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FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER

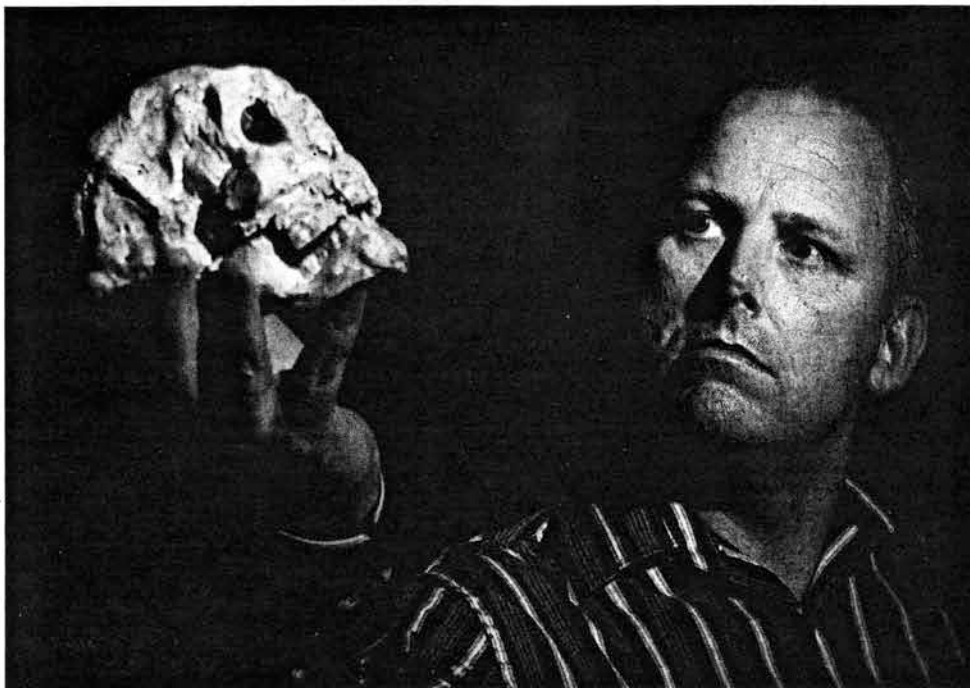
★ Sunday, September 14, 2008

Meet local artists who create and teach others how to do the same.

# Inspirations

STORY BY MARTY CLEAR • *Times Correspondent* • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIRK SHADD • *of the Times*

The best-known quotation from the eminently quotable H.L. Mencken is probably this one: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." • It's familiar, it's snappy, but it isn't true. • Many of the Tampa Bay area's best and most recognizable artists are also teachers at all levels, from kindergarten through graduate school, in conservatories, theaters and municipal arts facilities. • Given these days of ever tighter education budgets, they're also survivors. • With the new school year under way, we checked in with a few of the working artists who are helping to train the next generation of actors, dancers, playwrights, choreographers and visual artists. And with apologies to Mr. Mencken, every one of them told us they find teaching up-and-coming artists to be every bit as important and fulfilling as their personal creative efforts.



## Bill Leavengood, 48, playwright

**THE ARTIST:** He's a playwright, most famous locally for *Webb's City: The Musical* (which he co-wrote with Lee Ahlin) and other works that explore this area's history.

**THE EDUCATOR:** He's the director of playwriting, screenwriting and videography at Shorecrest Preparatory School in St. Petersburg.

**WHY TEACH:** "I just love the kids. The kids I get to teach are sophisticated, they're motivated, they're

intelligent. Teaching keeps me — and this is a horrible cliché, I know — it keeps me young. It gives me clarity."

**ON ARTS EDUCATION:** "When they started the theater program here, their idea was 'We'll get the best professionals we can get.' So they got good people, and then we all learned how to be good teachers. I will say that in the public schools (teachers) tell me their budgets are cut every year, though there are certain programs that are doing well because the parents want it."

*Tampa's Gorilla Theatre presents a staged reading of Bill Leavengood's new play "Charley and Emma," about the life and marriage of Charles and Emma Darwin, Sept. 24. Information: [www.gorilla-theatre.com](http://www.gorilla-theatre.com).*