

from LETTER BOX  
the editor

## A Season to Remember

The year was 1997. Mayor Glenda Hood asked Gerald “Jerry” Hilbrich to reenergize United Arts of Central Florida. Along with the late Karen Plunkett, they set out to build a team that would help create a solid foundation for the Central Florida arts community. The Orlando Science Center was just holding the grand opening of its 207,000-square-foot building, the Orlando Repertory Theatre would still be known as the Civic Theatre until the year 2000, and the Earl Cunningham paintings were part of a private collection. In 1998, Jerry and Karen called me. Well, if you know Jerry, you know most people say “yes” to whatever he’s selling. I headed downtown to an office the size of most conference rooms, where I accepted a job. When I arrived home I announced that I had a new place of employment. I didn’t know my title or my salary, and the office space had a lot to be desired. Let’s just say it was good that Jerry had an open-door policy, because his office didn’t boast a door. However, I knew I was surrounded by amazing leaders. It turns out my past in nonprofit management and a public relations degree would really come in handy as I was tasked with upgrading *Art Speak*, a glossy newsletter publication, to a mission-driven magazine called *OArts!* We worked with *Orlando Sentinel* in a unique partnership that continues today with Visit Orlando. The magazine will soon turn 20 years old, and in those decades the pages have been blessed with stories of growth, collaboration and synergy. Not everything has been rosy, and there have certainly been funding woes along the way. But when I survey the cultural landscape of 2017, we are truly fortunate to call Orlando home. I’m not much on looking back, but sometimes doing so allows for a moment of celebration.

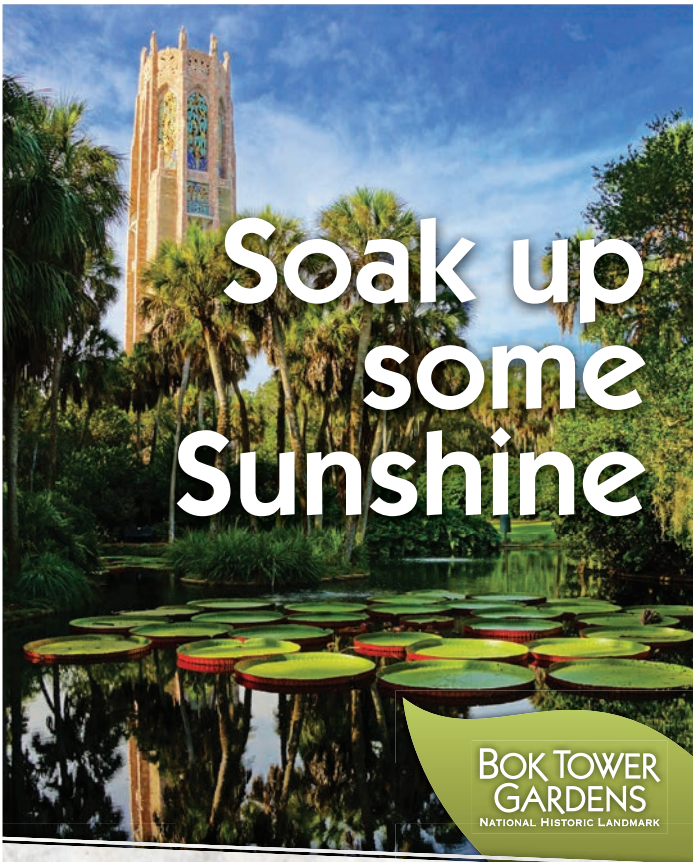
In this issue we talk anniversaries (page 16), from a theater that once housed farming equipment to an orchestra that has been able to diversify programming while maintaining a balanced budget. It’s remarkable what passionate, intelligent and visionary leaders can accomplish. As we launch the Season Preview of 2017-18, let us imagine what 20 years from now will look like. What amazing stories will grace these pages? And who will be telling them?

It is truly an honor. Cheers!

Cindy Bowman LaFronz  
Editor  
*Orlando Arts Magazine*



PHELAN M. EBENHACK



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