

MUSIC



William Campisano is ringed with lights as he plays his guitar in the Salt Creek tunnel on a Sunday evening. Campisano, a Dana Hills High student, has been singing and playing his guitar in the tunnel for the past year — almost every weekend for about five-six hours.

TUNNEL OF LOVELY TUNES

Dana Hills High student making a name for himself playing sunset music in the Salt Creek Beach tunnel

By Erika I. Ritchie
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DANA POINT » Will Campisano has loved music most of his life. Now he's sharing that love with others, in a somewhat unorthodox setting.

At sunset every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the Dana Hills High School senior sings and plays his guitar inside the tunnel at Salt Creek Beach. A singer-songwriter, Campisano's repertoire ranges from Childish Gambino to Eric Clapton, as well as some original tunes.

Whether its dog walkers, joggers or surfers, listener response has been overwhelmingly positive.

TUNNEL » PAGE 8



William Campisano has gained a lot of community attention and this summer attended a program at Berkeley College of Music in Boston.

COURTS

Man gets life in murder for hire

By Sean Emery
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SANTA ANA » A man was sentenced Friday to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the murder for hire of a Westminster woman, a 2014 killing arranged by her husband.

Four years after Magdi Girgis was sentenced to life in prison for having his wife, Ariet Girgis, killed in their Westminster home, one of the men he hired to carry out the murder, Anthony Edward Bridget, 44, was ordered to spend the rest of his life behind bars.

"This is a paid-for-killing-in-cold-blood-for-financial-gain (case)," Orange County Superior Court Judge John D. Conley said. "This is among the worst cases that you can have."

Richard Girgis, Ariet Girgis' oldest son, told the judge that "not a day goes by" in which he "doesn't think about my mom, and what was done to her." The son urged Bridget to "confess and repent" by identifying for authorities others believed to have been involved in the killing.

"I will never forget what Mr. Bridget has done to our family, but I do forgive him," said Richard Girgis, now in his mid-30s. "Now it's in his hands to do what is right, to turn over the other people involved and seek God's forgiveness."

On Sept. 29, 2004, two men broke into the Girgis home, tied up the couple's then-17-year-old son Ryan and stabbed and slashed Ariet Girgis dozens of times, nearly decapitating her. One of the men used a shoelace from a nearby shoe to bind the hands of Ryan Girgis before shoving him into a closet.

Detectives quickly turned their attention to Magdi Girgis, who at the time was awaiting trial for allegedly punching his wife in the face during an argument over money. Investigators believed Magdi Girgis was worried about losing his respiratory therapist license if he were convicted in the domestic violence case, and of losing his property to his wife in a



Bridget

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PUBLIC SERVICE

Fullerton, Brea fire chief to retire

By Jeong Park
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Fire Chief Wolfgang Knabe, leader of the Fullerton and Brea departments, said he will retire Dec. 29 to pursue other opportunities.

Deputy Chief of Operations Adam Loeser will be the next chief for the two departments, which function independently but share a command staff. He has handled day-to-day operations for the departments since 2015.

Knabe has served as Fullerton's fire chief since 2005. When the two cities merged their command staffs in 2011 to save money, he became Brea's chief as well. Combined, the departments have more than 130 employees.

"Right now, I think, is a good time because both departments are run very well," Knabe said. "Everything's aligned for success at this time."

Knabe launched the Urban Search and Rescue program for the departments. He also navigated the departments through cuts, part of the cities' broader budget reduction.

"Nobody wanted to do it,"

CHIEF » PAGE 6

DANCE

O.C. ballet theater opens 30th season

By Michael Rydzynski

Orange County's biggest and longest-lasting ballet company opens its 30th anniversary season the way it always has: with a program of short, original contemporary works.

"It's very expensive to be putting on these dance productions — but we thank God we've survived all these years, and we plan to keep going," said Salwa Rizkalla, founder and artistic director of Festival Ballet Theatre, which embarks on season 31 with three shorter pieces at the Irvine Barclay

Theatre today and Sunday.

