

# THE MAKING OF MY 'SWEET BLUES' COLLAGE

(with many to thank !)

A transplant from Brooklyn, NY since November 2022, I started as a volunteer at the [VAPA Center](#)\* in Charlotte, NC in June 2023, and felt like my creative life had found shelter. I had such joy, just being at VAPA. And coming from nyc, nothing compares there – for me – with VAPA's diversity and potential !

When I saw Leigh Williams 'Refreshing Waters' painting below – I thought, that's what I feel ! Then I looked at the painting and thought --- what if instead it was VAPA artists frolicking in the refreshing waters ?

\*VAPA: Visual And Performing Arts Center



'REFRESHING WATERS' by Leigh Williams [www.lbwilliamsart.com](http://www.lbwilliamsart.com)

I asked Leigh if I could use the outer framework of her painting as the foundation for a digital collage dedicated to VAPA performing artists. She said, "Sure !"

My first collaboration with a fellow visual artist !

*(Adding to my years of team visual arts projects working on low budget short films.)*

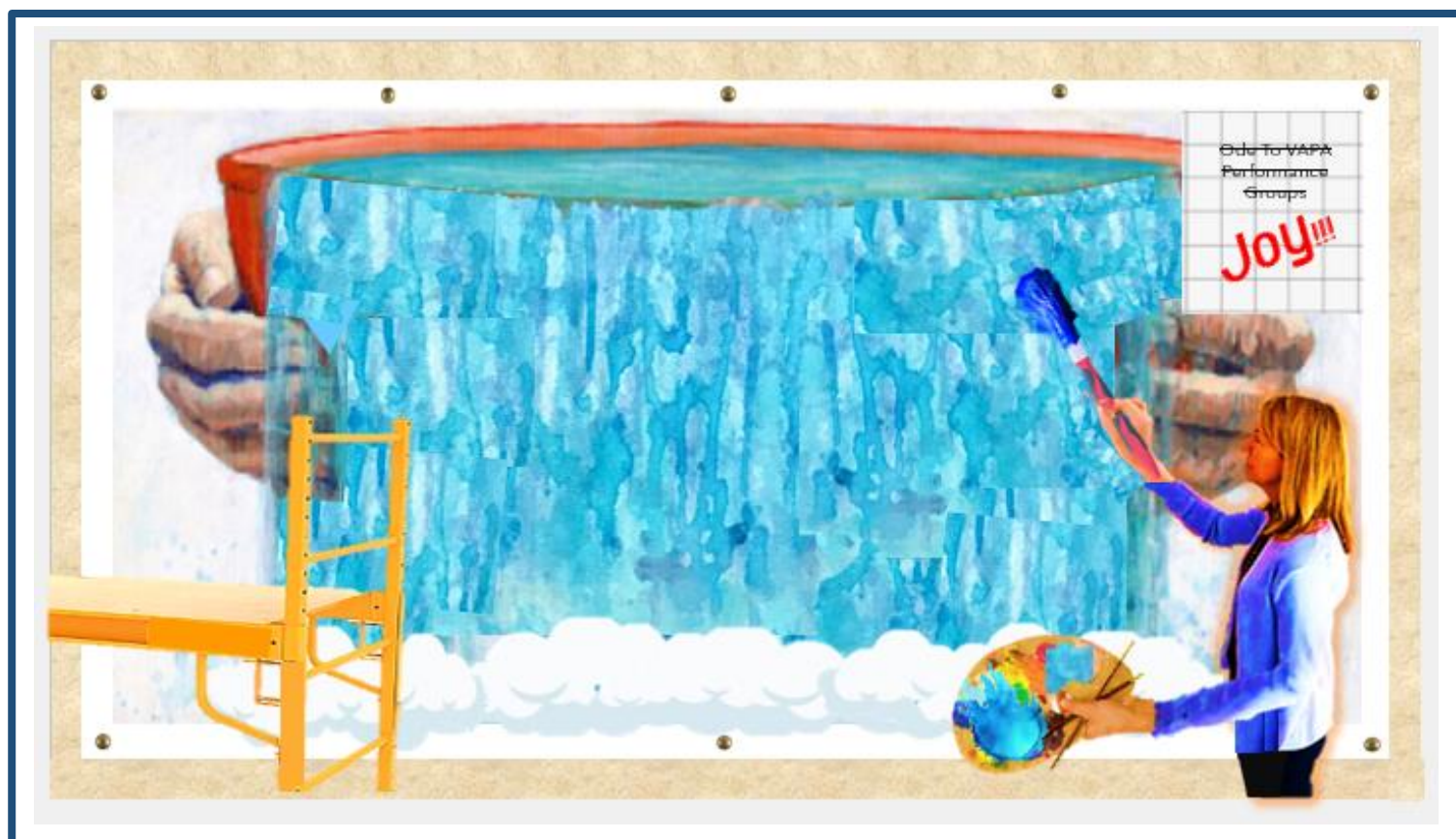
It's not the first time I've used someone else's work as a springboard for my concept and imagery. But the first time I'm actually dealing with the artist who inspired me. The first time I am able to use a portion of the actual imagery as part of my collage.

I decided to call it 'Sweet Blues'. Next I had to build the story for my collage. I like doing story-within-a-story visuals in a collage. I want people to be looking for clues as to the story I'm telling.

I expanded the framework of my picture by putting Leigh's painting contribution within a larger image --- that of the 'painter' finishing up the painting ! Leigh gave me an image of her body to use as 'painter'. I asked her to name the painting that the 'painter' was working on in the collage. Leigh wanted it called -- 'JOY'.

So 'Joy' also became part of my guiding inspiration. But I had to bring it down to me and turn it into story. So written above 'JOY' in the collage is: ~~Ode To VAPA Performance Groups,~~

And it had to make sense that you would see the words on a traditional painting, so I put it in the corner of a pre-marked grid that hasn't been painted on yet.



Next I needed to approach VAPA performance groups for PR approved pictures to use in the collage. I knew Stuart from Charlotte Comedy Theater because I took an improv class with them. But I did not know the others I approached. I wondered if they would think it strange that a new volunteer was asking for their pictures to cut up. But this was VAPA ! -- They all said, 'YES !' How Cool Is That ! Thanks to:

- Stuart, Charlotte Comedy Theater [www.charlottecomedytheater.com](http://www.charlottecomedytheater.com)
- Ron, JAZZArts Charlotte [www.thejazzarts.org](http://www.thejazzarts.org)
- Jane, Vision Elite Royalty [www.facebook.com/visioneliteroyaltydancecompany](http://www.facebook.com/visioneliteroyaltydancecompany)
- Anne, Charlotte Off Broadway [www.charlottesoffbroadway.com](http://www.charlottesoffbroadway.com)

They all sent me pictures to choose from. Images in my digital collage were going to be small, so I wanted striking poses and expressions. After I had cut out images from each of the contributors I had to figure out how to group them for it to make sense placing them inside Leigh's waterfall. I was working in PowerPoint, more limited than advanced software like Photoshop. All the figures looked disconnected and trying to layer transparent water over parts of them looked awful ! I started playing with the texture of the figures, thinking I could maybe blend them better with the water. But it looked awful blurring figures that were already small.

Everyone had been so generous and trusting ! I wanted the groups to be able to use the collage in their PR if they wanted. But what I had didn't work. It was just a collection of images that didn't make sense. Was I going to have to apologize and say -- *Sorry, I couldn't make it work as a collage ?*



### All The Pieces Together Were At First A Mess !



Then EUREKA ! I would create another layer to the story and put the performers on an actual stage, and then the waterfall would frame them like curtains. I HOPE THE ARTIST / ORGANIZATIONS WHO CONTRIBUTED LIKE IT ! - Trayce



*p.s. I signed the collage with my initials 'TAG' -- Can You Find My TAG ?*