

What's in ...

The Stacks

December 2022



A Message from Conservator Joe Wilson, Jr.

Hello! My name is Joe Wilson, Jr. Many of you know me from the roles I've played at Trinity Rep over the past 18 years. I am also proud to serve as a Professor of the Practice of Theatre at Wheaton College. My life in Providence has been made richer because of my neighbors. Of course, Trinity sits across the street from PPL. One of my closest friends, who happens to be my next-door neighbor works at PPL. Another friend, who also used to live next-door to me is one of the main reasons I have had the honor of working at Wheaton. Among the many beautiful things about living in Providence is that while our beloved city is composed of so many vibrant neighborhoods, our size allows the city to at times feel like one big neighborhood. People taking care of each other, challenging each other, strategizing about how to build a better and more equitable future together, while acknowledging that place making is critically important to our survival as a civil society. Creating community is vital to us feeling a sense of worth and belonging, and inspiring us to be in service of the greater good.

The theater, our educational institutions, and our libraries are “mini communities,” and our support for them are essential to the building of the “Beloved Community.” These institutions are not just collections of people or books, but of stories that reflect the multiplicity of who we are, allowing us to grow and become who we strive to be. This is why I am so proud to be a PPL Conservator. I, among many others, joined together to raise money in support of the new RI LGBTQ+ Community Archive at PPL. This effort came at a time when I was also working on the epic, award-winning play *The Inheritance: Parts One and Two* by Matthew Lopez at Trinity. Like the LGBTQ+ Archive at PPL, *The Inheritance* asks us to reflect upon the past, allowing us to honestly examine the present, recommitting ourselves to the creation of a world interconnected by compassion, empathy, and justice.

The play was inspired by E.M. Forester's *Howard's End*. At the beginning of that novel, Forester asks us to “Only Connect,” to one moment at a time ... to one person at a time. We are at a moment in history when there are so many different ways to “connect.” We all have so many “friends” via Facebook or “followers” via Instagram and TikTok, but these relationships can be fleeting, occasional, or transactional. Our libraries provide one of the most fundamental and lasting ways that we remain in communion with each other. Of course, we make connections through our shared stories, and the knowledge we gain from all of the wonderful resources offered by our libraries. But we also connect with people, those who help guide us through volumes of information for the purpose of answering the questions we ponder and exploring the pain and beauty of the world we inhabit. In addition, libraries curate programming and provide intergenerational educational opportunities, bringing together the community as we engage our curiosities and passions collectively, leading us to the joy and truth that we seek. Libraries are safe spaces for students to study and for everyone to simply reflect. Even during our darkest COVID days, libraries continued the work of connecting us all to our greater selves.

During this holiday season and as we approach the end of the year, I am asking that each of you consider making a gift to our library. Preserving the robust work of PPL is needed now more than ever. Building meaningful connections, with our past, with the truth, and with others must be our sacred charge. PPL is at the center of this work. Thank you for your continued support of Providence Public Library.

Conservator Society



Did You Know...

... PPL actually has two birth dates? The Library was initially chartered and named in 1874 as *The Free Library, Art Gallery and Museum in the City of Providence*. It subsequently was rechartered in 1875 as *Providence Public Library*. So PPL officially will turn 150 in 2025. The planning has already begun for commemorative celebrations of the Library's illustrious past, present, and future. Stay tuned!

Upcoming Events...

Virtual Crêpe Demo with Claudine Pépin & Rollie Wesen Thursday, February 9 — 6:30 pm

We are pleased to announce the details of our February crêpe-making demo event with [Claudine Pépin](#) and Rollie Wesen, Professor at JWU and Executive Director of The Jacques Pépin Foundation! The event will be virtual, so we hope everyone will be able to join us. Please save the date!



LOOKING AHEAD...

An Author/Literary Event in March/April

Savor the Story! — May 5, 2023

Visit prov.pub/sts-sponsor-2023 for sponsorship information.

PPL's October 25 Dance Party was MAD HOT!

