Common Ground(s)

On the heels of a historic election, discussions of unity and divisiveness consume the media landscape. Everyone wants a place in the discussion.*

Yet, the idea of forging meaningful and creative shared experiences is nothing new for BU students. As a global community of artists, CFA students come from all corners of the world. These conversations are simply part of everyday life on campus.

As we look toward 2017, this issue brings you stories of artists who are finding common ground within their communities, promoting unheard voices in their fields, and shaping what art means in the 21st century. These students don’t shy away from asking the difficult questions. Now, we challenge you to do the same.

*Heck, even Starbucks debuted a green line of cups in the name of humanity this holiday.

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Five inspiring graduate students from the Graphic Design MFA program are creating a project that will address missing voices in the graphic design field. **Margins** (launching early 2017) will work as an online platform for lesser known designers to share their work, backgrounds, and influences with other artists and the art community.

Alicia DeWitt (CFA’17), Nicholas Samendinger (CFA’17), Padmini Chandrasekaran (CFA’17), and Alex Creamer (CFA’17) are not only credited with creating the mission behind Margins, but are the winners of the 2016 Spark Award. Last April at an event at The Hawthorne in Kenmore Square, these student-entrepreneurs stepped into the CFA Spark Tank. The group presented their business proposal, and took home the grand prize for the innovation behind their idea: a $1,000 grant award to build the site, and make Margins a reality. Since then, the group has added a fifth member, Joshua Duttweiler (CFA’17), whose expertise in photography and interest in advancing the group’s mission made him an asset to the team.

According to DeWitt, Margins is a place “where people can find inspiration and discourse, but not in the traditional canon. We’re collecting interviews from people whose work encapsulates our mission and creating a platform for that to be easily located by anyone who’s looking for that sort of information.”

The idea came to fruition when the students made a discovery while enrolled in a design theory course: the missing voices of women and international artists. As Creamer recalls, “they were only teaching us very specific work about very specific types of people.”

The team started reaching out to designers in their networks here on campus because of the diversity within the program. From there, the project grew to include artists from their hometowns. They hope to feature ten interviews coinciding with the website’s release that show an assorted range of work to epitomize their mission of artistic networking.

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**Adjust Your Margins**

MFA students create a social network for artists.

by Anna Whitelaw (COM’19)

Rather than a uniform ten-question Q&A format, each interview will be tailored to the artist, in a way that showcases their work, and its relevance. “We definitely have some aspects of the designer’s backgrounds and influences that we want to cover,” says Samendinger. “But our goal is to create an organic conversation that highlights why we think that their work and who they are will be a resource for other designers.”

Chandrasekaran focuses on the fact that this website will be a way for artists to learn from each other and become inspired by other designers in their field. By bringing these artists together, the team hopes that they will further enhance the conversation.

“A goal for us is to make Margins more of a network,” she says. “It’s not necessarily always going to be us facilitating the conversation. We want it to be a community for designers where lots of different voices are heard.”

The team says that winning the Spark Award last spring was an important next step for their project, though not an essential one. They had agreed beforehand that even if they didn’t win, they had to follow through with **Margins** because of how important it would be to the art community. All five students are extremely passionate about the project and are dedicated to seeing it to completion.

Chandrasekaran emphasizes that the grant only fueled their passion. “It’s important that it’s not just about winning the grant. While the money was a tool to help make it happen, the grant only put us in motion.”

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Are you a graduate student with a breakthrough idea and the initiative to develop and implement your new venture? Pitch it to Dean Lynne Allen, and you may be invited to compete next April for the 2017 Spark Award.
Reaching for the Stars

BU Dance program takes students to new heights.

by Denae Wilkins (COM’18)

The 15th annual performance of Aurora Borealis will literally take students to new heights.

One of the things that makes this performance so special is the work that comes from the Aerial Dance courses. This December, students and faculty hope to emulate the meaning of their event’s name. When solar particles come into contact with the Earth’s atmosphere near the North Pole, known as the aurora borealis, a beautiful display of light is showcased in the night sky. It’s a fitting name for the event, which demonstrates the intersection of light and movement.

Yo-iel Casell, Assistant Professor of Movement, works with Taylor-Pinney as Co-Artistic Director for Aurora Borealis. Jumping off from the ideas and explorations that evolved from the Light and Movement course this fall, Casell choreographed a piece for the festival. In Casell’s words, “the piece is a wordless compilation of movement storytelling that explores poetry in humanity—our inner ‘light,’ inner ‘journey,’ inner and outer ‘connection,’ and the simple beauty of inner ‘discoveries.’”

