

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

## Honoring Achievement in Music, Theatre and Dance



*The Music, Theatre and Dance Student MaTiLdA Award Winners 2015*

On Monday, April 20 the Music, Theatre and Dance family gathered in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms to celebrate the hard work and achievements of the students and alumni receiving the department's prestigious 2015 MaTiLdA Awards. This year the Oakland University Alumni Association (OUAA) graciously sponsored the MaTiLdA Alumni Achievement Awards, and we look forward to a long and harmonious partnership with them. The OUAA connects alumni and friends within the university community encourages alumni to maintain an active role in programs that support OU and build relationships that benefit both students and university. MTD and OUAA are perfect together! Each year, OUAA proudly presents the **Arts at OU series**, and we have been delighted to have their groups attend our theatre productions, and music and dance concerts.



*L-R: John-Paul White, Cáitlín Burke, Michael Gillespie and Karen Sheridan*

This year, a very special alumna snagged both the music and theatre Alumni Achievement Awards, an unprecedented triumph. **Cáitlín Burke** enjoys a flourishing career specializing in Gilbert and Sullivan roles. She frequently captivates New York audiences as a principal performer with The New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, performing in some of New York City's most renowned theaters. She made her UK debut with England's National Gilbert and Sullivan Company, alongside members of The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, as part of The International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival. She recently returned from a highly successful UK tour, the first American to tour with this prestigious company, in their productions of *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and *Iolanthe*. In her acceptance speech, Cáitlín spoke movingly about the faculty members who have influenced her and to the delight of the audience, she performed a song from *The Mikado*. The next day she was back home and posted this update to Facebook, "Sitting in jury duty this morning (yup!), my heart is full because I spent a few hours last night with teachers from my undergrad, Oakland University. These incredible teaching-artists shaped me into the performer and person I am today. They have always supported me, and continue to do so. I am eternally grateful for everything they taught me. What would be without our teachers?"



*Gregory Patterson and Jenefer Ardell Miller*

The dance Alumni Achievement Award was given to **Jenefer Ardell Miller**, who since graduation has studied with, and perform shows alongside, legends such as Jason Samuels Smith, Ben Vereen, Sarah Reich, Savion Glover, Dianne Walker, Barbara D. Robert Reed, Debbie Allen, the Nicholas Brothers, Harold "Stumpy" Cromer, and Heather Cornell. She has danced, taught or choreographed for prestigious tap organizations such as the Detroit Tap Festival (honoring the legendary Nicholas Brothers), D. Chicago, the Chicago Human Rhythm Project, Motor City Tap Fest, and the St. Louis Tap Festival. Jenefer is a full-time high school theatre and English teacher and just directed and choreographed a professional production of *Hairspray*. She also coaches and judges speech and forensics events for middle and high schools and runs a local improv troupe. She's the founder and produce Just West of Broadway, a theatre convention designed for dancers, actors and singers; and the co-founder and co-director of Tap 24.7, a professional tap company in Phoenix.

The Distinguished Community Service Award was given to **Professor Emeritus Michael Gillespie**, who has generously donate funds to create an endowment to support student travel scholarships. "There is nothing like travel to startle the senses, to open the heart. And to blow the mind." He looked into the future and said he hoped that one day a theatre student would travel not just to Greece, as **McKayla Kremidas** will this year, but perhaps to places that seem impossible now, like North Korea, or even beyond earth's horizon. "And in the year 2100 – just picture this with me! – in my mind's eye, I see a young figure, dressed in an Oakland University sweatshirt – Golden Grizzly all aglow – delivering monologues on the moon."



*James Long performs, accompanied by Rebecca Happel, assisted by Rhys Burgess*

One of the most coveted awards, the Distinguished Musicianship Award, went to **James Long**, a euphonium performance major who is graduating this spring, and who plans to attend the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music in the fall. He gave a much-admired performance of *Euphonium Concerto Movement II, Zeibekikos* by Philip Wilby, before receiving the award from his primary teacher **Kenneth Kroesche**. There were many other performance highlights during the evening. The entertainment included everything from virtuoso piano classical pieces and scenes by award-winners actors, to a lighthearted tribute to the dance faculty and all the dance award winners. **You can see that on YouTube [here](#).**



*(l-r) guitar: Blake Foster, bass: Nick Voisich, pan: Renee Kuczeski, congas: Brendan Walter, vibes: Zollie Schut*

**Renee Kuczeski** was honored as the Outstanding Student in Composition, the first time this award has been given since 2010. Renee is a Percussion Music Education student, with a minor in World Music. She has been involved in Wind Symphony, Oakland Symphony Orchestra, Percussion Ensemble, Steel Band, multiple jazz combos, Brass Band, African Ensemble, Percussion Pop and other world music ensembles. She also teaches at several venues. **Terry Herald**, her composition teacher, calls her, "... one of the most talented people I have ever met. She has always been able to surprise and delight me with her creativity and passion."



Here is a complete list of all the student awards given in 2015: Distinguished Musicianship Award, **James Long**; Outstanding Student in Voice Performance, **Allison Vernon**; Outstanding Student in Piano Performance, **Hannah Bossner**; Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (Undergraduate), **Lucas Perzyk** and **Alyssa Primeau**; Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (Graduate), **Heather Neuenschwander**; Outstanding Student in Music Education, **Joshua Bobek** and **Jackie Gub**; Outstanding Student in Composition, **Renee Kuczeski**; Outstanding Student in Jazz, **Nicholas Voisich**; Outstanding Student in Chamber Music, We Three and She: **John Hallman**, **Morgan McGivern**, **Calvin Retz**, **Jason Rodriguez**; Joyce Adelson Piano Ensemble Award, **Hannah Bossner** and **Rhys Burgess**; Jennifer Scott Memorial Award, **Alexander Kopitz**; Pat and Mercedes Nicosia Meadow Brook Estate Award, **Devin Price**; Gittlen Achievement Award in Acting, **Pablo Calzada Munoz**; Gittlen Achievement Award in Theatre Design and Technology, **Chris O'Meara**; Gittlen Achievement Award in Musical Theatre, **Jillian Hoffman** and **Jacléne Wilk**; Gittlen Theatre Award, **Britney Spindler**; Distinguished Dance Student Award, **Brett Wotherspoon**; Maggie Allesee Choreography Award, **Priscilla Bakic**; Outstanding Dance Performance, **Mariah Chandler** and **Karin Spencer**; Outstanding Student Service Award - Music, **Alexander Walker**; Outstanding Student Service Award - Theatre, **Stacey Fleming**; Outstanding Student Service Award - Dance, **Chelsea Nabozny**; MTD Award, **Daniel Robinson**.

You can read more about each one of the award winners in [this OU News article](#).

You can see many more photos in our [Facebook album here](#). Feel free to tag yourself. Photos by **Jlboone Photography**