The Paramount Classics documentary, *Mad Hot Ballroom*, captured the minds and hearts of moviegoers the world over, and did not disappoint at PPL, as Conservators and friends were treated to a discussion and abbreviated film screening with fellow Conservator Rodney Eric López, former teaching artist and executive director of Dancing Classrooms. Special thanks to Claude Michelle Aubourg of Valiant Arts and Carolyn Castro of Napua O'Polynesia, who joined moderator PPL's Christina Bevilacqua in the discussion.

Rodney not only shared his experiences from *Mad Hot Ballroom*, but then led everyone in a joyful dance lesson not soon to be forgotten! We also enjoyed delicious dance-friendly Soul Food with a Latin twist from Kin Southern Table and drinks from Conservator Eric Taylor of Bottles Fine Wines!



Above (l-r): Rodney warms up the crowd. Laurie Moïse Sears meets her partner Rob Edwards. (left) Guest dancers Sergio Gonzalez, Ned Porter, Adriana Dawson, and Horton Sears prepare to shake a leg.

Need Some Great Holiday Gift-Giving Ideas?

We've got you covered. And, you can support your favorite library at the same time! **Celebrate your loved one with a seat plaque (\$250) in our fabulous new Donald J. Farish auditorium.** You get to choose the seat! Learn more: www.provlib.org/auditorium-seats/.

We offer bookplates (\$100) that can be put into new books being added to our collection. Choose a genre or subject area; we'll do the rest and let you know the title. Email Rae at rhebron@provlib.org for more info.

After some swag? Head to PPL's Market at shop.provlib.org. We have wearables, including T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, bandanas, and even cool PPL socks! There's also awesome insulated bags and foldable totes. If drink wear is your thing....we have that too!



PPL Alum Spotlight

*Because of **YOUR generosity**, individuals from all walks of life have transformative experiences at PPL. We're thrilled to share these stories of success and achievement with you to demonstrate **the incredible impact you are making** when you support the Library. **You REALLY do** make these alum stories possible!*

Beatriz Bueno: On a Journey

Beatriz's story was first published on The Public's Radio's community essay series as part of its Mosaic podcast on immigration.

I am not going to lie, I never thought it would be easy moving to the U.S., but I had no idea how many things I would have to go through. However, overcoming my fears and insecurities made me understand the real purpose of me moving to the United States.

I was able to find myself. I discovered who the real Beatriz is. Every single step of this journey served to break the armor I had built around myself trying to fit into something that didn't belong to me.

I grew up hearing that to succeed I needed to graduate from a good public university in something with a high salary. But at that point in life, I wasn't sure what I really wanted to be. I have always been creative. At 10 years old, I was always with a little notebook and some pencils. I really enjoyed copying drawings and coloring them in, as well as practicing calligraphy.

But as the years passed, I put this aside in order to concentrate on what would make me "successful" in life, as seen by society. Since I didn't really know what I wanted to do, I decided to stick with graphic design and although I was a really good student, when the time came to take the test to get into a public university, my score wasn't enough to be accepted by the university I chose.

"I am very proud of my journey. It has made me brave, resilient, and patient even when I wasn't able to realize it."

This failure became a huge deal for me because my insecurities took over and I felt absolutely incapable in every aspect. I felt like all my effort was thrown in the trash. To try to explain how bad it was, after that fail, I decided to give up graphic design, putting it in my mind that I wasn't good enough.

After taking a break to figure out what I really wanted, I ended up studying marketing and getting an associate degree from one of the colleges my parents and I could afford.

However, those two years were very important for my personal growth. I was able to enjoy and take the best of this experience, but the frustration of having failed before was still there and kept putting me down. It took years to heal.

Finding a job wasn't easy. Most of the companies were asking for advanced English, which I didn't have at that time.

I faced the fact that I had an associate degree and an internship experience that didn't seem to help me at all finding another job. That's when I decided to put everything to the side – even if I was literally at the beginning of my career – and come to the United States to become fluent in English.