“Our Aurora Borealis, students are lifted off the stage with silks, lira hoops, and trapezes, and perform in the air. It’s very similar to acrobatics,” adds Taylor-Pinney, who reminds us that the students performing are all properly trained. Safety will always remain the program’s first priority.

As for the students who aren’t as experienced, they’re still encouraged to experiment with the way their bodies move. “Beginners are encouraged to keep their feet on the ground,” she adds. “‘Baby steps,’ they say. Don’t move until you’re ready.” This is one of the many lessons she hopes students take away from their time with the Dance faculty.

Expression through movement is not only limited to technique taught in a classroom. When speaking about Aesthetics of Dance, a dance course offered in the spring, Taylor-Pinney notes the ways dance performance subconsciously impacts an audience. “While watching a dance performance, people are often opened up to new ways of perception and observation,” she says. “It inevitably hits people in a very primal and kinetic way.” Taylor-Pinney and the group of students and faculty performing in this event hopes the audience walks away with a new appreciation for movement, and ultimately, are inspired to take risks on the dance floor.

Co-presented by the School of Theatre and the Department of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Aurora Borealis 15: A Festival of Light and Dance runs December 4-5 at Boston University Dance Theater.

Students are lifted off the stage with silks, lira hoops, and trapezes, and perform in the air. It’s very similar to acrobatics.
“To hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature.”
—William Shakespeare

For the thousands of theater-goers who pass through the doors of the historic Boston University Theatre on Huntington Avenue each year, these words adorning the proscenium arch over the stage have given a point of reference to the artistic collaborations performed below.

“This quote represents a treasured notion about the art form that has been a touchstone for BU faculty and students for decades,” says Jim Petosa, Director of the School of Theatre. Shakespeare’s words fall on new meaning, carrying the School forward into a new era of theatrical excellence.

Opening Fall 2017, the new state-of-the-art BU Theatre Center promises to be a stunning gateway to the fast-changing West Campus. The complex is a 75,000 square foot facility located next to the 888 Gallery and directly across the street from CFA’s home at 855 Commonwealth Avenue.

“Patrons entering the new building will walk through a lattice proscenium,” says Petosa, who worked with the architects at Elkus Manfredi to conceptualize the design of the new space, and proposed the idea to etch Shakespeare’s words into the metalwork facing the lobby to echo its visual style.

Metaphorically, the entranceway represents “a more contemporary notion of theater than the old ‘picture frame’ aesthetic of an audience separated from the stage by an arch,” says Petosa. As for the quote, Petosa envisions this serving as a way to “make something of heart and connection with [the School] from our old home into our new home.” In this spirit, the exterior design is purposely playful and provocative—featuring a tilted façade wall (a virtual mirror) angled to reflect those gathering in the plaza outside during the day, and providing a revealing look inside the heart of the building as night falls.

A significant investment from the University partnered with the support of a naming gift (to be announced by President A. Brown at a later date), the new complex will serve as a beacon for the arts on campus, the cities of Boston and Brookline, and the surrounding communities. It comes just after the renovation of dedicated studio space at 888 Commonwealth Avenue for the College’s graduate Graphic Design program.

“Boston is filled with aging cultural spaces,” says Petosa. “For our faculty and staff, as well as the architectural team, this process has been energizing, and we have arrived at this extraordinary space—one that properly houses our premier Theatre program, and contributes to the mosaic of assets that make this city such a vibrant place to live and work.”

Most importantly for Petosa, the new space takes the School of Theatre, which has been bifurcated for over thirty years, and integrates it directly into the campus in a way that not only “maximizes the synergies of collaboration more accessible and immediate,” but makes the theater a part of the daily life of the BU community.”

“Collaboration is a really big part of what we do,” adds Johnny Kontogiannis, CFA’02, Boston University Theatre Production Manager who has helped manage the project from the ground up.

“All of the artists working on the show will be within a few feet of each other—students will be able to pop over to rehearsal hall in their peers’ sets being built, or visit the costume shop.”

“The new theater, itself, is a wonder,” says Petosa of the impressive 3,700 square foot multi-functional studio theater space and contemporary design and production facility. “It invites experimentation in design and performance and properly houses theatrical form in a way that provides intimate experience of epic ideas. Having access to dedicated space on a full-time basis will revolutionize our students’ experience.”

