

"Sometimes people forget that you can make a decent living being a musician. You might not be a millionaire, but you'll be happy. And by playing music, you'll make other people happy." So said OU alumna and world-renowned jazz violinist **Regina Carter** when interviewed by **Paul Freeman** of the *San Jose Mercury News*, before her recent concert at Stanford.



OU Music, Theatre and Dance welcomes all students to benefit from the enrichment provided by our arts classes, but our primary focus is on preparing our majors for their professional careers, whether it be in education or, like Regina, in performance. Our goal is to transform students' passion into creative and professional expertise. Here is some recent alumni news that shows just how well-equipped our graduates are with the tools, technique and understandings they need to thrive in their chosen fields.



Dance alum **AJ Sharp** recently had an incredible opportunity to be mentored by **Doug Varone**, one of the premier modern dance choreographers in New York. "This is so exciting!" AJ said. "Throughout the intensive week I worked with Doug Varone and the company members, as well as students from Purchase College, and I will be creating new work on dancers in NYC. Doug Varone will be curating a show for us that will take place from August 7 to 9. We will be premiering our work at 92nd Street Y in Manhattan the Buitenhuis Hall, where famous works like Alvin Ailey's 'Revelations' were created. AJ still emails her dance professors. "They are the first ones I want to share my dance accomplishments with," she said. "They played a major role in shaping my career. It will always be important for me to acknowledge the people that believed that I could do this."

Dance alum **Alexandra Plaskey** is also living and working in New York. She works as Executive Assistant and Group Coordinator for the CBS Altitude Group, the integrated media department of CBS Radio that creates custom content solutions for major brands across CBS properties nationwide. She also manages the CBS Altitude social media profiles, which includes tweeting pictures of **Stephen Colbert**, which she jokes is, "almost as good as seeing him in person!" Alex still dances occasionally, but mostly in the halls of CBS "for no reason at all." You can see Alex's page on the **CBS Altitude site here**.



Instrumental music alum **Daniel Turchyn** has joined the military, calling himself "A U.S. Army euphonium warrior!" He was offered a position to play with the U.S. Army Bands, and he took the first step in his career in early June, when he left for basic combat training in South Carolina.

Theatre design and tech alum **Jeffery Block** announced on June 11 that he had accepted a full-time position as a production designer at Interlochen Center for the Arts. Interlochen is in one of the most beautiful areas of Michigan and the center attracts thousands of arts lovers to its world-class educational and cultural opportunities every year.



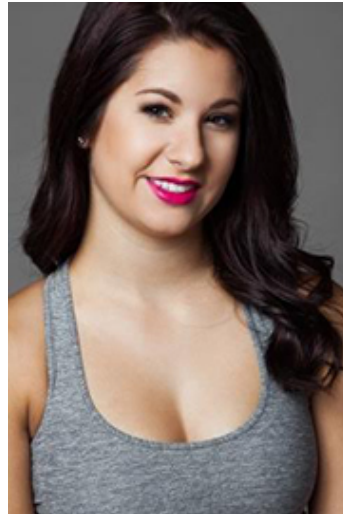
On May 28, the movie *Beyond the Mask* had its official red carpet premiere. Producer **Aaron Burns** has both an MBA and a bachelor's degree from OU. While a member of the Honors College, Aaron studied audio with music lecturer **Terry Herald** and much of the post-production audio, including all the automated dialog replacement, was done in Terry's studio. Both Terry and **Thomas D. Mahard**, special lecturer in theatre, were at the premiere. He played a treasonous villain in the movie. You can find out the latest news about the movie, which **has lots of OU connections, here**.

Some of our alumni have been performing on stage this summer. **Jackie Gubow**, who has both a BFA and a BM from OU, just completed a run playing Miss Andrew, the evil nanny who literally flies through the air, in *Disney's Mary Poppins* at the Barn Theatre in Augusta, Michigan. *The Battle Creek Enquirer* said, "Jackie Gubow made an impression as the villainous nanny Miss Andrew," and **Marcia Fulmer** wrote, "The energy [of the show] went up 100 percent when Jackie Gubow hurled herself into 'Brimstone and Treacle,' her remedy for everything."

