FROM SKETCH TO SCREEN

IN FILMS LIKE BIG HERO 6 AND FROZEN, ALUMS STRETCH THE LIMITS OF ANIMATION AND IMAGINATION
Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, and Alumni,

We are alive with color, texture, and variation. We are a community with many voices, all engaged and committed to the rigorous discipline of artistic practice. At CFA our goal is to give our students a life-changing experience. With that, they can change the world. My job, and my job, is to make the color, texture, and variation of CFA even 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.

So are we done? Is there nothing we can do better? I don’t think so. My job, our job, is to make CFA the destination for all that is new and exciting. Because we will be there to catch them. I ask the same of you. Let’s create and build upon the foundation of CFA. This journey of discovery belongs to all of us, and it requires an openness to the possible. Think big. Stretch your imagination. Challenge the status quo. Embrace the unknown. We ask freshmen to “jump off the cliff” because we will be there to catch them. I ask the same of you. Let’s make CFA the destination for all that is new and exciting.

I’ve started the conversation, but it must continue with you and all of the CFA community. I’d love to hear from you, so send me a note to ldallen@bu.edu. Warm regards,

Lynne Allen
Dean ad interim
BU College of Fine Arts

Follow me on Instagram @inmyredglasses (disclosure: I’m a newbie at this!).
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.

1. Gideon Bok, Freddy Lafarge as Gabriel, 2014, oil on linen, 55” x 57”.
2. Batu Siharulidze, Galicia, Tomiño City Center, Tomiño, Spain, 2014, granite, 6’ x 5.5’ x 3’.
3. Jaya Howey, Sociability Narrative, 2014, oil on canvas, 52” x 32”. Photo: Susan Byrne
4. Jill Grimes, Arrangement I, 2012, oil on canvas, 52” x 32”. Photo: Susan Byrne
5. Deborah Cornell, Vector, 2013, archival pigment print, 52” x 44”. Courtesy of Los Angeles Center for Digital Art

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.
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 Musical 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

SONS OF SERENDIP

SONS OF SERENDIP SIXZLES 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 Cordaro Kendall Ramseur (’12), harpist Mason Morton (’12, ’15), pianist and guitarist Cordaro Rodriguez ( LAW ’13), and lead singer Micah Christian (STH ’12) had other plans: the group released their first album in January.

The haunting blend of instrumentals 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 CENTER FOR ALL THINGS BEETHOVEN

FOR MUSICOLOGISTS, LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN’S OFTEN-MISUNDERSTOOD LIFE IS ENDLESSLY COMPELLING. HIS WORK THE INSPIRATION FOR LIFETIMES OF STUDY.

A new Center for Beethoven Research at the College of Fine Arts School of Music will serve as a resource for all things Beethoven. Now officially open, the center is the first in New England to invite visiting scholars and forge connections with Beethoven archives in Europe. Based at BU’s 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.

—SS
ALUMS AT THE OSCARS

Two Alums Accepted the Iconic Gold Statues at the 87th Academy Awards this Year: Julianne 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 is 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 alum 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 CAS’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, Aurora Borealis, which Chaffee helped launch in 2003.

She considers herself “fortunate to have worked with some of the best students and faculty in the country, in a program that embraces generosity and personal artistry.”

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.

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

Celebrated internationally for a tone critics have described as “classy, clear, refined, polished, and lovely,” tenor Aaron Sheehan is renowned for his interpretations of the oratorios and cantatas of Bach and Handel. But Sheehan, a lecturer in the School of Music’s historical performance program, moves easily from recital hall to opera stage—a recording of La descente d’Orphée aux enfers from recital hall to opera stage—a recording of BU Marsh Chapel Choir scholar Teresa Wakim (’05), an acclaimed soprano specializing in early music repertoire.—SS

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO A DISTINGUISHED TRIO

At the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, three professors retired after long careers during which they fostered interdepartmental collaborations, revolutionized BU’s cultural landscape, and developed programs that have impacted hundreds of students’ lives.—MS

FACULTY TENOR TAKES HOME A GRAMMY

Tenor Aaron Sheehan, a lecturer in the School of Music, and soprano Teresa Wakim (’05) performed a Handel opera by Charpentier.

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

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She carried this philosophy into her subsequent roles as the chair of the art education program and then as the director of the School of Visual Arts. After her term as director, she developed the online master of arts in art education program, which launched in 2008. Since then, Simpson has watched the program grow and expand its global presence. “It has been a total joy to teach so many different people from all over the world,” she says.

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

Judith Simpson, Director of Online Master of Arts in Art Education
PETER PAIGE MAKES PRIME TIME MORE INCLUSIVE
FROM IDEA OF FAMILY TO QUEER AS FOLK

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 series Queer as Folk and now working as a creator, executive producer, co-creator and writer of ABC Family’s The Fosters.

“I absolutely believe that people learn from 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 of 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 due to its depiction of a loving, untraditional family. “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. “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, ‘I never thought I’d see my family on television, just like me.’”

“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 clung 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 show 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 of television. I witnessed it firsthand with Queer as Folk, and I’m lucky enough to be experiencing it again with The Fosters.”

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 series Queer as Folk and now working as a creator, executive producer, co-creator and writer of ABC Family’s The Fosters, an award-winning series about an interracial lesbian couple and their blended family.

As a kid I was so desperate to be a part of something, to feel validated by companionship,” says Paige (’91). “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 clung to. Being gay gave me a little bit of that, but it wasn’t something I saw reflected in the world.” A
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 often inscribes her pieces with the mud’s geographic coordinates. She tags a finished bowl (above) with “Havre Volcano”; the sediment has resulted in a glaze as rich and smoky as the underwater eruption from which it came.

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.
ED AVEDISIAN’S PARENTS WERE SURVIVORS. They lived through what Armenians call Medz Yerit, the Great Crime, more commonly known as the Armenian Genocide. Then, they immigrated to the United States—just in time for their four children. Avedisian’s parents were survivors. They worked in a mill so their son could play in the orchestra. Now, he’s creating opportunities for the next generation.

BY ANDREW THURSTON

ED AVEDISIAN’S PARENTS’ GIFT

THEY WORKED IN A MILL SO THEIR SON COULD PLAY IN THE ORCHESTRA. NOW, HE’S CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.

“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 sing 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 “going 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 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, nobody else was going to hold back. "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 1989, he saw an opportunity to help improve the country’s education system.

“You will not accept money because they don’t have the money, but we want to give them a first-class education,” says Avedisian. “There are public schools in Armenia, but unfortunately, the government isn’t paying the teachers enough and they went from a class size of 20 to 35. At our school, you can’t fit more than 22 kids in a classroom and we pay 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. He 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.”
he 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’s populated by hundreds of thousands of citizens.
The illusion of movement has captivated audiences since the first animated film. J. Stuart Blackton’s 
Enchanted Drawing (1906) featured a tuxedoed 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, CFA alumni 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 
a risk-taking entrepreneur prone to jealousy. 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 
composer 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 storyboards—
thumbnail sketches that illustrate the stag-
ing 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 
entire city on screen, these alums are stretching the limits 
of animation and imagination.

For both Signe Baumane’s 
reedited 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, 
vocal, music, movement, and 
effects.

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 art-
ists to own their sequence.”

As the story develops, sketches-in-progress are com-
piled with vocal, music, and effects tracks to create an 
amanetic, 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, pro-
ducer 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 going 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 sus-
pended 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 
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when the storm suspends—easy in hindsight. It was the 
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BUILDING CHARACTER

In tandem with developing story through script-
work and sketching, the creative team collaborates to 
produce memorable characters, like Elsa from Frozen, 
Woody from Toy Story—and the puffy, white robot, 
Baymax, who steals every scene in the Disney film Big 
Hero 6. An inflatable health care robot, Baymax is the 
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Baymax 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 
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Robby the Robot, Gort from The Day the Earth Stood 
Still—“the room was just plastered.”

Hall and Williams visited the Robotics Institute at 
There, they met researchers working in the field of soft 
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“The illusion of movement has captivated audiences 
since the first animated film. J. Stuart Blackton’s 
Enchanted Drawing (1906) featured a tuxedoed 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, CFA alumni 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 
a risk-taking entrepreneur prone to jealousy. 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 
composer 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 storyboards—
thumbnail sketches that illustrate the stag-
ing 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 
entire city on screen, these alums are stretching the limits 
of animation and imagination.

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 art-
ists to own their sequence.”

As the story develops, sketches-in-progress are com-
piled with vocal, music, and effects tracks to create an 
amanetic, 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, pro-
ducer 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 going 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 sus-
pended 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 fjord, and second, had Elsa’s emotions manifest a storm 
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A scene comes together in multiple stages, including (from top) the storyboard (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).

A baby penguin’s waddle

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Once the story works and the characters are walking in the wings, it’s time to bring the film to life. The storyboard artists 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. Models are created, 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 actors’ 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, Baumane did not have the budget for a big team. She hand-drew characters on paper and constructed backgrounds from paper-mâché, painted wooden boards, and other materials. To achieve the illusion that the 3D characters are moving through the 3D sets, she constructed numerous drawings for each movement, all of which were colored, shaded, textured, and lit. In all, the film required 30,000 drawings.

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—Christian Roman

Robotics 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 in Japan. A baby spotted at a Shinto shrine in Japan

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.

EXPRESSION

BUILDING A HUGGABLE ROBOT

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.

Mr. Pricklepants from Toy Story 3 (above) was inspired by a Pixar artist’s childhood toy. The humble character began as a background character, but the team loved him so much “he grew into a master thespian,” says story artist Christian Roman.

THE MAGIC MAKERS

“Every once in awhile, you get to work on a film that takes on a life of its own,” Del Vecho says of the film that has inspired Halloween costumes, stuffed animals, jewelry, toys, stamps, sheets—and more than 55 million YouTube videos of fans singing “Let It Go.” He witnessed the audience’s continuing enchantment with Frozen during Blitz’s 2014 Alumni Weekend, when he took alums behind the scenes of the film. During the screening of a clip, four little girls sitting at the back of the auditorium shot to their feet to sing along to “For the First Time in Forever.” After the talk, Del Vecho opened the floor to questions, and called on one of the movie’s littlest fans first. She asked, “How does Elsa make snow come out of her hand?”

The producer expounded upon the animation techniques behind the character’s dramatic talent, which Elsa perceives as a curse, and how her struggle to control the power ties into the film’s theme, “love, not fear.”

“This wasn’t the answer the young girl was looking for. At the end of Del Vecho’s explanation, she asked, “But how does she do it?” How does Elsa actually make magic?” The spell holds. 

Mr. Pricklepants from Toy Story 3 (above) was inspired by a Pixar artist’s childhood toy. The humble character began as a background character, but the team loved him so much “he grew into a master thespian,” says story artist Christian Roman.

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Building a Huggable Robot

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CURRENTS

OF

CHANGE

The Nile Project brings together musicians from every country in the Nile Basin, which is embroiled in conflict over managing the river’s resources.

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
SHATTERING THE SOUND BARRIER

On a blustery afternoon in late March, inside a small CFA classroom, Kenyan musician Kasia Mutua is drumming, her hands carving the air in short bursts of rhythm, her palms coaxing complex patterns of sound from her djembe. The students lean in, straining to catch each sequence and then clap an echoing response. Each challenge gets harder. “Listen!” she says, laughing. “You have to listen.”

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 Mutua’s words as intently as they follow her music. She tells them how she grew up drumming in secret, quietly tapping out rhythms on her knees. “Drumming wasn’t acceptable for women,” she says. But she persisted, breaking down barriers and gradually making her way as Kenya’s only professional female drummer.

When Mutua joined the Nile Project, she experienced another first: hearing the music of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. That simple act of listening, she explains—which each member of the group has to do in order to make music together—is what all citizens who live in the Nile Basin must do if they are to solve the intractable issues facing the river they all share.

As Mutua and her fellow Nile Project musicians tell their stories, demonstrate their instruments, and answer questions, their presence in the classroom is a transformative experience for many students. “They really opened up my understanding of music as a social engagement tool,” says Neil Desai (SAR’15), a health science premie who never had time for a travel abroad program. “The residency was my entry point for learning about different cultures and changing my perceptions of Africa.”

Jeremy Weprich (CAS’15) found inspiration for his career path during the residency. “Learning about water politics through a musical lens was so powerful,” says the sociology major, who will pursue a graduate degree in higher education. “I want to work on restructurizing education so more people can have access to these rich experiences.”

For film major Giovanna Fernandez (COS’14, COM’16), the Nile Project was a reminder of the relevance of the arts. “Meeting these musicians confirmed that society needs people like me,” she says. “Arts can fill the gaps between disciplines and make ideas more accessible.”

This earnest optimism is exactly why the Nile Project is focusing its efforts on university communities, 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 2013 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 for 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 project teams—and tangible solutions—to address challenges along the Nile.

NOTE BY NOTE

Steven Sogu, a member of the Nile Project, stands alone on stage in BU’s Tsai Performance Center, a thunderous piano call to a sibilant cradled in both hands. The audience is hushed, waiting. As the spotlight rises, a note rings out, suspended in the silence like a single drop of water, clear and pure. And then there’s another. And another. Notes pile up, one by one, slowly at first, then faster and faster. Sogu’s fingers are flying now, as the spotlight shifts and other musicians emerge from the shadows. Gradually, the music becomes a torrent, spilling from the stage, rising and falling like a river, swelling to fill the high-ceilinged space.

When the Nile Project launches into its final song, the audience is swaying and dancing, hands in the air. The nearly sold-out performance is filled with students and professors, some of whom met the musicians in person during the week, and others from BU and the wider Boston community who just saw the posters and came. All of them are caught up now in the rhythms of Africa, celebrating the music of a distant river.

“Simply seeing these musicians onstage together changes the popular imagination,” says Girgis, whose impressive idea has sparked an ongoing musical dialogue among traditionally estranged cultures. “The Nile Project redraws the geography in your head,” he says, “and helps you think of these countries as a single region, a community, bound by a common history and a great river.” This is how change begins—one idea, one note, at a time. ♪

“I saw that I could use this musical platform to very softly change the way people think about each other.”—Mina Girgis

TODAY, Abe’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 Abe, who strives for diversity that attracts audience members from throughout the University.

The Global Lunchtime Concert Series is hosted in part by the Kreske Fund for World Music leadership by Steve M. Kreske (CAS’79).

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BU WEEKLY • FALL 2015

BU NEWS

Marena Abe was a high school student volunteering in Tanzania, when she set 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 on my place in society,” she says, “and a way to learn about others and their stories.”

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Mackenzie Devlin was trying to be ugly. The five-foot-seven, blue-eyed blonde had been told she’d be the ingénue type, and in a typical production of Henry IV, Part I, she’d play a noble lady.

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

Devlin (’15) was a performer in Femina Shakes, a CFA 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 tackle 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 CFA’s School of Theatre, asked the assistant professor of voice & speech and acting to direct a Shakespeare play featuring actresses “to stretch themselves in roles they might rarely have the opportunity to tackle 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.”

An actress and self-described feminist with training in Shakespeare, Hamel says that in Henry V, 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 just as grotesque as I could possibly 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.”

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 V, 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 just as grotesque as I could possibly be.”

An example: Jade Davis (’16), who played the impetuous war- rior 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’s 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.

**NO APOLOGIES**

Titus Andronicus is a Roman general who takes 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 (“I help 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.”

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 Ewheel, 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.

**BIGGER AMBITIONS**

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 get 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.
Carnegie Hall main stage debut in ('79) performed piano. Donations from the performance "A Night at the Opera," as well as pop, Brown To You—teamed up with Chamber Music Workshop in New Shostakovich at the Raphael Trio ('52), a pianist, August 2014. Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs in Award from the Alabama Alliance/ received the Professional of the Year for A. G. Gaston Boys & Girls Club, dent and chief professional officer Frank E. Adams, Jr.

Glass Town Cultural District concert frequent soloist with the Cape Cod director ad interim of choral activities. 

Alumni News

Fall 2015

JESS GOLDSTEIN; FRANK OCKENFELS/FX This past spring, he performed two

Kátya Kabanová ('13) performed

2014. 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 a composer of the New England Repertory Orches- tra, which received third place in the college/university orchestra division of the 2014 American Prize competition. Katie Stringer ('13) performed a selection of songs from genres including blues, jazz, and Broadway at the South Jackson Civic Center in Tennessee in January. Anna Woodbury ('13) performed selections from the music of Gaspard and Romeo and Juliette at the Dover Public Library in New Hampshire in February. Jordan Weatherston Pitts ('14) performed as the title character in The Play of Daniel at Trinity Church in Boston in November 2014.

School of Theatre

Stewart J. Lane ('73) released his latest book, Black Broadway: African Americans on the Great White Way, in February.

Alto Woodard ('74, Hon 04) was inducted into the 87th Oklahoma Hall of Fame in November 2014.

Juliana Moore ('83) won the 2015 Academy Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role and the 2015 Golden Globe Award for Best Actress by an Actress in a Motion Picture, Drama, for her performance in the film Still Alice.

John Macer ('85), superintendent of the Windsor Public Schools, is married to his wife, Tracy Macer, founder and director of the Windsor School of Performing Arts, received the Mas- sachusetts Cultural Council’s 2015 Commonwealth Award for Best Performing Artist in Creative Youth Development in honor of bringing arts experiences to the children in the community.

Don Schlomassner ('86) completed the final course level at the Grounds Schools of Interior Design and Computation. His work this past year took him to San Francisco to perform a second solo with The Tony Award-winning composer in concert, currently repre- sented on Broadway with Jersey Boys and On the Town. In 2014. The group placed fourth in the competition and, in January 2015, released their debut album, which placed on more than 10 different Billboard charts.

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Tiffany Chang ('13) is a composer of the New England Repertory Orches- tra, which received third place in the college/university orchestra division of the 2014 American Prize competition. Katie Stringer ('13) performed a selection of songs from genres including blues, jazz, and Broadway at the South Jackson Civic Center in Tennessee in January. Anna Woodbury ('13) performed selections from the music of Gaspard and Romeo and Juliette at the Dover Public Library in New Hampshire in February. Jordan Weatherston Pitts ('14) performed as the title character in The Play of Daniel at Trinity Church in Boston in November 2014.

School of Theatre

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whom she had been separated since birth, promised at the 2015 South By SouthWest festival. The film won the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary.

Brian August (’10) staffed a Birthing trip in December 2014, and in November 2014–2015 managed the Sarsia Opera’s performances of Tosca and Don Carlos 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 Bauccence (’10) accepted the position of scenic artist at the Virginia Stage Company in Norfolk.

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

Melanie Mah (’10) played the role of Falstaff in “The Merry Wives of Windsor” in the play Valley of the Heart by Luis Valdez during its run at the El Teatro Campesino in San Juan Bautista, Calif.

GW Rodriguez (’10) accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as the lighting and sound supervisor. This position includes managing the lighting and sound equipment for all of the university’s spaces, directing classes, designing sound for shows, and working on a large grant.

Maggie Einis (’10) won a 2015 Helen Hayes Award for her performance in Future. A Love Story.

Ellie Heyman (’10) directed May 30th by Calle Kibriel at the 30th Annual Directed Play, produced by the Drama League, to conclude her term as a company member of the Drama League Directing Fellow.

Antonia Lesser (’10) introduced her new play, Past Traumatic Super Delightful, a one-woman show about the current sexual assault crisis on college campuses. It explores how laughter can be present in the healing process after rape in an empathetic, productive way. Antonia brought her other play, God Is, to Houston, Yale University, Smith College, and the New Repertory Theatre in Watertown, Mass.

Benjamin Martin (’12) started Fox Media, a company dedicated to the production of film, theater, music, and various artistic events that strive to enchant the disenfranchised and bring about a new generation of interdisciplinary artistic collaborations. Ben also wrote the play La Llorona, which was workshopped during summer 2014.

Gail Shalan (’12) has been working with the oudust Cafe on a short film called Coyote Girl. The poetic version of the 90-minute play script Ritual Art Visit the Outpost Cafe.

Lillian King (’14) was the assistant artistic director and director of education at Northern Stage in White River Junction, Vt., for the season ending in May 2015.

School of Visual Arts

Poneloux Jonas (’15) unveiled her sculptures of Leonard Bernsman at Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s summer home in Lenox, Mass. This is her second sculpture to be permanently displayed at the Tanglewood grounds.

Mary Laipzig (’15) held a special screening of her paintings in the show A Fine Afternoon in August 2014.

Aileen Callahan (’68, ’70) has two pieces exhibited in The Experience Voice Brought to Light at Danforth Art in Framingham, Mass. in fall 2014.

Susan Marx’s (’68) artwork was featured in the exhibitions, Sensory Realms and Portal of Enigma at Agore Gallery in New York.

Pier Schwartz (’73) exhibited her work in Composing-Paintings at Gallery NASCA in Boston from September 5 to October 4, 2014.

Marsha Goldberg (’79) has two of her stitchings included in the group-joined exhibition In, Prose, Repeat 2016 at William Paterson University. She was awarded the grand prize, a solo show in the University Galleries.

Julia Sheply (’80) held an exhibit, LODES, at the Boston Sculptors Gallery from February 25 to March 29, 2015, which showcased her three-dimensional drawings.

Meredith (Merry) File Day (’82) launched Making Art with Artists, a grant-funded, nonprofit program aimed at opening new creative channels to children and youth in Lowell, Mass. A longtime studio artist and teacher, Meredith directed the program in summer 2014 and continues to offer out-of-school learning in the visual arts through Making Art with Artists in school vacation and after-school art club programs.

Douglas Shaw Elder (’99), executive director of the Firehouse Art Center in Norman, Okla., had his work featured in the Envisioning the West exhibit this past January and February at the University Galleries.

Howard Tran (’00) is an associate professor and department chair of art at Marymount College, where he received the college’s 2015 Constance Capo Plankenhorn Alumni Award for Faculty Excellence.

Jolene Powell (’01) showed her contemporary landscapes in the exhibition Zephyr Memories at Erie Gallery in North Carolina.

Sean Dono (’05)’s paintings and sculptures were showcased in the exhibit Sean Dono: MARS presented by the UMass Lowell art department from January 22 to February 20, 2016. Sean’s work built poetic, nonlinear narratives that attempted to find the alien within the earthly.

Reza Blatman (’06) curated the exhibit Forested: Eight Artists. Explore the Nature of Climate Change, which showcased a variety of works by Reza and seven other artists, including Dana Cuny (’99) and Joe Wardwell (’99), who were invited to present their interpretations of the current global question: What does the future hold for our contemporarily shifting landscape? The exhibit ran from October 1 to November 5, 2014, at Northeastern University.


Karen Ann Myers (’08) held an exhibition of her artwork at Concordville College in South Carolina from August 28 to September 25, 2014. This Is What Makes Us Girls examined the psychological complexity of women through intimate observations in the bedroom.

Tony Caves’ (’09) work was posthumously exhibited in the School of Visual Arts exhibition Tony Caves: True Self. The exhibition, curated by Marc Mitchell (’03), highlighted the artwork Tony created while living in Charleston, S.C., between 2009 and 2014.

Matt Neuman (’11) hosted a solo art exhibit featuring his large-scale woodcut prints at the Houston Fine Art Fair in Spring 2014.

Haylee Tallarida (’11) opened talahat.cooper, a one-of-a-kind jewelry boutique, in Providence, R.I.

