



INTRODUCING  
**BAY AREA NEWS APPS**  
Download *Bay Area News*  
for your iPad and iPhone



**MALE CALL**  
ADVICE FROM A GUY

Learn how to spell, or lose the woman

Q My relationship of over four years ended a few months ago, and I've been feeling ready to get back into the dating scene. I signed up for match.com (which is where I met my recent ex), and was disappointed to see the same lack of quality profiles as from five years ago (except for the one I got!). These guys apparently don't read the many tips for succeeding in online dating, because their profiles and emails are full of bad spelling, punctuation and grammar, and very often are just inappropriate. For most women I know, a message full of misspellings will be deleted immediately. My question is: Why can't guys get the simplest details right, like capitalization and spelling? Believe me, it's in their best interests.

M.M., Silicon Valley

A "hi gorgeous ... im good looking and somewhat shy and easygoing ive always wanted a attractive woman like you ... i work out twice a week and enjoy all you seem to im no deciever. im the real deal princess given a chance i will prove true to my profile"

You mean like that? We swear on a stack of Playboy dating manuals that we did not make that up. It was forwarded to us by a trusted member of the Male Call Ladies Auxiliary, while she was kvetching about this very subject. She shared it with a circle of friends, by whom it was roundly ridiculed, and then — you were right, of course — it was flushed.

Why some guys are oblivious to these online dating pitfalls is hard to say. Maybe it's ego — they figure the profile photos of them sky diving and lifting weights and crushing beer cans on their foreheads are so compelling that no girl would be unwilling to overlook a misplaced apostrophe or 12 to hook up with them, for love.

It could be that, for some, it's just a numbers game. They craft a perfectly phrased generic response, like Slick's poetic stream of consciousness above, and send it out to 50 gorgeous princesses in an evening. The assumption is that one or two are bound to respond. ("Hi swetheart, you had me at 'attractive.'") See — kismet!

So gentlemen, let's review some of the basics of online dating, because you obviously didn't do the reading assignment the first time around.

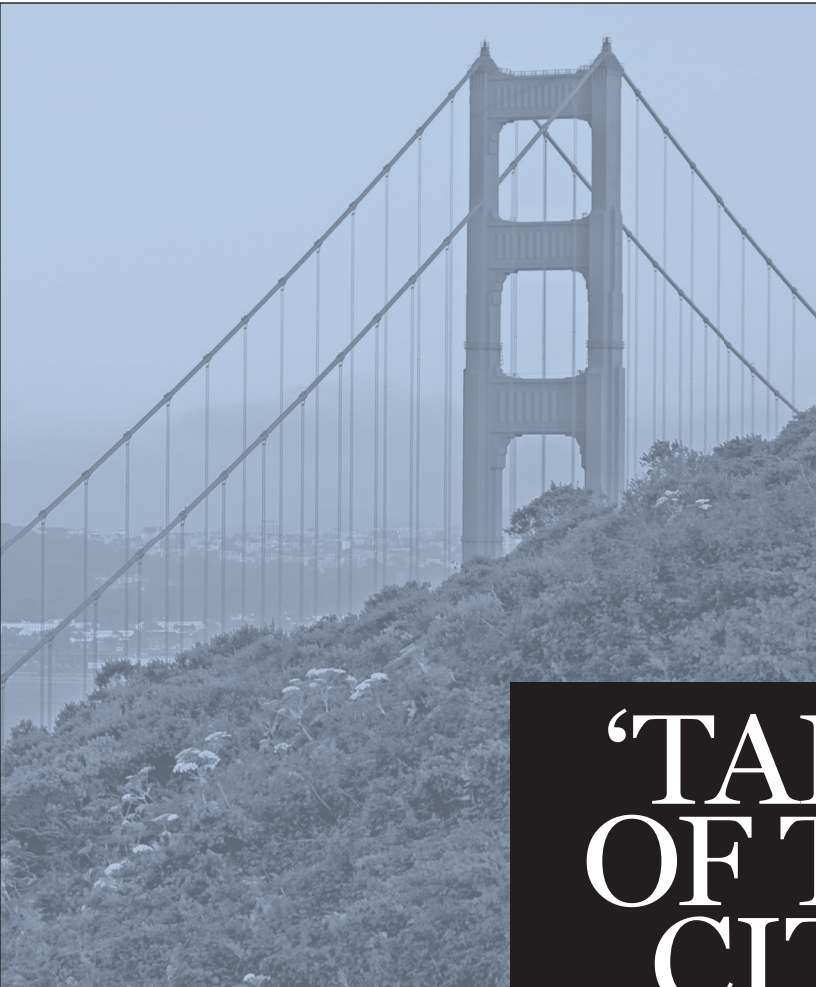
■ Use spell check, for goodness' sake! And perhaps glance through Strunk and White on proper punctuation, mmkay? Everyone makes a writing error here and there, but six mistakes, not counting missing commas, periods and capitalization, in a short paragraph like Slick's is just inviting derision.

