

Friday, Apr 27, 2018

## SMTD News, April 2018

The School of Music, Theatre and Dance presented ***Hands on a Hardbody***, an all-American musical, from March 28 through April 7 in the Varner Studio Theatre in Varner Hall. Based on true events and a 1997 documentary of the same name, *Hands on a Hardbody* is the story of 10 hard-luck Texans, armed with nothing but hope, humor and ambition, who have a chance at literally driving away with the American Dream after entering a contest to win a brand-new Nissan hardbody truck. The rules of the contest are simple: whoever keeps his or her hand on the truck the longest wins. As days pass under a scorching sun, each contestant, along with the car dealer and a radio announcer, reveals their story and their vision of the American Dream.

“(Hands on a Hardbody) is eerily like *Survivor* and the island is a flatbed in Nissan car lot,” said Sarah Hovis, a reviewer for The Community Edge. “But that’s the thing about hard times and being forced to be with people you may not normally interact with. You’re suddenly forced to face ideals you may not agree with like racism (*Born in Laredo*) and faith. Or hot-button topics like immigration and unemployment. *Hardbody* subtly addresses these topics in a way where you don’t feel as if you’re being clobbered over the head to agree, but rather are being given a gentle nudge to consider the other side of the coin.”

**Erica Kennedy**, a musical theatre major at Oakland University who was named Miss Congeniality in the 2017 Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant, was invited to read to preschoolers in the Lowry Center for Early Childhood Education to kick off National Reading Month in March. “As a theatre major, I perform in productions, many of which were originally great works of literature,” Kennedy said. “Reading is the foundation of all study: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as the arts.” According to a recent report by the National Literacy Panel, literacy skills begin at birth and a number of early skills are related to — and may even help predict — a child’s later success with reading and writing. “So take time to read this month, to a child or just for pleasure,” Kennedy added.



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Professor Emeritus **John N. Dovaras** passed away on April 24, 2018 at the age of 84. Dovaras joined the Oakland University faculty in 1966 and for 35 years was a professor in the Department of Music and conducted the Oakland University Community Chorus, which had over 100 members. During this time, he also founded the John Dovaras Singers. He conducted many symphonies and musical works over the years, including Leonard Bernstein’s Mass at the Detroit Music Hall. Dovaras also spent many years as the director of music at the Kids in the Hills Presbyterian Church.



Symphony Orchestra. He also authored a book titled, *Our American Choral Heritage - A Choral Director's Handbook*. The family will receive friends on Sunday, April 29 from 2-6 p.m. at A.J. Desmond & Sons, 32515 Woodward Ave. in Royal Oak. Visitation will be held on Monday, April 30 at 10:30 a.m. followed by the funeral at 11:30 a.m. at the First Baptist Church of Birmingham located at 300 Willits Street in Birmingham. To view the online obituary and to share your condolences, please visit the [Desmond & Sons website](#).

Music faculty member **Dan Maslanka** recently had the opportunity to play drums for six-time Grammy winning jazz trumpeter Randy Brecker. The Toledo Jazz Orchestra, one of the many groups Maslanka plays with, performed as Brecker's band when he performed a concert at the Valentine Theatre in Ohio and a masterclass in Berkley.

Music faculty members **Jeffrey Heisler** and **Victoria Shively** were honored at the 23rd Annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon on April 11. Heisler, assistant professor, received a Faculty Recognition Award for Scholarship and Shively, special lecturer, received the

2018 Excellence in Teaching Award. Heisler was nominated by the full-time SMTD faculty, and chosen by the College of Arts and Sciences. Shively was nominated by students and colleagues, and chosen for one of the two university-level outstanding teaching awards — one recognizing a full-time faculty member and one a part-time faculty member.



**Take Root**, a contemporary dance company-in-residence at Oakland University, performed *I Have a Story to Tell You* on April 20-21 as part of SMTD's Professional Artist Series in Varner Hall's Studio Theater. Each performance started with the film, *Ripples From the Skin We Shed*. Last spring the entire company (musicians included) created this underwater dance on film in OU's pool at the Recreation and Well-Being Center. Following the performance weekend, the full company flew to Berlin to spend the week working with their Dance for Parkinson's Disease program and participating in a Talk Back with their PD community, working with the arts education program and teaching a creative movement class to 6-9 year olds, as well as collaborating with the Tanz Tanzgente on a series of dances for World Dance Day.