“We really want to see a new space that looks towards the future of what theater in this country is going to be,” adds James Noone, Associate Professor of Scene Design whose work has been seen everywhere from Broadway to HBO. “Audiences today are looking for an active experience when they hear a story something you don’t feel so much in a proscenium theater. With 250 seats, and hundreds of possibilities for audience layouts, Noone hopes to provide theater-goers with an immersive experience.

“Every school is unique—the size, the student body, whether classes are open to the greater community at large,” says Nancy Leary (CFA’83), Assistant Professor of Costume Design and Production whose work in opera and theater spans several decades. “We have an opportunity to create something personal that will work for us and is perfect for BU.”

The new teaching space is complete with all-new purpose-built classrooms and studio space for both graduate and undergraduate students. Outfitted with cutting-edge technology and new industrial equipment, students will have access to an expanded Costume Shop and modern Scene Shop, Dye Room, and laboratories for Lighting and Sound.

“We always say we work on the ground [in the School of Theatre],” adds Kontogiannis. “The center [on Huntington Avenue] was formerly a restaurant, and before that a post office. The eastern most side of the building was at one time a movie theater. We’ve done a really good job transforming those spaces into studios and classrooms, but for our students, who learn by doing, having the ability to move into a building built specifically for these activities to happen is tremendous.”

“Students will have the opportunity to work with technology that is current with what professionals in these fields are using, perhaps not on the same scale as, say Lincoln Center, but the same caliber of materials—from the consoles to the equipment to the networking.” adds Mark Stanley, Associate Professor of Lighting Design and Resident Lighting Designer for the New York City Ballet.

Much of Stanley’s teaching is done in the Light Lab—a microcosm of a theater space. “Lighting design is about experimentation, exploration, and discovery,” adds Stanley. “The Light Lab allows for more in-depth teaching, a broader student experience, and greater possibilities for how they can transfer that knowledge to the stage.”

Leary also sees the importance of a Light Lab for the new facility. “As a costume designer, you’re never sure what may happen—how a certain light might affect the dye of the costume. Having the ability to experiment before getting to the stage is a learning experience that our students will take forward with them into their professional careers.”

With construction in full swing, the vision for the Theater is becoming realized in beam and structure form, and is reshaping the landscape of West Campus. What will be happen inside the building is certain to make just as much impact. As Noone explains, “The new theater is a transformative space that has all the tools for us to tell the stories.”

For live updates, visit bu.edu/facilities/project/boston-university-theatre-center.

Be a part of this remarkable project.

We invite you to invest with us and help shape a brilliant future for theatre at Boston University. By supporting this center, you will not only advance the arts on campus, you will help prepare our students for accomplished careers in performance and production. The opportunities for your support are abundant and encompass levels of engagement for everyone. For more information on how to support the Boston University Theatre center, please contact Josh Aiello, Assistant Vice President, School Development at 617.353.2286 or jaiello@bu.edu.
Contemporary Reflections

BU sets the stage for Design & Production facilities.

by Brooke Yarborough

School of Theatre By the Numbers

75,000 SQUARE FEET
3,700 SQUARE FOOT STUDIO THEATRE
250 SEATS (100S OF POSSIBILITIES FOR AUDIENCE LAYOUT)
172 UNDERGRADUATE PERFORMANCE MAJORS
78 UNDERGRADUATE DESIGN & PRODUCTION MAJORS
52 GRADUATE STUDENTS (DIRECTING, THEATRE EDUCATION, DESIGN & PRODUCTION)
December

12/4 — 12/5
Aurora Borealis 15: A Festival of Light and Dance
Micki Taylor-Pinney and Yo-el Casseus, co-artistic directors
A vibrant exploration of the symbiotic relationship between light and movement featuring premiere dance and movement pieces. Presented by CFA School of Theatre and the Department of Physical Recreation, Education & Dance • Boston University Dance Theater

12/6
Concert Band, All Campus Orchestra + Big Band
December 6, 8pm All University ensembles come together for their final concert of the semester. Tsai Performance Center

12/8 — 12/16
Faithless
Andrew Joseph Clarke, playwright • Stephen Pick, director
Two generations of an Irish-American family gather in a hospital waiting room while awaiting the passing of their family matriarch. But when black sheep Skip unexpectedly returns, decades of baggage surface. A BU New Play Initiative production, co-produced by Boston Playwrights’ Theatre, CFA School of Theatre, and the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences • Boston Playwrights’ Theatre • Ticketing Code: NPI

