

The Arts Paper

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Books

Author Fishman floats a warning about impending water crisis

By Jan Engoren
Contributing Writer

Not one to shy away from large topics, award-winning journalist and author Charles Fishman will bring a whopper to the Festival of the Arts BOCA this month.

Fishman's talk, which will take place March 9 at the festival as part of the Authors & Ideas series, focuses on one of his favorite subjects: water.

"Water has achieved an invisibility in our lives that is only more remarkable given how central it is," he writes in his 2012 book, *The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water*.

"In the U.S. and the developed world we've spent the last 100 years in a kind of aquatic paradise: Our water has been abundant, safe and cheap. We could use as much as we wanted, whenever we wanted, for almost no cost."



Fishman But that is changing, he says, and access to water is one of the foremost challenges facing the planet today.

"The biggest questions facing our relationship to water is how much do we use?" Fishman said in an interview. "What do we use it for and what is the cost of that use? The point is that we don't take water seriously and we live in a thoughtless age about water."

Although born in Boston, Fishman, 61, grew up in Miami and attended Palmetto High School. He has a natural affinity for the state and says he loves the "non-political part of Florida," the landscape, the people and the sense of community.

He scored a job at the *Washington Post* as a reporter immediately after graduating college but left in 1986 to take a position at the *Orlando Sentinel*, where he began

See **FISHMAN** on AT15

Art



All the presidents' man

Ann Norton displays works of celebrated photographer Benson

By Gretel Sarmiento
Contributing Art Writer

A distraught Ethel Kennedy has just seen her fatally wounded husband lying on the floor of a hotel kitchen. With a ferocious scream, she pushes back the crowd, demanding it grant him some space. One daring camera stays and catches the prelude to Bobby Kennedy's death.

Six years later, Pat Nixon stands near her husband as he struggles to address his staff one last time. Richard Nixon's agonizing pause behind the podium is nothing compared to the look of unbearable pain in his wife's eyes. The camera is there again, documenting



TOP: The Beatles get silly in a Paris hotel room in 1964.

ABOVE: Hillary and Bill Clinton share a moment in 1992.

Photos by Harry Benson

every second of her fortitude.

For the past 60 years nothing has eluded legendary photojournalist Harry Benson — not Muhammad Ali or Queen Elizabeth or Willie Nelson or Winston Churchill. The Scottish-born photographer has captured every U.S.

president since Dwight Eisenhower and documented history-defining moments, such as the James Meredith civil rights march, the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall, and the funeral of Martin Luther King Jr.

From Somalian refugee camps and Vietnam War protests to Truman Capote's *Black and White Ball* and Bobby Fischer's world chess championship in Iceland, Benson's career is an extreme case of being in the right place at the right time.

A selection of about 40 of his photographs, mostly in black and white, is on view at Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens through June. They include civil right figures, politicians, musicians, celebrities, and athletes. For those who weren't born yet, they bring to life events taught through books or Wikipedia. If you were around, they

See **BENSON** on AT13



Lauren Weinberg plays the temptress Lola in the Wick Theatre's production of *Damn Yankees*. Photo provided

Theater

'Damn Yankees' promises devilish fun at the Wick

By Hap Erstein
ArtsPaper Theater Writer

Polled for their preferences in musicals, the Wick Theatre's audiences have consistently ranked 1955's *Damn Yankees* very high.

What is it about this Tony Award-winning show based on Douglass Wallop's tongue-in-cheek novel, *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*, that is so appealing?

Jeffrey Moss, who directs the Wick's production that begins performances March 2, sums it up in two words: Nostalgia and heart.

"Nostalgia can be a wonderful

thing. These musicals from that golden age have something at the heart of them. At the core of all these shows there is heart, as this show enunciates very clearly," he says. "And the construction and the great songs, so well placed in the show. And the book captured the emotion so well."

It was Wallop's inspired idea to combine the great American pastime of baseball with the devilish, enduring legend of Faust. That is, a middle-aged avid Washington Senators fan sells his soul to Satan to help his beloved team beat the dominant club of that era, those damn New York Yankees.

"But it's more than just being about

sports," adds Lauren Weinberg, who plays the devil's secret weapon, a seductress named Lola. "It's about following your dream. And then actually realizing what's most important in life. It kind of makes everybody reflect on what makes them human, what makes them tick."

"It contains an interesting idea," Moss notes. "It poses to the audience the question, 'Would you do this? What would you sell your soul for?' And when you do it, was it worth it?"