Calling the program "Ovation," Rizkalla presents the works of three choreographers who incorporate modern techniques and movements into a fundamentally ballet framework: "Texture of Time," "Oops" and "Plume."

"The theme of 'Texture of Time' is: Our bodies all get older, but our hearts remain young," she said of the program's longest work (at about half an hour), choreographed by Josie Walsh, whose husband, Jealous Angel, wrote the New Age-like score, with special effects

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PHOTO BY DAVE FRIEDMAN

Dancers from Festival Ballet Theatre perform "Texture of Time," one of three works the company will present in its season-opening recital "Ovation."

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A girl passing by drops some change in William Campisano's guitar case.

PHOTOS BY BILL ALKOEFER

Tunnel

FROM PAGE 3

Campisano has played for brides walking through the tunnel on their way to their beach wedding; he's been asked to serenade proposals; and he's helped celebrate birthdays and anniversaries.

"A lot of his inspiration comes from the local community," said Ray Medina, director of vocals at South Orange County School of the Arts at Dana Hills High. "It's part of the fabric of who he is, and he feels comfortable there. People expect to see him there now — it's part of his identity."

The idea to sing in the iconic beach tunnel, which last year got a makeover mural from another Dana Hills High student, was sparked more than a year ago.

Campisano and some of his friends — then members of a barbershop quartet — went there one evening when no one was around to see what their vocals would sound like. They found the tunnel had perfect acoustics, enhancing the sound of their instruments and voices.

After Campisano's friends moved on to college, he decided to go it alone at the tunnel — just him and his guitar.

"It turned into something more than just a hobby," said Campisano, 18. "Within the first month, a bride walked through and asked me to play for her wedding. I sang all the Ed Sheeran songs I knew and was included in their wedding photos. I think I made their day better; they certainly made mine. I took this event as a sign that this was my calling."

Since October 2017, Campisano has played in the tunnel three evenings a week, almost every week. When he performs, he draws a crowd.

"I'm still unfailingly exhilarated when complete strangers hang out and sing with me; when old couples dance in the moonlight as I croon Frank Sinatra; when friendly musicians pass by and play alongside me until dark," he said.

Influenced by Harry Potter, John Mayer

Campisano started play-



William Campisano plays his guitar in the Salt Creek tunnel as the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean on a recent Sunday afternoon.

PHOTOS BY BILL ALKOEFER

ing piano at age 6 but didn't sing until middle school when he began participating in musical theater and choir. He continued into high school and learned to play guitar after being cast as Harry Potter in "A Very Potter Musical." The role, he said, required him to serenade the dragon on guitar.

"I decided to learn how to play guitar, and since then, I've never put it down," he said.

But his biggest inspiration is singer-songwriter John Mayer.

"He's one of the best — if not greatest guitarist of our generation, and his songwriting and his work has an extremely personal insight into the world," Campisano said. "To me, a great artist is someone who can evoke emotional response out of someone solely through their work, and every time I listen to John Mayer, I feel passionate about music."

Tips pay for formal training

By the start of summer, Campisano had collected \$6,000 in tips for his tunnel performances. He used

the money to pay for a five-week summer course at Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he and several hundred other students studied music theory and participated in performance classes.

There, Campisano was among 30 students — out of 300 — who passed their auditions in a singer-songwriter competition.

"I got to perform with my fellow songwriters in a series of showcases where we played our songs on stage. I was impressed with the other students in this competition. I learned how they wrote their music and got a whole new perspective on writing."

Plans for the future

Now in his senior year at Dana Hills High, Campisano, who has a 4.1 grade-point average, is involved in arts at school. He has a leading role in the school's production of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," which opens Dec. 6, and he's part of the Dana Hills Improv Team.

The Laguna Niguel resident also is busy filling out college applications to places such as Berklee College of Music, USC, Yale and

Harvard. He hopes to study music performance, something he says he would like to spend the rest of his life doing.