12/14 — 12/18
The Cherry Orchard
Anton Chekhov, playwright • Marina Brodskaya, translator
Kelly Galvin, director
In Chekhov’s last full-length play, an impoverished landowning family is unable to face the fact that their estate is about to be auctioned off. rozpakin, a local merchant, presents numerous options to save it, including cutting down their prized cherry orchard. But the family is stricken with denial. Chekhov captures the precipitous descent of a wealthy family and in the process creates a bold mediation on social change and bourgeois materialism. Boston University Theatre, Lane-Comley Studio 210 • Ticketing Code: Theatre

January

1/30 + 2/6 + 2/11 + 2/21 + 2/23
Music Faculty Recital Series
January 30, 8pm Baritone James Demler with pianist Pavel Nersessian performs works by Johannes Brahms, Robert Schumann, Henri Duparc, and Pyotr Illich Tchaikovsky. Tsai Performance Center

February 6, 8pm Pianist Gila Goldstein performs works by Leo Janacek, Franz Liszt, Nikolai Medtner, Bela Bartok, and Sergei Prokofiev. Tsai Performance Center

February 11, 8pm Composer and pianist Ketty Nez with guest violinist Amelia Kaplan performs works by Kaplan and Nez, as well as Dmitri Shostakovich. CFA Concert Hall

February 21, 8pm Pianist Konstantinos Papadakis performs works by Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt, Minas Boboroudakis, and Johann Strauss. Tsai Performance Center

February 23, 8pm Pianists Pavel Nersessian and Boaz Sharon perform works by Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt, Sergei Prokofiev, and George Gershwin. Tsai Performance Center

1/24 + 1/26
Center for New Music
January 24, 8pm JACK Quartet performs works by Ulysses, Lachenmann and Cem Ergun, as well as Fred Lerdahl’s String Quartet No. 3, culminating this season’s residency with the American composer and music theorist. CFA Concert Hall

January 26, 8pm JACK Quartet performs new works by BU student composers. CFA Concert Hall

1/26
Ivan Linn Recital
January 26, 8pm Featuring Zulalian Award-winning pianist Ivan Linn. Tsai Performance Center

1/28
Artists in Transit
January 28, 8pm Palaver Strings performs works by Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and Bela Bartok. Presented in conjunction with “An Exploration of Boston” exhibition. Gallery 5

February

2/2
Arneis Quartet
February 2, 8pm Contemporary works by Leos Janacek, Stephen Mendelssohn. Tsai Performance Center

2/3 — 3/26
Occupancies
An exhibition exploring how bodies create, negotiate, and describe the world around them, and how these bodies inform the media who use or intimate these ideas around identities and the self. Artists include Indira Allegra, eBAT, Edie Fake, Nona Faustine, Marie-Joseph, Jonath Groeneboer, Ramiro Gomez, Intelligent Mischief, Ellen Lesperance, and others. A collaborative exhibition with Transgender Feminist History. Opening Reception: February 3, 6-9pm • 808 Gallery, Stone Gallery. Details visit: bu.edu/arts. Opening Reception: February 3, 6-9pm • 808 Gallery, Stone Gallery.

2/4 — 2/26
Brecht On Brecht
Bertolt Brecht, playwright • Jim Petos, director Celebrating the 150th anniversary of Bertolt Brecht, this new production of Brecht’s most famous work is an enquiring look into the political and social issues that permeate his plays. Featuring the world premiere from the New Repertory Theatre and Boston University. Boston College, Boston Performance • Arsenal Center for the Arts. Details: brechtsonbrecht.com

2/9
Boston University Symphony Orchestra
February 9, 8pmPerforming works by Antonin Dvorak and Benjamin Britten. CFA Concert Hall

2/13
Muir String Quartet
February 13, 8pmPerforming works by Antonin Dvorak and Wolfgang Mozart. (with Virtuoso Linda Toree). Tsai Performance Center

2/16
Boston University University Orchestra
February 16, 8pmPerforming works by Jean Francais, Timothy Mahn, and a premiere by Ketty Nez. Tsai Performance Center

2/16 — 2/26
The Honey Trap
Leo McGann, playwright • Andy Brenkus, director
When two off-duty British police officers arrive at the outskirts of Belfast in 1976...

What seems like a typical night at the pub turns into something much darker. Decades later, reliving that night for an oral history project, Dave reopens old wounds that send him back to Belfast in search of answers and revenge in this Irish tragedy. A BU New Play Initiative production co-produced by Boston Playwrights’ Theatre, CFA School of Theatre, and the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Boston Playwrights’ Theatre • Ticketing Code: NPI

2/18 – 2/25
‘Tis Pity She’s A Whore
John Ford, playwright • Mark Cohen, director
Ford’s epic story explores myriad forms of doomed love—incest, infatuation, betrayal—and the tragic consequences that befall both those who seek revenge and those who choose to look the other way. Calderwood Pavilion at the BCA, Wimberly Theatre • Ticketing Code: Theatre

2/22 – 2/26
Much Ado About Nothing
William Shakespeare, playwright • Stephen Pick, director
In Shakespeare’s delightful farce, Hero and her fiancé, Claudio, hatch a plan to matchmake the sharp-witted—and sharp-tongued duo—Beatrice and Benedick. Meanwhile, meddling Don John plots to ruin their wedding. Boston University Theatre, Lane-comly Studio 210 • Ticketing Code: Theatre

2/23 – 2/26
Emmeline
Music by Tobias Picker • William Lumpkin, conductor • Jim Petosa, stage director
Based on the novel by Judith Rossner with libretto by J.D. McClatchy, Picker’s two-act opera is an American retelling of the Oedipus myth from the mother’s viewpoint. In 1841, 13-year-old Emmeline is sent to work in a Massachusetts mill where she is seduced by her factory supervisor and gives birth to a child who is swiftly given away. Twenty years later, she marries a young man only to discover too late that he is in fact her son, becoming irrevocably ostracized by society. A Boston premiere. Boston University Theatre Ticketing Code: Opera

2/25
Making Room: Practicing Feminisms Today
February 25, 9am By creating spaces for female voices and visibilities, this half-day conference will engage an intergenerational group of women across disciplines in discussion around interpretations of feminisms, and how they are constructed and employed within our current cultural and political climate. 808 Gallery

2/28
Contemporary Perspectives Lecture Series: Sheila Pepe
February 28, 6:30pm Pepe is a New York-based artist who draws on the traditions of fiber arts to create large-scale sculptural installations. Her tactile, process-driven work utilizes traditionally feminine techniques to address issues of gender, class, and queer identity. Jacob Sleeper Auditorium

Ticket Information
All events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. Visit bu.edu/cfa/events for more details.

NPI $10 general admission; $15 CFA Membership; $10 students. bostonplaywrights.org • 617.933.9660

Theatre $12 general public; $10 BU Alumni, WGBH and WBUR Members, and Huntington Subscribers; $8 CFA Membership; free with BU ID, at the door, day of performance, subject to availability. bostontheatrescene.com • 617.933.8600

New Rep/BCAP #225–59 with discounts available to CFA Members and BU Community. newrep.org • 617.923.8487

Opera $20 general public; $15 BU Alumni, WGBH and WBUR Members, Huntington Subscribers, and senior citizens; $10 CFA Membership; $5 students; free with BU ID, two tickets, at the door, day of performance, subject to availability. bostontheatrescene.com • 617.933.8600

Venues
Boston University Art Galleries
808 Gallery
808 Commonwealth Avenue

Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery
855 Commonwealth Avenue

Gallery 5
855 Commonwealth Avenue

Boston University Performance + Lecture Venues
Arsenal Center for the Arts
321 Arsenal Street, Watertown

Boston Playwrights’ Theatre
949 Commonwealth Avenue

Boston University Dance Theater
915 Commonwealth Avenue (enter on Buick Street)

Boston University Theatre & Lane Comly Studio 210
264 Huntington Avenue

Calderwood Pavilion at the BCA, Wimberly Theatre
527 Tremont Street

CFA Concert Hall
855 Commonwealth Avenue

Jacob Sleeper Auditorium
871 Commonwealth Avenue

Teal Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue
In 2005, when the College of Fine Arts announced the launch of master’s and doctoral online degree programs in Music Education, it promised they would “transform music education in America.” That’s a bold statement even from a department used to playing a historic role in the teaching of music. As co-host of the historic 1967 Tanglewood Symposium in Music Education, the department helped conceive and issue the Tanglewood Declaration that helped to guide the field for many years. But this was different. Professors who loved the classroom experience had to place their faith in new technology and in students they’d never met.

There were a few doubters, but after 11 years of success, it’s hard to find them now. With 447 current students and almost 2,000 alumni, CFA’s online programs (an MA in Art Education was added in 2015) have made it possible for hundreds of music and art teachers, scholars, and advocates to achieve an advanced degree without disrupting their professional lives and uprooting their families.

When asked why he founded the online Music Education programs, Professor Andre de Quadros says, “I came to BU from Australia, a country of great distances. It is quite typical to have (satellite) locations in many areas. While there, I began a satellite program of my Australian university in Malaysia.” By the time he arrived at BU, the modern version of a satellite campus was distance learning.

De Quadros says he was aware that many arts educators could not give up their jobs and relocate to Boston to enroll in graduate programs. Leaving a good job, family, and friends behind to embark on a graduate degree program in Boston was not possible for many qualified students. “We wanted to make this great brand...this great program, available to everyone.”

Professor Bill McManus, who was there at the early stages, remembers being skeptical at first. “I thought it was just talking heads. When I saw the first online course designed by the late Professor Anthony Palmer (who died in 2013), I was blown away. The course was loaded with videos and modules. It didn’t take long for me to become a believer. Within a year, we had over 200 students.”

Patricia Mitro, Associate Dean for Enrollment, says the online programs’ success is built on three pillars: having a team dedicated solely to online students, talented course developers, and a distinguished faculty who brought into the concept and were committed to teaching online.

While some students are surprised at how rigorous the programs are, they come to appreciate their quality and convenience. Students work on their own schedules and there is no time wasted on long commutes. Current DMA student, Lenora Helm Hammonds (CFA’10) writes in an email, “The program was an answered prayer because after researching DMA programs for working music educators, BU’s was manageable, affordable, and offered the prestige of a highly respected university with a solid faculty.”

The online MA Art Education program was pioneered by Professor Emerita Judith Simpson, former director of the School of Visual Arts, with assistance from Professor Lynne Allen, currently acting Dean of the College of Fine Arts. The program is committed to nurturing students as both teachers and artists, and offers an optional, on-campus Summer Studios component.

“This residency is a precious feature of our program. It offers teachers the time and space to re-awaken and develop their creative sources,” says Professor Rebecca Bourgault. “This makes the program attractively different from others.” Michael Millam (CFA’16), a recent master’s graduate, points to the curriculum design class as “a lot harder than I thought but I learned a lot and because of the lesson unit I designed I was invited to speak along with my professor at the 2016 National Art Education Association conference. While I learned a lot about how to become a better teacher, I’ve also learned how to be a better arts advocate.”

The future looks bright for expanded distance learning at CFA, according to Assistant Dean of Digital Learning & Strategic Initiatives Rebekah Pierson. “We plan to build on the successes of our online graduate programs by harnessing the talent and enthusiasm of our army of online alumni to help envision and build CFA’s next generation of digital learning opportunities, which we hope will include hybrid programs, professional development, and massive online open courses.”

So, after 11 years, have the BU College of Fine Arts online graduate programs met the lofty goal of transforming music education in this country? Maybe not quite yet but they’re getting there. Professor McManus is bullish that the transformation will happen: “Our graduates are popping up all over the country. We have hundreds of them teaching in high schools, universities, and in the community. They’re really making an impact.”
Tradition Meets the Modern World

Blurring the lines between artistic practice and academia, Josephine Halvorson refreshes graduate painting program.

by Laurel Homer

Fall 2016 started a new chapter for the Graduate Painting program at the College of Fine Arts. Spork recently sat down with the person at the helm of this next leg of the journey, Josephine Halvorson, the new Professor of Art and Chair of Graduate Studies in Painting.

Halvorson comes to BU from Yale University’s School of Art, where she taught since 2010, holding the position of Senior Critic in the MFA program in Painting & Printmaking. She has also taught at Princeton University, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, Columbia University, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

What is your vision for the MFA Painting program?

My vision is to bring BU’s important history as a hands-on, materials-based MFA program into the 21st century: how can the traditions of painting and sculpture connect with our world today? I want to explore the specificity of Boston University—its history, culture, and location—as a way to meaningfully engage with the world inside and outside the studio.

How has your work as an artist influenced your teaching?

As an artist I spend time in front of something—a tree, a fire, a window, for instance—and paint from my own perceptions. By showing up in person and paying attention, I’m able to describe an object’s appearance, but I’m also able to express my understanding of it in new ways. I want to paint the invisible—emotion, time, history—through the visible. I often think about the parallels my artistic practice has with my teaching, namely that I try to see more than meets the eye, to understand the student’s motivations, ambitions, and fears. Through critical engagement with a student’s art and ideas, their underlying intentions are revealed.

What about Boston University and the College of Fine Arts made you consider this position?

The invitation to join any institution as Professor and Chair of a graduate program is a rare opportunity in higher education today. To be able to join CFA, where the students have heart and the faculty care, was appealing. I’m young and energetic and have a decade of teaching behind me. I’ve been fortunate to have taught in some of the country’s most rigorous art programs and have lectured at dozens of schools throughout the US and abroad, accumulating a comprehensive knowledge of the role of contemporary American MFA programs. I’m grateful for the opportunity to implement what I’ve learned.

Additionally, I’m familiar with Boston University. My father studied art here as an undergraduate in the early 1960s. My own first formal art training took place in Boston, where, as a teenager, I studied with Barnet Rubenstein at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Since 2010, I’ve been a periodic visitor to the MFA program. It’s an honor to continue the work of those who have been here before me—John Walker, Dana Frankfort, Philip Guston to name a few—and to serve among the ranks of brilliant colleagues.

What do you think is important in an MFA program?

I emphasize individual expression. In art, and especially in art education, I feel it’s important to hear as many voices as there are artists. And yet it’s somewhat of a riddle to teach art in the first place. How do you teach someone something only they can do? How do you navigate, challenge, undermine, and embrace the inherent hierarchies of education? To be effective as a teacher, and move the program forward, I want to make sure there is never one dominant voice in the students’ heads. Ideally, each visitor to their studios contradicts the previous one, where the student is left with their own thoughts and decisions. The two years of graduate school should be a hybrid and challenging chapter in a person’s life: one is neither a student, nor an artist, but a combination of both. It’s a place to develop empathy, cultivate curiosity, and learn how to follow one’s nose.

Halvorson grew up on Cape Cod, where she first studied art on the beaches of Provincetown. She attended The Cooper Union School of Art (BFA ’03), and continued her interdisciplinary education at Columbia University’s School of the Arts (MFA ’07). Halvorson has been granted three year-long fellowships in Europe, and is the recipient of several awards, including the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2009) and a New York Foundation for the Arts award in Painting (2010).

Her work has been exhibited worldwide and is represented by Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York, and Peter Freeman, Inc., Paris. Currently on view at Storm King Art Center in New Windsor, NY, is her first outdoor sculpture exhibition, curated by Nora Lawrence. Her first museum survey was in 2015 at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, NC, curated by Cara Fisher. Her work has been reviewed by Artforum, Brooklyn Rail, New York Times, New Yorker, Frieze, and Art in America, and she is also featured in Art21’s documentary series “New York Close Up.”
Artists in Transit

Emerging musicians turned entrepreneurs take classical music outside the concert hall.

by Brooke Yarborough

Declining ticket sales, empty orchestra halls, shifting attitudes and cultural interests—these are the perils plaguing the 21st-century artist. Steeped in tradition and the ideologies of the past, how does an art form (such as classical music) redefine itself to be relevant in contemporary society?

Spark posed this question to Palaver Strings, the Boston-based chamber orchestra behind the "Neighborhood Music" movement. Composed of nine students and alumni, and a few friends from neighboring Boston conservatories, Palaver operates as a small, self-run ensemble, with a big mission: breaking down traditional barriers (i.e. ticket prices and formal attire) to make music accessible through performances in diverse and unconventional settings.

Executive Director and Co-Artistic Director Maya French (CFA’15’18) sees community as the powerful force behind Palaver: "As members of Palaver, we are not only colleagues, but also a tight-knit community. As BU students and alumni most of us are not from the Boston area, but we have become each other’s support in our new home.” Elizabeth Moore (CFA’14), Violist and Co-Artistic Director, agrees. In the fast-paced and often impersonal world we live in today, Moore believes it’s more important than ever to find a center. “Palaver Strings believes that art and music have the power to bring [people] together as communities, to make [them] strong and more compassionate where [they] live.”

This season, Palaver is celebrating a different neighborhood throughout the Boston area each month, through food, music, and art. From Cambridge and Somerville to Roslindale and Quincy, January brings Palaver back to Boston proper for Artists in Transit (January 28), a musical journey that explores the idea of being an outsider in a new land.

Sponsored by Dean Lynne Allen, the performance is a collaboration with School of Visual Arts students Molly Dee (CFA’17) and John Branagan (CFA’17), who are hosting their exhibition, An Exploration of Boston, in Gallery 5 where the performance will be held.

“Our journey as artists navigating our new home of Boston will be brought to life by these artists,” continues Moore, “and reinforced through the vibrant and youthful themes of Benjamin Britten, the lush soundscapes of Ralph Vaughan Williams, the adventurous and nautical tunes of Gustav Holst, and the exotic and sometimes brutal realm of Béla Bartók.” Just as these composers were influenced by their travels and experiences abroad, Palaver hopes to bring their own experiences traversing the city by not only performing in the exhibit, but also interacting with the art on display. “It’s a fitting theme for a fast-paced city full of students and professionals from all over the world,” she adds.