■ Don't send boilerplate emails. And if you do, at least change them enough so that you refer to something specific in the woman's profile. ("Hey, I like extreme eating contests, too! Have you ever eaten 5 lbs. of breaded calamari in one sitting? Oh, wait, maybe you meant you like to *watch* extreme eating contests. Never mind then. But seriously, do you like calamari?")

■ Everyone fudges a bit in their profiles, but don't go overboard.

There are plenty of other tips to be had out there, so let's hear from some online dating vets. Give us some do's and don'ts based on your vast experiences.

Contact Male Call at [malecall@mercurynews.com](mailto:malecall@mercurynews.com).



'TALES OF THE CITY'  
THE MUSICAL



MERCURY NEWS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION WITH IMAGES FROM MERCURY NEWS ARCHIVES AND GETTY IMAGES

ACT adapts Armistead Maupin's iconic story of life in the '70s in world premiere, bringing the saga back to where it all began

By Karen D'Souza  
[kdsouza@mercurynews.com](mailto:kdsouza@mercurynews.com)

Welcome back to 28 Barbary Lane. Once again, mysterious landlady Anna Madrigal will hold court over the bohemian denizens of her iconic Russian Hill boardinghouse, dispensing equal portions of wisdom and weed as she watches over her flock of dreamers, swingers and misfits, all looking for a sense of family amid the tumult of San Francisco in the '70s.

Only this time, Madrigal and the other "fantabulous" characters in Armistead Maupin's now mythic "Tales of the City" — from wide-eyed Mary Ann Singleton to Michael "Mouse" Tolliver and hippie-granola bisexual Mona Ramsey — will also break into song.

"What makes a story sing?" asks director Jason Moore during a rehearsal for the new "Tales of the City" musical, which makes its world premiere at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater on Wednesday.

See **TALES**, Page 9



DAVID ALLEN STUDIO

From left: Jason Moore, director; Jeff Whitty, librettist; and John Garden and Jake Shears, composers, of "Tales of the City" at American Conservatory Theater.

'Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City'

Libretto by Jeff Whitty, music and lyrics by Jake Shears and John Garden, based on the novels by Armistead Maupin

**When:** Wednesday through July 10

**Where:** American Conservatory Theater, 415 Geary St., San Francisco

**Tickets:** \$40-\$130; 415-749-2228, [www.act-sf.org](http://www.act-sf.org)

After accident, Dalis is back for an encore

Following months of surgeries and rehabilitation, Opera San Jose founder is eager to return to work

By Richard Scheinin  
[rscheinin@mercurynews.com](mailto:rscheinin@mercurynews.com)

On Oct. 22, Irene Dalis was on her way to work at Opera San Jose, driving north on Interstate 880 in San Jose after a standing appointment with her hairdresser. She remembers that a white SUV sped onto the freeway from The Alameda and spun out of control on the rain-slick surface, barreling across three lanes, smashing into Dalis' car and changing her life.

A Good Samaritan pulled her from the wreck. Dalis, 85, looked up at him, she recalls, and asked, "Do you go to the opera?"

She laughs, nearly seven months later, recounting that moment. Not that there's anything remotely amusing about what Dalis — Opera

San Jose's founder and general director — has endured: snapped and shattered bones above the right ankle, 15 broken ribs, multiple surgeries and skin and muscle grafts over the course of five-plus months in three different hospitals. "There was much talk that I might have to have the right leg amputated," she says.

Yet those words spoken at that moment — "Do you go to the opera?" — are so Irene Dalis.

