SUMMER/FALL 2014

Esprit
Boston University College of Fine Arts

MOZART GETS DOWN
A NEW SPIN ON CLASSICAL MUSIC

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WITNESSING REALITY
Is there a place for art in the classroom? Society continuously debates the merit and the need for the arts in education, but whether the conversations centers on a grade school art lesson, a high school music program, or a college fine arts degree, the answer to this question is an unequivocal “YES!”

Yes to the crayons. Yes to the marching band and the drama club. Yes to arts in prisons and hospitals. And, yes, to the serious commitment of an arts education. Art provides perspective and prompts discussion. Art fosters growth, both for the artist and for the audience. Art inspires collaboration.

Art transforms. We see this transformation in our classrooms and in the ways in which you, CFA students and alumni, are impacting the world. You are finding innovative ways to engage new audiences, organizing movements around crises, and addressing social issues through your art.

I talk often about the need for citizen artists who examine, engage, and change the world, even if the world doesn’t appreciate the importance of art quite enough. You are champions of art. You have artistic and academic curiosity, and you value the learning process as much as the finished work.

You are orchestral musicians, museum directors, stage actors, educators, creative directors, and many other vital kinds of artists. You have taken diverse paths, but your starting point is the same: the College of Fine Arts. You are proof of the power of art, and you are changing the world.

As we celebrate CFA’s 60th anniversary this year, I reflect on how the College has changed through the years, but more important, I think about how crucial it is for education to evolve, to provoke, and to challenge young artists. Please join us in saying a resounding “YES!” to the arts by supporting CFA’s campaign, visiting us at 855 Commonwealth Avenue, and attending our student performances and exhibitions. Thank you for all that you do.
“WHOEVER PAINTED THIS DESK MADE MY DAY!” a Boston University student posted on Instagram with the hashtag #thechairproject and a snapshot of a rainbow-hued desk. Hila Landesman (CAS’13) is the artist behind this desk chair—and 21 more, which together make up The Chair Project, a site-specific installation that enlivens CAS classrooms one chair at a time.

Landesman, an economics and environmental policy major, embraced her lifelong passion for the arts by enrolling in CFA Professor Hugh O’Donnell’s site-specific design course during her senior year at BU. “I wanted to be around different people with different interests and backgrounds,” she says. “The word ‘interdisciplinary’ caught my eye in the course description. Sure enough, the course was filled with students from various majors with different ideas and goals. It was very exciting!”

Inspired by the class, Landesman enlisted artists from CFA, CAS, CDM, and SMG to paint the chairs, which students now use in every type of class, from art history to land use planning to Hindi. Students share their love for the chairs on Twitter and Instagram, and vie for the chance to sit on Landesman’s site-specific seats.

—LARA EHRLICH

READ AN INTERVIEW WITH HILA LANDESMAN @ www.bu.edu/esprit.
MIDSUMMER MISCHIEF

Forget the fairy wings. In the Classic Repertory Company (CRC) production of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, costumes, lighting, and sets are nearly nonexistent. The jester-clad cast of eight (mostly CFA alumni) remains onstage at all times, transitioning between roles and scenes to the beat of a drum. Midsummer is ripe with transformation (of scorn to love, friend to foe, and, memorably, an average Joe into the donkey-headed transformation (of scorn to love, friend to foe, and, memorably, an average Joe into the donkey-headed paramour of a fairy queen) and the CRC's minimalist aesthetic underscores this theme, inspiring actors and audience to refashion space through imagination. “You come back to the basics—who are these people and what are they doing?” says Celia Pain ('13), who plays the mischievous sprite Puck and is education and advocacy coordinator for CRC, the flagship educational outreach program of the New Repertory Theatre (New Rep) in Watertown, Massachusetts. Pain and her fellow actors bring stage adaptations of classical and modern literature to New England-area schools and communities, including those underserved in the arts. “Not only does our accessible approach to the material hopefully give them new insight into or love for these texts, but I think it’s really good for these kids to see that we went to school for something we are passionate about, that school can be fun,” she says. CRC, which is in its first year of partnership with Boston University, is a bridge program that aims to help recent graduates make the leap into professional theater. “It builds their confidence, it builds their stamina, it builds their résumé,” says Jim Petosa, New Rep’s artistic director and the director of the College of Fine Arts School of Theatre, “and it gives them that important thing that an actor always needs: an audience to engage.” —JULIE RATTEY

CFA TRENDS ON TWITTER

In an article naming Boston University one of the “5 Tried-and-True Acting Colleges” in the United States, the renowned performing arts magazine Backstage commended the University for pushing “actors to be part of a play as well as understand the role their play takes on in a larger discussion.” Backstage lauded School of Theatre Director Jim Petosa’s philosophy that theater is “a force for understanding aspects of humanity, whether at the geopolitical level or at the local level. We’re not bound to one style or method, but we do tend to stress plays that really have an impact on our understanding of societal phenomena.” BU is in the company of Carnegie Mellon University; Rutgers University; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.—LE

BIG NIGHT ON BROADWAY

CFA alums topped the Tony Awards on June 8, 2014, at Radio City Music Hall when Stewart F. Lane ('73) and Sue Wagner ('97) received trophies for Best Musical for A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder, which they co-produced. The musical comedy—in which one actor, Jefferson Mays, played eight heirs vying for the family fortune—was the evening’s most celebrated show, with 10 nominations and 4 wins. Broadway’s biggest night marked milestones for both alums: it was Lane’s sixth Tony Award; Wagner also took home a Tony (her third) for Best Revival for A Raisin in the Sun. At Radio City Music Hall when Stewart F. Lane ('73) and Sue Wagner ('97) received trophies for Best Musical for A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder (top). Co-producer Sue Wagner celebrates her two Tony Awards (for Gentleman's and A Raisin in the Sun) with husband Rick Flanagan ('73) (bottom).
**ALUMS AT THE OSCARS**

**TWO ALUMS WALKED THE RED CARPET AT THE 86TH ACADEMY AWARDS THIS YEAR:** Alfre Woodard ('74, Hon.'04) starred as Mistress Shaw in *12 Years a Slave*, which won the Oscar for Best Picture, and Peter Del Vecho ('80), producer of *Frozen*, took home a golden statue for Best Animated Feature Film. The 3-D Disney hit also won Best Original Song for “Let It Go.” Based on Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale *The Snow Queen*, *Frozen* is a departure from traditional *The Snow Queen*, Frozen’s storyline is a departure from Christian Andersen’s fairy tale *The Snow Queen*, *Frozen*. Del Vecho led the box office smash’s transformation from a traditional *The Snow Queen*, Frozen’s storyline is a departure from Christian Andersen’s fairy tale *The Snow Queen*, *Frozen*. Del Vecho led the box office smash’s transformation from a traditional

*The 3-D Disney hit also won Best Original Song for “Let It Go.”* Based on Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale *The Snow Queen*, *Frozen*’s storyline is a departure from Christian Andersen’s fairy tale *The Snow Queen*, *Frozen*. Del Vecho led the box office smash’s transformation from a traditional


**SHARE YOUR #CFANOTES**

We invited you to take Esprit behind the scenes of your works in progress, and you rose to the challenge. You shared your sketchbooks, costume designs, business plans, installation models, and more on CFA’s social media pages. Here are just a few of our favorites so far. Look for more *Esprit* notes throughout this issue of *Esprit*.

**MASTER CLASS**

“I FELL INTO THE WORLD OF OPERA,” says David Kneuss (‘70), executive stage director of New York’s Metropolitan Opera. Although he began his professional life as an actor, the School of Theatre gradu-ate quickly moved into directing, staging hundreds of operas around the world during his 35-year career. In 2012/2013, he returned to CFA for two residencies in the Opera Institute.

What was your favorite residency moment?

We staged the first two acts of the Marriage of Figaro with tag-team casts—starting with one group of singers and then trading off to another—so I was able to work with a number of students. One of our Counts was a wonderful bass baritone, and in the second act, he switched to playing Antonio, the drunk gardener. This student was very refined and careful. The day of the performance, I told him to come in with a mouthful of crackers and blurt out his lines. He walked onstage and opened his mouth, and crackers flew all over the place. Nobody was expecting it—and it was perfect. I need to be just a little outra-geous with these students to get them out of their comfort zone.

You regularly stage operas in Japan. How are Japanese and US audiences different?

Japanese audiences are very polite. They don’t applaud until the end, when they go completely crazy. They’re very serious and knowledgeable about opera, and they almost never go to see an opera for the first time without having listened to it first. It’s quite thrilling.

Does education help audiences appreciate opera?

You could go to an elementary school in Japan, and every kid is play-ing the violin. Japan figured out that learning music helps you learn other things. And I think it becomes very obvious when you compare their tremendous emphasis on musical education to the deterioration of music education in this country.

How has opera changed in the last 35 years?

It’s harder to get an audience now. When I first came to the Met, we never had to buy ads and the opera was still 97 percent sold-out every night. Now we spend a lot of money on publicity and we struggle to fill the seats. They say it’s because the graying population of opera-goers is dying off. But you know, there are always more people getting gray; it’s just that priorities change. I think they change because there’s not much music educa-tion in schools, and in this social media world, things have to be instantaneous. There’s nothing instantaneous about opera. It takes an attention span that people don’t seem to have as much anymore. I think once we get an audience in the seats, though, they’re usually pretty happy with the show.

Was there a moment with opera when you thought, “This is why I wanted to do this?”

The first production I worked on was a live telecast of *Tosca*, with Luciano Pavarotti and Shirley Verrett. It was my first job as assistant director, the director left, I was suddenly in charge, and we were sending this television show out live to the world. I remember walk-ing home afterward thinking I’d landed on the moon. I found out later that more people saw that telecast than had ever seen the opera before in history. That was a defining moment.

**ART SHINES AT NIGHT**

For four nights in October 2013, a laser installation entitled uboc No. 7 & StuVi2 connected Boston University’s Law Tower (dubbed the ugliest building on campus—hence the uboc in the title) to the newest student residence (Student Village 2, or stuVi2). German artist Florian Dombois created the installation for nonprofit TransCultural Exchange’s Conference on International Opportunities in the Arts: Engaging Minds. He chose two buildings that were similar in size and shape, but separated by distance and time. The law building is one of the oldest towers on cam-pus, and StuVi2 is the newest. The beam, which acted as a “dialogue” between the two buildings, also stretched across the BU Bridge. For the record, Dombois doesn’t think the Law Tower is the ugliest building on campus, but the name was too perfect to pass up.—RACHEL JOHNSON
Ready-Mixed Murals

TURNING CONCRETE MIXER TRUCKS INTO SWIRLING, SPIRALING WORKS OF ART

BY ANDREW THURSTON

I spy with my little eye something...really big. And indescent. And concrete-spattered. We’re playing I Spy the Mural Cement Truck. There are three to spot: hot neon leopard print, African kente cloth, and paper clip-patterned United Transit Mix’s 30,000-pound turning, churning art galleries—sprayed and rolled with bright murals by artist Andrea Bergart (’08) in 2013—are a kaleidoscopic spiral against the cement grays and muted steel reds of New York’s construction sites. The company does a “lot of high-rise work” (Mastronardi has been in the construction business for 40 years and he’s never seen anything like this. “The truck was due for a paint job. She asked to do it; so I said, ‘Pick a truck. I’m open to new ideas.”

