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# Lakelife

VOL. 2, ISSUE 3

WINTER 2008 • FREE



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# striking a chord

Kazanetti String Quartet educating and inspiring local students through Plaza residency

by ANDREA GABLE





While studying music at Indiana University, high-school friends Julie Rosseter-Sweeney and Elizabeth Alvarez would often meet up with other musician friends to rehearse outside of the classroom or to take a break from the books and just hang out. They almost always ended up at a house owned by two of their friends – Jeff Costello, or Cos for short, and Tim Edwards, or Eddie. For a group of college friends drawn together by their love of music, Cos and Eddie provided a “chamber” for their music as well as for their laughter and memories.

So when the two found themselves back in Atlanta after completing separate graduate work and decided to start a performance string quartet, their thoughts kept bringing them back to a fond place and time. After some creative re-working, Elizabeth came up with a name for their quartet that was a personal tribute to their musical roots – Kazanetti.

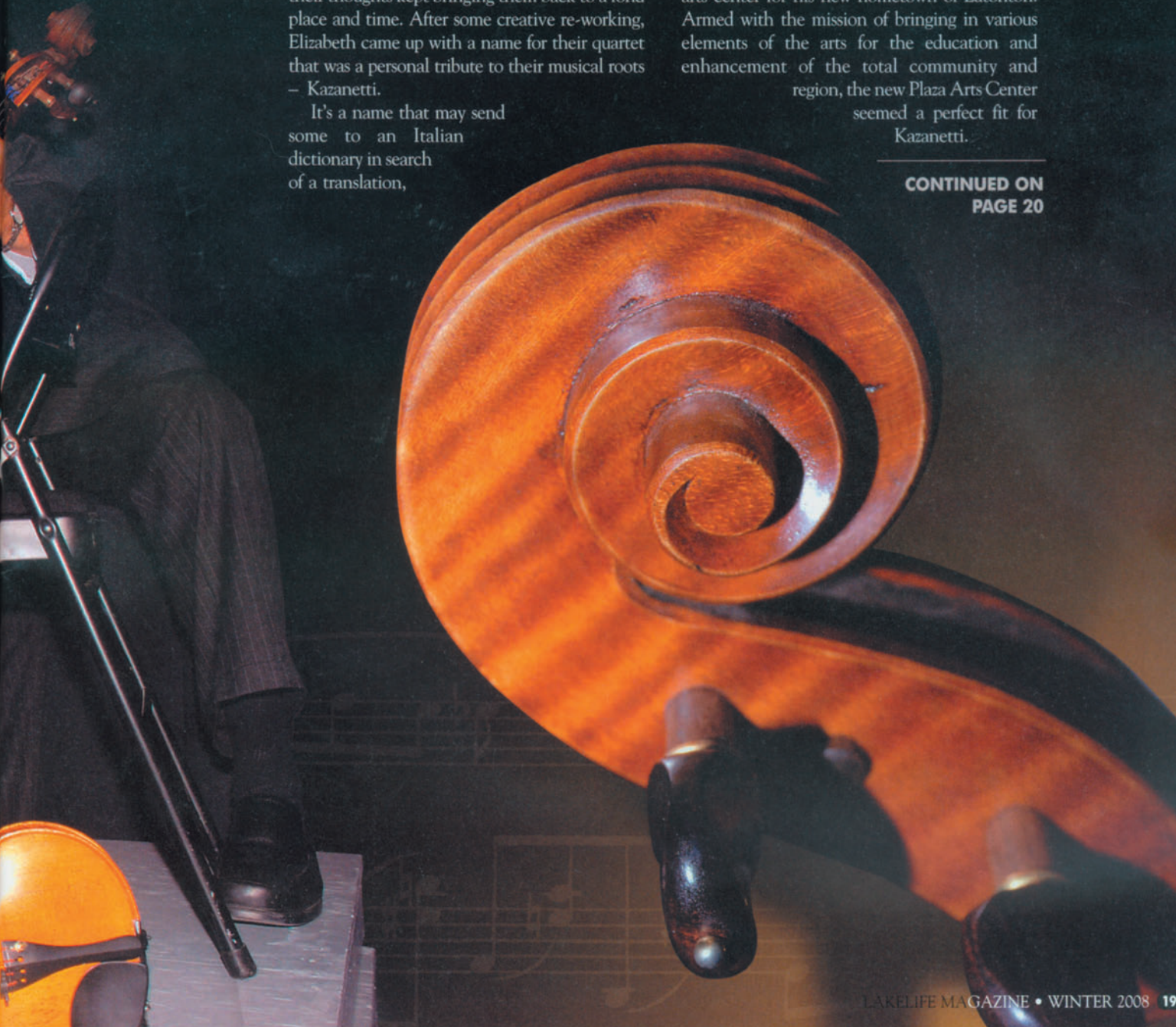
It's a name that may send some to an Italian dictionary in search of a translation,

but for the two friends, it has a meaning that's not so much deep as it is personal. “We didn't want our name to necessarily be something musical,” said Julie. “We wanted a name that meant something to us and brought about good feelings.”