In this new era of entrepreneurial music-making, “it is not enough today to present classical music in a concert hall—to wait, and expect the crowds to come to you,” French says. “What is needed today, and what we want to help bring to communities in the area, is music that reaches out into the world and interacts with it—music that comes from a genuine place and can comfort, create space for reflection, and a way to communicate beyond.”

Palaver Strings will perform Artists in Transit on Saturday, January 28, at 8pm, in Gallery 5. The program will include Benjamin Britten’s Simple Symphony, Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus, Gustav Holst’s St. Paul’s Suite, and Béla Bartók’s Divertimento for String Orchestra.

Rooted in the BU community, Palaver Strings launched its first official season in 2014, and has held residencies at Boston University Art Galleries and on the Medical Campus through Arts | Lab @ BMC.
The group’s name, “Palaver,” comes from the term “palaver hut,” a place of discussion and conflict resolution in Liberia. In their early days, Palaver gave benefit concerts for the Liberian Fund. As a diverse group of individuals, seeking to come to a creative agreement through music, the “palaver hut” has remained central to their mission as they have expanded their outlook to other social causes.

Molly Dee (CAF'17), Novae, Wood, spray foam, plaster, spray, and acrylic paint.
BU Big Band Honors Duke Ellington

BU Big Band is rehearsing for a momentous performance. On January 16, under the artistic direction of composer and conductor Randall K. Horton, the University’s jazz ensemble will perform excerpts of Duke Ellington’s “Sacred Concert” with BU’s “Inner Strength Gospel Choir.” For Horton, a close friend of Ellington’s who served as his arranger in the last years of his life, celebrating the legacy of this legendary composer and jazz pianist is not only his mission, but his musical calling. BU Big Band is honored to remember Ellington as part of the University’s annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration.

January 16, 1pm
George Sherman Union Ballroom

Spark is Award-Winning

Congrats to the Spark team for winning:

MARCOM AWARDS

- 9 Editorial and Design Awards (2 Platinum Awards, 5 Gold Awards, and 2 Honorable Mentions) from the MarCom Awards, an international creative competition for outstanding achievements by marketing and communication professionals.

GDUSA

- 2016 American Graphic Design Award from Graphic Design USA.
To be featured in the Design Annual published in December.

BU @ a2ru

BU College of Fine Arts presented at the 4th Annual Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) in Denver, Colorado, in November. The national conference was focused on “creative venture, well-being, and the new humanities.” With BU as a proud member, a number of CFA faculty, staff, and students participated in three workshops and panel sessions.

- “Placing Arts Where Life Is” included Moises Fernández Via, Concert Pianist, Director, Arts | Lab @ Med Campus, and was moderated by Dean Lynne Allen.

- “Collaborating Across Campus Boundaries and Prison Walls: The Art at Play at Boston University” featured Dr. André de Quadros, Professor of Music, Chair, Department of Music Education; Judy Braha, Program Head, MFA Directing; Jen Guillemine, Director ad interim, School of Visual Arts; Emily Howe, Instructor, Prison Education Program; and Trey Pratt, Teaching Fellow, Petey Green Program.

- “Preparing Future Faculty for New Roles in Arts and Humanities” featured Margaret Rowley, PhD candidate; Jessica Warren, DMA candidate; and André Maestre, DMA candidate, and was moderated by Susan Conkling, Professor of Music.

Arts & Ideas in Action

Last month, CFA, Questrom, The BUzz Lab, and the BU Arts Initiative came together to present Arts and Ideas in Action: Art • Business • Social Impact Symposium.

The event brought creative visionaries, thought leaders, advocates, artists, designers, students together for an interactive, stimulating conversation. Presenters included founders and directors from IDEO, EpiCenter Community, Resilient Coders, athenahealth, Art Lifting, Turning Art, and Artists for Humanity.

The event was planned by Jen Guillemine and Wendy Swart Grossman, co-teachers of a new course at CFA, The Creative Economy and Social Impact. For many, it was a safe following the election, and provided pathways for arts and business to work together toward a common goal. Graphic design faculty led student design thinking workshops and explored the intersections between arts and the community, arts and technology, arts and healthcare. Learn more at bu.edu/cfa/arts-and-ideas-symposium.

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