**Anthony Guest**, associate professor of theatre, recently finished up directing duties for *The Odd Couple* at Thunder Bay Theatre (TBT) in Alpena, Mich. "Anthony has provided a wonderful perspective and a new set of expectations for all the young people we currently have at TBT right now," said TBT Producing Artistic Director Jeffrey Mindock. The play, which closed April 22, was the first installment of TBT's [Great American Play Project](#).

Congratulations to **Dr. Kenneth Kroesche** and the **Oakland University Brass Band** on their performance on March 24 at the 2018 Dublin Festival of

Brass in Dublin, Ohio. Out of the nine bands that competed, the OUBB were named the Grand Champions of the festival and received the Paul Droste Shield. In addition, they won in the categories of Best March, Best Slow Melody and Best Major Work. Three players were singled out for their excellent playing during the performance: Scott Brickner received the Best Cornet Award, Nicole Tremonti won the Best Tenor Horn Award and John Andersen earned the Best Baritone Award. Steven Mead, virtuoso euphonium soloist and adjudicator at the festival, commented "Such fine





The Oakland University School of Music, Theatre and Dance recently honored some of its top student performers and distinguished alumni during the 19th annual **MaTiLdA Awards**, which took place on Monday, April 16 in the Oakland Center Banquet Room. The “red-carpet” event included dinner and music, theatre and dance performances, as well as award presentations recognizing exceptional service and performance by Music, Theatre and Dance students. For a complete list of winners, visit [oakland.edu/mtd/matildas](http://oakland.edu/mtd/matildas).

**Viorica Burca**, an instructor with Oakland University’s Music Preparatory Division, received rave reviews from Deanne Mihelich, a parent whose daughter, Ava, is enrolled in the program. “I credit much of Ava’s music success to her exceptional teacher, Mrs. Burca, who is such an inspiration to her,” Dennae Mihelich said. “The first time Ava heard Mrs. Burca play a tune, her eyes grew as big as saucers and a smile crept over her face. I could see that Mrs. Burca’s love for the piano and enthusiasm for playing music were contagious — and I immediately knew that this was the teacher for her. She holds Ava to the highest standards and smoothly guides her through the difficult challenges. She is also a very kind and empathetic teacher. All these amazing qualities in one teacher make her a rare find, and I am very grateful that we found her.” The Music Preparatory Division serves music learners of all ages, including pre-school and elementary-age children; middle school and high school students; adults of all ages; students seeking serious preparation for college careers; and learners who are simply seeking to learn more about music to enhance their lives.

On March 5, eleven senior **BFA Theatre** majors performed two showcases for agents, casting directors and other theatre professionals at The Beckett Theatre in New York City. The showcase was highly successful and our students received multiple callbacks and several students signed to agencies. On April 16, two of the students also performed at a showcase at the Theatre Wit in Chicago. This showcase, shared with Western Michigan University theatre students, was for Chicago casting agents.



**Joe Shively**, associate professor of music education, traveled to Uganda from March 18-28. He was a featured presenter at the 2018 Music Education Conference held at Kyambogo University in Kampala. The theme for the conference, co-sponsored by Oslo Metropolitan University (Norway), was music education for lifelong learning. Shively’s presentation, *Learning to Be and Live Together: Revisiting Constructivism as a Philosophical Guide for Music Education*, was well received and provided a connecting thread for the entire conference. Additionally, Kyambogo lecturer and Oakland University Ph.D. student James Isabiry presented *Learner Agency in a Context of Scaffolding: An Undergraduate Music Teacher’s Class in Darkness*.

The Oakland University Board of Trustees on April 9 approved a new **Bachelor of Music in Music Technology**. The new major seeks to attract and serve students who have sufficient performance background on an instrument or voice to be able to pass the music program entrance audition and to be able to succeed as an art music performer and musician at a level that would enable them to earn a Bachelor of Music degree. Courses for the degree include classes such as Acoustics for Musicians, which would cover topics such as human hearing, acoustic measurements, intensity and loudness, software analysis tools and musical illusions. Other courses expected to be included are basic recording techniques, audio design and processing and interactive computer music.