Even now, speaking on the phone as she heals at her home in Willow Glen — on her feet, her body intact, working daily with a therapist to build her physical strength and muscle tone — she has to be pushed to discuss her ordeal.

See **DALIS**, Page 5

Fifth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition

**When:** 7 p.m. Saturday **Where:** California Theatre, 345 S. First St., San Jose  
**Tickets:** \$50-\$100 (half the price is tax deductible); [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org) or 408-437-4450; students 25 and younger with ID: \$11 at the door.



LIPO CHING/MERCURY NEWS ARCHIVES

Irene Dalis, shown in 2006, hopes to be back at work this month.



Experience

www.mercurynews.com/entertainment



Romare Bearden's "Out Chorus" (1979-80, etching and aquatint, Edition 200).

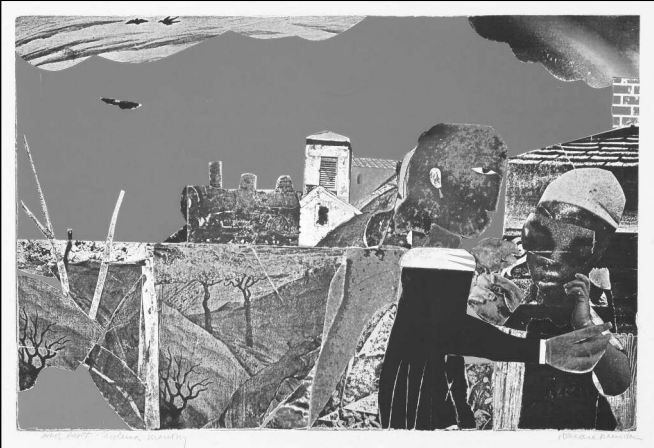
# A true renaissance artist

Bearden's prints rival his collages

By Sura Wood  
Correspondent

SAN FRANCISCO — To enter the realm of prolific African-American artist Romare Bearden is to surrender to a rhapsody of color. Though he's best known for his exquisitely composed, textured collages, a new exhibition at the Museum of the African Diaspora — "From Process to Print: Graphic Works by Romare Bearden" — concentrates on the artist's less familiar but no less dazzling explorations of printmaking, rendered in a variety of techniques he honed over a nearly 30-year period, from the turbulent 1960s through the early 1980s.

The show includes more than 80 images, from lithographs, etchings and monotypes to screen prints, dry-



Bearden's "Carolina Memory (Tidings)," (1970-72, screenprint, Edition 125). The artist's memories of his upbringing in North Carolina influenced his work.

points and engravings. It also features two haunting black-and-white photo-projections from 1964: "Train Whistle Blues II" and "The Conjur Woman," which depicts a fearsome sorceress with a penetrating gaze and magical powers, whom Bearden encountered on the Caribbean

island of St. Martin. Infusing his work are many influences — Picasso; the organic, puzzle-piece unity of patchwork quilts; the brightly colored cutouts of Matisse; and African masks and motifs. But Bearden melded them with a sensibility and perspective all his

**'From Process to Print: Graphic Works by Romare Bearden'**  
**Through:** July 3  
**Where:** Museum of the African Diaspora, 685 Mission St., San Francisco  
**Admission:** \$10, \$5 students and ages 65 and older, free ages 12 and younger; 415-358-7200, www.moadsf.org

own, as seen in the African images, intricate textile patterns, deep melon hues and azure blues of "Falling Star" (1980).

A descendant of the Harlem Renaissance and an activist during the civil rights movement, Bearden (1911-88) befriended the literati, artists and famous musicians of his era. Duke Ellington was his first patron, and Branford

