

Friday, Feb 23, 2018

Working in the Arts: SMTD Alumni News, February 2018

Joe Santoni, who earned a BA in music from Oakland University, landed the role of a lifetime when he was chosen to be part of the original cast of Disney's *D Cappella*, a new Pentatonix-style touring performance experience from Deke Sharon, the arranger for all three *Pitch Perfect* movies and creative director Jim Milan.

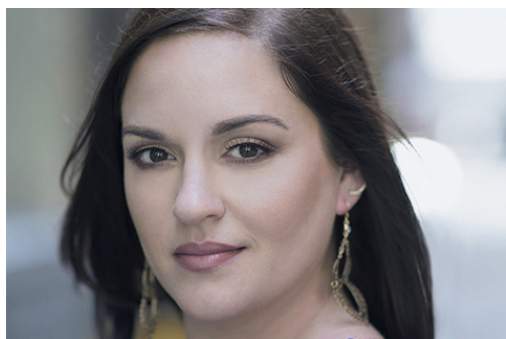
Built around seven vocal ranges — soprano, mezzo, alto, tenor, baritone, bass and vocal percussion — the concerts will feature new arrangements of Disney favorites. "Landing a gig as awesome as this has been nothing short of magical," Santoni said. "Words can't describe how honored I am to be part of such an amazing opportunity. It still blows my mind that I can say I'm recording Disney music for my job and preparing to perform all over the country. Dreams do come true, and my inner child is ecstatic!"

Santoni, who performed in various operas and as a member of Gold Vibrations, the Oakland Chorale and Oakordz while at OU, said the university played a "crucial role" in his development as a vocalist. "OU pushed my musical abilities to the next level and I am forever grateful for the friends, and now family, that I made there!"

Chelsea Otten (BM '08, MM '11), an elementary music teacher in the Hallsville School District in Hallsville, Mo., received a \$500 grant from the Missouri Retired Teachers Foundation (MRTF) to restore the district's aging xylophones. To receive the grant, Otten completed the MRTF application, including materials needed, a plan of action, and a budget. In addition to being highlighted on the district's [website](#), Otten was also featured in an article in the [Centralia Fireside Guard](#), a local newspaper. "This article made me reflect on my development as a music educator, and OU's role in that growth," Otten said.



Oakland University music alum Joe Santoni recently landed the role of a lifetime when he was chosen to be part of the original cast of Disney's "D Cappella."



Ann Toomey

Ann Toomey, a native of Shelby Township and an alumna of Oakland University, helped kick off the Chamber Music Society of Detroit new weekend-long chamber music festival, *WinterFest*, which was held Jan. 19-21 at Varner Recital Hall on the Oakland University campus. "There's nothing more exciting than coming back to your hometown and alma mater to perform in a concert," Toomey said. "Oakland University holds such a special place in my heart and is a major part of who I am today." Other participating artists included Solisti, the Aeolus Quartet, and three performers with ties to Michigan, including soprano Ann Toomey, pianist Tian Tian and violist Yur Gandelsman.

OU alumni **Halla Hilborn**, **Vivian Ellsworth**, **Alexander Walker** and **Alison Vernon** collaborated with **Deborah VanderLinde**, an assistant professor of music education and the music education program coordinator at Oakland University, on a chapter for the book *Coming of Age: Teaching and Learning Popular Music in Academia* by Carlos Xavier Rodrigues. The aim of the chapter, entitled *Popular Music Pedagogy: A Look into Curricular Possibilities*, is to share pedagogical possibilities for popular music curriculum in middle and high school music classrooms.

Abhay Sinh Rathwa was on the cover of the January edition of Detroit Talent Magazine. Originally from India, his desire to explore music history and theory brought him to Oakland University, where he is a current student pursuing a B.A. in music. Also featured in the January issue are voice alums **Jocelyn Zelasko** (BM '03 and PhD in progress) and **Constantine Novotny** (BM '13). You can read the entire issue here: www.detroittalentmag.com/january_18.

Kayvon Kashani-Gharavi (BM '17) sang in New York City with the Westminster Choir College Symphonic Choir. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in choral conducting.

OU alumna and renowned jazz violinist **Regina Carter** joined accomplished jazz pianist Xavier Davis on stage on Feb. 14 to present an evening of Valentine's Day-inspired tunes in Varner Recital Hall. "Xavier Davis and I have been performing together off and on in different

musical connection.”

Music education alum **Anthony Case**, band director at Lawrence Technological University, was appointed director of athletic bands to help kickstart the resurgence of the university’s pep band program. “This has always been a dream of mine and is a phenomenal opportunity for me,” Case said. “I am very honored to be undertaking this band and look forward to each day. The program is in its infancy stage, but it has the opportunity to flourish through consistent communication, dedication from students, faculty and administration, community involvement and outreach, and the continued support of music.” Case is a two-time graduate of Oakland University, where he received his Bachelor of Music in music education and Master of Music in instrumental conducting.

Brazilian pianist **Ronaldo Rolim**, who studied with Flavio Varani, professor emeritus of music at Oakland University, and earned a Doctor of Music Arts degree from Yale University, has been busy performing and recording all over the world, including such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, Tonhalle Zurich, Wigmore Hall (London), and Seoul Arts Center. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras such as Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Phoenix Symphony, Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, and Mina Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra.



Xavier Davis & Regina Carter



Maria Reed as "Cinderella"

Maria Reed (B.F.A. '17) is playing the lead in The Players Theatre production of *Cinderella*, which opened Feb. 18 in New York City. “I’m excited and fortunate to be playing Cinderella,” Reed said. “This is my first New York show and I’m having a blast and a half! It’s comforting to be in rehearsal again and I’m so happy to be doing something I’m passionate about. I feel like OU’s Theatre Department really prepared me for the professional process!” Tickets to the show are available at ovationtix.com (use code “Cast” for \$10 off).

Angel Gippert (B.A. '99), the director of choirs at Farmington High School, was recently elected president of the Michigan School Voc Music Association (MSVMA) Executive Board. She previously served on the Board as director of honors choirs.

Lauren Wainwright, who earned a BFA in musical theatre at Oakland University, played the role of Ex-Girlfriend in the Florida Studio Theatre's production of *Once*, based on the book by Enda Walsh. Wainwright, who is based in New York, has also performed in regional productions of *Violet*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Medea* and *Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming*; as well as New York productions of *Peace, Love and Cupcakes*; *The Tempest*; *Twelfth Night*; and *Camino Real*.

Alexandra Zorn (BFA '09) began performing in February as an original member of [The Broadway Princess Party](http://TheBroadwayPrincessParty.com) concert series at New City’s Feinsteins/54 Below. A Michigan native, Zorn has also appeared in the first national tour of *Cinderella*, as well as numerous regional productions across the country.

Yuki Mack, who earned a BA in piano performance at Oakland University, and her sister Tomoko have established themselves as world renowned pianists who are highly sought after as educators and performing artists. Known as *The Mack Sisters*, Yuki and Tomoko have won top prizes in several international competitions, including the *Dranoff International Two-Piano Competition* in Florida, and the *Ellis Two-Piano National Competition* in South Carolina. They’ve also received both the first and Kodama prizes at the *International Piano Duo Competition* in Tokyo. When they’re not teaching or performing, the Mack sisters are recording. They have established a highly acclaimed collection of four-hands piano music, including the CDs *Rhapsody*, *American Mosaic*, *Fantasy*, and *Danse Montage*.

Regan Tackett (BM '16) is pursuing a Master of Arts in Voice Pedagogy at the Ohio State University and has been cast in their upcoming production of *Candide* as the lead role of Cunegonde. Based on the French philosopher Voltaire’s novella of the same name, *Candide* is an around-the-world romp of idealistic optimism and a series of absurdly unfortunate events. The naïve Candide is infatuated with the high-born Cunegonde, and, along with her brother Maximilian and the serving maid Paquette, they subscribe to the axiom that has been taught to them by Dr. Pangloss: that everything that happens is always for the best. This simple doctrine is called into question as Candide is exiled, caught up in an Inquisition, cheated out of a fantastic fortune, cast into a squalid commune, and continuously kept from his one true love. With an ingenious score by the legendary Leonard Bernstein, *Candide* is a biting hysterical political satire on life and the very nature of human existence.



The Mack Sisters

OU alumni **Alex Holycross** and **Mark Chandler** of the “thrash grass” band [Native Howl](http://NativeHowl.com) recently kicked off a national tour. Consisting of



Native Howl

December 2016. They are also working on a new dual-disc album, which is expected to be released in June.

OU alumna **AJ Sharp** (BFA '13), who moved to New York after graduation, has busy been producing her own work, performing with sr dance companies and positioning herself for a major breakthrough. Sharp has been dancing since she was 10 years old, and has been teaching her own clases since she was 16 years old. She is currently the lead teaching artist for competition and recreational dance instructor for The Brooklyn Dance Centers.

Sarah McEneaney (BFA '16) is one of the founders of Square One Collective, a new theatre company based in New York City. They are an international collective of artists committed to creating compelling, relevant and original works of theatre that respond to stories and issues related to today's globalized world. They have been invited to perform as part of the 2018 FURY Factory hosted by foolsFURY theater company from July 16-22 in San Francisco. Square One Collective also includes Andrea Ang, Akhshay Gandhi and Sally Kingsford.



Square One Collective