Jassal Raja (’15), a painter, was named one of the Boston Globe’s six top student artists of the year in spring 2015. John Woodrow Wilson

Born in Robury, Massachusetts, to parents from British Guiana, Wilson explored themes of racial disparity and the urban poor through his paintings, sculptures, and lithographs. Wilson’s most famous work, a sculpture titled sexual Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59), was commissioned by Congress in 1985 for the US Capitol Rotunda. Wilson’s works were heavily influenced by Fernand Léger, with whom he studied in Paris from 1924 to 1925. Wilson received the college’s 2015 Constance Capo Plankenhorn Alumni Award for Faculty Excellence.

John Woodrow Wilson

In recent years, Sidewalk worked with alums and students on campus projects such as Art at the Heart, a vine drawn in chalk on the Commonwealth Avenue sidewalk, with sketches and comments in the leaves. His last exhibition, Out My Window, consisted of poetic sketches he created from his bed during a period of declining health.

"He was a gift; I was a recipient," says Tina. “I had 36 good years of lots of joy. My, could he spread happiness and love. He was so funny, so charming and always told it like it was,” says Deborah Cornell, artist and Wilson’s former student. “It was magical, and was such an intimate introduction to understanding the dialogue between an artist and their work.”

He was equally respected by his colleagues at CFA. “He had a very warm personality, very sparkly, and always told it like it was,” says Deborah Cornell, chair of printmaking. “I respected him enormously, and his ability was evident through the excellent work of his students.” —A.J.
Celebrating Our 60th

We marked our anniversary with visits from alums, master classes with special guests, and events honoring our community.
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, educational outreach, performance programs—and all of which directly benefit students across campus.

S$1-$4.9M
Mark Melkonian (18), COOB'09
Mark Melkonian (18), CB'82
Michael P. Melkonian (18), COOB'09
Michael P. Melkonian (18), CB'82

$5-$9.9M
Andrew L. Kammerer (09)
The Estate of Margaret M. Martin
Jean M. Pepallato (85) and
A. Neil Pepallato

$250,000–$499,999
Andrew L. Kammerer (09)

$500,000–$999,999
The Estate of Margaret M. Martin
Jean M. Pepallato (85) and
A. Neil Pepallato

$1,000,000–$2,000,000
Stewart S. Lane (73) and Bronca Comley

$2,000,000–$4,999,999
Sung Hee Kwon ('85, '88) and
Ken C. Anderson

$5,000,000–$9,999,999
Steven W. Barter ('71)
Jeanne W. Barter ('60)

$10,000,000–$24,999,999
Margo I. Friedman (SED'96) and
Chet and Joy Douglass
Peter di Bonaventura (CGS'78)
Betsey Brown

$25,000,000–$49,999,999
Robert N. White

$50,000,000–$99,999,999
The Estate of Margaret M. Martin
Jean M. Pepallato (85) and
A. Neil Pepallato

$100,000,000–$249,999,999
Fred M. Levin, The Shenson Foundation

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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 alums 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.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND CONSERVATORY-STYLE TRAINING TO EMERGING ARTISTS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

“‘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.’

ED AUDESIAN
CTO, VPE, PHILANTHROPIST AND FORMER CLARINETIST

WHAT ONE PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR WORK?

“‘Hard to pick one! Pencil, pen, and paper. Photoshop. A scanner.’

JOHN LÜDERMAN
CO-FOUNDER, CURATOR

IF YOU COULD GIVE YOUR UNDERGRADUATE-SELF ONE PIECE OF ADVICE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

“I’d ask her, ‘What are your most authentic needs, and are they being fulfilled?’ I’d advise her to slow down and learn what she needed to feel more whole.’

PETER PAGE
PRO, CO-CREATOR OF ABC’S "RE"

WHAT’S THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT ARTISTS IN YOUR FIELD?

“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.”

MARK ROBERTSON
FREELANCE VIOLINIST

YOU’RE WORKING 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

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

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SHARE YOUR #CFANOTES

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.