The two were quickly joined by Michele Mariage-Volz, who Elizabeth met while getting her Master's degree, and they eventually snatched up George Butler, a new cellist in town, to complete the quartet.

In the more than 10 years that Kazanetti was performing throughout the Atlanta area and its members were teaching private lessons, Julie's father Tom Rosseter was at work locally spearheading the development of a community arts center for his new hometown of Eatonton. Armed with the mission of bringing in various elements of the arts for the education and enhancement of the total community and region, the new Plaza Arts Center seemed a perfect fit for Kazanetti.

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Upon its opening earlier this year, the Plaza Arts Center welcomed Kazanetti as its resident quartet. And like Cos and Eddie's so many years before, the Plaza Arts Center became a new venue for a group of musicians to hang out and play music, only now with a slightly greater purpose.

As resident quartet, Kazanetti's main mission is to expose Putnam County students to orchestra music,

educate them through creative musical avenues and enhance their cultural experiences

Through a partnership with Putnam County Schools, Kazanetti makes frequent visits to the schools to perform for students of all ages. This exposure is an important first step in establishing a future strings program within the schools.

through an annual performance series.

Drawing from their experience as teachers, Kazanetti has formed a unique collaboration with the Putnam County School System to establish a string program that will compliment their existing music education programs.

"No Child Left Behind" doesn't include art or music. But we're making a real effort with our children to make sure that no child is left behind when it comes to art and music," said Putnam County School Superintendent Jim Willis. "Our kids deserve to be exposed to good music and good art and Kazanetti and our partnership with the arts center is helping us do that."

Julie said Kazanetti's first step is to expose the students to string music and get them excited about it. Once a month, the quartet has been making visits to the school for "hands-on" sessions, Q&As and special performances like Halloween's "Peter and the Werewolf." And before each of their concerts at the Plaza Arts Center, the group holds a musical "petting zoo" that allows children to look, play and learn about the different string instruments.

So far, George's cello has been the biggest hit with the younger crowd at the petting zoos. They want to know how heavy it is and whether or not it is taller than they are. Once they measure up and discover how surprisingly light it is, they become interested in the sounds it makes and how those sounds meld together into song.

"The kids get so excited at the petting zoos," said Willis.

"It's something





brand new to them and it's not electronic. It's not a TV or a video game, it's something that's real. And it's just amazing to see the light that comes on in their eyes."

As part of the residency, Kazanetti will develop this early exposure into educational programming. The group has combined efforts with Georgia College & State University to begin training music students to come into the schools once the string program has been established.

From there, Kazanetti plans to venture beyond the music classrooms and infuse music education into all

academic subjects.

"We're working with the schools to come up with programs that aren't strictly musical but help make students see how things are connected," said Julie. "There are so many correlations with math and music and science and sound. We can teach music history in the context of the politics,

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Part of Kazanetti's residency includes a performance series made up of various concerts throughout the year. Here, Tom Rosseter and others enjoy an outdoor concert at the Plaza.

## PLAZA ARTS CENTER CALENDAR

### FEB. 20

Kazanetti performs with world-renowned guitarist Pierre Bensusan.

### MARCH 20

Kazanetti performs with the Celtic Rock Band Mickla-a-Do and the Drake School Irish Dancers.

### APRIL 18

Kazanetti and OperaSouth present "Edible Opera" – music to dine for.

### SEPT. 19

Kazanetti takes the stage with their mentors, the Manhattan String Quartet.

### FEB. 5-6, 2010

Kazanetti presents "Scout remembers To Kill a Mockingbird."

For more information on these events, contact the arts center at (706) 923-1655.





Before each performance, the Kazanetti Quartet holds a musical 'petting zoo,' allowing children to touch and play various instruments. Students from nearby Georgia College & State University join the Quartet to facilitate these sessions.

industry and daily life of the times they are studying."

Kazanetti hopes to contribute not only to the academic advancement of local students but to their overall character and future achievement.

"Music is such an important way of shaping who you are," said Julie. "There is a discipline to it because you have to practice. You have to learn how to work by yourself on an instrument but you also have to be able to play with a group and learn to adjust and to compromise. There are just so many life lessons that music can teach."

Kazanetti's mission of musical exposure, education and enhancement is not limited to school-aged children. Part of their aim, Julie said, is to work on all levels with all different age groups. "Beyond the students in our schools, we have college kids who are excited about being a part of this community. And there are all of these adults who have always wanted to play or wanted to have music as a bigger part of their life, whether that means going to a concert or actually learning to play," she said.

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**MICHELE MARIAGE-VOLZ** Violin

Michele R. Mariage-Volz attended Indiana State University and Georgia State University where she studied with the renowned Robert Billups and Oliver Steiner, respectively. Over the years Michele has performed regularly with regional orchestras in Illinois, Indiana, Georgia, and Alabama. At one time she was a member of the Colorado Philharmonic and has been a core member of the Atlanta Opera Orchestra since 1992. She regularly substitutes with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and serves as Concertmaster of Opera South in Atlanta. In addition, Michele is constantly in demand as a studio musician in the Atlanta area and has recorded for Usher, Goodymobb, and Tasha as well as R&B and commercial sessions.



**JULIE ROSSETER** Viola

Julie Rosseter is an award-winning violist and a core member of the Atlanta Opera Orchestra since 1994. She is a graduate of the Indiana University School of Music where she studied with the renowned violist Abraham Skernick. After receiving her degree in music performance, Julie won the prestigious Blumfield Fellowship and completed her Masters degree at Wichita State University in Kansas and began her orchestral career as Assistant Principal violist of the Wichita Symphony. In 1992, she was awarded an Artist Diploma Fellowship at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Penn. During her years at Duquesne, Julie was a member of the Pittsburgh Opera and the Keystone Chamber Players, and was named Young Artist in Residence at Penn State University's Penn's Woods Festival. In 1993, Julie returned to Atlanta, where she served for a number of years as violist with the Columbus Symphony, the Alabama Symphony, and the Atlanta Virtuosi.



"We've talked about doing a Saturday school or a place where people can come and learn to play string music and bring the chamber music back to the chambers, back to your house where you can get together with friends and play some music."

Between educating future musicians, the quartet will maintain a performance series comprised of three to four concerts a season. To keep things fresh, Kazanetti will be joined on stage by guest musicians to reach into different genres and showcase various instruments aside from the usual strings.

"Every time we come, we try to put a new spin on things and make it a little bit different," said Julie. "It stretches us as players and it makes it interesting for the kids or the adults that come to the concerts. It keeps it new each time and makes it fun."





**GEORGE BUTLER** Cello

George Butler is a graduate of the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati and has studied additionally at the Westminster Choir College and the Cincinnati Christian University. At 17, George was the only instrumentalist from the state of Ohio chosen to perform on cello in a national youth symphony orchestra at New York's Carnegie Hall under the direction of the late great maestro Leopold Stokowski. He went on to earn the Bachelor of Performing Arts degree at the College-Conservatory and was fortunate to receive instruction in chamber music from members of the famed LaSalle Quartet.

In addition to performing on the cello, he has directed church music full time for much of that time. He founded his first choir at the age of 19 and has conducted thousands in choirs, orchestras, concerts, national conventions and worship services ever since.



**ELIZABETH ALVAREZ** Violin

Elizabeth Alvarez received her Bachelor's degree with honors from Indiana University. Upon returning to Atlanta she continued her education with a teaching assistantship at Georgia State University where she earned a Masters of Music in Music Theory and later continued with doctoral studies in Musicology at the University of Maryland. Her major teachers and mentors include Yuval Yaron, Dr. Charles Knox, Dr. Susan Tepping, and Oliver Steiner. Alvarez has performed across the Southeast with orchestras including Columbus, Alabama and Charleston Symphonies as both violinist and violist. She has performed at Piccolo Spoleto and is active in the Charleston chamber music scene on both violin and viola.

The group's March concert will be a Celtic program featuring Irish dancers, that will allow students to learn an Irish jig just in time for St. Patrick's Day. In April, Kazanetti will perform with Opera South for an "edible opera" where audiences can enjoy dinner and music.

By having a permanent venue, Elizabeth said the group now has the capacity to collaborate with other musicians in a way they've always wanted but were never able. "The Plaza gives us a foundation where, now, we can put the spokes of the wheel out and have a hub from which to work," she said. "We've had this list of wishes and dreams, so to speak, for the 10 years we've been together and now we can start crossing things off that list.

"This community has just really embraced us and allowed us to come home and it is just a great gift to be able to contribute something back."