Meanwhile, he's working to expand his performance schedule with gigs around town at local restaurants.

Medina said he admires Campisano's talents, especially his storytelling skills.

"That's what sets him apart from the rest," he said. "I'd liken Will to someone like Carole King. He takes his experiences and puts them to pen and paper and tells stories in a way that moves people."

While he waits for his break, or until he goes away to school, Campisano plans to keep singing in the tunnel at Salt Creek Beach.

"I just want to make people happy by playing there," he said. "I want everyone to enjoy themselves, have a good time, and enjoy the beach as much as I do. I want everyone to know everything's going to be OK because it has to be. I also want to inspire anyone who makes any form of art and for them to know that it definitely has a place in society, and is a beautiful thing to share with the public."

MOVIES

Coscarelli films at Frida Cinema this weekend

By Peter Larsen
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If you ever had a nightmare about a silver sphere with two deadly daggers zooming at your face, you can thank director Don Coscarelli, who dreamed up that weirdly terrifying weapon for his 1979 classic, "Phantasm," and the four sequels that followed.

Or maybe you wanted to believe that Elvis Presley wasn't really dead, though you probably wouldn't have pictured his secret life as a nursing home resident who has to battle an ancient Egyptian mummy, as Coscarelli imagined for the 2002 horror-comedy "Bubba Ho-Tep."

Both of those films will screen at the Frida Cinema in Santa Ana this weekend, with Coscarelli in attendance for a Q-and-A and then a book signing for his new memoir, "True Indie: Life and Death in Film-making."

Coscarelli, 64, started making films as a boy growing up in Long Beach and was just 19 when he sold his feature film "Jim the World's Greatest" to Universal. "Phantasm," which he wrote, directed, shot and

edited, followed four years later, its story about the evil Tall Man — killing off people to turn them into zombie dwarfs with help from that deadly, spinning orb — making him into a cult director overnight.

"Phantasm" also owes a small debt to Coscarelli's Long Beach ties, according to a tweet by the director this year.

"Phantasm" screens Saturday in a newly restored 4K version made from the original camera negative, and featuring a new 5.1 audio soundtrack. The restoration was overseen by director J.J. Abrams, who, along with musician and director Rob Zombie and actor Bruce Campbell, offered glowing praise for "True Indie," Coscarelli's memoir.

"Bubba Ho-Tep," which starred Campbell as the aging Elvis and Ossie Davis as an African-American man who claims to be the still-living John F. Kennedy, screens Sunday.

"True Indie," which will be available for sale and signing at the Frida, shares all the stories about the making of those films as well as other Coscarelli movies, including "The Beastmaster" and "John Dies at the End."

CALIFORNIA

Canine blood bank disputes abuse claims

By Amy Taxin
The Associated Press

GARDEN GROVE » The animal rights group PETA alleges that dogs at one of the nation's largest canine blood banks are mistreated, but the nonprofit that runs the Southern California facility says the retired racing greyhounds are well-cared for and save other dogs' lives.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals sent complaints this week to California and local authorities alleging the 200 greyhounds kept at Hemopet don't receive proper care and are cooped up nearly all day in pens too small for their size. The group contends confining dogs in a facility to draw their blood is wrong and says they should be placed in homes and only donate blood if their owners opt to bring them in.

Hemopet, which has operated for decades, said the dogs are well-cared for and get regular walks and outdoor play time at its 1.5 acre Orange County campus. The organization said the greyhounds participate in a state-regulated canine blood donor program for about 10 months before they are placed in well-screened adoptive homes.

Veterinary experts said there is a demand for canine blood to treat ill pets and those in need of emergency surgery. How to meet this need, however, is subject to debate.

"Community" blood banks rely on walk-in pet donors, while "closed" banks such as Hemopet require dogs to live on-site while giving blood. The controlled setting ensures blood is free of diseases.

California requires the closed model be used for commercial canine blood banks, said Hemopet's president, Dr. Jean Dodds. She said she believes pets living in people's homes would need to be retested for disease before each donation to provide a comparable level of safety, and even then it might not be possible to safeguard the supply.

