SPOTLIGHT
on Italian Americans in the New Orleans Area

Dan Lauricella

Combining his love of music, construction experience, and connections to his Italian heritage, entrepreneur Daniel Lauricella has struck the perfect balance with his latest venture: New Orleans Record Press.

Born and raised in Brockton, Mass., Lauricella comes from a family with strong Italian roots. "My great grandfather came to America from Porto Empedocle, on the southern coast of Sicily," he said. "My father was raised in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston; It was the typical multi-generational, multi-storey, Italian family household."

Lauricella grew up learning the construction trade from his father, a skill that would later serve him well. After studying music at Wheaton College in Norton, Mass., he decided to hit the road. "I had been very fortunate to do a lot of traveling when I was growing up, but it was mostly in Europe. I had not, until that point, seen much of America outside of New England. So I got in my car and drove. I was tired of Massachusetts winters, so I headed south."

He would make his way to a new city, use his knowledge of home construction to find a job and, as he said, "stick around for a while." Lauricella fell in love with Savannah, Ga., and internationally renowned classical violinist and teacher. She was born Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg is an International Violin Competition winner of the Walter W. Naumburg - Enrico Villamaino III

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg is an internationally renowned classical violinist and teacher. She was born in Rome and moved to the United States so that she could study at the Curtis Institute of Music. Salerno-Sonnenberg also studied under Dorothy Delay at the Juilliard School of Music and at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

In 1981, she became the youngest winner of the Walter W. Naumburg International Violin Competition which launched her professional career. Salerno-Sonnenberg received an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1983 and was named 1988 Ovations Debut Recording Artist of the Year. While making Christmas dinner for her family in 1994, Nadja badly injured her left little finger while chopping onions. Her fingertip was surgically reattached. It took six months for her finger to heal, but she didn’t let that stop her from playing, Salerno-Sonnenberg reworked pieces for three fingers and continued to perform.

The intensely personal 1999 documentary film, Speaking In Strings, is based on Nadja and earned a nomination for Best Feature Documentary Film at the 72nd Academy Awards. In 2005, Salerno-Sonnenberg created her own label, NSS Music. The label’s roster of artists includes Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg, pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, horn player John Cerminaro, pianist/composer Clarice Assad, conductor Marin Alsop, the American String Quartet, the Colorado Symphony, Orquestra Sinfonica do Estado de Sao Paulo, and the New Century Chamber Orchestra. She was selected as the Music Director of the New Century Chamber Orchestra in 2008 under a three-year contract.

In 2015, Nadja joined Loyola University, College of Music and Fine Arts, New Orleans as a Resident Artist she was also named Extraordinary Faculty/ Director of Chamber Faculty. At Loyola, she continues her work with The Loyola Strings, the conductor-less string orchestra she introduced in her first year of Residency, as well as on/off campus teaching, and performances with Loyola students and faculty.

Salerno-Sonnenberg has also given many television interviews, including CBS’s 60 Minutes and Sunday Morning; CNN’s Newsstand; NBC’s National News and The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson; and PBS’s Live from Lincoln Center.

— Megan Celona

Vincent Glorioso, III

Vincent J. Glorioso, III, also known as Trey, is a personal injury lawyer who was born in New Orleans. He attended St. Paul's High School in Covington, where he won two state tennis championships and was the number one singles and doubles player for four straight years. Following graduation, Trey at-
Candy Company in 1915. He was forced to leave school at age 9 after he lost his legs in a tragic streetcar accident. By the age of 12, he was selling fruits and vegetables from a cart as well as any extra Italian taffy that his mother made. The taffy was so successful that he built a special wagon to make the candy. Sam chose to call it Roman Candy rather than Italian Candy in the hopes of enticing more than just Italians to purchase the taffy—it worked.

Sam worked the cart until his death in 1969. His grandson Ron Kottermann had just returned from the Vietnam War and took over the business in 1971 and still uses the original cart. The Roman Candy cart can often be found in Uptown, New Orleans.