The legendary director/book writer George Abbott adapted Wallop's novel

See **YANKEES** on AT14

FISHMAN

Continued from page 11

writing features for its Sunday supplement, *Florida Magazine*, and became an editor.

Initially, Fishman became interested in bottled water. He thought it was “silly and ridiculous,” and decided to examine the industry.

His article for *Fast Company* magazine, titled “Message in a Bottle,” dissects the multibillion-dollar-per-year industry and the irony that comes with it. For example, he says, in the case of Fiji water, water is being shipped around the world to fill consumer demand, when half the people living in Fiji do not have access to clean, safe drinking water.

“How is it that I can walk into any CVS, drug or grocery store near my house and get clean water from Fiji?” he asks.

“One out of six people in the world has no dependable, safe drinking water,” he writes. “The global economy has contrived to deny the most fundamental element of life to one billion people, while delivering to us an array of water ‘varieties’ from around the globe, not one of which we actually need.”

This observation propelled him on a journey to India, Australia and Las Vegas looking at the global state of water.

“It’s time to pay attention,” Fishman says. “For now, water is cheap, safe and unlimited. There is a time coming, however, when these three things won’t be true anymore.”

Unlike gasoline, he says, we don’t manage water use by price. There’s no cost incentive to conserve or to think creatively about its use. He thinks water costs should be higher, and come with incentives to save. As a case in point, when he wrote *The Big Thirst* a decade ago, he says a typical American family of four used 1,000 gallons of water each day.

“We have lost track of the value of clean, safe and reliable water and totally take it for granted,” he says. “No one says, ‘I can’t take three baths this week,’ or I can’t make coffee this morning because the water isn’t good.”

The water disconnect extends to his home state.

“Florida is the craziest water state in the country and has serious water problems — even though there is an abundance of water — because the water is poorly managed.”

Fishman’s other books include *One Giant Leap: The Impossible Mission That Flew Us to the Moon* (2019); *A Curious Mind: The Secret to a Bigger Life* (2015, co-written with Hollywood producer Brian Grazer), and *The Wal-Mart Effect* (2006), in which he visited 100 Walmarts in 23 states to do research.

Fishman is married to journalist Trish Wilson and lives in Washington, D.C. The

If You Go

The 17th annual **Festival of the Arts BOCA** runs March 3–12 at the Mizner Park Amphitheater, 590 Plaza Real, Boca Raton. **Tickets:** \$15 to \$150 **Info:** festivalboca.org; 561-571-5270

couple have two children. He is currently at work on his next book, which will look, as Studs Terkel did in the 1970s, at the world of work.

In his March 9 talk, Fishman will attempt to create a sense of urgency around solving our water problems.

“The point of my talk is to say: Hey, you guys, we need you to pay attention,” he says. “What matters is the way water is managed in communities, what we ask our water utilities to do and what we ask our elected officials to do.”

“Vote for people who take water problems seriously — fix the water supply, manage storm water and fix the Everglades,” Fishman says.

“We’ve lived in blissful ignorance for 100 years,” he notes, “but that ‘golden age of water’ has dried up, so to speak. We need to pay attention. I want to give people a sense of what that means, how they can plug in and pay attention and sound a wakeup call.”

Festival schedule

Also appearing at the **Authors & Ideas** series will be author Lynne Olson, who speaks at 7 p.m. March 6 about her book *Madame Fourcade’s Secret War*, the true story of Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, a Frenchwoman and mother of two who became leader of a vast Resistance intelligence organization and spy network in France during World War II.

She will be followed at 7 p.m. March 8 by author, actress and social commentator Fran Lebowitz.

Fishman’s talk is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, March 9.

Other events at the festival include a screening of *Fantasia*, the 1940 Disney cartoon, accompanied by the Festival Orchestra Boca, led by conductor Constantine Kitsopoulos (March 3); the Young People’s Chorus of New York City (March 4); *A Night at the Ballet*, featuring principal dancers from the New York City Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre (March 5); the Future Stars Competition, a live contest featuring young South Florida vocalists and dancers (March 7); jazz vocalist Nicole Henry (March 10); the Festival Orchestra Boca in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* and solo performances by Jupiter flutist Kara Ravaschieri and violinist Hina Khuong-Huu (March 11); and a closing concert by the Brazilian jazz-pop legend Sergio Mendes (March 12).



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