I came straight to Rhode Island because my aunt had been living here for a couple of years and she offered me all the support I needed to live in the U.S. She had a cleaning company which I helped her out a couple of times throughout the years. Working in cleaning and being able to experience a different culture helped me to break a huge part of the armor I built and to see myself in another perspective. Those two things, plus time passing made me understand the importance of the "failure" I had in my life. I did not fail. Those things just weren't for me at that moment.

I had to come far and face a new reality to figure it out. I had to accept and deal with my insecurities in order to be able to listen to my inner voice and be at peace with myself.

I am a graphic designer now because I learned not everything happens when and how I want. I also learned that life is not supposed to be easy and it is from the difficulties that we grow the most.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Beatriz is currently enrolled in PPL's Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI) English class program via Zoom. She has this to say about her experiences in the program.*



I am from São Paulo, Brazil. I have an associate degree in Marketing in Brazil. When I arrived in the U.S. in 2016, I took English classes at East Providence Public Library and this summer went back to ESL classes, but this time at an online program. I am now self-employed as a freelance graphic designer.

I feel like I will always need to improve my writing skills since English is not my native language. That was the main reason I attended the 2022 summer class and I definitely plan to come back to class in the future.

I could realize how advanced my English is now and be a little more confident in my writing skills. Jon is a very supportive teacher and he makes you want to write more and more every class. His passion for writing and sharing stories really inspires us. I am happy to say that my biggest accomplishment in this class was having one of my essays go on air on The Public's Radio Mosaic Podcast. That was huge for me and I enjoyed every step of the process of writing and recording it. It is definitely an experience that I will never forget.

I felt really inspired by my fellow students' histories. They are amazing people, strong, resilient, and we have a good connection.

Conservators in the Spotlight!

Our congratulations to these Conservators, all recognized this fall.

WaterFire Providence honored **Dr. Joseph A. Chazan** for his extraordinary support of Rhode Island artists and arts organizations over the past 50 years at its sixth Annual FireBall Gala on October 20 at the WaterFire Arts Center.

Adriana Dawson, Verizon community engagement director, was honored by the Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England during its annual Leading Women of Distinction Awards held October 13 for her contributions throughout the local community, as well as making positive impacts in their respective fields.

United Way of Rhode Island presented **Beverly Ledbetter**, former Brown University chief legal counsel, with the John H. Chafee Live United Award, recognizing her lifelong commitment to creating change and building opportunities for all during its 96th annual celebration event on October 12.

We are happy to share everyone's news and success stories! Please let Alex know of any updates we can share in future issues.

Passage

HENRY DEXTER SHARPE, JR.



We are saddened by the passing of Henry D. Sharpe, Jr. in July. He was 99. He leaves his cherished wife of nearly 69 years, Peggy Boyd Sharpe, their children, Henry III, Douglas, and Sarah, their spouses, and five grandchildren.

Born in Providence, Henry graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and Brown University in 1945. He earned two battle stars while serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

In 1946, he joined the apprentice program at Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Co. and, in 1951 at age 27, succeeded his father as the firm's President and CEO. He later served as chairman until retiring in 1996 after 50 years. Henry championed community advancement and integrity, serving on boards of the Providence Journal, RI Public Expenditure Council, United Way, Brown University, The Public's Radio, and many other civic and philanthropic organizations.

Henry and Peggy have been longtime benefactors of PPL, joining the Conservator Society at its inception in the 1990s. They were major supporters of the Library's *Expanding Possibilities* campaign in 2002, as well as generous funders of various campaigns dating back to the 1980s.

Welcome New Conservators!

Welcome to Candy Adriance, Kate & Arthur Chute, Ronald & Delores DeLellis, Philip Gould & Athena Poppas, and Juan & Tina Wilson.

We'd love to have email addresses and birthdays for all our Conservators. Please contact Alex at 401-575-6478 or arempis@provlb.org to help us stay in better touch!