

Sensory Delights



Get Real by Brooke Bessesen



Time's a wastin', better do something good with it

Let's face it, life's a gamble. A crap shoot. A box of chocolates. Every day we peer into the unknown, drunk with hope and leaning heavily on Lady Luck.

When tomorrow promises no promises and every small step forward is an undeniable leap of faith, a single spin around the sun can bring new, often unforeseen challenges right alongside amazing, unexpected delights.

This, in fact, is the only guarantee: tick tocks on the universal pocket watch - a brigade of sequent minutes - will march promptly and unquestioningly forward.

At birth, we are each given a tiny sliver of the Eternal Epoch to spend any way we choose. But there's a catch. The exact amount of that credit remains a mystery and ... no matter, it's never enough. This makes time (a resource at once infinite and non-renewable) our most cherished commodity.

There are dozens of adages about it: Time is too valuable to waste, Make every moment count, Time waits for no one, Live life to the fullest, etc.

The bottom line is, we are like fated thieves in a jewelry store ... we can stuff our bags with diamonds and gold but we're destined to be hauled away empty-handed. The only thing we'll manage to get out the back door is the memory of what happened before we departed.

So why go for the diamonds? Shouldn't we be stuffing our bags with jewels of recollection instead?

Indeed, memories are my most treasured possessions, experiences that linger on my heartstrings as distant but ever-resounding chords. Many marvelous ... some tearful ...

but all precious!

Despite perceived pressures and obligations, most of us are privileged to decide how and where our limited years on this planet will be expended. Yet too often we are afraid to break chains of convention, too cautious to stack our chips on the chance draw of an ace.

I have elected the adventuresome though, by many standards, risky existence of consistently following my dreams.

They have tempted me across thresholds of fear to extraordinary far-off places, surprising internal alcoves of creativity and unexpected professional heights. And they ushered me to a wonderful husband and home.

The return has been tremendous.

Safely said, nothing valuable can be gained without considerable exposure.

We enter into the most significant proposals - romance, marriage, parenthood, occupation and locale - knowing full-well such ventures could yield either devastating failure or incredible success.

Whether impelled by a conservative or speculative nature, in the end we are left to evaluate the opportunity costs of our choices.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock...

Second by second, the future slips through us to the past. An evolution that feels exponentially faster with age.

Sometimes, if we pay deliberate attention, we become aware of this ethereal progression, notice past, present and future existing in the same space.

At a recent dinner with our entire geographically-

scattered family - the first in nearly two decades - I found myself overcome with sentiment. Time with loved ones is valued beyond words.

Across a table bedizened with matching plates and sparkling glassware, I silently focused on one person, then the next, in turn.

With each, I savored rich, varied memories from our past. I watched them in the present, happily passing bountiful plates of togetherness that filled my belly with contentment. And, concurrently, imagined where we all might be in the coming years.

With a pure note of gratitude swelling from my heart, I carefully etched the scene in the sandstone of my mind to carry with me into the ever-changing future. Another jewel in my bag.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock...

There's not a moment to squander. Time makes faces grow older, landmarks disappear. It bathes us in nostalgia and leaves us breathless with reminiscence.

The best we can do is move purposefully toward our ideals, proceed with passion and keep courage as our closest companion.

I can't gamble money. Not even a quarter. It gets my nerves all in a tizzy. But when it comes to life, I'm margined to the hilt.

Some people play for wealth or recognition, security or comfort. But I want to walk away from the table with just one thing: a life that has been truly lived.

Here I stand, peering into the unknown, dice in hand, hope in my veins and Lady Luck by my side. Will tomorrow bring me challenges or delights?

Odds are: both. I'm willing to bet on it.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is taking a hiatus from her *Real Life* column to work on two upcoming book projects, *Look Who Lives in the Ocean* (the follow-up to her popular children's book *Look Who Lives in the Desert*), and *Zachary Z. Packrat, a story about a little collector who can't help but acquire more stuff*. *Arizona Highways Books* is publishing both titles.

Smooth Jazz for Christmas

Four of the most diverse and inspirational names in jazz come to the Mesa Arts Center Ikeda Theater, 1 E. Main St., Mesa, for the holidays with a Cool Christmas of smooth jazz. The night of Dec. 20 at 8 p.m. the talents of David Benoit (piano), Kirk Whalum (saxophone), Jonathan Butler (guitarist) and Michael Franks (vocalist) will come together to play holiday music as well as their greatest hits.

David Benoit's 1985 radio hit *Linus and Lucy* helped launch the smooth jazz genre, and his early genre recordings, including *Freedom at Midnight* and its Grammy nominated 1988 follow-up *Every Step of the Way*, are considered influential classics.

Benoit has released 25 solo recordings in the last 29 years, worked with noted orchestras such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic and composed music for Peanuts TV specials for over a decade.

Kirk Whalum came to the saxophone in junior high school. At Texas Southern University in Houston Whalum met Bob James, who was so impressed with his playing that two weeks later, Whalum found himself in New York soloing on James' album. Whalum's debut album *Cache*

stayed at number one for over five weeks in 1995. Whalum has released numerous recordings and to date, has been nominated for seven Grammys.

Raised in Cape Town, South Africa, during apartheid, Jonathan Butler's talents as a singer and guitarist were recognized at an early age. At thirteen, Butler caught the ears of British record producer Clive Calder and his first single broke down racial barriers, becoming the first song by a black artist to be played by white radio stations in South Africa.

More than 28 years and 15 albums later, Butler is undeniably one of the most successful jazz musicians of the last quarter century.

Vocalist Michael Franks has mesmerized an international legion of fans with his one-of-a-kind artistry of weaving stunning lyrics with jazz, soul, pop, chamber and music from around the globe.

His best known works include *Popsicle Toes*, *Monkey See Monkey Do*, *The Lady Wants To Know* and *When the Cookie Jar is Empty*.

Tickets are \$40 - 60. Contact the box office at (480) 644-6500 or www.mesaartscenter.com.

Phoenix Theatre's *Cookie Company*

Place: Cookie Company, Phoenix Theatre, 100 E. McDowell, Phoenix.

Production: 5th Anniversary of *The Quiltmaker's Gift*.

Plot: Adapted from the book by Alan Prewitt, Artistic Director for Phoenix Theatre's *Cookie Company*, *The Quiltmaker's Gift* has become a timeless heart-warming musical tale about a greedy king whose life is transformed by a wise quiltmaker. The quiltmaker reveals to the king that joy is found in giving and not receiving as the story transports the audience to a magical land of singing bears, helpful birds and an army of befuddled king's guards.

Players: Cookie Company theater players.

Particulars: Plays Dec. 9 - 10 and Dec. 16 - 17. Performance Dec. 9 - 10 are

at 1 and 3 p.m. and Dec. 16 - 17 at 1 p.m. only. Tickets are \$12 and include cookies and milk and an autograph session with actors following the performance. Call (602) 254-2151 or visit www.phxtheatre.org for tickets.



The Quiltmaker's Gift plays at Phoenix Theatre's Cookie Company from Dec. 9 - 17.