Hemopet supplies about 40 percent of the commercial blood bank products sold in the United States and is one of two such authorized facilities in California, Dodds said.

Dodds said the greyhounds would be killed if they weren't rescued from the racing industry. Hemopet provides medical care and spays and neuters the dogs and screens them to assess whether they are suitable donors. Greyhounds often have a "universal" blood type, she said, which can be used for any canine transfusion.

In a letter to California's Department of Food and Agriculture, PETA alleged that dogs' tails, paws and nails are injured in small cages where they're kept 23 hours a day, and blood is drawn at times from animals suspected of illness.

Ballet

FROM PAGE 3

fects by Academy Award winner Jim Doyle (developed the "dry fogger" in 1992), which includes projections. "In the end, the entire stage is exposed. We're stripping everything away to show that the essence that is you will always be there."

This will be the second time for the 18-dancer "Texture of Time," which Festival Ballet premiered in 2013. Walsh previously worked with the company on her "The Secret Garden," among other pieces.

Then it's time for something humorous with the 10-minute "Oops," choreographed by Viktor Plotnikov of Boston.

"It's very comical," Rizkalla said. "We set it on 14 students of the Southland Ballet Academy

IF YOU GO

What: The company opens its 30th-anniversary season with "Ovation," a contemporary program of short works.

Where: Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, University of California, Irvine, campus.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Tickets: \$39-\$45

Information: 949-854-4646, thebarclay.org

and they just love it. It's playful and shows the innocence of their age, which is around 10, 11 years old. It's all about the purity of that age, and the showing of their personalities."

Helping greatly in the comical department is setting "Oops" to "Dance of the Hours," from Amilcare Ponchielli's opera "La Gioconda," which has been sub-

jected to many humorous treatments (Disney's "Fantasia," Allan Sherman's "Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh," etc.). Like "Texture of Time," this will be the second production for "Oops," First Prize winner of the 2011 Youth America Grand Prix, subsequently touring the U.S.

"Plume," choreographed by Andreea Schermoly, receives its world premiere.

"It's about the environment and how beautiful it is — and how it's affected by our thoughtlessness," Rizkalla said in describing the 20-minute piece for 16 dancers, set to Max Richter's "recomposition" of Antonio Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons." "It shows us how we have to be more careful and save the environment. The dancers are like birds, and the 'Plume' is their feather."

Although Rizkalla enjoys encouraging choreographers to cre-

ate new works, she equally enjoys bringing some of them back, as with "Texture of Time" and "Oops."

"It's nice to have them in our repertoire and revive them," said Rizkalla, who estimates the company has "20, if not more" in its contemporary repertoire, in addition to the five in its evening-long storytelling repertoire: "Sleeping Beauty," "Swan Lake," "Giselle," "Don Quixote" and "Coppelia."

When Rizkalla formed Festival Ballet (incorporated 1988) as the performing branch of her Southland Ballet Academy in Fountain Valley (founded five years earlier), her company was not the only game in town. There were several of various sizes, led by Ballet Pacifica, which suffered its demise in 2007.

"So many ballet companies with 10 times our budget have folded over the years, so we have

to be careful," Rizkalla said.

While getting ready for "Ovation," Rizkalla is simultaneously preparing her dancers for that Tchaikovsky holiday mainstay, "The Nutcracker," which will run for 15 performances Dec. 8-24. In addition, there's "Sleeping Beauty," this season's evening-long classic ballet, presented March 23-24, and "Gala of the Stars" in August, the only Festival Ballet production not at the Irvine Barclay (Segerstrom Concert Hall).

In other words, business as usual, even in this 30th-anniversary season.

"Our most important goal is to maintain the Festival Ballet Theatre," Rizkalla emphasized. "So we must keep on presenting first-tier ballet productions and keep busy these beautiful dancers of Orange County."

"It's the moment they live for: