FROM SKETCH TO SCREEN

IN FILMS LIKE BIG HERO 6 AND FROZEN, ALUMS STRETCH THE LIMITS OF ANIMATION AND IMAGINATION
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So are we done? Is there nothing we can do better? I don’t think so. My job, our job, is to make the color, texture, and variation of CFA even more pronounced, more vivid.

This journey of discovery belongs to all of us, and it requires an environment where all ideas are listened to—no matter how wild or unconventional. CFA, housed within a great research university, is the perfect laboratory to explore possibilities for art and its role in society. The world is changing, and we need to change with it, to make new directions. I am counting on all of you to join me in mapping CFA’s future. Think big. Stretch your imagination. Challenge the status quo. Embrace the unknown. We ask freshmen to “jump off the cliff” and asked that they tell me their ideas, their challenges, and the highs and lows of their time at CFA. These conversations have been enlightening and informational, and like that blank canvas, they encourage us all to create and build upon the foundation of CFA.

For a visual artist there’s nothing more promising (or terrifying) than a blank canvas. Over the last few months in my new role as dean ad interim of CFA, I’ve spent a great deal of time listening. I’ve met with students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and asked that they tell me their ideas, their challenges, and the highs and lows of their time at CFA. These conversations have been enlightening and informational, and like that blank canvas, they encourage us all to create and build upon the foundation of CFA.

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ALL WINTER, PASSERSBY DID DOUBLE TAKES AT THE TWO GIANT LIONFISH SCULPTURES visible through the plate-glass windows at the 808 Gallery on Commonwealth Avenue. The work of Kitty Wales, a lecturer in sculpture, they served as a calling card for the show inside: the School of Visual Arts Faculty Exhibition, which ran at the gallery from January 30 to March 1, 2015.

Featuring the work of more than 30 artists who teach painting, sculpture, graphic design, art education, printmaking, and photography, the show underscored the diverse talent among CFA’s faculty. It also offered a dazzling assemblage of small- and large-scale pieces, both realism and abstraction, encompassing a wide selection of genres and media. “It’s always inspirational for students to see the work of their professors, and to make connections between what they teach and what they do professionally,” says Lynne Allen, former School of Visual Arts director and CFA’s dean ad interim, who also exhibited at 808. “The pieces span traditional themes, installation, digital, and found objects, offering a glimpse of varied ways of thinking and expressing ideas in today’s contemporary art world.” —JOHN O’ROURKE

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EXHIBITION @ bu.edu/esprit.

Kitty Wales’ piece, Lionfish, is inspired by the 19th-century wooden clipper ships at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London, Connecticut, and the lionfish at the nearby Mystic Aquarium.
SONS OF SERENDIP SIZZLES ON THE CHARTS

AFTER Sons of Serendip finished fourth on America’s Got Talent in 2014, you wouldn’t have blamed the quartet for resting on their laurels. But cellist and vocalist Kendall Ramses (’12), harpist Mason Morton (’12, ’15), pianist and guitarist Cordaro Rodriguez (LAW ’12), and lead singer Micah Christian (STH ’12) had other plans: the group released their first album in January.

The haunting blend of instrumentalists and vocals that made the quartet a television favorite is even more moving and refined in their self-titled debut. The album is packed with their classical covers of popular songs, many of which they performed on America’s Got Talent. For their first track, Sons recorded their angelic rendition of Keane’s “Somewhere Only We Know,” the song they performed for their first-round audition. Within one week of its release, the first track, Sons recorded their angelic rendition of Keane’s “Somewhere Only We Know,” the song they performed for their first-round audition. Within one week of its release, the album appeared on five Billboard charts.

—MARA SASSOON

A TRIPLE-THREAT ENDOWMENT

FOR NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY, producers Stewart F. Lane (’73) and Bonnie Comley have been the toast of Broadway, winning nine Tony Awards between them, including the 2014 Tony for Best Musical for A Gentleman’s Guide to Love & Murder. They’ve also been generous supporters of CFA; the couple recently endowed the Stewart F. Lane and Bonnie Comley Music Theatre Fund to launch a new Music Theatre Concentration within the School of Theatre starting fall 2015. The $750K gift gives CFA the ability to produce a large-scale musical as part of the School’s annual programming, hire another adjunct faculty member, and create courses designed to empower students to reimage and revolutionize music theater. When combined with their previous gifts, this commitment moves Lane and Comley into the ranks of $1 million-plus lifetime donors of BU; in April 2015, the University welcomed them into the William Fairfield Warren Society, which recognizes the impact of major donors. Lane, cochair of the College of Fine Arts Campaign and member of the College of Fine Arts Dean’s Advisory Board, was recently named a member of the University’s Board of Overseers.

—SUSAN SELIGSON

IN HONOR OF ARTISTRY

FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF SIDDNEY FRIEDMAN, AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE AND DIRECTING, have established the annual Sidney Friedman Prize Fund to be awarded at BU’s Commencement. Friedman has directed more than 90 plays throughout his career and was the inspiration for the fund to honor a graduating School of Theatre student who exemplifies an outstanding combination of scholarship and artistry. The first recipient, chosen by the School of Theatre faculty, is Jaclyn Fulton (’15), who majored in stage management and earned the highest grade point average in the School’s Class of 2015. “Jaclyn is an inquisitive, thoughtful, meticulous student who embodies intellectual curiosity both in the classroom and the rehearsal room, where she is a partner to the director, actors, designers, and technicians,” says Jim Petosa, director of the School of Theatre. “She is that kind of artful stage manager who helps elevate the room to its best collaborative advantage.”

—LARA EHRLICH

A new Center for Beethoven Research at the College of Fine Arts School of Music will serve as a resource for all things Beethoven. New officially open, the center is the first in New England to invite visiting scholars and forge connections with Beethoven archives in Europe. Based at BSS Commonwealth Avenue in the Department of Musicology & Ethnomusicology, the center will feature a digitized library dedicated to the composer and will collaborate with Beethoven centers around the world to host events and conferences. At the center, CFA students will have the opportunity to consult a library of facsimiles of Beethoven’s autographed scores, among other resource materials.

“A great deal of work has been done on Beethoven, of course, but it’s a myth that all the work has been done,” says Jeremy Yudkin, a CFA professor of music and codirector of the center. The German-born composer left behind hundreds of sketchbooks and annotated scores that provide conductors and musicians with insights into his intent, as well as nuances of how he wanted the pieces played—how fast or slow, loud or soft. Hundreds of these marked-up original scores and sketchbooks “haven’t been looked at, much less analyzed,” says Yudkin. The center will also benefit from a digitized collection of the research of its codirector Lewis Lockwood, the Fanny Peabody Research Professor of Music, Emeritus at Harvard University and the distinguished senior scholar in CFA’s musicology & ethnomusicology department. —$5M

The Center for Beethoven Research is funded by the office of the vice president and associate president for research, the College of Fine Arts, and the School of Music, with support by the Jack Spaid Concert Fund.

THE QUARTET: FROM LEFT, MASON MORTON, KENDALL RAMSEUS, MICAH CHRISTIAN, AND CORDARO RODRIGUEZ.

MARA SASSOON/FALL 2015 ESPRIT
ALUMS AT THE OSCARS

Disney Producer Roy Coni ('87) (above, center) won an Oscar for Big Hero 6, the animated hit about a boy and his robot friend.

Two Alums Accepted the Iconic Gold Statues at the 87th Academy Awards This Year: Janinne Moore ('83) won the Oscar for Actress in a Leading Role for her portrayal of a Columbia University linguistics professor diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease in the film Still Alice. This was Moore’s fifth Academy Award nomination—and first win.

Roy Coni ('87) was the producer of Big Hero 6, the winner in the best animated feature category. The film, about a teenage prodigy and his puffy robotic pal, has earned more than $600 million at the box office worldwide. This is the second year in a row that a BU alumn has won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature; Peter Del Vecho ('80) picked up last year’s Oscar for Frozen, another Walt Disney Animation Studios film.—Joel Brown

Judith Chaffee, Associate Professor of Theatre (Movement)

Judith Chaffee had always been fascinated by the intentions behind actors’ motions, the “why” behind their turns, and the passion behind their movements,” she says. She came to BU in 1974 as the dance director for the Department of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance; when BU’s School of Theatre sought to incorporate more dance into its program, she joined the faculty to work with its young actors.

The 2011 recipient of the Metcalf Cup and Prize for Excellence in Teaching, Chaffee says she owes a lot to her mentor, BU Professor Emeritus Joe Gifford, who had also taught movement for actors. “I’ve been lucky to pass on my insightful teachings about the importance of finding stillness, dropping in, and letting go of the ego to allow generosity and vulnerability,” she says.

Some of Chaffee’s favorite moments at BU involved partnerships, such as her work choreographing performances for the School of Music’s Opera Institute and the course she developed with Mark Stanley, an associate professor of theatre (lighting design), that involved collaborative explorations for dancers, designers, actors, and directors. The course, Design and Choreography: Experiments in Light and Movement, also provides material to BU’s annual light and dance performance, Light and Movement, also provides material to BU’s annual light and dance performance, Light and Movement, also provides material to BU’s annual light and dance performance. Some of her favorite performances, she says, were the only faculty. “We not only taught courses and seminars,” Simpson says, “we also did field supervision.”

Simpson says her students and colleagues made the hard work worthwhile. “Students at BU are creative, intelligent, and respectful. They are eager to succeed and inquisitive. That kind of student energizes the professor,” she says.

A high point for Simpson was working with six colleagues to write the textbook Creating Meaning Through Art: Teacher as Choral Maker (Pearson, 1997). The book reflects her belief that “making things is not what art education is about. Making meaning through art is.”

Judith Chaffee, Associate Professor of Theatre (Movement)

Judith Chaffee

Ann Howard Jones, Chair of Ensembles Oversight, Professor of Music, Director of Choral Activities

Ann Howard Jones established a symphonic chorus organization at BU shortly after she joined the School of Music faculty in 1993. As part of the organization, she conducted BU’s symphony orchestra and symphonic chorus in concerts at the prestigious Symphony Hall. Not only did the symphonic chorus spur an evolution of the music department, but it also “changed the culture of BU at large,” Jones says. “Suddenly the BU community had a place to go and watch such performances.”

The 2011 recipient of the American Choral Directors Association’s esteemed Robert Shaw Award, Jones credits BU for opening the door to conducting experiences she may not have found elsewhere, like working with Professor David Hoose, the director of orchestral activities. Hoose often allowed Jones to take the helm in performances. “It’s highly unusual for an orchestral conductor to step aside and let a choral conductor, like myself, step in,” she says.

Jones also cherishes what she calls the “aha moments” in the conducting seminar she taught at the School of Music. In one class, she invited a dancer to assist her students in freeing their movements and was surprised by the lesson’s success as her students began to move more fluidly.

“Teaching at BU reinforced what I know about how the conducting process works best,” she says, “but I also owe a lot of my own teaching success to the instrumental and vocal professors who train our students.”

Judith Simpson, Director of Online Master of Arts in Art Education

In 1996, when Judith Simpson joined the School of Visual Arts faculty as an assistant professor in the art education program, she and Professor Emerita Janet Olson (’73) were the only faculty. “We not only taught the entire program that consisted of seven courses and seminars,” says Simpson, “we also did field supervision.”

Simpson says her students and colleagues made the hard work worthwhile. “Students at BU are creative, intelligent, and respectful. They are eager to succeed and inquisitive. That kind of student energizes the professor,” she says.

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Judith Simpson

Making things is not what art education is about. Making meaning through art is.”

Faculty Tenor Takes Home A Grammy

Tenor Aaron Sheehan, a lecturer in the School of Music, and soprano Teresa Wakim ('95) performed a chamber opera by Charpentier at the 55th Grammy Awards.
Expanding TV’s Idea of Family
FROM QUEER AS FOLK TO THE FOSTERS, PETER PAIGE MAKES PRIME TIME MORE INCLUSIVE. BY JOEL BROWN

In his role as Emmett Honeycutt on Queer as Folk, Peter Paige (left) helped shape audiences’ evolving attitudes toward the LGBTQ community. He believes his domestic drama The Fosters may have an even more significant impact on viewers due to its depiction of a loving, untraditional family.

“We are a society obsessed with our own reflection,” Peter Paige says, “only the mirror we are looking in is the 42-inch plasma in our living rooms. We all want to be reflected there, and when we don’t see ourselves, we feel invisible.”

For much of his Hollywood career, the actor, writer, and director has striven to make gay people more visible on television, first playing Emmett Honeycutt on Showtime’s groundbreaking Queer as Folk and now working as a creator and executive producer of ABC Family’s The Fosters, an award-winning series about an interracial lesbian couple as they raise their brood of biological, adopted, and foster children, mostly teenagers.

“As a kid I was so desperate to be a part of something, to feel validated by companionship,” says Paige (93). “I was an only child and we moved a lot, so I never had that sort of privilege of regional or ethnic identity that a lot of people cling to. Being gay gave me a little bit of that, but it wasn’t something I saw reflected in the world.”

Or on TV. Although gay people occasionally showed up on talk shows like Ricki Lake and Donahue, gay characters on scripted series tended to serve as either comic relief with obvious—but unacknowledged—sexuality (Paul Lynde, Dom DeLuise) or guest stars in “message episodes,” like Archie Bunker’s linebacker friend Steve on All in the Family.

So Paige knew he was part of a paradigm shift when, as a young actor in Hollywood, he auditioned for the out, proud, and often sexually explicit Queer as Folk. Based on a British series, the show followed the lives of a group of gay men in Pittsburgh. It presented a rounded portrait of a gay peer group, dramatizing their romances, disputes, and bedroom behavior as matter-of-factly as if they were the Carringtons or the “Friends.” It was the first time many gay men had seen a lot like their own on television, Paige says.

His character, Emmett, was funny, flamboyant, and highly sexual, with a turn as a porn actor and an affair with a closeted pro quarterback among his storylines. Queer as Folk, which ran from 2000 to 2005, was part of a TV

continuum from Ellen to Will & Grace to Queer Eye for the Straight Guy that Paige believes helped shape audiences’ evolving attitudes toward the LGBTQ community.

“You are reaching people in their homes—in their underwear—every week and showing them things about the world and themselves that can produce incredible change,” Paige says. “I absolutely believe that people learn to relate to people different from themselves through storytelling—especially the week-in, week-out familiarizing possible with television. I witnessed it firsthand with Queer as Folk, and I’m lucky enough to be experiencing it again with The Fosters.”

He had change in mind when he and writing partner Brad Bredeweg created The Fosters, which counts Jennifer Lopez among its executive producers. The show follows police officer Stef Foster (Teri Polo) and school administrator Lena Adams (Sherri Saum) as they raise their brood of biological, adopted, and foster children, mostly teenagers whose romances, identity issues, and acting-out provide the drama. While the show doesn’t feature the sex raps that made Queer as Folk a sensation, the milder domestic drama may have an even more significant impact on viewers, Paige says.

“When fans of Queer as Folk see me, they feel like they know me, like I was at the gay bar with them just last week,” Paige says. “Now, with The Fosters, we get stopped by moms saying, ‘Thank you, I never thought I’d see my family on TV,’ and 13-year-old kids saying, ‘Thank you, I never thought I’d see my parents on TV. Thank you for putting a family that looks like mine out there, because it means so much to me.’

“And that’s been true not just of lesbian households, it’s been true of a lot of different families, families that aren’t one ethnicity, two-gender parents, two-and-a-half children,” Paige says. “There are more and more of them these days. Any family that doesn’t fit the sort of 1950s norm is hungry for representation and visibility. Seeing a lovingly depicted family that doesn’t fall under that traditional sort of umbrella has been exciting for a lot of people.”

In his role as Emmett Honeycutt on Queer as Folk, Peter Paige (left) helped shape audiences’ evolving attitudes toward the LGBTQ community. He believes his domestic drama The Fosters may have an even more significant impact on viewers due to its depiction of a loving, untraditional family.
SEAFLOOR CERAMICS
AN ARTIST CREATES GLAZES FROM OCEAN FLOOR SEDIMENT
BY LARA EHRlich | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CYDNEY SCOTT

AT THE END OF A LONG ROAD curving along the sea in the Cape Cod town of Woods Hole, Massachusetts, a handmade sign points the way to the Soft Earth pottery studio. There, in a converted boat shed warmed by a wood stove, and with a view of the ocean, Joan Lederman (‘68) works at a pottery wheel. The walls are lined with stoneware and porcelain, each with a compelling origin story. Researchers from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution just down the road supply Lederman with the mud she uses to create glazes that crackle or branch into veins or gleam like glass. Research ships return to the institution from journeys around the globe, bearing, among other materials, mud from the largest underwater volcano in the world, and sediment from a layer of Earth rich in iridium from the asteroid said to have killed the dinosaurs. In the crucible of Lederman’s kiln, mud is transformed into art.

“When I first get a bag of mud, I ask, ‘Now what do I do with you?’ Lederman says. Sediments from around the world respond to firing in different ways depending on their composition. Lederman’s newest mud (below) is from the Havre Volcano, an underwater volcano just north of New Zealand.

Lederman’s pieces mirror the geology of the sediments. A design representing one glaze’s origin—a hydrothermal vent—emerges as the piece moves from raw to finished form.

LEARN MORE ABOUT LEDERMAN @bu.edu/esprit.
ED AVEDISIAN’S PARENTS WERE SURVIVORS. They lived through what Armenians call Medz Yeghern, the Great Crime, more commonly known as the Armenian Genocide. Then they immigrated to the United States—just in time for the Great Depression. “They came here and they struggled,” says Avedisian (’59, ’61). The message to their four kids was, “Get your education; don’t do what I’m doing. You don’t have to work in a mill.”

The family didn’t have much, says Avedisian, but it did have a clarinet. The instrument belonged to Avedisian’s brother, who apparently wasn’t always thrilled about sharing it. “I would try to make some noise out of it and get it back in the box so he wouldn’t know I was disturbing this instrument. I wouldn’t get it in there correctly.” He soon got the hang of packing the clarinet away—and playing it. In a five-decade career, much of it as a Boston Pops and Boston Ballet woodwind mainstay, Avedisian performed concerts with superstar singers—such as soprano Joan Sutherland and Leontyne Price—and rehearsed with master composer Igor Stravinsky.

In 2009, Avedisian retired. His clarinet stays in its box. He jokes that he’s afraid to hear what his playing would sound like now, since each day that goes by is “one day further away from what you could do.” Instead, he spends his time experiencing music in a new way—enjoying the whole piece, not just concentrating on the woodwind section—and working as a philanthropist to help improve education in his parents’ homeland, Armenia.

Avedisian inherited his musical skill from his mother, a talented singer. “She could solfège anything,” he says of his mom’s ability to work through each pitch. “She would sing a song with the words one time and then she’d sing it again with the names of the pitches.”

When everybody else told Avedisian he “was crazy to try to go into music,” his mom backed him up. “She said, ‘You want to, go ahead, go do it.’”

Avedisian chose CFA as his route into music after becoming entranced with a recording of the Boston Symphony Orchestra on the radio. The clarinetist blew him away. “Who is this guy?” the teenage Avedisian asked himself. “I want to study with him.” The musician was Manuel Valerio, a professor at CFA.

At BU, Avedisian found things were “gonz pretty well” studying the clarinet with Valerio and decided to pursue a career as a performing musician in a symphony orchestra. In the decades that followed, Avedisian played not just with two of Boston’s best orchestras, but with the Atlanta Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Boston Opera Company, and the Boston Lyric Opera. He also taught at CFA and made appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera.

When Luciano Pavarotti was in Boston, Avedisian would typically join the Italian’s orchestra. He remembers sitting in the woodwind section as the great opera singer blazed through his range. “This guy was singing with reckless abandon,” says Avedisian. “Unbelievable. I said, ‘We’re hearing this in rehearsal!’ Of course, he sang that way to a certain extent on stage, too. His sound was just incredible and it captivated the audience every time.”

And if Pavarotti was going full throttle, “You become part of it and he draws you into the zone. That’s what the arts are all about. When you can be on that level, with someone like that, that is something special.”

Toward the end of his playing days, Avedisian became successful in investing, which allowed him to take up a new career: philanthropy. The focus of his efforts has been Armenia. In the early 1980s, the Armenian State Philharmonic invited Avedisian to perform a Mozart concerto in the country. He loved the scenery and people; less so the Communist restrictions. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1991, he saw an opportunity to help improve the country’s education system.

“WE DIDN’T HAVE MUCH IN FINANCE, BUT WE HAD EVERYTHING ELSE: WE HAD ALL THE INSPIRATION YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED. IF YOU’VE GOT IT, USE IT, AND DEVELOP IT.”

Avedisian became a trustee of the American University of Armenia and later supported construction of its 10,000-square-meter Paramaz Avedisian Building in honor of his brother. The building is home to classrooms, conference rooms, and auditoriums; even the teachers a little bit more [than the government does]. The school is also the first building in Armenia to be Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design certified. Avedisian says the decision to use sustainable power sources has had a big impact on the landlocked, largely energy-dependent country. Armenian authorities have been inspired to bring sustainable heat to 100 remote schools beyond the reach of gas lines.

With the legacy and education the school is providing, says Avedisian, the children of Yerevan are “only limited by their own talents and willingness to develop them.” It’s a fitting tribute to the parents who gave him the same opportunity.

“I need to honor them—not only them, but others like them,” says Avedisian of his philanthropy. “We didn’t have much in finance, but we had everything else. We had all the inspiration you could possibly need. If you’ve got it, use it, and develop it. You owe it to yourself and everyone who came before you.”
The man on the computer screen, buried to his shoulders in thick, white goo, strains to move. His shadow looms behind him, breaks apart, and melts into the distance as he slogs inexorably to the edge of the frame. It’s an animated image, or gif, and the artist bringing him to life is Wendy Cong Zhao, who achieves the illusion of strenuous movement in a series of 34 line drawings. In this and other gifs she shares on her blog, the classically trained painter is beginning to experiment with animation.

This experimentation has led her to rethink how she creates art, and to deviate from the idea that a single artwork is the end goal. When studying fine art, she says, “we work for a long time on one drawing or painting. Then, we hang it up and take a long time to study it.” In animation, however, the illusion of movement is achieved by connecting tens, hundreds, thousands—hundreds of thousands—of individual drawings. “When they’re all moving together, each drawing is only seen for a split second,” she says. “Each could be very good, but it’s not about that. On screen, you see the film as a whole.”

For Big Hero 6, Disney created San Fransokyo (pictured), the largest set piece ever made for an animated feature. It is populated by hundreds of thousands of citizens. 

In their work on Big Hero 6, Frozen, and other films, CFA alums are stretching the limits of animation and imagination. By Lara Ehrlich
The illusion of movement has captivated audiences since the first animated film. J. Stuart Blackton’s Enchanted Drawing (1906) featured a tedeeed man coating chalkboard drawings to life through stop-motion animation. From the costume to the staging, Blackton presents animation as a magic trick, and in the decades since, even as audiences and films have become more sophisticated, the spell holds.

“Animation is one of the most magical art forms you can imagine,” says Roy Conli (’87), a producer for Walt Disney Animation Studios. And today, CPA alums like Conli and Zhao are the ones making the magic. From granting movement to line drawings, to conjuring an entire city on screen, these alums are stretching the limits of animation and imagination.

IT STARTS WITH A STORY
Animator Signe Baumane had a story to tell. In her 2014 feature film, Rocks in My Pockets, she traces her struggle with depression through the generations to her grandmother who, in 1920s Latvia, fell in love with her grandfather. Baumane plunges into her story of fantasy and madness through stop-motion animation driven by a crisp voice-over.

“The script was the blueprint,” says Zhao (’11, COM’11), who worked with Baumane as a colorist, and then as a compositor and editor from 2011 to 2013.“Signe recorded the voice-over first. We had to cut it up a little bit, but the main structure remained unchanged.”

With the story in place, Baumane developed storyboard—thumbnail sketches that illustrate the staging for each scene—and worked with a team of five assistants and interns to animate the piece. Although collaboration was vital to the process, Baumane’s singular vision steered the group, “We ask ourselves: What do we want to see next, as moviegoers?”

As they sketch from the working script, the story artists consider a variety of questions. “What’s the point of the scene? What do I want the audience to feel about it? How can I make this part of the story better?” says Roman. “A lot of creative freedom is given to the story artists to own their sequence.”

As the story develops, sketches-in-progress are compiled with voice, music, and effects tracks to create an animatic, or an animated storyboard, which is screened every 12 weeks for the studio’s entire team of directors and writers. “We essentially tear it apart,” says Conli, producer of Disney’s Academy Award-winning film Big Hero 6. “Often, 75 percent of it goes back into development, but the 25 percent that stays is to be the core of the story you tell.”

Del Vecho points to the last scene of Frozen as an example of the efficacy of this process. Loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale The Snow Queen, Frozen is the story of Princess Anna’s epic quest to save her sister, Queen Elsa, who has suspended their kingdom in winter. When Anna falls under a spell that begins to freeze her heart, only an act of true love can save her. “We always knew we wanted to end the movie with the true love being between the sisters, but it wasn’t very clear how to stage the ending to achieve the desired emotional impact,” Del Vecho says. When the team thought they had finally found the ending, one artist disagreed.

“He went off for two weeks and sketched up a new ending, and pitched it to us,” Del Vecho says. “To achieve a compelling climax, the artist ‘first placed the scene out on the floor, and second, had Elsa’s emotions manifest a storm that makes it believable that everyone is close to each other, but cannot see each other until the right moment, when the storm suspends—easily in hindsight.’”

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For both Signe Baumane’s indie feature film Rocks in My Pockets (below) and the Disney monster hit Frozen (right), the filmmakers developed the story and created storyboards—thumbnail sketches that illustrate the staging for each scene—before adding color, vocals, music, movement, and effects.

BUILDING CHARACTER
In tandem with developing story through scriptwork and sketching, the creative team collaborates to produce memorable characters, like Elsa from Frozen, Woody from Toy Story—and the fluffy, white robot, Baymax, who steals every scene in the Disney film Big Hero 6. An inflatable health care robot, Baymax is the brainchild of Tadashi, who dies in an accident, leaving his little brother, Hiro, grief-stricken. Hiro stumbles across Bayman among his brother’s belongings, and the robot interprets the boy’s grief as a wound he must heal.

When developing Baymax, directors Don Hall and Chris Williams aimed to create an original robot, different from anything the audience would have seen before. They filled their story room with pictures of “literally every robot that has ever been in a film,” says Conli. WALL-E, Robby the Robot, Gort from The Day the Earth Stood Still — “the room was just plastered.”

Hall and Williams visited the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There, they met researchers working in the field of soft
We all work together. It is always an amazing bit of alchemy when everybody is firing on all cylinders. —Christian Roman

says the storyboards then head to a production team that animates the story. At Pixar, it’s about a two-year process—beyond the two or three years it takes to develop a story. Modelers create the characters and backgrounds on the computer, then riggers add points of articulation to the models so they can be manipulated. The layout artists use the storyboards to develop rough blocking, placing the “camera” within the scenes and the characters in their key poses. The animators enrich the posing, camera movements, and character expressions, which are all coordinated with the actor’s voice recordings. The lighting team then renders the scenes to add shading, textures, and reflections. “Every step has people who are experts,” Roman says. “We all work together. It is always an amazing bit of alchemy when everybody is firing on all cylinders.”

A scene comes together in multiple stages, including (from top): the storyboards (sketch that defines the action of a scene), the layout pass (in which models are used to approximate camera and staging); the rough animation pass (fully animated images reveal the scene’s drama); and the final lighting version (a fully textured image rendered with computer-generated lighting).

robots to develop a health care robot made of inflated vinyl that will tend gently to elderly patients. This project “sparked in Don’s mind the idea of a huggable robot,” says Conli. “This was the beginning of Baymax, and the fact that he was a health care robot made total sense within the structure of our story.”

When the team had Baymax’s shape, they drew out his personality through expressions and movement. “Animators are essentially actors with computers—we used to say ‘actors with pencils,’” Conli says. “They do a lot of research, as an actor does, exploring character.” Inspired by Japanese animation, the creative team traveled to Japan, where they stumbled upon a suzu shrine. It seemed to be smiling serenely at them, Conli says, and inspired Baymax’s simple, yet expressive features.

Finally, “we recognized that we were going to want a super appealing walk,” he says. The team watched videos to find the “cutest walks” in nature, which they determined were “a human baby in a diaper, a human baby in a loaded diaper, and a baby penguin.” The baby penguin won. “They had found Baymax’s distinctive waddle.”

We must say the storyboards and the characters are waiting in the wings, it’s time to bring the film to life. The storyboards sketch each scene, complete with movement, lighting, and camera angles. “Every little detail should support the direction of the story you want to tell,” Roman says. The storyboards then head to a production team that animates the story. At Pixar, it’s about a two-year process—beyond the two or three years it takes to develop a story. Modelers create the characters and backgrounds on the computer, then riggers add points of articulation to the models so they can be manipulated. The layout artists use the storyboards to develop rough blocking, placing the “camera” within the scenes and the characters in their key poses. The animators enrich the posing, camera movements, and character expressions, which are all coordinated with the actor’s voice recordings. The lighting team then renders the scenes to add shading, textures, and reflections. “Every step has people who are experts,” Roman says. “We all work together. It is always an amazing bit of alchemy when everybody is firing on all cylinders.” All told, the process of bringing a single film like Toy Story 3, Frozen, and Big Hero 6 to the screen involves the work of anywhere from 350 to 800 people.

Although a small production like Rocks in My Pockets follows a similar process, Baumann did not have the budget for a big team. She hand-drew characters on paper and constructed backgrounds from papier-mâché, painted wooden boards, and other materials. To achieve the illusion that the 2D characters are moving through the 3D sets, she created enormous drawings for each movement, all of which were colored, shaded, textured, and lit. In all, the film required 30,000 drawings. Zhao worked with Baumann to bring the characters and world together, she edited the scenes, digitally colored each one in Photoshop, composited them in After Effects, and edited the film. This work required Zhao to not only develop new technical skills, but to employ the traditional skills she learned at CPA. “It helped to have taken sculpture classes, to know what it should look like when a character moves through space,” she says, “especially if the background is moving, like if there’s a pan or a zoom.” And the skills she developed as a painter enabled her to shade characters with the knowledge of how different light sources generate shadows. “The ability to draw well, compose, understand perspective and color theory, and so on, is key to working and creating animation,” Roman adds. “The computer doesn’t compensate for a lack of creativity or artistic ability. It is simply a tool, like a brush or a pencil.”

The creative team for Big Hero 6 traveled across the world to gather inspiration for Baymax and drew on diverse elements to create a robot unlike any audiences had seen before. Described as a robot unlike any audiences have seen before, the robot developed at Carnegie Mellon University is an inflated vinyl health care robot made of inflated vinyl that will tend gently to elderly patients. This project “sparked in Don’s mind the idea of a huggable robot,” says Conli. “This was the beginning of Baymax, and the fact that he was a health care robot made total sense within the structure of our story.”

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ELEVEN COUNTRIES, 400 MILLION PEOPLE, 4,300 MILES OF RIVER—50 YEARS OF POLITICAL DISCORD. CAN THE MUSIC OF THE NILE PROJECT BRING HARMONY TO A STRUGGLING REGION?

BY Suki Casanave
It is also the story of a river. The conviction that music has the power to spark change. A first-of-its-kind musical collaboration, the Nile Project is an experiment in education and empathy, an exploration of music as political activism. It is also the story of a river.

**A MUSICAL RISK**

The idea for the Nile Project began with an invitation. Mariët Abé, an assistant professor of music in CFA’s department of musicology and ethnomusicology, plays accoutrements with the Delo Band, an Ethiopian pop music group that has been featured in the New York Times and Rolling Stone and on National Public Radio. She had invited Girgis to a gig—and that’s when inspiration struck. “Here I was, listening to the first time in my life to music from Ethiopia,” she recalls. “How was it possible that I’d never heard this music before? I realized I could do something to promote a conversation that’s desperately needed.”

Girgis and Nylo Project cofounder, Mekhit Hadera, an Ethiopian-American singer, knew they were taking a risk: “bringing 18 musicians together from all these countries,” Girgis says, “but the results were spectacular.” The group’s first concert became their first album, Album, released in 2013 and named after the Egyptian city of Aswan, which is located at a bend in the Nile River. This spring, the Nile Project’s first North American tour—residencies at 35 universities in four months—delivered a powerful musical message directly to college students, the world’s future leaders. At BU, the weeklong residency included panel discussions on water politics, social engagement, and the arts, as well as classroom visits, creating a lively interface between the arts and other disciplines.

The students in Abe’s Sound, Music, and Ecology class listen to music. A pianist ensemble—the series has grown steadily over the past four years. Each performance features a different musical collective that brings together students from different countries and university campuses, both in Africa and in North America. The idea is to go below the radar of national politics and get students thinking about their commonality and their common problems,” says Barbara Brown, director of outreach for BU’s African Studies Center, who was invited to Aswan in 2011 to attend the first Nile Gathering, a week of workshops for community educators and activists.

Music alone may not be enough to transform the jostling power along the Nile River, Brown notes, but it’s a starting point. “Think of our civil rights movement,” she says. “Singing brought people together and strengthened their resolve. It was crucial. Music didn’t end segregation—but it was a piece.”

Girgis has expanded the Nile Project with a fellowship program, an academic version of the musical collective that brings together students from different Nile country universities to learn about each other’s cultures. Universities outside Africa, including BU and other US schools, will also be encouraged to participate, building international relationships based on a common bound by a common history and a great river.” This is how change begins—one idea, one note, at a time.

**HEAR THE MUSIC OF THE NILE PROJECT**

Visit bu.edu/ espirit.

**A TASTE OF WORLD MUSIC**

Mariët Abé was a high school student volunteering in Tanzania, where she sat down one afternoon at a portable keyboard and started to play. Soon people were gathering round, singing and teaching their songs to each other. “That’s when I realized that music can reflect my own place in society,” she says, “and a way to learn about others and their stories.”

Today, Abé’s Global Lunchtime Concert Series, sponsored by the Department of Ethnomusicology, in collaboration with the BU Arts Initiative, brings a regular dose of world music to campus. A Ukrainian quartet, a Chinese folk band, a Malian guitarist, an Ethiopian ensemble—“the series has grown steadily over the past four years. Each performance begins with a short talk and ends with a question and answer session.”

“The success of the series speaks to the growing interest in world music,” says Abé, “and the desire for diversity that attracts audience members from throughout the University.”

**THE NILE PROJECT**

The Nile Project musicians, including (from left) Ayoub Mahbouh, Ham Badou, Karina Mutua, and Michael Bichika, hope that if they can make music in harmony, their countries can find a way to begin overcoming generations of distrust.
Mackenzie Devlin was trying to be ugly. The five-foot-seven, blue-eyed blonde had been told she's the ingénue type, and in a typical production of Henry IV, Part I, she'd play a noble lady.

But in the 2014 CPA production, she was Falstaff—a corpulent, unshaved knight with a penchant for boozing and bawdy humor. Her hair was mussed. She wore a fake belly. She loved every minute of it. “I allowed myself to be completely unhinged and just as grotesque as I could possibly be.”

Devlin (’15) was a performer in Femina Shakes, a CPA initiative that presents one all-female Shakespeare play a year. The productions enable junior and senior performance majors to stretch themselves in roles they might rarely have the opportunity to take in traditional casting. Freed from stereotypical gender constraints to explore themes of power and authority in new ways, they emerge more confident—and with greater ambitions for meatier roles.

“I don’t want to be this actor who’s always pretty onstage,” says Devlin. “I want to play deeper and more troubled and layered people, and I really felt like playing Falstaff was a way in.”

Giving actresses juicier parts, and a chance to explore untapped sides of themselves, was one of Christine Hamel’s goals in launching Femina Shakes. In spring 2011, she says, Jim Petosa, director of CPA’s School of Theatre, asked the assistant professor of voice & speech and acting to direct a Shakespeare play featuring actresses who were not otherwise performing major roles that season. The project would help compensate for the overabundance of women in the program and fulfill the School’s promise of guaranteed casting.

An actress and self-described feminist with training in Shakespeare performance, Hamel (’05) took the charge a step further. Searching through Shakespeare’s canon, she asked herself, “What would help women feel like they could advocate for themselves, where they were using some of their skills, where they were dealing with issues of power and hegemony and advocacy and politics?”

Julius Caesar was a perfect fit. The inaugural Femina Shakes production in 2011 had a homegrown feel, with the actresses “owning” every aspect, says Hamel. They painted the studio with graffiti written in Latin to create an “incendiary” Roman atmosphere in which the characters were “speaking truth to power.” She and Petosa felt the project was such a positive experience for the actresses that CPA should continue to offer it. Four productions followed—Titus Andronicus, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, and Henry IV, Part I—directed respectively by Hamel, Lillian King (’14), Adrienne Boris (’15), and guest director Meg Taintor. Hamel is considering Twelfth Night for this fall.

“Very few plays,” Shakespeare or otherwise, “have passed the test of having two women speaking to each other for any sustained amount of time about something other than a man,” says Hamel. Playing nontraditional roles gives women the chance to explore larger themes and questions—like “to be or not to be.” “I’m hungry to see more female characters that are at the philosophical, intellectual, or emotional epicenter of something really big,” says Hamel. “I think that is probably why women are really attracted to the role of Hamlet.”

I’m hungry to see more female characters that are at the philosophical, intellectual, or emotional epicenter of something really big.”

—Christine Hamel

Henry V wore lipstick

Though the women of Femina Shakes take on male roles, they don’t strive to become men. No fake mustaches, no embarrassing codpieces. Nor do they aim to imitate men with their physical behaviors. “We’re playing characters as opposed to playing gender,” says Hamel. For the sake of clarity, the actresses do decide their characters’ sex—playing key male roles like Romeo as men is common but not a rule—and they give the audience costume-related clues, like pants and pulled-back hair. They might even redefine how gender is visually portrayed. For example, Hamel says that in Henry IV, which Femina Shakes set in post-World War II London, male characters were played as men whose appearance was that of sturdy Rosie the Riveters, in pants and lipstick. But however gender is portrayed, it’s not the focus of the actresses’ preparation. “In Julius Caesar,” says Hamel, “it is more interesting to me to have an actress take on Mark Antony as a character who happens to be a man, as opposed to figuring out how to be a man and then playing Mark Antony.”

