

# The Man Behind Tandy

## Jon Scoville finally steps out into his own spotlight

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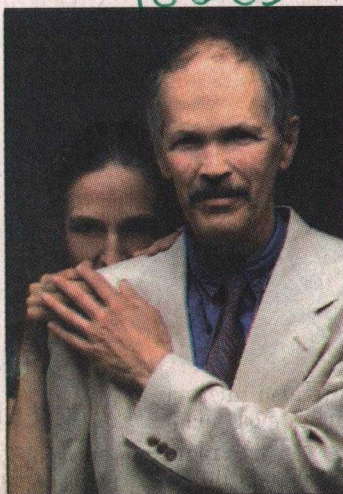
There are worse things to be than Tandy Beal's "arm candy," as composer Jon Scoville jokingly calls himself.

If it weren't for the regal dancer and choreographer coming into his life, Scoville likes to say, he'd be "playing golf and voting Republican."

As partners for 40 years — both domestic and artistic — Scoville and Beal have developed a well-worn public persona: She's the most prominent and beloved artist in Santa Cruz County and him? He's the guy who lives with her.

Tandy Beal is the first person to protest such characterizations, and this weekend she puts her money where her mouth is with "Wild Life," a two-night performance at the Mello Center celebrating the work of the man in the shadows: Jon Scoville.

The occasion marks Scoville's 60th year, the 40th anniversary of his first meeting Beal and the 30th anniversary of their first collaboration as artists. On top of that, it also marks the release of three new recordings of Scoville's work,



Contributed photo

Jon Scoville says if Tandy Beal had not come into his life, he'd be 'playing golf and voting Republican.'

from which Beal will premiere new choreography. More than 35 performers and musicians will be on hand for what amounts to Scoville's artistic Moment in the Sun.

Jon and Tandy are indeed hus-

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## Scoville

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band and wife. But their wedding dates back only 13 years ("We had a 27-year engagement," deadpans Scoville). Their relationship dates back to the Kennedy years, and it has ripened along several lines: friends, lovers, partners, collaborators and, Scoville insists, writer and muse.

"We all talk facetiously about when the Muse is going to visit us," he said in the airy living room of the couple's mountain home. "But there is a definite image of what Tandy does on stage — not only as a choreographer and director, but as a dancer — that's there in my imagination at all times."

Scoville is an old Santa Cruz face, a former bluegrass picker whose old band Women and Children First used to play the Catalyst and the defunct White Buffalo back in the late 1960s. (He was also the first employee at Bookshop Santa Cruz.)

From folk and bluegrass, Scoville's musical odyssey took him to Brazilian, Balkan and Indian music, the latter thanks to study under the tutelage of the legendary Ali Akbar Khan.

This from a man who as a child was prohibited from dancing on Sundays.

Scoville grew up the son of a devout New England Presbyterian minister. It was almost a Calvinist upbringing — "My imagination was gray and brown," he said — and he couldn't have found a more opposite number than the free-spirited young Tandy Beal whose parents were both actors.

Scoville was thrilled at the spirit of creativity in the Beal household ("Every breakfast was a theatrical production," he said) but is quick to point out what

### If You Go

**WHO:** "Wide Life," featuring the music of Jon Scoville, with Tandy Beal, Mandjou Kone, trapeze artist Aloysia Gavre, tango duet John and Nancy Lingemann, Paula Bliss, Rock Lerum and more.

**WHEN:** 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

**WHERE:** Henry J. Mello Center for the Performing Arts, 231 Union St., Watsonville.

**TICKETS:** \$14.

**DETAILS:** 763-4047.

gifts his parents gave to him. Though the religion didn't take with young Jon, the "enormous sense of reverence" has remained with him.

His love affair with the music of Brazil dates back 40 years as well. In 1963, he said, he took Tandy to a screening of the landmark Brazilian film "Black Orpheus," which played out the famous Greek myth against the backdrop of Carnivale in Rio de Janeiro.

"I consider Brazil an antidote to a New England upbringing," he said. He busied himself by "marinating" in Brazilian food, culture and music and teaming up with Brazilian producer and longtime friend Paulo Brandao, though Scoville didn't get to Brazil for the first time until 1985.

"Having worked with a lot of composers," Beal said. "(Scoville is) one of the few who can make a really funny, laugh-out-loud scene. He speaks music as a language. He's articulate in its emotional range. He writes lyrical things that just make you cry, then create a wonderful rhythmic drive, then something funny. That's why we're doing this show."

Scoville's scores for his wife number about 75. A video instal-

lation in the lobby of the Mello on Friday and Saturday will highlight the work Scoville has done with filmmakers, including Man Ray.

Also on hand will be copies of Scoville's recently released CDs "Palmistry" — compositions for solo piano — and "Wide Life," which shows off Scoville's wide Brazilian influences. Debuting at the show will be his most recent recording "Albert's Bicycle."

The show at the Mello takes its title from Scoville's recording, which in turn is borrowed from an old Spanish proverb — "Life is short, but it's wide."

"That means simply that, as you get older, you see the span of your life in an arc. When you're 20, that arc seems endless. When you're 60, you realized that arc is (pointed downward), yet life seems fuller, richer. There's a gratitude that comes with age that I feel, that there's such an abundance of friendship and meaning to life."

The "Wild Life" show is dedicated to the memory of arts producer Jyoti Prather Robinson, a friend of Jon and Tandy who passed away earlier this summer after a long battle with cancer.

"What an inspiration she was," said Scoville. He recounted a story in which Tandy was performing Scoville's composition of "A Wing and a Prayer," a piece dedicated to the memory of Tandy's father, John Beal.

"Jyoti was the stage manager on that show. And here she is, knowing her life has a finiteness to it, working as a stage manager for a piece that was basically a eulogy. She's got the headset on, running the show and there's a morphine pack strapped to her side helping her control the pain."

"That's living wide."

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