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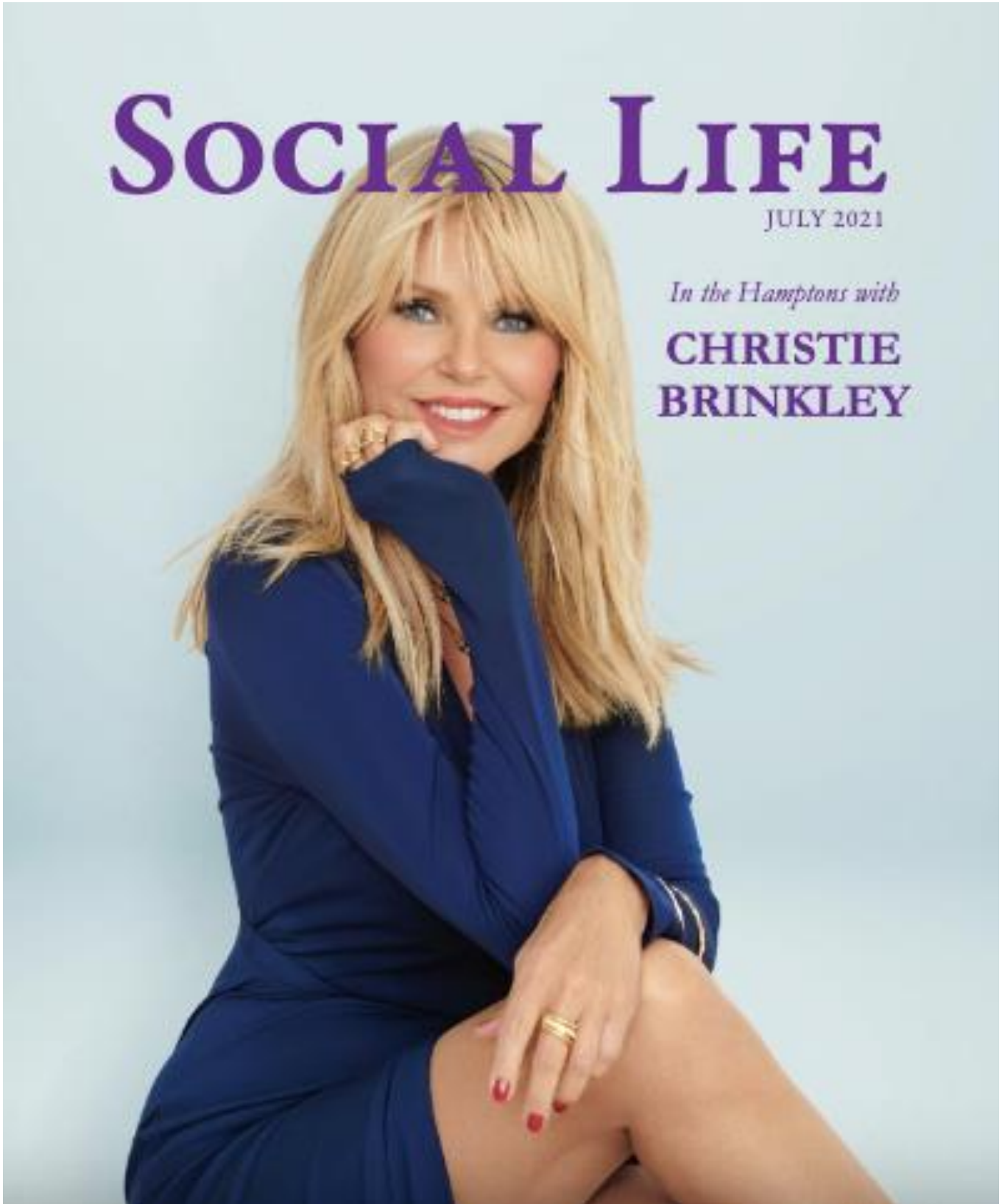
SOCIAL LIFE
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JULY 2021

In the Hamptons with

**CHRISTIE
BRINKLEY**



ART

STEVEN COLUCCI

DANCER, MIME, PAINTER & PRODUCER

WESTHAMPTON BEACH PROJECT

By R. COURI HAY

WORKING WITH DYSLEXIA

Steven Colucci — dancer, mime, and painter — is the producer of the third annual Westhampton Beach Project on July 30 and 31. Colucci has always been captivated by the arts and aspired to become an artist himself, but growing up in the South Bronx and moving into arts in NYC proved challenging. At age 12, Colucci went to the New York University Reading Clinic to help with his dyslexia. On his commute from the Bronx to Manhattan to attend school, Colucci always had an extra pair of clothes with him, changing outfits at the 161st stop on the D train to avoid getting bullied. Even so, Colucci enjoyed the NYU clinic because it awoke the artist within him.

