

MADISON NEHORS

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Meet Marc & John!

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Marc & John prepare for their upcoming musical at the Deacon John Grave House

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By Lisa Lelas • Photos by Catherine King

In a time when everyone seems to be looking down into their phones, Marc Deaton and John Johmann agree that they may never have met if their chance encounter happened today. “We met on the ‘C’ train in New York City twenty years ago,” explains John, “we noticed each other on the subway platform and smiled as we sat across from each other on the train. At my stop, I gave him a simple friendly nod, and we went out for a drink.” Marc adds, “That wouldn’t happen today. No one looks up anymore!” Twenty years later, they are still together, married for the past four years. There’s a lesson here...look UP people! Don’t let opportunities pass you by. That very principle seems to be woven into how they live their lives, and it’s working. Both Marc and John are driven by passion. They work together in an organization they founded and love, travel often, entertain a lot, and they’re not afraid to take risks. They simply enjoy looking up!

Marc was born and raised in southern California, the eldest of three kids, earning his degree in Southern Utah in theatre and music. He went on to grad school in New Orleans. Becoming a professional opera singer brought Marc to Vienna, where he lived for many years, singing major roles in many international European theaters. In the late 90’s he moved to New York, where

he met John. Still maintaining an apartment in the city, Marc explains, “We wanted a week-end place to escape to. We found Madison and love it here. It’s home now.” Eight years ago, Marc and John created the Madison Lyric Stage, bringing a unique immersive theater experience to audiences right here in town.

John grew up in Queens, NY with two younger brothers, while attending high school in Manhattan. “I’m a city boy,” he smiles, “but spent many summers at the beaches on Long Island, so I also love being by the shore.” He earned his Bachelors degree from Columbia University. “I did theater all through school and always wanted to be a performer, but landed a job at a PR agency and focused on that.” Currently, John works for a major French bank in New York City and splits his time between NY and Madison, where he helps run their theatrical company here.

“We bought our home about 12 years ago. We never intended to live in Madison full time, but we fell in love with this community,” says John. “We live in a historical Scranton house, built in 1935. It was in desperate need of repair but we had a vision. We created a ten-year plan to fix it up, but ended up doing that in a year! During the renovation, we got used to living here. We love it.” Marc agrees, “I love Madison because it’s physically beautiful with easy access

to woods for talking walks with our dog, Wally, as well as several great beaches. Our home is country. I like being able to have a garden and have a car. People on the shoreline have been extremely kind to us. Being a part of a community has been very nice. We've developed very close friends who support us personally and professionally."

The couple kept their apartment in the city, which serves as John's haven while he works full time there and both enjoy having a place to crash when they visit NY friends or attend Broadway shows, but Madison has really become their home. Both Marc and John direct and star in many of their current productions. John hadn't performed in a decade and was skeptical to get back on stage, but appreciates that he was able to follow his early dreams. "I'll always hold Madison very dear," says John, "for my artistic re-awakening, the place I got married, and the place where I can de-stress and just breathe."

Madison Lyric Stage, now an award-winning 501(c)(3) non-profit performing



Walking their dog, Wally by the shore

arts company, is currently in full swing with their summer shows. "We started the company eight years ago in a barn in our backyard," said Marc, "one day, after doing a couple little concerts in the house, I said let's do a show in the barn! We moved in a piano. Our very first production was a musical show we called Sondheim in the Barn, but we couldn't

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really promote it, so it was mainly just for friends and family.”

Eventually, as the humble enterprise grew into a professional theatre company, they moved their productions to the Deacon John Grave House on the Boston Post Road and Academy Street.

“It’s not like any theater show you’ve ever been to,” explains Marc, “It’s an immersive experience. Only 40 tickets are sold to each performance so they sell out quickly. Instead of the set changing, the audience actually moves from room to room, immersing themselves right into the various scenes.” Their season runs from April to November each year, featuring three main productions and two smaller shows. A variety of genres is spotlighted, one opera, one musical theater and one straight drama, so there is something for everyone. Next show is the Stephen Sondheim/James Lapine musical “Into the Woods” which runs July 18-28, followed by the opera Hansel and Gretel which runs October 4-13. (MadisonLyricStage.org).



John & Marc recharge between shows at the beach

“We travel a great deal. We both love Europe,” Marc smiles, “since John works for a French bank we get to go there a lot!” But, they always look forward to coming home. “When we’re not traveling, we are always around town,” says Marc, “we love to go to the Madison movie theater and we love all the shops downtown. But mostly, we enjoy being home, eating, cooking and socializing with friends.”

CATHERINE KING
Photographer

www.catherine-king-photography.com
ckphotographyllc@gmail.com
203-654-7975
@catherinekingphotography

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Attorney Sweeney is a graduate of Gettysburg College and Quinnipiac University School of Law and has been practicing in the areas of real estate, probate, and trusts & estates since 1998.

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Michael J. Sweeney
77 Wall St. Ste. 1-W
P.O. Box 1370 Madison, CT 06443-1370
Tel. 203-244-9522 Fax 203-244-9533
mjs@Sweeney-Law.com
www.Sweeney-Law.com

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