Flute faculty member **Amanda Blaikie** presented a free recital at Varner Recital Hall. Blaikie, known for her sparkling tone and sensitive, expressive musicality, was recently tenured as 2nd Flute of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. She previously held the positions of Principal Flute with the Michigan Opera Theatre, Sarasota Opera, Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra, and the Miami City Ballet.

**Robert Skylis** won the @AIMS (American Institute of Musical Studies) national Operetta Tenor competition on March 6 and will receive full tuition with accommodations for AIMS in Graz this summer. AIMS, held annually since 1969 in Graz, Austria, is an intensive six-week summer program featuring an international faculty of voice teachers and coaches with master classes by eminent performers of opera and Lieder, and numerous performance opportunities and concerts with the AIMS Festival Orchestra.



Theatre faculty member **Thomas D. Mahard** is starring in the upcoming play *Northern Aggression* at The Tipping Point Theatre in downtown Northville, Mich. The play runs from May 17 - June 24. For more information, visit [tippingpointtheatre.com/northern-aggression](http://tippingpointtheatre.com/northern-aggression).

Associate Professor of Theatre **Lynnae Lehfeldt** is heading to Scotland for three weeks to complete the Linklater Voice Designation Programme, taught by Kristin Linklater at the Kristin Linklater Voice Centre. Kristin Linklater is a world-renowned teacher of voice production who has pursued a highly successful academic and theatrical career in the United States and Europe for the past fifty years. Linklater Voice takes you through a series of step-by-step practical exercises that include relaxation, awareness of breathing, the experience of voice vibrating in the body, how to open the throat, the development of resonance and range, and the articulating activity of lips and tongue.



Theatre students **Emily Hadick** and **Alex Benoit** are playing Jerusha Abbott and Jervis Pendleton in *Daddy Long Legs*, a two-person show running at The Dio - Dining & Entertainment through May 20. Based on the classic novel which inspired the 1955 movie starring Fred Astaire, *Daddy Long Legs* is a beloved tale in the spirit of *Downton Abbey*, filled with soaring musical melodies that The New York Times calls "A great treat!" All tickets include dinner, dessert and non-alcoholic beverages, visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/180083032789541> for more information.

Dance lecturer **Rebecca Crimmins** is offering speciality classes for adults and college in May, such as Get Off Your Feet! Floor Barre Conditioning, Dance My Body Back!, and Tap Intermediate for Musical Theater. For more information, visit [rebeccacrimminsdance.com](http://rebeccacrimminsdance.com).

On Saturday, April 14, **Tuba Ignis**, Oakland University's student tuba-euphonium quartet, competed in the Chamber Music Competition of the Mid-West Regional Tuba-Euphonium Conference held at Indiana University-Purdue University in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The quartet received Honorable Mention, coming in second to a graduate quartet from DePaul University. The field of competitors was represented by major music schools from across the mid-west including the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Tuba Ignis' program included *Ubi Fumus, Ibi Ignis* (where's there's smoke, there's fire), which is a piece that was written for the quartet earlier in the year by composer, Peter Meechan. The quartet's members include John Andersen (junior music performance & education major), Ian Lester (senior music performance), Brandon Thibault (junior music performance) and Colin Holstein (sophomore music performance). They are all students of Prof. Kenneth



The **Oakland University Chorale** kicks off its Spring 2018 Michigan Concert Tour on Saturday, April 28 at Birmingham First as part of the Live@First classical concert series. After that, they'll perform on Thursday May 3 at the First Presbyterian Church in Lansing and Saturday May 5 at Central United Methodist Church in Traverse City.



The **Oakland Symphony Orchestra** presented their final concert of the season on April 11 at Detroit's Orchestra Hall in the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center. The OSO performed *Fanfare for the Common Man* by Aaron Copland and *A Survivor from Warsaw, Op. 46* by Arnold Schoenberg. They were joined by the Oakland Symphony Chorus and the Detroit Concert Choir for *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125* by Ludwig van Beethoven. The piece also featured Melissa Maloney, soprano; Alta Dantzler, mezzo soprano; Drake Dantzler, tenor; and John-Paul White, bass.

**Karen Sheridan**, professor of theatre, was presented with the Monica E. Emerson Diversity Award on April 12. The award, given annually, recognizes significant achievements, creative programming efforts or innovative diversity and inclusion

concepts of faculty, staff, students, alumni and academic units in developing a culturally diverse, compassionate university community reflective of inclusive excellence. Professor Sheridan was honored for her work in connection with the Deaf community and her work with African-American students at Oakland University.

Oakland University Dance Theatre and OU Repertory Dance Company presented their annual **Young Choreographers** showcase, featuring works choreographed by talented OU student choreographers and guest artist Demetrius Tabron, from April 12-15 in the Varner Studio Theatre in Varner Hall. The show consisted of 12 pieces, nine of which were student choreographed works. Elizabeth Riga premiered a piece set on The Repertory Dance Company and Tabron premiered a work set on the Oakland Dance Theatre dancers.



The **Oakland University Jazz Band** finished their season on March 21 at Varner Recital Hall with a night of exciting big band music and a tribute to legendary jazz trumpeter Thad Jones. The evening concert featured performances by the Oakland University Jazz Singers, under the direction of Scott Gwinnett, as well as the Oakland University Trumpet Summit with special guest artists Rayse Biggs, John Douglas, Anthony Stanco and "Future Golden Grizzlies" Kurton Harrison III from the Detroit School of Arts and Jabril Johnson from Ann Arbor Huron High School.



**Thomas Torrento**, a doctoral student in Music Education at Oakland University and director of bands for Van Dyke Public Schools, was recently named as the Region 9 Teacher of the Year by the Michigan Department of Education and is one of 10 finalists for the 2018-19 Michigan Teacher of the Year. "I am honored and humbled to have been selected as the Region 9 Teacher of the Year," Torrento said. "If provided the opportunity to work alongside education stakeholders as Teacher of the Year, I intend to tell the stories of teachers and students I've met while working and networking within our public school system who feel left behind, overwhelmed or forgotten and to fight to bring more light to the extreme disparity that exists today." The Regional Teachers of the Year were selected following a multi-level process that began with more than 430 different teachers nominated by students, staff and community members.

**Alan MacNair**, founder and conductor of the Oakland University Chamber Orchestra, will serve as guest conductor of the Motor City Symphony Orchestra, on April 20 during the Spring Concert at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. MacNair graduated from the Interlochen Arts Academy and then received a Bachelor of Music degree from Michigan State University, where he

conducting with Gustav Meier at the University of Michigan. MacNair has also been the music director and conductor of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony, the concertmaster and assistant conductor of the Rochester Symphony, and a substitute violinist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He is also a frequent adjudicator and clinician at national and regional music education conferences, and conductor of All-State and All-Conference Orchestras around the nation.

OU dance student **Jasmine Brewington's** work, *In Conversation*, has been accepted into the Summer Stage as part of the 2018 Detroit Dance City Festival (DDCF). The DDCF is a three-day community building event that celebrates dance in its various forms and disciplines. This year's event was Aug. 10-12 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Music Education doctoral candidate **James Isabirye** has been invited to address the UNESCO General Assembly in Paris, France, on June 4, 2018, about the success of one of his Ugandan cultural preservation projects that was funded by a substantial grant from UNESCO. James has several such projects that are ongoing — involving preserving the musics of several Ugandan cultures by learning the music and reteaching it to the cultural communities. Much of this music was lost in the political upheaval that took place in Uganda during the 20th century. James's work has fostered revitalized spirit within these communities. The work has been recognized by both Ugandan kings and central government officials. They also invited a spokesperson from one of the communities to join him in his presentation to share the community perspective on the strength of the program as well.



On Tuesday, April 3, the **Oakland University Wind Symphony** and **Symphonic Band** had their last performance of the season. The concert featured Risto Tevdoski, winner of the 2017-18 Band Concerto Competition, who performed Concerto for Clarinet by Artie Shaw. Also playing on the piece was special lecturer **Bret Hoag**, who played a 1931 Martin acoustic guitar (appropriate for the time period the Shaw piece was written in). The guitar belongs to Terry Herald, technical coordinator and music lecturer at OU.

The Oakland University Repertory Dance Company on March 23-24 presented **Plateau** on in the atrium of the Engineering Center on the campus of Oakland University. The piece, choreographed by Associate Professor of Dance Thayer Jonutz, featured musical accompaniment by the OU guitar studio, as well as poetry from theatre student Mickey Mcglinnen.

