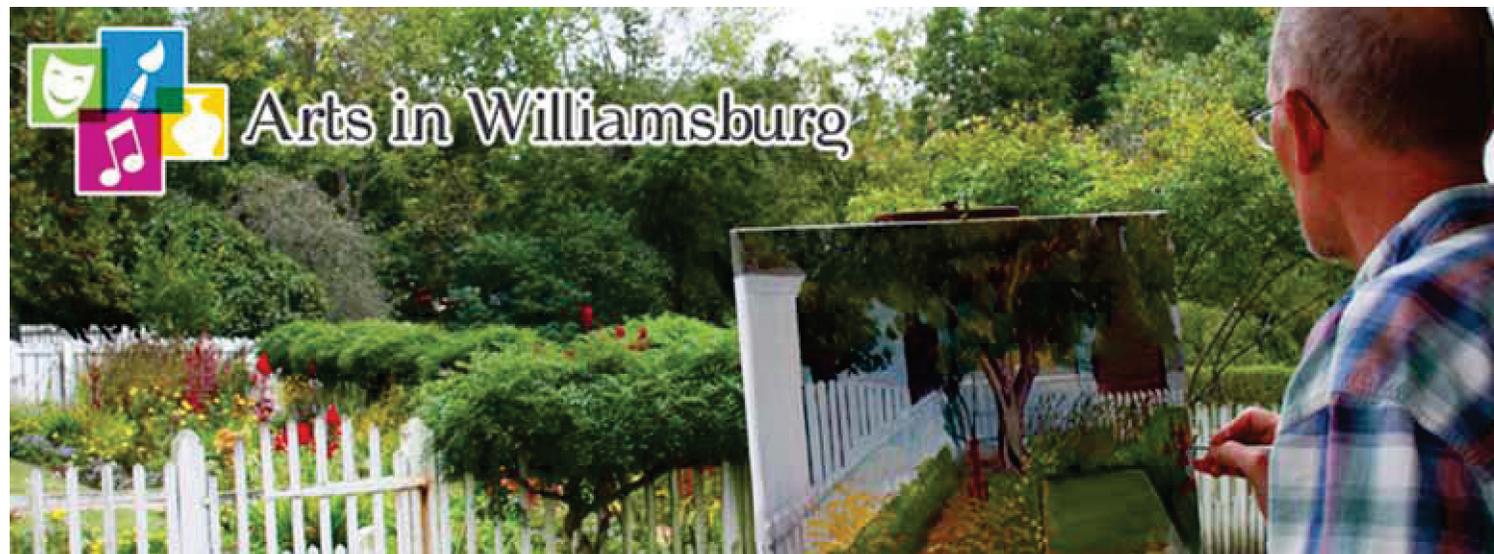
It's a fortunate person who can be moved by music to rapture or tears. Most can only relate to it as pleasing wallpaper laid over the substructure of their lives, but for others it is the undergirding influence of their existence. So it is for Tim.

Over the years, there have been moments

of affirmation that encourage Tim in his chosen work. "I once heard it said that when you're given a gift, that means you're the delivery boy," he says. "It's up to you to pass it on. When you see that someone has received something through you, it's very gratifying." A few years back, he was approached by a couple while performing at a local gallery.

Tim remembers, "The husband, John, had been in a terrible car accident and given up for dead. While he was in a deep coma, his wife played my Quiet in the Meadow CD at his bedside." Miraculously, John began to rally, and after a long struggle recovered almost completely. "They found my music to be so inspirational," he says with awe, "that both of them took up hammered dulcimer and play for others recuperating from brain injuries."

Tim has come a long way in twenty years. His earliest days as a professional were spent hawking his Christmas cassette tape at craft shows. In later years, he's played for U.S. Senators, Margaret Thatcher, and invited to play for the elder President Bush. Some have said that the definition of true success is to make enough money at something that stirs your passion that you're able to keep doing it. Tim's passion is stirred on a daily basis; he clearly loves what he does, and that makes for a happy man. NDN



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 29 - 31

- Virginia Symphony at Lake Matoaka
- Virginia Symphony at Yorktown
- Opening Night Event at the Freight Shed
- Colonial Williamsburg Taste Tradition
- CW Military Bands Concert

September 5-7

- Arts District Hog Wild for the Arts
- This Century Art Gallery Weekend
- Williamsburg Symphonia Lecture & Concert
- Concerts and Art in Historic Churches throughout the region

September 12-14

- New Town Arts Festival
- Glass Art Show at Legacy Hall
- Chalk Art Festival

September 19-21

- Tucker Arnold Storytelling Festival at Kimball
- Williamsburg Book Festival
- Contemporary Artisans Festival
- Plein Air Festival
- WHRO Art Appraisal Fair
- Under the Big Top PechaKucha Festival
- Art Inspires Stories Weekend

September 26- 28

- Taste of the James - James River Assoc. craft beer, wine, food, art
- Yorktown Art Stroll (Expanding up the Hill for 2014)
- P.I.P.E. concert at Lake Matoaka

October 2-5

- Williamsburg Gallery Crawl
- Merchant's Square "Right On" concert
- Yorktown Wine Festival
- An Occasion for the Arts

October 10-12

- All Jazzed Up - Williamsburg Jazz & Wine

Festival

- Jazz Brunch at Merchants Square
- Virginia Fashion Week at Sadler Center



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