

Tuesday, September 1, 2015

Working in the Arts: Alumni News, September '15

Here is a round-up of this summer's news from our alumni who are #workinginthearts.

If you've been to Greenfield Village this summer you might have seen some of them singing and dancing in the Town Hall Revue "Simply Gershwin," among them, **Dave Roy**, **Elizabeth Fritsch** and **Eric Swanson**.

Musical theatre alumnus **David Vogel** just announced he is on his way back to Florida. "I'm joining the cast of *Promises Promises* at Broward Stage Door Theatre," he wrote. "It's running September 25-November 1. Ready for the next adventure!"

Donna Buckley, who graduated from our BFA program in design and technology and ran the costume shop before taking an MFA at Wayne State, has accepted a position at the University of Mississippi in Oxford as the Instructional Assistant Professor of Costume Technology. That's Ole Miss for you football fans!

Mary Gietzen is also an alumna of our BFA in design and tech, and Wayne State's graduate costume design program. She has accepted her first big job out of graduate school as the new costume shop manager at Central Michigan University.



(l-r) Dave Roy, Elizabeth Fritsch and Eric Swanson



The cast of *BeBop: The Musical*, with Brian Baylor, center, and Luciana Piazza, far right.

Luciana Piazza contacted us with details about her most recent performance, which was a brand new musical called *BeBop: The Musical*, composed by OU jazz faculty member **Scott Gwinell** and directed by **Carrie Morris**. The show uses humor and puppets to spoof the 1940s creation of BeBop Jazz, telling a fictional story about Charlie Parker's ascent into jazz history and the trials that he overcame to get there. OU theatre junior **Brian Baylor** played Charlie Parker while Luciana had the role of trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker. The August 21 event was a work-in-progress staging so there is more to come. You can follow *BeBop's* progress on the **Carrie Morris Arts Productions website**.

Voice alumna **Suzanne Grogan** finished her MM at New England Conservatory in 2014 and this summer she moved to Shreveport, Louisiana for a year-long residency at Shreveport Opera. "I will be performing as Frasquita this October in *Carmen*," she said, "and performing in various concerts, children's operas, and next spring I will be in both *HMS Pinafore*, and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*."

Another alumna who studied voice has taken a quite different path. **Lisa Klein** is studying for an MA in Communicative Sciences: Disorders at Michigan State. This summer she completed an internship at Sparrow Specialty Hospital in her field of speech-language pathology. In an MSU interview she said this was a career she first considered at the suggestion of **Professor John-P White**, her voice teacher. "I spent a few years working as a singer and actor before deciding I wanted to go back to school and use my skills in music and performing to help other professionals." Read more about **Lisa's professional development here**.

Jackie Gubow is still working at the Barn Theatre in Augusta, MI, where she is a second year apprentice. In August she appeared in *Hands on a Hardbody* with guest star **Rex Smith**, a platinum recording artist and veteran of stage and screen, including a Broadway starring role in *The Pirates of Penzance* and many television credits.

Sam Rohloff spent the spring in Boca Raton, FL, appearing in *La Cage Aux Folles* with **Lee Roy Reams**. He returned to New York "ready to audition" and acquired an agent (Daniel Hoff Agency) and many callbacks. In the August he announced he was joining the first national Equity tour of *Kinky Boots* as one of the Main Angels. He joined rehearsals in Boston and will open in September. **Check the tour information here**.

Caitlin Burke, who won two alumni McTilde awards last year, will appear in a lavish new production of *The Sound of Music*

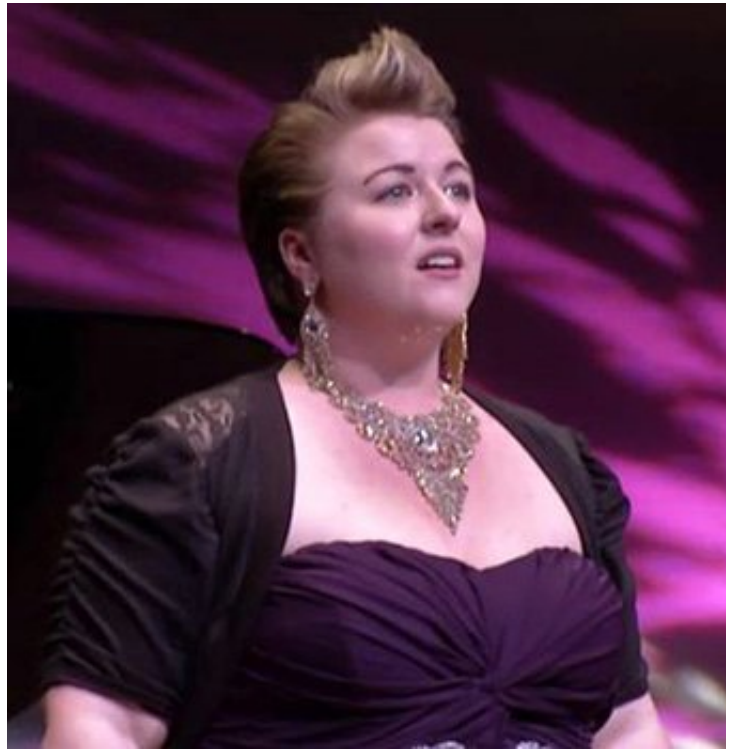
show is scheduled to be at the Wharton Center from February 9 to February 14, 2016 and at the Fisher Theatre from May 10 to 22, 2016. [Full tour information here.](#)

Voice instructor **Edie Diggory's** former student **Cheyenne Coss** is currently a graduate student at the New England Conservatory. She was recently chosen to represent the school at the The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In [this YouTube clip](#) you can watch her sing "Jewel Song" from Gounod's *Faust* and "Song to the Moon" from Dvorak's *Rusalka*. Cheyanne's performance begins at 15:00. Her accompanist is **JiYung Jasmine Lee**.

Choral music education alumnus **Peter Joseph Portman** just started his new job as choral director at Lakeland High School, as well as International Academy West, which was just listed as one of the top ten high schools, ranked for college preparation, by *Newsweek* magazine.

Marcia K Wieland, also a music education choral alumna, just announced she has accepted the position of director of choral and vocal activities at Cowley College in Arkansas City, Kansas. Marcia was previously the choir director at Grand Junction High school in Colorado. She is really excited to begin this new collegiate chapter of her life.

On July 18 our good friends at **Meadow Brook Theatre** held a gala celebration for their 50th anniversary. If you weren't able to join them you can show your support by purchasing the book *Fifty Years of Meadow Brook Theatre*, by **Thom and Maryann Foxlee**. Many students, alumni and faculty have worked with and for MBT over the years, and of course, theatre alumnus **Travis Walter** is the current artistic director. Read more about the anniversary and the book in this article in the *Daily Tribune* by **Malissa Martin**.



Cheyenne Coss at the Kennedy Center



Joshua Kelly and his "star wagon" at the ESPY Awards

In other theatre news, **Danielle DeWulf** announced in July she had her SAG/AFTRA card. Los Angeles-based **Joshua Kelly** posted on Facebook that he had his own "star wag and personal assistant" as he prepared to appear at the E Awards in the Microsoft Theater, where actor and comedian **Joel McHale** was host.

Musical theatre alumna **Alexandra Zorn** returned to New York this summer after some months with the national tour of *Cinderella*. She was in the ensemble but also Ella's understudy, and she did get to go on as the lead in mid-May. On August 16 she was part of "The Broadway Princess Party" a special concert hosted by Broadway star **Laura Osnes** at the Bluebird Cafe. Some of New York's leading ladies sang everyone's favorite 'Princess' songs. [Read more about the event here](#) and see 'step and repeat' photos of the princesses, including Alexandra.

Finally, we have some news about one of our most distinguished dance alumni, **Assistant Professor Rodne Brown** of The Ohio State University, who is a choreographer and the founder/director of The Brown Dance Project (The BDP). His choreographies have been performed in India, South Africa, Europe and China, as well as the United States. This summer his work was featured in the Detroit Dance Festival Choreographers Showcase which [you can read more about here](#). Keep up with all the news about **The BDP** on their website.

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