

NEW N A N

Coweta

M A G A Z I N E

Coweta Women in *Music*

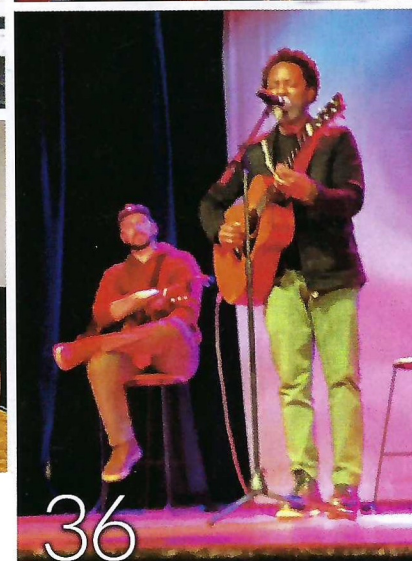
PLUS...
*Music Off the
Beaten Path
Southern Arc Dance*

MAY | JUNE 2025
COMPLIMENTARY COPY

THE MUSIC ISSUE

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Roll Call

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Caroline Nicholson loves disappearing behind a good book and falling into fictional worlds. She has a Master of Arts in English from the University of West Georgia. In time, she hopes to publish her own young-adult novel.



Beth Neely is a Coweta native and co-publisher of The Newnan Times-Herald. When she's not working, she can usually be found up to her elbows in a garden or catching critters with her kids. She lives in Newnan with her family.

Chan Suto is the current president of the Fayette Philharmonic Youth Orchestra in Peachtree City, a 501(c) nonprofit.



Christina Potts is a local Master Gardener, native plant enthusiast, and passionate naturalist. She enjoys sharing her knowledge about conscientious landscape planning and sustainable gardening practices that support local wildlife.



Melissa Jackson teaches writing and literature at University of West Georgia-Newnan. Her poetry collections include "Cameo," "Sweet Aegis" and "Paper Birds."



Joan Doggrell is retired from two professions: college English instructor and technical writer. She lives in Newnan with her husband and two hairy dogs.



Sara Moore's warm and welcoming nature influences her photography. She lives the quiet country life in Newnan on a farm with horses, dogs, chickens and ducks.



Jennifer London lives in Newnan with her daughter. The two use their travels as inspiration for stories they create with Jennifer writing and her daughter illustrating. Jennifer believes that everyone has a story to tell, and she loves being a freelance writer and meeting new people.



Frances Kidd is a Newnan native who spent most of her adult years working as a nonprofit and marketing consultant. Although she's an avid traveler, she never lost her Southern accent. If she's not in Georgia, you can find her out in the country in Italy.



Correction

In the March/April edition of Newnan-Coweta Magazine, five photos in the "What's IN in Interior Design?" feature were incorrectly attributed or missing attribution. All of the photos for Knox Powell Designs were photographed by Michelle Cannon Smith. We regret this error.

Stringing together moments:

Chris Johns makes music wherever he goes

Written by **CHAN SUTO**
Photographed by **SARA MOORE**

When you meet Chris Johns, he strikes you as being easy-going, friendly and unassuming. You won't know that he's the principal cellist of the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra, a conductor for the intermediate orchestra of the Fayette Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, a private music instructor or a shop owner.



Growing up, Chris was destined to be a creative artist or a performing musician. Chris's father, Dean, was as prolific in visual arts as his mother, Elaine, was gifted in music. His father designed and produced tapestry, gallery jewelry, pottery and metal artworks with some of his art featured in the Mint Museum of Charlotte and other galleries. Chris's mother was a violinist who taught middle school orchestra and performed with ensembles like the Savannah Symphony and the Florence Symphony.

In an environment steeped in artistic and musical talents, it's hardly surprising that Chris and his siblings followed in their parents' footsteps. In 2014, Chris combined his music education and entrepreneurship to open a string shop in Peachtree City that became Johns Violin Company.

Originally from Charlotte, N.C., Chris and his family of four children, ages 8 to 14, have made Newnan their home since 2014.

His three siblings are all musical. His younger brother, Alex, played string bass and has a degree in recording engineering. His two older sisters, Stephanie and Tasi, both studied violin; Tasi would later turn professional.

With mom and sisters as violinists, it was decided that Chris would play a different instrument. At age 4, Chris began

cello studies under the tutelage of his mother's friend, Jennifer Frisina, who took him as her first student and remained his cello teacher for the next decade. His next cello teacher, Alan Black, the principal cellist of the Charlotte Symphony, significantly influenced his musical development in high school.

To advance his musicianship, Chris joined youth orchestras and auditioned for various regional and state orchestras.



“Helping musicians and serving their needs are more important than making a one-time transactional sale.”

- Chris Johns



ABOVE
Chris Johns conducts the intermediate orchestra of the Fayette Philharmonic Youth Orchestra at a spring concert in Peachtree City.



RIGHT
Chris Johns is the principal cellist for the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra.

At UNC-Wilmington, Chris focused on cello performance, earning his bachelor's in 2002. Chris had the unexpected fortune of meeting and reuniting with helpful people who would profoundly impact his life.

While researching graduate schools for his master's in cello performance, he reconnected with his middle school orchestra director, Dr. Skip Taylor, who was teaching at the University of Georgia's Hugh Hodgson School of Music. As a graduate assistant at UGA, he helped run Dr. Taylor's summer music camp for three years.

Then, a chance encounter with a string proprietor at a music conference gave Chris the golden opportunity to later work for himself after earning his master's in 2007. A familial entrepreneurial past likely inspired Chris to strike out on his own; Grandfather Gus operated a grocery store, and an uncle owned an auto repair shop.

Chris stays musically engaged in the community and afar. He continues to hone his performance skills by playing in the LaGrange Symphony and in local churches. In the fall of 2024, his collaboration with Chris Ferebee, an old friend from UGA who is currently an adjunct professor at Berry College, took them to the UK for an invitational performance at the Oxford University. They and another friend, Jesse Graves, a professor of English at East

Tennessee State University, will be returning to Oxford this fall for another original performance of music inspired by poetry.

In addition to operating his shop and "maintaining his chops," Chris offers private cello lessons and gives back to support music education. Danya Claiborne, a parent of one of his students shared, "He offers expert instruction with a relaxed, encouraging atmosphere. I have enjoyed seeing her musical skills grow over the years.... Mr. Johns maintains a busy schedule and I feel blessed that he can work with Rebekah."

Chris is a staunch supporter of the Fayette Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (FPYO), a community-based 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides string students the opportunities to develop their musicianship in a collaborative setting. Last fall, Chris became the conductor of their intermediate orchestra when FPYO formed a second ensemble for intermediate musicians.

In many ways, Chris has fashioned his life around music. He applies his musical expertise to instruct, perform, conduct and service our community with care. In his words, "Helping musicians and serving their needs are more important than making a one-time transactional sale." Chris's journey speaks to self-determination, business acumen and serendipity.

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