The Roman Candy cart is an iconic piece of New Orleans history as is Mr. Okra’s hand-painted pick up truck. Arthur Robinson was born on in New Orleans in 1943, the youngest of 14 children. His father, Nathan Robinson, sold produce via wheelbarrow or horse and buggy, and was known as Okra Man. His son Arthur was “Lil Okra.” Arthur worked many jobs including gas station management, the merchant marines, and repairing the tires of 18-wheelers. About 30 years ago, Arthur began selling produce full time and became Mr. Okra.

Mr. Okra would drive through all New Orleans neighborhoods in a brightly painted, beat up pick up truck selling his produce. Before you saw the truck, you would hear his voice booming over the loudspeaker in his truck, “I have oranges and bananas, I have eating pears and apples!” He drove slowly giving customers enough time to come out of their houses to flag him down and purchase produce.

In 2009, Mr. Okra’s truck died and it looked like the tradition would end, but New Orleans couldn’t let that happen and held fundraisers to help him buy a new one, which was of course painted to look like the old one!

Mr. Okra has been immortalized in a children’s book and a documentary, which made it into the Sundance Film Festival. The Louisiana Children’s Museum plans to put a recreation of the truck on permanent display. What will happen to Mr. Okra’s actual truck? His daughter, Sergio Robinson, plans to take over her father’s route and continue the family business.

Grazie, Mr. Okra.
attended Millsaps College in Jackson, MS where he studied psychology and played NCAA college tennis; his sophomore year, he was the number 1 singles and doubles player. In 1994, he transferred to the University of New Orleans and walked on to their men’s tennis team. He earned a Bachelor of General Studies from UNO in 1996.

After graduation, Trey attended Loyola University School of Law in New Orleans and was a member of the National Trial Advocacy Team. He was also the founder and President of the Justinian Law Society, a local chapter of the National Italian American Bar Association. During law school, Trey worked as a law clerk for The Glorioso Law Firm and as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Roland Belsome in the Civil District Court of Orleans. In May 2000, Trey received his juris doctor and passed the bar in October 2000. Trey joined The Glorioso Law Firm as Vice-President and works with his sister, Maria Glorioso and father, Vincent Glorioso.

In his first year at The Glorioso Law Firm, Trey successfully resolved over 25 personal injury cases as lead counsel. As lead attorney, Trey has handled and successfully resolved over 300 personal injury cases with a total value of over $10 million. Trey has also represented numerous professional athletes, including Ricky Williams (NFL running back), Jon Heidenreich (NFL offensive lineman), and Tiffany Junot (Professional Boxer, WBC World Champion and Golden Gloves Champion). Trey was awarded the “Top 100 Civil Plaintiff Award” by the National Trial Lawyers in 2017 and selected as one of National Trial Lawyers top 40 under 40 in 2012.

In 2001, Trey began playing tennis again and started competing in the United States Tennis Association (USTA) State, Southern, and National tournaments. Between 2004 and 2011, Trey won 72 USTA sanctioned matches and over 180 matches in his entire career. He was ranked as high as #20 nationally in Men’s 30’s singles and #4 in the South in Men’s open singles. In 2013, Trey won his last tournament title, the English Turn Doubles Championship.
the United States Civpol Program, which sends American police officers abroad to represent America in war-torn areas. He lived in Bosnia for a number of years before returning to the U.S. and opening his training facility.

“I played baseball, and I wrestled, and I started with karate, which led to boxing, then kickboxing, then Jiu Jitsu, and MMA, right in the early ‘90s,” Gaudet said. He has 35 years of training and teaching experience in numerous martial arts, and he holds a third degree black belt in Minami and Seki Ryu Jiu Jitsu. Additionally, he is one of Louisiana’s most senior state-licensed MMA referees.

“I didn’t go into fighting professionally because I already had a career. I was 19 when I joined the sheriff’s department. But I have 35 years in martial arts, and I spent 25 years as a cop. I can tell you I find working in my gym more fulfilling. I have a great record of getting people to work hard to reach their peak performance levels.”

He also believes that the stereotype of the hot-headed Italian has worked in his favor over the years. “Having a bad temper is good for fighting, as long as you can control it,” he laughed. His passion has served him well; even as he coaches at Mushin, he is developing a new police training system and aiming to turn his fitness center from a stand-alone entity into a franchise.

“I want to push everyone to do their very best,” Gaudet said, “myself included.”