An example: Jade Davis (’16), who played the impetuous warrioress Hotspur in Henry IV, Part I, and Ivy Elwell (’15), who played Hotspur’s wife. Elwell says her onstage interaction with Davis was about a marital relationship formed by their words and goals as
opposed to sexual chemistry. Hamel says, “I think at a certain point in rehearsal, the ensemble and myself and whoever is in the room stop seeing women and start seeing characters, which is really exciting.”

What the audience may notice more in an all-female cast is the gender bias inherent in the play. Lines like Hotspur’s “[C]onstant you are, / But yet a woman” can jar the ear even more than usual. Violence can also become more disturbing for audiences. In the scene in Titus Andronicus preceding the offstage rape and mutilation of Titus’ daughter Lavinia, the actresses playing aggressors removed Lavinia’s nude nylons and gagged her with them. For Eliza Rose Fichter (’13), who played Lavinia, the scene “didn’t feel scary to do at all” because of the trust she shared with her fellow actresses. But she believes that for the audience, the unfamiliar experience of “watching female bodies do this to another female body was scarier and more dangerous, I think,” than watching a man—the expected aggressor—perform the same actions.

Titus Andronicus is a Roman general who bakes his enemy’s sons into a pie and breaks his own daughter’s neck. To take on the lead of Shakespeare’s dark and violent play by that name, Caroline Rose Markham (’13) had to reevaluate nearly everything about herself.

“I think there is an apology in everything that I say and do,” she says. “There is always this tinge of, ‘I am so sorry to say this so directly, but I need you to…’” In the role of Titus, “there was none of what I associate with the female apology. I will literally stab you if you are in my way.”

As Titus, Markham also became conscious of ways she conveyed gender through body language. It was challenging “to find a neutral way of doing everything,” from walking and sitting to drinking a bottle of water. Walking to and from rehearsal, she’d practice “trying to eliminate all the gendered physical behaviors that I learned my entire life.”

Now, the assurance she found playing a bad-ass general in combat boots and “a giant Mohawk that looked like a Roman military helmet and made me feel like I was six feet tall” goes with her everywhere—from studying abroad at the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (“I played Hamlet and I felt ready to go. There was no, ‘How do I be a man?’ or ‘How do I do this?’”), to auditioning for Boston-area productions (“It helps me walk into a room and do whatever piece I want.”), to the restaurant where she trains fellow servers to walk and act with confidence.

Davis had a similar experience playing Hotspur. “I felt much bigger, bolder. I felt so unstoppable playing Hotspur.” Now, she says, “I will never be timid to audition for big roles.”

Women cast as women in Femina Shakes productions are empowered in other ways. Their characters may be confined to the domestic sphere or even victimized, but that doesn’t mean they’re weak or powerless. “Lady Percy doesn’t necessarily have physical power over Hotspur,” says Ehwell, but she does have power in her words—in the rich language Shakespeare offers her “to really assert herself” in demanding answers from her husband and more of a share in his life.

“I THINK AT A CERTAIN POINT IN REHEARSAL, [EVERYONE STOPS] SEEING WOMEN AND STARTS SEEING CHARACTERS, WHICH IS REALLY EXCITING.”
—CHRISTINE HAMEL

Hamel hopes the heightened ambitions Femina Shakes actresses tap into won’t just influence the classical roles women are offered, but the roles created for them.

“If you have a generation of really strong actors who are hungry for the kinds of roles they got to play when they performed as Mark Antony and Titus Andronicus and Henry the Fifth—assertive and strong and really thinking globally about how to change the world, not, ‘How do I change my husband?’—you might have playwrights writing roles for those actresses.”

If that comes to pass, someday an actress may actually have to check her calendar when offered the chance to play one of Shakespeare’s men: she may be too busy portraying extraordinary women.

“IF YOU HAVE A GENERATION OF REALLY STRONG ACTORS…YOU MIGHT HAVE PLAYWRIGHTS WRITING ROLES FOR THOSE ACTRESSES.”
—CHRISTINE HAMEL

For Associate Professor Jack McCarthy’s organizational behavior class at Quinipiaum School of Business, each Femina Shakes production typically involves an ensemble performance and a lecture or talkback for another BU school or topic relevant to its courses of study, such as Elizabethan history for the College of General Studies.

“I FEEL MUCH BIGGER, BOLDER. I FEEL SO UNSTOPPABLE PLAYING HOTSPUR.”
—JADE’ DAVIS
Ginastera’s Carnegie Hall main stage debut in (‘91, ‘96) made his Community College. At a Richter Association for the Arts (‘79) performed piano. Donations from the performance

Sandra Piques Eddy (‘99), (‘82) right, Alan Schneider (‘93), Chelsea Beach (‘12), and Orange Najeh (‘16) performed together in the Boston Lyric Opera’s Kátya Kabanová in March. Canton, Mass, public schools in fall 2014.

Anna Woodbury (‘12) performed selections from Bizet, del Golgo and Roméo and Juliette at the Dover Public Library in New Hampshire in February. Jordan Wurth斯顿 (‘14) performed as the title character in The Play of Daniel at Trinity Church in Boston in November 2014.

School of Theatre


Alicia Woodard (‘14, Hon 04) was inducted into the 87th Oklahoma Hall of Fame in November 2014.

Christine Noel (‘11) is artistic director of the Providence Singers, which joined the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra in its eighth annual holiday performance of George Frideric Handel’s Messiah in December 2014.

Courtney Sandor (‘11) earned an MA in applied and professional ethics from the University of Leeds. Her dissertation was about resolving dissinence in Children’s Literature.

Joelle Lucie (‘16) performed her classical debut album, Take Me There, in September 2014. The album features her distinctive “jazzed-up pop and p popcorn jazz” style in standards, originals, and pimped-out pop covers.

Branda von der Morea (‘05) affiliated with Hammond Residential Real Estate in September 2014. In her new role, Branda collaborates with buyer and seller clients from Hammond’s office.

David Glover (‘05) is director of the Carolina Brass Quintet, a brass quintet at Northeastern High School in Massachusetts, was a judge for the Massfield Idol competition, which featured more than 30 middle and high school student competitors.