See **BEARDEN**, Page 10

# Reassessing Johnson, Dylan

Myth and mystery surround pair of musical legends

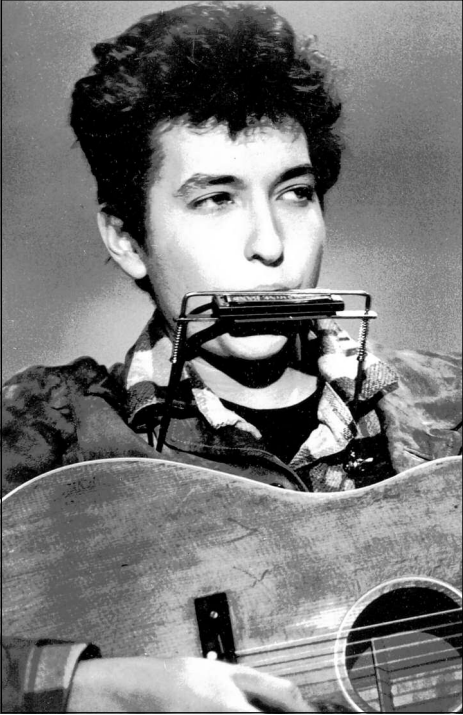
By Greg Kot  
Chicago Tribune

Time tends to reduce great artistry to caricature. Bob Dylan — wasn't he a protest singer? The voice of a generation? The guy who provided the soundtrack for world peace and civil rights by writing "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are A-Changin'?"

And what about Robert Johnson? Didn't he sell his soul to the devil? At some dark crossroads in Mississippi? And then he invented the modern blues?

But Dylan wrote only a handful of protest songs, quickly realizing they were an artistic dead-end. And Johnson never had any documented meetings with Beelzebub. With the 100th anniversary of Johnson's birth celebrated May 8, and Dylan's 70th birthday coming May 24, it's time to take a fresh look. Myths aren't why the music of these two artists still has the ability to bowl over listeners. There's something else, but what exactly?

Johnson made his living as a juke-joint troubadour during the 1930s traveling throughout the South (before his death in 1938). He was in enough demand to make \$6 per gig, about five or six times the going rate. But he never visited Chicago, where most blues recordings were being made at the time. Instead, his reputation was largely built on regional word of mouth, and he didn't have the na-



LEFT: MERCURY NEWS ARCHIVES; RIGHT: ASSOCIATED PRESS ARCHIVES

The 100-year anniversary of the bluesman Robert Johnson, left, and the 70th birthday of Bob Dylan have prompted a new look at the two legends of American music.

tional stature of prominent blues hit-makers of the era such as Kokomo Arnold and Leroy Carr.

When he finally did commit his music to tape in two solo recording sessions — one in a San Antonio hotel in 1936, the next in a Dallas warehouse in 1937 — he produced 29 songs and several alternate versions. The songs were issued as 78-rpm singles, and one became a modest regional hit: "Terraplane Blues."

But his sound was already becoming dated by the time of his death at age 27, more indebted to the stripped-down Mississippi Delta style of predecessors such as Charley Patton and Son House than

the band-oriented jump and swing sounds that were coming into vogue in the urban centers up north. In part because of that, he was largely forgotten until a young white audience of hard-core folkies and aspiring rockers discovered him in the '60s — when Johnson's music was issued on album for the first time.

A 1961 compilation anointed him "King of the Delta Blues Singers." That status, however, was something Johnson never enjoyed when alive, though a number of his songs had become standards for subsequent generations of urban blues singers: "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," "Sweet Home

Chicago," "Stop Breakin' Down Blues."

The collection portrayed Johnson as the epitome of the stereotypical backporch bluesman, tormented by demons that drove him to an early death. (In actuality, Johnson was poisoned by a jealous husband who didn't appreciate the philandering singer sleeping with his wife.)

But subsequent more-complete collections of Johnson's music — including the recent "Robert Johnson: The Centennial Collection" (Columbia Legacy) — have made clear that he was anything

See **LEGENDS**, Page 7

## Dalis

Continued from Page 1

She would much rather talk about the company, how it worked "like a clock" this past season: "As I've told my board, I could get hit by a bus, and the company would continue. And it did." And she plans to be back in her office within two weeks. Even after "feeling like I've been to hell and back twice," this whirlwind says she has no plans to retire: "There was a while there when I thought I'd have to give it up, but I'm back."

"I'm only moving forward," she says, for instance toward the Fifth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, a showcase for 10 emerging singers, Saturday at the California Theatre. She will attend? "Of course! It's an opportunity to show young talent that we *do* believe in them and we want to help them. That's what my whole life is about right now, to help someone get going, to launch careers."

It's a terrific occasion, with the finalists culled in the preceding days from 100 or so competitors. Several of the judges are from nationally ranked companies; there's \$50,000 in prize money; and the audience votes gets to vote on its own winner in this "Opera Idol" kind of event.

But let's get back to Irene Dalis, because the driver of that SUV — who vanished from the accident scene and hasn't been found — came *that* close to removing the South Bay's most widely respected arts personage from the planet.

And if you don't know her story, here it is in a nutshell: The daughter of a downtown San Jose hat maker, she grew up on Delmas Avenue, watched Clark Gable in "Gone with the Wind" at least seven times at the California Theatre after the film's opening in 1939, graduated from San Jose State in 1946 with a minor in math and a major in music education, then went off to New York for more music studies.

As a mezzo-soprano, she cultivated her career at regional opera houses in Europe. In 1957, she debuted at New York's Metropolitan Opera, where she starred in dozens of productions over two decades, before retiring in 1976 and returning to San Jose — to her true destiny and most important career, she has said, as the founder of Opera San Jose, now in its 27th season.

And so, while in the hospital — first at Valley Medical Center and Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose, and finally at California Pacific Medical Center's Davies Campus in San Francisco — she studied the company's balance sheets. "You better believe it, every month, *absolutely*."

She also watched videotapes of the performances she was missing at the California Theatre: "Oh, I tell you that was the biggest punishment. That was the hardest, knowing that my people were on stage, and where was I? I was in bed. Fifty miles away."

Yes, there was additional punishment: grueling surgeries and relentlessly enforced rehabilitation.

"Honey, it was the real thing. You know I don't do anything halfway."

"At the beginning," she says, "I really thought I

should depart: 'Let's find out what's on the other side of this world. Let's just do it.'

"That was my first wish, and I wasn't frightened or anything. But when I realized that I was not going to die, then I knew I had to do everything in my power to help this heal, and I tried to cooperate with all the doctors, and I really did have a dream team. And yes, there were moments of great difficulty, but somehow or other good sense came into my brain: 'Well, it's not going to help to be depressed.' And I just found a good thing to think about every day, something in my life, and I've had a wonderful life."

She pauses to come up with the words to characterize her recent experiences: "My whole life has been go-go-go, do-do-do. But this was six months doing nothing, and all I did was think and think and think. I'm not a religious person, but I spent a lot of time thinking about the Big One. And I think I relived my entire life, as well. I really do."

Which memories rose up?

"Oh, I thought about my late husband, and about my childhood, and how I spent most of it at the piano. And I thought about college in the war years, and how, during World War II, people would hang stars in their living room windows. And the day my mother took down those three stars, and I knew my three brothers were well and coming home — they were all overseas in the military. I think that was the happiest day in my life."

Is she a nostalgic person?

"I didn't used to be," she says, then tallies her family members, who rallied around her in the hospital: her daughter Alida and grandsons Gregory and Scott, as well as her two nephews and six nieces and her three great-nephews and three great-nieces. And her friends, too, and the hundreds of people who sent her get-well cards: "The kind of support I have in this city is amazing."

"I think basically I've come to appreciate my life," she says. Just over a month ago, she returned home and walked through the door. "Oh," she says, "I just thought my little house was a palace."

Every day she works with the therapist, who has "had me out on the walker," she says. "I just went down to the curb and walked around. Pretty soon it's going to be graduation time" — back to work, she means — "and meanwhile, if I can walk 20 steps, I'm grateful."

In recent years, Dalis was a power walker, striding through several miles every day. Are the power walking days over?

"Oh, I think that's a thing of the past. But we'll see. One step at a time, my dear. Anything is possible."

Just a few days ago, doctors gave her permission to put her full weight on her injured right leg: "I'm liberated!" she says.

"I saw two performances over the weekend," she adds. Attending those final performances of "La Bohème," she was "on *cloud nine*," she says. Last Sunday, when she took her seat, a stir went through the audience: "It was like mother's come home."

Contact Richard Scheinin at 408-920-5069.

New Century Chamber Orchestra

NADJA SALERNO-SONNENBERG, MUSIC DIRECTOR

WORLD PREMIERE OF

Mark O'Connor's Elevations

Plus works by Elgar, Bridge, and Schnittke

FRIDAY, MAY 20TH, 8PM

First United Methodist Church, Palo Alto

Tickets start at \$29!

BUY ONLINE AT NCCO.ORG

OR CALL CITY BOX OFFICE AT 415.392.4400

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg