

Monday, May 4, 2015

May 2015 News

Students

As we always do at this time of year, we want to congratulate our graduating seniors and remind them that although they will always be part of the Oakland University and Music, Theatre and Dance families, those Oakland emails will expire soon! So to continue receiving Prism, please send a personal email address

to gellis@oakland.edu so we can add you to our listserv. And don't forget to continue sending us your news!

Some of our musical theatre graduates will be moving to New York City, and their careers received a jump start in March when they attended the annual Senior Showcase, which is made possible by generous support

from Oakland University Offices of the President and Provost. **Professor Fred Love** reported that they performed for packed houses of theatre business people, and that the students received 79 callbacks in the first couple of days. He wrote, "Many of the students were asked to sign with agents and many of them will be returning in a few weeks for more auditions and appointments." The seniors and faculty who traveled to New York also met up with 31 OU theatre alums and a good time was had by all.



Gabrielle Minchella, who is a current musical theatre major, will give a preview performance of the character Pinkalicious, from the children's play of the same name, at a free storytime event at the Barnes & Noble bookstore in Rochester Hills at 10 a.m. on Monday, May 11. She will appear in costume to read from the book, sing and pose for photos. There will also be a book fair benefiting the OU Theatre program from May 11-17. If you are purchasing anything at Barnes and Noble during that period, please mention OU Theatre at checkout. The bookstore is located at 2800 S. Rochester Road. And don't forget to bring your family to one of the three performances of *Pinkalicious* in Varner Recital Hall: **10 a.m. on Friday, May 15; 7 p.m. on Friday, May 15; 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 17.**

In March, the members of the renowned chamber ensemble **Quintet Attacca** made a special trip to campus to give a masterclass. **Hannah Bossner, Amanda Crecelius, Jessica Commyn, Emily Hyde, Moriah Bussey, Alyssa Primeau and Heather Neuenschwander** all participated. It was just one of many priceless opportunities our student musicians had to work with visiting professionals this year, and even though the academic year is officially over, guests are still headed to OU to work with our students. On Thursday, May 21, guitarist **Roberto Fabbri**, will give a concert on campus. **You can see details of that event here.** He will also work with our guitar students in a masterclass. Just for fun, you might want to see that thanks to Signor Fabbri, OU made it onto **the World Wide Web, Italian Style.**





Competition at this year's North American Brass Band Championships (NABBA). Luke, who is a trombonist, will be attending Southern Methodist University in Dallas to continue his studies.

A fellow brass band member, **James Long**, is headed to Cincinnati Music Conservatory, where he will further his study of the euphonium. Both Luke and James were 2015 MaTiDa Award winners. Voice major **Chynna Roose** has also made a decision about grad school. She will attend San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Congratulations to you all. If we haven't told the world about your plans, please let us know what they are, so we can share them. You can email us (gellis@oakland.edu) or post them to our official Facebook page: [facebook.com/OU.MTD](https://www.facebook.com/OU.MTD)

Piano student **Rhys Burgess**, who just finished his junior year, won a MaTiDa this year, as well as an award from outside the department. He

was honored by the university's Tutoring Center as their Exceptional Appointment Tutor of the Year and commended for his dedication and hard work. He was hired in the fall semester of 2013 to tutor undergraduate students in music theory and aural skills, as well as other classes like history. Because of his specialist knowledge, he mostly assisted freshmen and sophomores with their music classes. Like most good teachers, Rhys found himself receiving, as well as giving. He said, "I have really enjoyed my time with the Tutoring Center. I find peer tutoring to be a very rewarding experience . . . from the various "a-ha!" moments after the student finally grasps something, to when a student excitedly comes to me with the grade they got on their most recent quiz or assignment after a few tutoring appointments, and they can see their hard work come to fruition. It is such a wonderful experience to assist my peers in being the best that they can be, and with the close-knit nature of the music department, tutoring has really helped build and strengthen my relationships with those around me." You can read more about the Tutoring Center [on their Facebook page here](#).



Looking forward, the OU Brass Band will play two important off-campus gigs in the coming weeks. They will play at the Midwest Regional Tuba-Euphonium Conference (MWRTEC) on the campus of Bowling Green State University in mid-May. Their concert will be at 8 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, with soloists **Dennis J Nulty**, **Daniel Perantoni**, **Demondrae Thurman** and **Adam Frey**. You can see more on [MWRTEC's Facebook page here](#).

In early June, the band will attend the Great American Brass Band Festival (GABBF) in historic Danville, Kentucky. The festival bills itself as a showcase for diversity in brass through a variety of genres, presentations and performances, featuring the best brass musicians in the world. Our award-winning brass band will fit right in! Read more about [GABBF on its website here](#).

Many of our theatre students will be working professionally this summer. Among them are **Jason Maracani** working as a design intern at Edward Pierce Studio in New York; **Vanessa Quigly** working as a props artisan at Music Theatre Wichita in Kansas; **Chris O'Meara** working as a lighting technician at Utah Shakespeare Festival; **Kyle Blasius** working as a master carpenter at Interlochen School of the Arts in Michigan; **Ashley Gaal** working as a scenic artist at Black Hills Playhouse in South Dakota; **Chelsea Criger** working as a wardrobe assistant at Colorado Shakespeare Festival; and **Sydney Thurman** working as a properties intern at Tibbits Theatre in Michigan. Several musical theatre and acting majors are also working this summer, including **Olivia Griffin** as a performer at Cedar Point; **Emma Griffith** at Thunder Bay Theatre in Michigan; **Lucianna Piazza** at Encore Theatre in Michigan; **Josh Steckelberg**, **Anna Marck**, **Andrew Barikmo**, **Callie Smith**, **Sarah McEneaney**, **Lucianna Piazza**, **Kim Alley** and **Tym Falk** at Water Works Theatre in Michigan; **Ian Turnwald** at Huron Playhouse in Ohio; and **Ali Reynolds** at the Purple Rose Theatre in Michigan.

Joshua James, who is currently working on a Ph.D. in music education, appeared on Channel 4's **Live in the D** with his Orchard Lake St Mary's School jazz band. Josh was interviewed about the band's recent trip to Poland and appearance at a jazz festival there, and then the band got to play on air. [You can see that clip here](#).

Finally, we want to tell you about the project **Tara Sievers-Hunt** and **Jocelyn Zelasko**, both alums and current doctoral students, appeared in at Willistead Manor in Windsor, Canada. It was the debut of a mixed media chamber opera called *Pat & Emilia*, based on the lives of two Windsor artists: photographer Pat Sturn (1910-2011) and opera singer Emilia Cundari (1930-2005). You can read more about this exciting project [on Facebook here](#). But please stay tuned, there are more members of the Oakland family involved in this project and the production will be on our fall performance season, so we plan to follow up with a more detailed account in an upcoming issue.

Alumni

Natalie Weiss, Teal Wicks, Stephen C. Anthony, Jackie Burns, David Perlman, Danielle Wade and Mj Rodriguez. [You can read more about that event here.](#) And if you want to catch up with Elyse's news you can [check out her personal website here.](#)



While they were in New York for the Senior Showcase, musical theatre faculty **Fred Love** and **Julie Malloy** caught up with **Elise Castle** at the Lion Theatre on 42 Street. She was appearing in Eddie Cantor's hit show *Whoopie*. You can follow Elise [on her website here.](#)

Still wowing them on Broadway is an alum with many more years experience on stage. **Jayne Houdyshell** attended Oakland when theatre classes were offered through the on-campus Academy of Dramatic Arts in the 1970s. She is currently appearing at the Cort Theatre in *Fish in the Dark* with **Larry David, Rita Wilson** and **Rosie Perez**. You can read more [about the play on its website here.](#)

Josh Williams is a very new theatre design and technology alum with finals only just completed, but he announced on Facebook that come September he will begin an exciting new chapter of his life. He has been hired by Disney World as a stage technician and will be working at the Animal Kingdom. He'll spend the summer working as an audio technician at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. **Dan Robinson**, who also just graduated, is headed out to Los Angeles to take up his new full-time position immediately. He will work as an assistant lighting designer at Team Imagination.

Voice alum **Jake Skipworth** is finishing up his masters at Wichita State University this spring. We were delighted to hear he was the winner of the Naftzger Young Artist Voice Competition, which is administered by the Wichita Symphony. The competition

is open to residents of Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma or non-residents who are enrolled at a college, university or conservatory in those states. That's a lot of competition. Congratulations Jake!

And finally, **Spiros Xydias**, one of our doctoral alumni, just had his article about "Composing in Performing Ensembles" published in the most recent issue of *Michigan Music Educator*. Dr. Xydias is the director of music at Baker Middle School, International Baccalaureate World School in Troy. [You can read his article here.](#)

Faculty

At the recent Founder's Day faculty recognition celebration, department chair **Jackie Wiggins** was appointed Distinguished Professor. The program described her as "a noted scholar, a committed and inspirational teacher, and a hard-working member of the Oakland University community." It went on to say, "Described as an extraordinary classroom presence, Dr. Wiggins' contributions are noteworthy and voluminous. Dr. Wiggins has championed her department, music education and the arts as a member of the Oakland University community. In recent years, her attention has largely been on the graduate programs in music with a particular focus on Ph.D. students. She is credited for leading the doctoral program in music education to a status alongside the best programs in the nation. Oakland University recognized the quality of her mentorship by awarding her the first ever Graduate Mentor Award in 2014." Dr. Wiggins was also recently appointed to the university's Strategic Planning Committee.

Assistant Professor of Dance **Thayer Jonutz** was recognized at the faculty celebration for his research. The program noted, "Thayer Jonutz's creative work has been amazing and prolific. He is the co-founder and artistic director of a newly formed dance company, "Take Root," and formed "Mise En Place" several years ago. Collaboratively, he and colleague **Ali Woerner** have created four full-evening length productions, each one requiring at least six weeks of work to choreograph. This summer, Jonutz and "Take Root" are scheduled to perform internationally in both Berlin, Germany and Seoul, Korea."

Another faculty member with summer plans is theatre professor **Karen Sheridan**, who will return yet again to the Peninsular Playhouse in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, where she will direct *Nunsense*.

Theatre lecturer **Tom Mahard** recently finished a run in the play *On Golden Pond* at the Encore Musical Theatre in Dexter, Michigan and his performance was very well received. **David Kiley** in the Encore Michigan newsletter said, "He ... puts on a clinic for how to play this tricky character." MLive referred to him as "The amazing Tom Mahard."

Another of Tom's recent projects opened around the same time. He played "the bad guy," or at least one of them, in the Revolutionary War thriller *Beyond the Mask*, a movie starring **John Rhys-Davies**, most famous as Sallah in the Indiana Jones movies and Gimli the dwarf in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Although this movie is on a much smaller scale, it launched with an

Composer and OU sound coordinator **Terry Herald** is at work recording the score for the film he is working on, *The First Rosa*. You can watch a few minutes of those **recording sessions in this YouTube clip**. And once again this year, one of Terry's compositions was used for the televised coverage of the final day of the Masters Golf Tournament, so if you are among the millions of people who watched **Jordan Spieth** make history on April 12, you were part of the "ratings though the roof" report that Terry was happy to get from his agent!

The very next day, voice instructor **Dr. Alta Dantzler** was singing at Carnegie Hall. She was the alto soloist in Mozart's *Solemn Vespers*, in concert with the Masterworks Festival Chorus and the New York City Chamber Orchestra.

As we told you in the March issue of Prism, Ugandan musician **Haruna Walusimbi** has been a visiting scholar at OU this past semester, making fans and friends wherever he goes. **Professor Mark Stone** emailed to tell us that towards the end of Haruna's visit they both ended up on stage with American banjo player **Bela Fleck** and his "amazing wife" **Abigail Washburn** at the Kentucky Country Day School theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. Mark wrote, "We had a blast! We brought down the house. A standing ovation for our combination of Appalachian and Ugandan music. It was an amazing experience."



This summer we are offering camps for **jazz musicians, young pianists**, and young musicians interested in **theory and composition**. We will also host the **Great Lakes Dance Festival**. In addition to all of those, which you can find on the **OU website here**, Take Root dance company is hosting a dance intensive in early June, which **you can read more about here** and jazz instructor Scott Gwinnett is offering the Metro-Detroit Jazz Workshop in July, **which you can read about here**. Both will be held on the OU on campus.

Finally, we want to recognize the commitment and dedication of

some longtime members of faculty and staff. **Professor of Music John-Paul White**, who is the most senior member of our faculty and the head of the voice program, was recently honored for his 30 years at OU. Department chair **Jackie Wiggins** and budget manager **Manjit Gill** were both recognized for 20 years of services, while **Terry Herald**, **Associate Professor Joseph Shively** and **Associate Professor Deborah VanderLinde** were all acknowledged for their 10 years service. Congratulations to all.



Photos, from the top:

Some of our most recent music graduates with Associate Professor Deborah VanderLinde (r)

Musical theatre seniors, alums and faculty in NYC

Student masterclass with Quintet Attacca

Luke Perzyk with Associate Professor Ken Kroesche

Tutoring Center director Beth DeVerna with Rhys Burgess

Associate Professor Fred Love, Elise Castle and Julie Malloy

Dr. Alta Dantzler (2nd from the left)

(l-r) Bela Fleck, Associate Professor Mark Stone, Haruna Walusimbi and Abigail Washburn

(l-) President George Hynd, Professor John-Paul White and Provost James Lentini