Jesse Goldenstein (‘90) and Alan Schneider (‘93) performed in the University of Rhode Island’s 2015 Outstanding Teaching in Wisconsin Avenue Award.

Sandra Piques Eddy (‘99), (‘82) right, Alan Schneider (‘93), Chelsea Beach (‘12), and Orange Najeh (‘16) performed together in the Boston Lyric Opera’s Kátya Kabanová in March.

The group placed fourth in the competition and, in January 2015, released their debut album, which placed on more than 10 different Billboard charts.

Tiffany Chang (‘13) is music director of the New England Repertory Orchestra, which received third place in the college/university orchestra division of the 2014 American Prize competition.

Kate Stringer (‘13) performed a selection of songs from genres including blues, jazz, and Broadway at the South Jackson Civic Center in Tennessee in January.

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who had been separated since birth, premiered at the 2015 South By Southwestern Festival. The film won the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary.

Brian Austin (’10) staffed a Birthright trip in December 2014, and in November 2014–2015 stage managed the Sarasota Opera’s performances of Tosca and Don Carlo in repertory. Brian was named the production stage manager of the Des Moines Metro Opera during the summer and the Atlanta Opera during the main season.

Mike Beaumont (’10) accepted the position of scenic artist at the Virginia Stage Company in Norfolk.

Lizl Leuchs (’10) began working as an executive assistant at UnitedHealthcare in November 2014.

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I would like to thank the disenchanted and bring Yew Media, a company dedicated to bringing joy."

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Celebrating Our 60th

WE MARKED OUR ANNIVERSARY WITH VISITS FROM ALUMS, MASTER CLASSES WITH SPECIAL GUESTS, AND EVENTS HONORING OUR COMMUNITY.

1. Jason Alexander (Hon.’95) leads an energetic and interactive master class with theater students to kick off the fall semester.
2. Metropolitan Opera Chorus Master Donald Palumbo (CAS’70) works on vocal technique with Opera Institute students as they prepare for the run of Angels in America.
3. As part of the Cosi Project, Sandro Piques Eddy (‘99, ’02) and David Kreuss (’70) spend time in residence with the Opera Institute.
4. CFA parent Andrew Stanton, writer-director and vice president, creative, for Pixar Animation Studios, delivers the keynote speech at CFA Convocation.
5. Sarah Millichip (’52) and Kellie Hogue (’52) perform a medley of songs in tribute to Stewart F. Lane (’73) and Bonnie Comley at BU’s Celebration on Broadway event in New York City.
6. Alumni, faculty, and friends reunite for the opening of the School of Visual Arts’ alumni show, Convergence.
7. Sara Chase (’05), Greg Hildreth (’05), Stewart F. Lane (’73), and Bonnie Comley attend BU’s Celebration on Broadway event in New York City.
8. Peter Del Vecho (’80), Phylis Hoffman (’61, ’67), and Frank Ginsberg (’65) are honored with 2014 CFA Distinguished Alumni Awards.
9. CFA Dean’s Advisory Board member Saul Cohen and his wife, Naomi, peruse undergraduate artwork in the 808 Gallery.
10. Amelia Cook (’18, CAS’18) performs at the 2014 Distinguished Alumni Awards.
11. In celebration of her 50th reunion year, Jane Pappalardo (’65) presents her granddaughter, Marguerite O’Brien-Pappalardo (’15) with her degree at CFA Convocation.
12. On set at the 808 Gallery with the America’s Got Talent film crew and Sons of Serendip, Micah Christian (STH’12), Mason Morton (’12, ’15), Kendall Ramseur (’12), and Cordare Andrea (LAW’12).
We are grateful to the generous donors who support our gifted students in music, theater, and visual arts, and to our CFA alumni who donate to Boston University. These gifts drive important capital initiatives, scholarships, endowed professorships, outreach, performance, and exhibitions—all of which directly benefit students across campus.

$1–$249

$500–$999

$1,000–$2,499

$2,500–$4,999

$5,000–$9,999

$10,000–$24,999

$25,000–$49,999

$50,000+
Leading Questions

As CFA heads into its sixth decade, we are asking ourselves some tough questions. Our mission is to ensure that we are arming students with the skills and expertise they need to be successful as artists. So, we’re asking our faculty, administration, students, and alumni for input on how to address the changing role of the arts in society and assess the value of an arts education. The individuals featured throughout this issue of Esprit answer some of our most pressing questions.

“That you have to be ruthless to succeed. You need tenacity, you need talent, you need courage—but you do not need to be unkind.”

“Yes, I would recommend conservatory-style training to emerging artists. It’s important to know yourself. Some artists flourish when they can reach far and wide in their study, with the freedom that comes from liberal arts, some fly when they are given specific tools in a more focused setting. Whatever brings you a feeling of play and liberation.”

“What one piece of technology is essential to your work?”

“It depends: It’s important to know yourself. Some artists flourish when they can reach far and wide in their study, with the freedom that comes from liberal arts, some fly when they are given specific tools in a more focused setting. Whatever brings you a feeling of play and liberation.”

“If you could give your undergraduate-self one piece of advice, what would it be?”

“Fulfilling, challenging, riveting, world-widening, exploration of self, unexpected, risk, worthwhile.”

“No strings attached.”

In 2015, Mark Robertson recorded for the soundtrack of the action comedy Ride Along 2 (above). He also recorded for the Netflix show House of Cards (right).

HE’S WORKED WITH MADONNA, created a chamber orchestra, and recorded for TV shows like House of Cards and films like Ride Along 2. Versatility is freelance violinist Mark Robertson’s calling card. After studying under the late, legendary Roman Totenberg at CFA and getting a master’s at Juilliard, Robertson ’92 moved to Los Angeles and began playing for film and TV. He’s spent much of his career learning “how to not only expand work opportunities, but learn all the different kinds of ways you can make a living out of being a musician,” from performing with rock stars to cofounding a music contracting company, Allegro Entertainment. In 2015, he co-created the 47-piece, for-profit Hollywood Chamber Orchestra to bring more live concerts to the Los Angeles area, targeting 18- to 49-year-olds with popular offerings such as video game and movie music. Robertson will produce, program, and fundraise—and commission new works. “I’m always trying to diversify,” he says.—JB

Join the conversation and help shape CFA for the next generation of artists @ bu.edu/esprit.

READ MORE ABOUT ROBERTSON @ bu.edu/esprit.

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Join the fun! Take us behind the scenes by posting sketches, notes, or pics from your work in progress on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, using the hashtag #cfanotes.