At the clinic, Colucci was handed a paintbrush and told to channel himself through art. Studying the virtuosity of renowned Hamptons artists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and John Marin, Colucci found a world where he could thrive. After finishing at the clinic and graduating from William Taft High School, Colucci received a scholarship to the New York School of Visual Arts. Colucci said, “My parents did everything necessary to make me become an artist. If I had become a doctor, they would have been disappointed.” With this goal in mind, Colucci moved to Paris after earning a bachelor degree in painting. In the City of Love, Colucci found a new fascination: by combining his admiration for art and movement he began to study pantomime and ballet with the legendary Etienne Decroux, a corporeal mime master.

STUDYING WITH MARCEL MARCEAU

From Etienne Decroux Colucci learned the art of corporeal mime, pantomime movement that places drama within the body. Elements of theatricality usually expressed in speech on a stage are instead expressed by a silent body moving in space. But it wasn't until Colucci studied with Marcel Marceau that he began to find fame. Marceau's wife, Ella Jaroszewicz, a mime herself, saw Colucci perform and personally brought Marceau to Colucci's studio to meet him. Quickly, he became Marceau's next corporeal mime protégé of the late 1970s. “Marcel was



Steven Colucci

very complicated and everything he did was in deep thought,” said Colucci. “He always used to say, ‘To experience comedy you need trauma.’ Not a lot of people were doing corporeal mime, so, everyone was interested in what we were doing,” remembered Colucci. “Especially in America because here we separate the two, dance and mime. But in Polish mime, they're one.”

HAMPTON ART MOVIE THEATRE

During the course of Colucci's career, he met the musician and composer Robert Ruggieri, who played classical guitar and the Moog synthesizer. The pair revolutionized the world of creative expression by introducing music to pantomime. They performed their first collaboration at the Hampton Arts Movie Theatre in 1960. Colucci and Ruggieri found an unconventional way to explore corporeal mime and body movements. Adding sound from the guitar and synthesizer opened new ways for the human body to flow and created a new atmosphere. Colucci is now the president of the Musical Mime Theatre and still works alongside Ruggieri.

A NEW GENERATION OF ARTISTS

Today, Colucci has inspired many performing artists around the world and made it his mission to contribute to the education of the younger generation of creators. In the '80s he wanted to provide corporeal movement as an outlet for people and expose the public to this unique art form. When Colucci returned to New York from Paris, he organized a dance and mime program at Bard College. He encouraged his students to practice every day, much like a pianist. His advice was to be beyond criticism, but prepare as if going to war. He emphasized the need for enough training and for students to show their worth, but he also said, “While you're creating, don't become an intellectual fool.”

WESTHAMPTON BEACH PROJECT

Colucci is the producer of the Westhampton Beach Project, which provides up-and-coming performers with a place

ART

to publicize and unveil their talents. The free-to-the-public annual event is a combination of opera, ballet, and modern dance held on the Great Lawn on Main Street in Westhampton. "I knew that it was time to launch The Westhampton Beach Project event, which has been on my mind for several years," said Colucci. "I wanted to provide all these amazing dancers, artists, and singers with a platform to showcase their talents." The next Westhampton Beach Project takes place on July 30th through the 31st. All proceeds will go to the non-profit Musical Mime Company, which is committed to cultivating artists and awareness of art and corporeal movement. The two-day event will feature the West-African singer and songwriter Eva Sita, a soloist from the American Ballet Theatre, choreography by the Alison Cook Beatty Dance Company, and a tribute to Frank Sinatra by the vocalist Steven Maglio.

MoMA & THE NATIONAL ARTS CLUB

Colucci is also a painter. His neo-post-impressionist work erupts with bursts of emotion and color. It's as if Colucci's decades of dance experience have transferred to his art-making: Vibrant colors dance elegantly like ballerinas on a stage. His artwork has been featured in MoMA, The National Arts Club, Belenky Brothers gallery in SoHo, and the permanent collections of the Mark Hachem Gallery in NYC and Paris. Colucci refers to his art as "a technical expression of physicality and movement."



Steven Colucci, *LA Eggerman*

Steven Colucci
whbproject.com
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