But a Lisa Frank-inspired, rainbow-colored, leopard-print cement truck?

“I wanted to see what I could get away with,” says Bergart. “The machinery is such a masculine thing, the construction sites are such macho places, so I wanted to see if I could get some hot pink and leopard print in there. I was surprised they let that happen.” “I thought it was nice,” says Mastronardi. “Nice enough that he let Bergart paint a second truck. And a third. (His favorite: the paper clip-daubed truck for “the colors, the design.”)

BUILT TO SCALE

It started with a scale model. Bergart used a toy concrete truck to test different patterns and techniques, making short videos to see how the prints worked as moving pieces. The concept to execute that.”

BECOMING UNIQUE

The final images don’t exactly match the stationary images on a wall, the typical mural. “Images change and I like that things can be included at the site,” she says. “I think it’s important to respond to the environment. I usually do a thumbnail sketch or a smaller sketch, but a painting is its own thing, too, and I want it to deviate a certain amount and be its own image.”

For the first two trucks, Bergart used vinyl car magnets to make templates, sticking them on the steel drums to guide the painting. The paint clips design was more freehand: spray paint for a ghost image; brushes and rollers for the finish. The paint had to be industrial-grade, tough enough to withstand a pounding on the construction site and a daily wash down with additive-laced water. “On each truck, I was trying to figure out the paint that would last the longest; at the same time, I accept that it’s a cement truck, a little bit dirty and beaten up and backed into things. That’s part of it, too: having it decay.”

The third truck—interjecting blue, orange, and green islands of color—only got its stand-out addition in the final moment: “I added paper clips during the last day. I thought it was recognizable and humorous.”

She hopes to do more work with United Transit Mix, but her next grand scheme involves a different kind of moving canvas: sailboat canvas. Bergart has a grant to travel to South Africa and plans to “celebrate the harbor in Cape Town” by painting a sail. There are no toy boats in progress yet: “I’m reaching out to sail manufacturers and trying to figure out how to translate an image and the best technique to execute that.”

So, while I Spy the Mural Cement Truck is open only to the 60 million or so residents and visitors to New York for now, expect the global edition to start soon. 

Visit Bergart’s “thinking about a range of ideas, from Constantin Brâncuși to African sculptures” for this mixer truck study.

Andrea Bergart has “gotten a little bit tired of stationary images on a wall, the typical mural.”
WHAT DO J. S. BACH, LEONARD BERNSTEIN, MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR, AND THE ROLLING STONES HAVE IN COMMON? BY LARA EHRlich

Composer and Grammy Award-nominated conductor Julian Wachner (’91, ’96) answers his phone at the Jacksonville Airport baggage claim. This is his only opportunity for an interview, as he is about to embark on a trip with “five priests and a theologian.” This might sound like the opening of a bad joke, but it’s actually a retreat for the senior staff of New York’s Trinity Wall Street church, where Wachner is the music and arts director. Throughout the next four days, they will discuss the programming for the coming year, which will include more than 600 events. In his spare time, Wachner is also the music director of the Kennedy Center’s Washington Chorus and serves as a guest conductor at organizations throughout the country. As he gathers his bags and traverses the airport to meet his colleagues, he keeps up his half of the interview with the dexterity of a seasoned conductor.

You’ve said you chose to attend BU to earn a well-rounded education. How did academics impact your career?

My career is grounded in study. I didn’t jump from one huge musical success to the next; I had a long existence as a professor at BU and MIT, and then at McGill University. Now that I’m in my early 40s, I’m beginning to have the kind of success and recognition that some people have in their 20s. I’m very happy about the way it’s happened because I’m very calm and confident in my musical abilities. I feel like I have something to say on a human level, not just a musical level.

What do you want to say?

As a composer I tackle subjects like love and loss in One, My Dark-Eyed One, which I wrote for Scott Allen Jarrett (’99, ’08) Back Bay Chorale, and thorny theological issues like in my first symphony, Incantations and Lamentations, and issues of the day like in Du Yun’s opera Angel’s Bone, which is about human trafficking. I’m trying to make a difference in people’s lives, whether to give them a glimmer of hope at Christmas, to make them think seriously about an intense subject, or to touch their souls.

The New York Times wrote of your Bach series at Trinity that, “no one would mistake the crowd at the Free Bach at One concerts for 1 percenters. Many are tourists, stopped in their tracks by what they hear.” Who do you see as your audience?

I don’t think I’m elitist in my choice of music or the way that I make music, and I think people feel that. One of my models was Leonard Bernstein (Har.’83), who felt that music should be for everybody, and that it is a way to bring people together. At our Trinity performances, we have people who don’t know where they are going to sleep that night and people who live on the Upper East Side all in one place together, creating a community.

The Trinity Wall Street Choir performed “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” with the Rolling Stones in December 2012. What inspired this collaboration?

I got a Facebook message from a critic whose husband is tied into the music business and that was looking for a New York-based choir. She said, “It’s a famous rock group, and I can’t tell you any more than that.”

“I’M TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE’S LIVES, WHETHER TO GIVE THEM A GLIMMER OF HOPE AT CHRISTMAS, TO MAKE THEM THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT AN INTENSE SUBJECT, OR TO TOUCH THEIR SOULS.”

The show at Barclays Center in Brooklyn was the first US performance of the Rolling Stones’ 50th anniversary tour and they wanted the choir to be a surprise for the audience. When I got out onstage for the sound check, Mick Jagger walked over and was like, “Hey, I’m Mick Jagger,” and I was like, “Yeah, I know who you are!” It was the first time they had ever performed “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” with a live choir. You need a professional-level choir to sing that high C for as long as it demands; we were lucky we had three ladies who could do it. When the Stones decided to come back in June 2013, they asked me to recommend a choir, so I suggested BU’s Marsh Chapel Choir.

You were the University organist and choirmaster for Boston University’s Marsh Chapel for 17 years, and you recently invited the Choir and the Collegium Orchestra to perform at Trinity’s weekly Bach at One concert. Why did you invite the BU musicians to perform at Trinity?

I invited them to keep the relationship going between me and Scott Allen Jarrett, who was my associate at Marsh Chapel for about five years and is now the director. Between the two of us, we have maintained an incredible musical tradition since 1990, and it was logical to return to my alma mater to activate that professional scholarship.

How do you balance all of your professional roles and maintain your sanity? The variety keeps my work fresh and alive, and the fact that I’ve prioritized my wife’s happiness over everything else keeps me balanced. I’ve done this enough now that I’m able to do the work without getting exhausted. In fact, the work feeds my creativity and my energy. My staff at Trinity knows that I’m studying scores at 6 in the morning and 11 at night, and conducting. Even some of the twentysomethings ask, “How do you have all this energy?”

Composers and conductors throughout the world recognize your talent. Today, you are nominated for a Grammy Award. What does this mean to you?

I’m not sure if people think I’m successful yet, but I think it might be a way for the world to recognize that I’m an artist. I think it’s a way for me to be taken somewhat seriously. I’ve been at BU for a long time, and I’ve been doing well as a conductor, but this is a way for me to be recognized as a composer as well. I don’t think I’m elitist in my choice of music, and I don’t think I’m an academic, but I do think I’m an artist, and I think this is a way for people to understand that. This might sound like the opening to an intense subject, or to touch their souls.
From Sketch to Soundstage

AS THE PRODUCTION DESIGNER FOR FILMS INCLUDING GHOST, WHEN HARRY MET SALLY, PATTY HEARST, AND HITCH, JANE MUSKY BRINGS DIRECTORS’ VISIONS TO LIFE

BY JULIE RATTEY

J

ane Musky’s heart sank as she stared into the closet. She’d thought the bedroom’s shag carpeting was bad, but this was far worse. The closet was maybe five feet long and three feet wide—and it would be the setting for half of her new movie. What the hell am I going to do? she thought.

It was the late ’80s, and Musky (’76) was researching in San Francisco for Patty Hearst, a film about the abduction of the newspaper heiress and her two-month captivity in the closet of a Golden Gate Avenue apartment. The film’s limitations were a cinematic problem. Production designer Musky and director Paul Schrader hashed out their options. Hearst had said she’d been blindfolded; how could they use that detail to their advantage? “We came up with this fantasy of what she thought the bedroom’s like,” Musky says. “The whole premise of the picture, was built around these wild fantasies of what she thought she was living in—what she thought she saw and what she thought she heard.”

Musky’s creativity and can-do attitude have served her well in her nearly 40-year career creating the defining look for stage, television, and film productions. Versatility has come in handy, too, as Musky’s résumé shows. She’s designed everything from the New York apartments in When Harry Met Sally and Hitch to the gritty frontier towns of Young Guns, and taken up eclectic projects ranging from the TV musical drama Smash to a biopic on rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Notorious) to commercials for Garnier. Her theater background—including her teenage years painting high school musicals and her studies at CFA—gave her a solid foundation from which to tackle any obstacle. “I always tell young people who want to become designers, ‘Train in the theater first,’” she says. A stage designer’s experience can be a valuable asset in other fields, as Musky discovered when she and a friend ventured into television to design an after-school special in the ’80s. “We could make props, we could do everything from the New York apartment to a biopic on rapper The Notorious B.I.G.,” Musky says. “We could make props, we could do whatever, so all of these producers thought we were the best thing that had happened to them in years.”

The experience was a turning point for Musky. Through her television contacts, she met future Oscar-winning directors Joel and Ethan Coen and designed their first feature (and her film debut), Blood Simple. She has since collaborated with other prominent directors including Mike Newell (Monsters vs. Aliens) and Alan Pakula (The Devil’s Own). Musky’s latest project—Squirrels to the Nuts, a comedy about a prostitute-turned-actress—reunited her with director Bogdanovich, with whom she had collaborated on the 1988 comedy Illegally Yours. “I think the greatest challenge is trying to keep up with his sense of humor,” Musky says. In one instance, they worked to find a design element that would provide a backstory for an unlikely, volatile couple played by Cybill Shepherd and Richard Lewis. “Peter kept trying to think of something funny to show how much they really were in love with each other, so we invented this wedding portrait. We photoshopped them into this ’60s, out-in-the-fields kind of thing. It became a centerpiece over their heads in one of the big scenes.”

The first few weeks Musky spends brainstorming with a director is “the most exciting time” in her job. “You spend some time together trying to understand where the script’s going to be heading, but on top of that, the director’s style and how far they want to pursue different journeys.” Then Musky evaluates “how far I take an idea, whether it’s through color, through comedy, through drama, through period feeling.” Finally, she strives to “make it accessible enough that the audience can jump in and not feel intimidated by the design.”

All this design work needs to be completed within budget and on schedule—an increasingly challenging demand. “Everyone feels that with the electronic age, things have gotten so efficient and tailored that you don’t need a lot of the things that you used to need. That’s not true at all. I think if anything, what’s happening is there are too many shortcuts that are actually detrimental to films.”

Inadequate preparation time, smaller crews, and less funding can decrease production quality—something Musky says producers new to the industry don’t always understand. “They look at you cross-eyed, like, ‘What do you mean you need this?’” Musky’s level-headed approach to her work and collaborative attitude have kept her in the game and expert at adapting to the challenges of her field.

“The more successful designers I know are very grounded and pragmatic,” not divas who insist on their own way, she says. Her experience has also confirmed how crucial it is to “always be good to your crew and try to really foster those relationships for the lifetime of your career.”

The longevity of Musky’s career gives credence to the advice she’d offer aspiring designers: “Really make sure your craft is honed before you get out of school, because it carries you very far in this business.”
IT WAS TOO LOUD FOR CONVERSATION AT THE BARKING SPIDER TAVERN

in Cleveland, Ohio, an intimate venue where an eclectic mix of live folk, rock, blues, bluegrass, jazz, reggae, and gospel spills out into the beer garden on any given night. Courtney Miller’(16) had left her friends to squeeze through the tables for a jam session with classical musicians from the nearby Cleveland Institute of Music, where she earned her undergraduate degree. She fitted the reed into her oboe, and leaned into the haunting first notes of Bach’s Oboe Sonata in G minor. The crowd quieted beneath the swaying Christmas lights and Miller felt good—until she returned to her table, where her friends told her the performance had made them uncomfortable.

“Why?” she asked, mystified.

“You were playing Bach,” they explained. “We should be at a concert hall. We feel guilty for sitting here in jeans, drinking beer.”

Their reaction stunned Miller. “It resonated with me so much that they had a preconceived idea of classical music—even though they are my good friends and they know I’m a goofball,” she says. “They thought what I do for a living was totally inaccessible.” If her oboe intimidated even her closest friends, how could she hope to reach a broader audience?

This question hounded Miller all the way from Cleveland to Boston, where she is a doctoral student at the School of Music. At CFA, Miller found she wasn’t the only one asking questions about building an audience and navigating the challenges of a classical music career.

In 2013, the School brought together industry experts, musicians, educators, scholars, and composers for the Are We Listening? symposium, which addressed the question: How can we find ways to innovate while retaining the core standards of our field? Here are just a few ways students and alums are answering this question in their work.

TAKING THE MUSIC OFF THE STAGE

In her quest to introduce the oboe to new audiences, Miller turned to another musical genre for inspiration.

“Pop musicians have been making music videos for decades, and we don’t even stick our toes in it,” she says. Miller and fellow musician Ceylon Mitchell (’13, ’14)
### SAYING “YES” TO STRANGE

Opera composer David T. Little’s newest work began with a feeling he couldn’t articulate, “kind of like staring at white lines on a TV. You start to see things in it if you stare long enough.” He turned to his longtime collaborator and producer, Beth Morrison (‘98), to bring the feeling into focus. “I helped David articulate the idea in a way that allowed him to feel safe to explore it,” Morrison says. With all of her collaborators, she wants to “see how deep and how strange an idea can go, and where it might take me. I try to support the scariness of going out on a limb and trying something new.”

Morrison is all about trying something new. She initially studied to be a vocal performer, earning a bachelor’s in music from CFA and a master’s in music from Arizona State University, but she never felt comfortable in the spotlight. It was only when she became the administrative director of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute that she realized what she was meant to be doing—and it changed the course of her career. “It was exciting to create a vision for a whole institute,” she says. “As a performer, the focus is really so much on myself. Once I was able to focus outside of myself, I was in a much more fulfilled position.”

Morrison founded the indie opera company Beth Morrison Projects (BMP) in 2006, and in less than 10 years, she has become one of the most sought-after producers in the opera world. BMP champions music theatre, opera-theatre, and multimedia concert works by today’s most exciting emerging artists like Little and Missy Mazzoli (‘02), whose opera Song from the Uproar was featured in the Summer 2013 issue of Esprit, and is now touring.

These daring new artists—as well as established composers like David Lang, Ted Machover, and Philipglass— are drawn to Morrison because she is doing something new. Some traditional opera companies develop work, some produce work, and others do both. BMP does more.

As creative producer, Morrison collaborates with composers to develop new works, unbridled by the limitations of bigger organizations. She assembles the creative team that secures the world premiere venue, funding, marketing, and publicity; and develops the pitch materials—all the components that must come together in order to create a new work. For Little’s piece, Artaud in the Black Lodge, for instance, “we are just at the beginning of dreaming up what the project is, who the collaborators will be, and where we will premiere the work. It’s an exciting place to be, because anything is possible.” The production elements reinforce the collaborative atmosphere: Morrison cultivates her team, allowing them the freedom they need to innovate and push boundaries.

For Morrison, success comes back to this freedom to innovate. “I never say to a composer, ‘You can’t use electronics, or you can’t have more than five players’—the kind of limitations that are put upon composers by commissioning organizations and larger institutions. The greatest work happens when people feel they can experiment.” Her collaborators respond by producing works that are like nothing else in the opera world. For a ambitious new artist, Little says, “the most important thing is having someone who says yes.”

### ESTABLISHING YOUR OWN STYLE

Kendall Ramseur (‘12) was home for the holidays during his final year in graduate school at CFA, when he received a phone call from a concerned family friend. How would he support himself as a professional cellist? How would he pay his student loans? How would he live?

The well-meaning friend urged Ramseur to give up his lifelong dream and join the Air Force.

Ramseur wondered how many artists give up when their dreams are challenged, and he began to write inspirational lyrics to keep himself motivated. These lyrics would become “Littleullay,” the first song of his album T.I.M.E., which took him in a new direction as an artist. “I know that I had a voice,” he says, “so I decided that I would learn how to sing and play the cello at the same time.”

There was one problem: No one else was performing both voice and cello, and because there was no precedent, Ramseur was on his own.

Ramseur was already an established cellist, having performed for Maya Angelou on her 80th birthday, accompanied a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, and played with the Grammy Awards Orchestra. Upon moving to Boston, he had experimented with performing at weddings and in T stations. Now, he was ready to push that experimentation further.

Singing and playing cello simultaneously was a new challenge, which at first he found daunting. If the pitch was sharp, he wasn’t sure whether to tune his voice to the cello, or tune the cello to his voice. “They have two different personalities,” he says, “so do how I bring out one instrument without stepping on the other instrument’s toes?”

He had a breakthrough when he realized he could learn by writing his own music, allowing one instrument to carry the melody, while the other accompanied, slowly rebuilding his confidence on both instruments. As he practiced, he became a better performer, “stretching my voice more.”

After three months of practice, Ramseur was finally ready to perform for an audience—at the release party for his first album, T.I.M.E.
specialist by day, Hum is a musician on his bike. He parked next to a Play Me, I’m Yours street piano in the courtyard of BU’s George Sherman Union as other bicyclists rocked from all directions, bearing instruments of their own. They ranged around the piano for the opening strains of Aretha Franklin’s rendition of “Respect,” and then, prompted by a cowbell, began to sing: “What you got? Baby, I got it! What you need? You know I got it!” It didn’t matter that the words weren’t quite right, or that they were off-key—the musicians added their guitars, shakers, clarinets, mandolins, trumpets, and tambourines, creating a wild cacophony that faded for a trumpet solo, then swelled into joyous noise again.

“The street pianos were the highlight of my year,” Hum says of the Play Me, I’m Yours Street Piano Festival, an international art project by British artist Luke Jerram that has traveled to 46 cities around the world. The festival “brings such joy to whoever gets to experience it,” says Margo Saulnier (’96), the project manager responsible for organizing Play Me, I’m Yours in Boston. Hosted by the Celebrity Series of Boston, the festival engaged the entire city, from the institutions that installed 75 pianos throughout the greater Boston area, to the local artists who painted them. BU hosted three pianos—at the East Courtyard, the GSU, and Kenmore Square—which were painted by CFA alums Ashley Teamer (’13), Kathleen Courtyard, the GSU, and Kenmore Square—which were painted by CFA alums Ashley Teamer (’13), Kathleen Kennedy (’13), and Elizabeth King (’11).

The festival “created a great sense of community and showcased the talent of the citizens who live here,” Saulnier says. Participants shared their talent and extended the community through social media, uploading videos, photos, and comments to webpages devoted to each piano. Inspired by the BU pianos, journalist Kaylee Hill (SED’15, COM’15) filmed a short documentary, School of Theology students held a hymn flash mob, the Hip-Hop Club freestyle rapped, and the all-male a cappella group The Dear Abbeys broke their no-instruments rule to pose for a photo.

“I work at the Starbucks in the GSU and didn’t quite understand where all the lovely, sporadic music was coming from for a bit, but I LOVE IT!” Ella Clausen (COM’15) commented on the website. “The beautiful music spontaneously flowing through totally makes my shift.” At the Kenmore Square location, a local doorman posed on the piano seat, and high school musician Max DiRado performed his original composition, “Le Benjamin, So Long,” as strangers paused to listen.

“If each piano had its own community around it,” Saulnier says, and although the pianos weathered the elements in an urban environment, “the people who lived in the neighborhoods took care of them,” even covering them with sheets when it rained. As Play Me, I’m Yours proving, when we bring our instruments out of the recital halls and into the streets, communities will make music together.
While serving in the Marines’ Infantry Sniper Unit in Iraq, Evan Gildersleeve combated the long stretches of boredom punctuated by indescribable violence the best way he knew how: He sketched his fellow marines, the city of Ramadi, and the Iraqi people “to document what I saw, and my emotions,” he says. “In one hand, I had a sketchpad; in the other, an M240 machine gun.”

Upon returning to the States, shell-shocked and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, “I turned to painting my sentiments, because it was a way to visualize what I was up against.”

His recovery took a bewildering turn after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, which echoed the violence he had experienced in Iraq and left him feeling adrift. “I have military skills, but I felt helpless because I couldn’t use them,” he says. Once again, he turned to the one skill he could use to help others, and to make sense of a world altered beyond recognition.

On a rainy spring afternoon, Gildersleeve and his wife, Petra, joined dozens of strangers at Boston University’s 808 Gallery to create art in honor of the first responders and bombing victims, including graduate student Lu Lingzi (GRS’13). This was the first “art marathon” event hosted by Still Running, a nonprofit effort founded by Boston University sophomore Taylor Mortell (’16) and alum Luca De Gaetano (’13). In the year following the tragedy, Still Running hosted a series of art marathons and community exhibitions, offering Boston citizens a conduit through which to help their wounded city heal and to give voice to the otherwise inexpressible.

Making art in response to tragedy was a natural impulse for Mortell. At 15, she had endured a traumatic brain injury and “having something to occupy my mind” had been instrumental to her recovery. “Art helped me feel productive, especially because I couldn’t do schoolwork. It felt good to be able to do something.”

A painting and sculpture major at CFA, Mortell creates contemplative oil portraits in earthy palettes, and the studio hours slip by as she surrenders to “the tactility and physicality of working the material. Making decisions about which colors to use and how to move the brush is a culmination of the mental concentration and the physical coordination of art-making. That’s when I am the most focused in mind and body.”

Mortell was inspired to launch Still Running, which is supported by grants from BU’s Arts Initiative and Youth Service America, to give others the same opportunity to find focus and restoration through art. The idea resonated with her peers at BU, and she quickly attracted volunteers and advisors, including Jack McCarthy (GSM’02), associate professor of organizational behavior at BU’s School of Management. McCarthy connected Mortell with local contacts that provided advertising support and financial assistance.
The art marathon events attracted a cross-section of participants, including local artists like Gildersleeve, art students, community members, and curious passersby. “It was everybody,” Mortell says. “We got people ages 4 to 86; some said they didn’t know anything about making art,” but as they began to work, they realized something Mortell had discovered as a teen—the simple act of taking paint or crayon to a blank page can focus grief and deliver solace.

Painter Caitlin Serpico (’16), who donated several works to the project, says art helped her “release my feelings” about the tragedy. The glass depicted in her watercolor painting “shows signs of cracks and chips and yet it still retains water. I accompanied this image with a caption that states, ‘You may be cracked or chipped but that does not mean you cannot be filled.’”

In a piece by Massachusetts College of Art and Design student Alyssa Aviles, a brownstone rises from black and white charcoal into soft pastels, populated by swans freed from their Swan Boats. “I am stricken by the way in which the city overcomes the harsh, white winter and blooms into magnificence,” Aviles says in her artist’s statement. “In the same way that Boston defeats the bitter cold, it has conquered a heartbreaking tragedy with resilience. I took images that to me represent Boston and created a scene that depicts a transition from a static, colorless space into a place that is triumphant and full of life and color.”

“I enjoyed seeing how making art helped people deal with what happened in their city,” says Mortell’s former high school art teacher, Meghan Dinmore (’04, ’05), who participated in a number of the art-making events and, for her donation, illustrated the bold letters B-O-S-T-O-N that does not mean you cannot be filled.”

In pieces by SPIRIT writer Evan Gildersleeve, painter Caitlin Serpico, and art student and therapist Alyssa Aviles, the artistic process helps people who feel helpless.

When Mortell was recovering from her brain injury, she worked in pasta. It may sound silly, she says with an embarrassed laugh, but cutting the spaghetti and arranging the pieces into flowers and robots was “soothing.” The process occupied her hands and alleviated her restlessness, until she was able to focus on more complex projects, like a self-portrait in tempera paint.

Artists also find that different tools help them express different emotions, as Gildersleeve discovered while making art—“a process that was challenging and frustrating,” he says. “I used a palette knife to get out the feeling of what I experienced in Iraq,” he says. “It’s an aggressive tool that artists can use to attack the canvas, as opposed to making it refined and beautiful. It’s an emotional way to converse with the painting. A brush is a finer tool used for adding detail. It was a while before I was able to pick up a brush.”

Lowenstein adds that the Still Running art marathon events were particularly effective not only because the participants were making art—but because they were making it together. “There are a lot of benefits to the pop-up art projects,” Lowenstein says. “When you’re in a group, you’re talking to people, sharing your experiences, and sharing your art. A lot of healing goes on.”

Though the art marathons were originally intended as sprints—just three weeks—they grew beyond Mortell’s expectations into a yearlong effort, with monthly community events hosted at locations throughout Boston. At each event, Gildersleeve says, “There were a lot of bright spirits and good energy, and it felt like we were able to do something. The artistic process helps people who feel helpless.”

Additional reporting by Susan Seligson.
FOR ACTIVIST AND COMPOSER MATT GOULD, THEATER IS ABOUT PHILANTHROPY — AND TRANSFORMATION

BY SUKI CASANAVE

IN THE BASEMENT of the American Repertory Theater, Matt Gould ('01) is pulling on his favorite leather boots—the ones with the soles that can really hammer out the sound when he’s onstage. Outside, the February night in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is bitterly cold, with windchills pushing temperatures into the single digits. But in Gould’s tiny, brightly lit dressing room, the radiators are on overdrive. Unfazed by the stifling heat, he leans against the cinder block wall philosophizing about the dangers of success, about staying true to your ideals. He has already done his breathing exercises, and—his other pre-performance ritual—lit a candle, which flickers in the corner. Now, dressed in black jeans, black waffle-knit shirt, and black-rimmed glasses, he’s pretty much ready to go. Except for his boots, which he finishes lacing and knotting—and then it’s time.
Witness Uganda is a musical that surges through the theater. The plot is an impulse to help and change the world, according to Gould, who learned to find real change. The show’s program notes, describes the story of a musical with the rhythms of Africa in Witness Uganda, a musical that explores the impulse to help and the challenge of creating real change. The show’s director, Diane Paulus, describes the story as a way to teach people about escape. Theater, by contrast, should be the one place where we can’t escape—where we’re forced to “witness” reality. "We’re hoping people leave the show saying, ‘I lived fully for two hours, and now I can’t escape—where we’re forced to “witness” reality. “We’re hoping people leave the show saying, ‘I lived fully for two hours, and now I can’t escape—where we’re forced to “witness” reality.”

The show has received positive reviews from the Boston Globe and the Huffington Post, among others, and typically brings the audience to its feet. As soon as the house lights come up, Gould and Matthews reappear on stage for “Act III” to answer questions. Sometimes they are joined by guests like Timothy Longman, associate professor of political science and director of the African Studies Center at BU, who did some consulting on the production during its development. “What I love about the show,” he says, “is that it’s inspirational, but also self-effacing. It’s a nice critique of the sort of naïve approach to doing good in Africa.”

On this February night, someone in the audience asks whether Gould and Matthew plan on returning to Uganda, given the recent news. For a moment there is silence. Only hours earlier, the Ugandan government signed into law a bill criminalizing homosexuality and, in some cases, imposing life sentences. “We don’t know yet about returning—it’s scary and inhumane,” says Gould, noting that they’ve heard from people trying to flee the country. “They fear for their lives.”

The conversation is a sobering reminder of harsh social and political realities. That’s the point of these post-performance "talk-backs," says Gould. “It’s a way to continue the dialogue on issues that deeply matter and touch the lives of real people. “There’s this pervasive idea that theater is escape—which may have been true at one time,” he says. But today, Gould notes, nearly everything we do is about escape. Theater, by contrast, should be the one place where we can’t escape—where we’re forced to “witness” reality. “We’re hoping people leave the show saying, ‘I lived fully for two hours, and now I can’t escape—where we’re forced to “witness” reality.”

As the theater empties, Gould and Matthews greet people in the lobby, disinfecting hugs and posing for pictures. Finally, after the last group of fans has offered its thanks, after every hand has been shaken and the very last person has turned to go, Gould makes his way back to his dressing room and changes his shoes. Then he heads out, humming, into the night.
We are grateful to our community of alumni, faculty, families, and friends who believe in the importance of supporting gifted students in music, theater, and the visual arts through their generous contributions. Gifts to the College of Fine Arts drive important capital initiatives, scholarships, educational outreach, performances, and exhibitions, all of which directly benefit the talented young artists of Boston University. Thank you!

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Ellen Schorock’s (’06) article “Pipe Music Inspired by Art” was featured in the January/February issue of the pipe magazine Clovis Companion. Mark Constant (’89) became executive director of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra in September. He was previously the executive director of the Philadelphia Baroque Orchestra. Monica Tesserine (’94) performed at a free concert in November at the Holy Family Parish in Concord, Mass., and recently played with Indian Hill Orchestra, conducted by Bruce Haeng. She is on the faculty at both Cushing Academy and Assumption College, and serves as a piano teacher at the Indian Hill Music Center. Shana Farr (’98) performed across the country and internationally from Lenox to New York City, and in her own solo tour. For upcoming performance dates, visit www.shanafarr.com.

Sandra Piquets Eddy (’09, ’02) was featured on the cover of Classical Singer magazine in May.

Paul André Bempéchat (’09) performed as a part of the 14th Ivory Empire concert series in Clarksburg, Mass., which included works by Mendelssohn, Schubert, César, and Brahms, and showcased talented performance students from the Clarksburg-Harrison Cultural Foundation’s Steinway Concert Grand Piano.

Maria D’Amato (’01) of the Metropolitan Opera, performed in the First Night and the Mendelssohn Chamber of (’01, ’05), a regular appearance with Richard Evans in December. Maria D’Amato (’01) of the Metropolitan Opera, performed in the First Night and the Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Bruce Haeng. She is on the faculty at both Cushing Academy and Assumption College, and serves as a piano teacher at the Indian Hill Music Center.

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from the New York Foundation grant for playwriting/screenwriting as Barbara Killebrew) received a Boo Killebrew Teachers programs. Shakespeare in Schools and Teachers made significant improvements to the position of education director for the Shakespeare Society, where she worked for the past four years and the position of education director for New York City’s theater district. (’98, ’04) has taken Short Film Festival. I Am a Big Ball of Sadness short film, which starred fellow alums (’95, ’99) and Michael Kaye (’06, ’11) performed together (’97) made his Off-Broadway debut in January at the Theatre at St. Clement’s in Janie Jackson Gay, and with music by Billie Joe Armstrong. Last year, McManamon received rave reviews for his role in The Beat in the Tiger Suit, which premiered at the Brick Theater in Brooklyn, N.Y. He also starred in the short Am I a Big Ball of Sadness, which was shown last fall in 300 cities worldwide and was included in the 2013 Manhattan Short Film Festival.

Jordan Dann (’98, ’04) has taken the position of education director for Teachers & Writers Collaborative in New York City, leaving her position at Teachers & Writers Collaborative in Watertown, Mass. The production featured alum Lorna Bateman (’13), David Koshman (’12), Celina Pen (’13), Simon Pringle Wallace (’11), Rebecca Sands (’13), and Julia Schonberg (’13). Anna Light (’05, ’08) shared her career story in an interview with the Costume Cafe Podcast. She works in a leading role in the New York City Ballet costume shop. Her interview can be found at www.costumeacapodcast.com.

Stephen Barkhimer’s (GRS’08) play Windowmen, a coming-of-age story based on working at Lower Manhattan’s Fulton Fish Market in his early 20s, received acclaim in the Boston Globe during its fall run at the Boston Playwrights’ Theatre. The production starred fellow alum Daniel Berger-Jones (’05) and Will Lyman (’71).

Michelle “Bella” Poynton’s (’08) The Aurora Project, which charts a love story between an intelligent design robot and a genetically enhanced female explorer infected with an illness, was presented by Boston’s Science Fiction Theatre Company last fall.

Danny Bryck (’09) held a staged reading of his new documentary play, The River and the Sea, at the New Repertory Theatre in Watertown, Mass., in March. He has launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund the transcription and production of the documentary.

Our Girl in Trenton, written by (’14), and Three Blessed Brothers, written by (’10), were both produced and performed in October as part of the Boston University New Play Initiative. Our Girl in Trenton also served as CFA’s official entry for the 2014 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Lily Narbonne (’10) had the lead female role of Constance Bonacasa in The Three Musketeers and small roles in King Lear and AY’s That Ends Well last summer at the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival.

Back to Back to Back to BU Alumni Weekend is a time to come back to campus to catch up with old friends, visit your favorite haunts, and see all that’s new at BU. We have four days of special events, including reunion gatherings, alumni awards, the Brian J. Honan 5K—even a drive-in movie. See what’s new at BU, visit bu.edu/alumniweekend.

I was elated and devastated all at once,” the band Father Tiger croons in its song “First Love.” Film director Michael Medico (’94) puts a story to the Among a selection of music videos with a kind: a little boy falls for a little girl and woos her as they grow up; though they become best friends, their relationship never blossoms into romance. At the end of the video, we learn why. (Spoiler alert!) Father Tiger released “First Love” in June 2013, the day before the Supreme Court rulings ended DOMA and Prop 8, and the band has donated a portion of its iTunes proceeds to the fight for marriage equality.—LE

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