Luciana Piazza, who graduated this spring from the theatre program, has several professional gigs lined up. In June she appeared as Ensign Janet MacGregor in the Encore Musical Theatre Company's production of *South Pacific*. In August she's scheduled to play Phoebe in Water Works Theatre Company's Production of *As You Like It*. If you would like to catch that production, check out the [company's website here](#). Then on December 1, she will join The Purple Rose Theatre Company's apprenticeship program. Luciana said, "I am excited to spread the OU name wherever I go." You can follow [Luciana's career on her website](#).

Musical Theatre alum **Emily Stys** (BFA '13) will head back to the Disney Fantasy cruise ship at the end of August to spend a year working with the Disney Cruise Line. She's currently in Toronto for summer rehearsals. Emily is a main stage singer and also has the opportunity to show off her amazing dance skills.

David Vogel (BFA '13), also an MT alum, is appearing in *George M!* a musical about the life and career of legendary showman George M. Cohan at The Wick Theatre in Boca Raton, FL. The show premiered on Broadway in 1968 starring Joel Grey and Bernadette Peters. This production will run from July 4-19. If you're in the Boca Raton area you can find [ticket information here](#).



Three of our music alums are continuing their academic careers. **Jane Hines** just completed two master's degrees at Bowling Green State University, one in music theory and the second in music history. In September she will begin work on a PhD in musicology at Princeton.

Stephen Komer also just completed his master's degree in music theory. He studied at Indiana University Bloomington and will return there to continue working towards his PhD. Stephen will also serve as coordinating instructor for sophomore aural skills at IU starting in the fall.

Robert Benton, who since January has been playing euphonium in the Dunshan Symphonic Wind Orchestra in China, will return to the US to take up a position as assistant professor of low brass and music theory at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. After leaving OU, Dr Benton completed an MM at Michigan State University and a DMA at the University of Michigan.

New theatre tech and design alum **Daniel Robinson** has been very busy since he began his job as an assistant designer with the well-known lighting design house Team Imagination in California. It seemed as though his feet had barely touched the ground in California before he was whisked off to work in Lagos, Nigeria with CEO Michael Veerkamp. After the job in Africa was completed, Dan spent a few days in London where he saw a couple of shows and had some time to sight see. You can read more about Team Imagination and its CEO in [this interview with Michael Veerkamp](#).





Voice alum **Jason Wickson**, who completed his studies at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and participated in various high-pro apprentice programs, is emerging as one of the next leading tenors in the U.S. After a recent performance as Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer*, *The New York Times* wrote, "Best was another tenor, as a passionate, bronze-toned Erik. With his hapless love for Senta, Erik seems ridiculous in many productions, but Mr. Wickson gave him affecting seriousness." This summer he will play MacDuff in Verdi's *Macbeth* at Chautauqua Opera, on July 1. You can read more [about the production here](#) and you can follow Jason's [career on his website](#).

Finally, our world music coordinator **Associate Professor Mark Stone** will be in Durban, South Africa in May to play with the **Bernard Woma Ensemble** and guests of the **Kwazulu-Natal Philharmonic**. OU alum **Daniel Walsh** is artistic administrator of the orchestra. He oversees the orchestra's programming and community outreach, arranges and sometimes composes works to be played on concerts, teaches theory to the group's cadets, and conducts the group, works with related choral groups, and organizes the visits of many guest artists. Mark said it was a very rewarding experience

him as an artist and especially as a teacher. "I was able to see Dan draw on myriad aspects of his training at Oakland University was wonderful to observe how his studies of world music with me have helped him to succeed in this multicultural country, and equally inspiring to see how his studies of composition, conducting, voice, guitar, theory, and history with my colleagues at OU have all given him an incredible foundation to build his career upon."

Exactly! Alumni, please send us your news. We would love to feature your stories about working in the arts.

Photos, from the top

Regina Carter, photo by Barbara Barefield

AJ Sharp in rehearsal

A CBS summer Colbert sighting, photo by Richard Lobel

Andrea and Aaron Burns at the Beyond the Mask premiere, photo by Terry Herald

(l-r) Jackie Gubow, Luciana Piazza, Emily Stys and David Vogel

Daniel Robinson at work in Lagos, Nigeria

Jason Wickson, photo by Karen Taylor Photography

If you have news you want to share please email gellis@oakland.edu