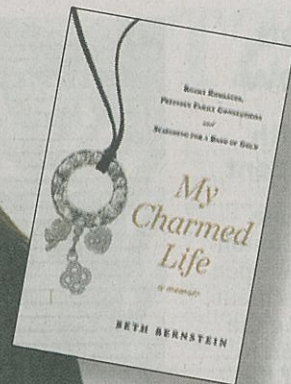


'Charmed'

New City native Beth Bernstein's memoir full of gems. **LIFE & STYLE 1B**



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Puzzles inside

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To Hill and back at WBT

Many connections make
'The Music Man' a
standout for Scott Bierko

By Suzanne Samin
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A century after it was set, John Fanelli and the Family Theatre Company are bringing the Broadway classic, "The Music Man," to the Westchester Broadway Theatre for a newly extended eight-week run, through Aug. 26.



Scott Bierko

The musical, which is centered around July 4, 1912, was written in 1957 by Meredith Willson. It tells the story of Harold Hill, a con man who glides into River City, Iowa, posing as a bandleader. He sells band instruments and uniforms to the unsuspecting townspeople, with the intent of skipping out with the cash. However, an unexpected change of heart changes Hill's life forever.

In a break from rehearsal at the Elmsford dinner theater, Scott Bierko, who plays Hill, explained that as good a salesman as Harold Hill is, he falls in love with the town and very specific people in it — especially Marian Paroo, a librarian played by Victoria Lauzun, who steals his heart.

The timing of this production is not all that makes this show stand out.

Bierko, 50, of Yorktown Heights, has a deeper connection to Harold Hill than simply playing him in this production. Raised in Rye Brook, he played the role at age 11, with The Harrison Players community theater.

The connection does not stop there.

Bierko's younger brother, Craig — seen on TV in "Sex and the City" and in the films "Cinderella Man," "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," and "The Change-Up" — played Hill on Broadway in Susan Stroman's 2000 revival of "The Music Man."

Craig says that he'll be supporting Scott through every step of the journey, the same way he did for him during his Broadway debut.

"I hope to be as good of a brother to him as he was to me."

Scott says he and his brother discuss the role every night on the phone.

At the age of 11 he did not understand the complexities of the character, he says. However, looking on it now, he feels when Hill undergoes his transformation, the audience transforms along with him.

Director John Fanelli, 41, of York-

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A charmed

LIFE

New City native
Beth Bernstein's
memoir full of gems

By Karen Croke
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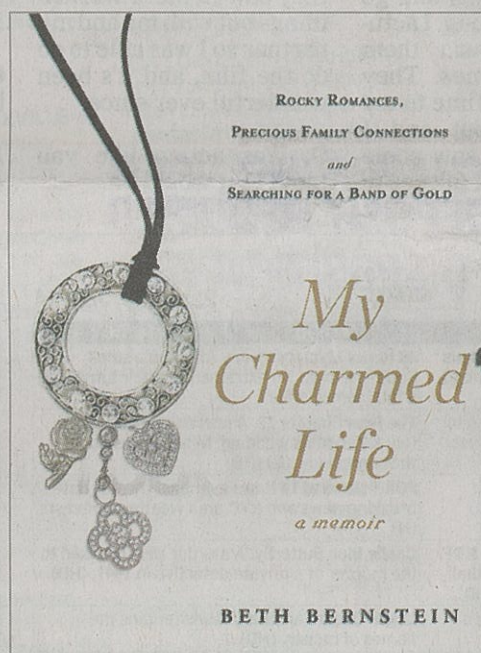
Beth Bernstein loved growing up in New City. It was where she got her ears pierced, fell in love for the first time, and had her heart broken.

Bernstein, who now lives in Manhattan, has written a memoir that weaves together all these milestones and more — from that first break-up ("he gave my turquoise Zuni ring to another girl") to the unexpected death of her mother. What they all have in common is a piece of jewelry as a touchstone.

"Our jewelry ultimately tells the story of our life ...from the first diamond, to the (first) engagement ring, to the family heirlooms, and finally, to the pieces that we pass on to others," Bernstein says.

She will give two readings of her book "My Charmed Life: Rocky Romances, Precious Family Connections and Searching for a Band of Gold" (Penguin Books), first

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Author Beth Bernstein says time in New City inspired her.

CHARMED: Author's memories tied to pieces of jewelry

Continued from Page 1B

on Wednesday at Barnes & Noble in Nanuet; then at Landsberg Jewelers in Rye the following day.

She's looking forward to being on familiar ground.

"I remember every specific detail about growing up in New City; I loved living in New City," says Bernstein, who moved to New Jersey after her parents divorced. "I was just becoming popular, I just finished eighth grade, I had just been French kissed for the first time, and suddenly, we have to move."

Bernstein clearly remembers a set of 1970s love beads from that time. "There is a whole chapter in it called 'Love Beads.' My parents were divorced and my mom was dating and starts acting like a teenager, singing along to Helen Reddy and wearing my love beads. That was the only time when she wasn't my best friend," Bernstein says.

"She was a whole other person and I always think of that time with love beads."

She associates her parents' marriage with a watch. "Instead of an engagement ring, my father gave my mother a watch," she says. "It was more practical than a ring, and eventually they got divorced. Looking back, it represented his lack of commitment."

Her mother had been a runway model; her father owned a textile mill, so Bernstein says she was always a fashionably precocious child, who demanded to have her ears pierced at age 7.

She eventually became a jewelry designer and stylist, and also wrote about the business as a freelance writer.

As for the pierced ears, when her mother refused — "I had to wait until I was 17" — Bernstein Scotch-taped on paper earrings instead. "My grandmother came over, saw this, and said, 'we can make it

IF YOU GO

What: Author Beth Bernstein will be doing a public book signing and a jewelry styling.
When & Where: 6:30 p.m. July 18, West Nyack Barnes & Noble; 140 Rockland Plaza, 845-624-2920. 5:30-7:30 p.m. July 19, Landsberg Jewelers, 132 South Ridge St., Rye Brook, 914-510-8920.

look a little better.' She ended up taking me to get my ears pierced at the mall and bought me my first gold hoops."

The book's 21 chapters each revolve around a specific piece of jewelry and a memory that goes with it: the love beads, gold hoops, and eventually, jewelry that Bernstein buys for herself when a suitable partner doesn't come along with the bling.

The common thread is the relationship between

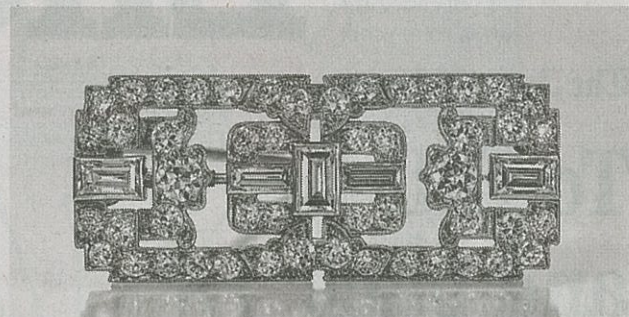


These earrings belonged to Beth Bernstein's great grandmother. BART GORIN/RSP

Bernstein, her mother and her grandmother, a thread as strong as that which holds together her mother's prized strand of Mikimoto pearls.

Over the years, Bernstein goes from a fifth grader devastated when her first beau takes back his ring to a confident, independent woman who ditches her non-committed Italian boyfriend after he gives her — what else — a watch instead of an engagement ring.

"Out of any material possession, jewelry is the



This art deco brooch with center and side baguette diamonds in platinum has its own story to tell. BART GORIN/RSP

most sentimental, and the most permanent," she says. "It's something you can hold onto; it makes you feel better when you put it on. And for women, many of our major moments are determined by jewelry, the engagement ring, the wedding ring and so on."

The two pieces that carry the most emotional weight for her are her mother's string of pearls — "I always remember her dressing up in those; I put them on the anniversary of her death," and a brooch that was handed

down to her by her great-great grandmother, which Bernstein wears as a pendant. "That piece shows connection," she says.

Although it's been a long time, Bernstein says she still vividly feels the connection to her hometown, especially long-ago shopping excursions to the Nanuet Mall. "It's funny, you remember buying your first pair of dangling earrings, and then every time you walk by a place selling dangling earrings, that first memory comes right back, doesn't it?"