

SMTD News, November 2017

Ali Woerner and Thayer Jonutz of Take Root, a non-profit dance company-in-residence at OU, held their season opening concert on Oct. 14 at Red Bull Art House. The concert also featured the debut of Take Root's underwater dance film, "Ripples From The Skin We Shed," which featured all eight company members underwater.

On Oct. 27, Jonutz and Woerner were presented with the Emerging Artist Award by the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre and Dance. The awards recognize SMTD graduates from within the past 15 years who have made a significant contribution to their artistic field. "Our time at the University of Michigan not only fostered the beginning of our journey through art and collaboration, but our mentors provided space for us to understand the true gift of our craft and how to pay it forward within our communities," Woerner said. "The Emerging Artist Award is incredibly meaningful to us because it represents the journey that got us to this point in our careers and the endless possibilities that are ahead."

Woerner will also be the guest speaker at OU's next Soundings Series, which will take place from 3-4:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 27 in 242 Elliott Hall. Woerner will share her experience about engaging the community via the Dance for Parkinson's Disease Program, which offers classes in three locations in Oakland County. To RSVP, contact Leanne DeVreugd at devreugd@oakland.edu.



Ian Lester, winner of the state-level MTNA Young Artist Competition in the Solo Brass category.

Music student **Ian Lester** was named the winner of the state-level Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Young Artist Competition in the Solo Brass category. He performed a challenging program including movements from the Vladimir Cosma and the Joseph Horowitz *Euphonium Concertos*, Peter Graham's *The Holy Well* and Georg Philipp Telemann's *Flute Fantasia no. 3 in g minor*. He will be competing against other state-level winners at the regional level competition in January at the University of Illinois. In addition, **Brandon Thibault** received the alternate position and **Matt Dutton** was given the honorable mention. Ian, Brandon and Matt all study with Dr. Kenneth Kroesche.

Alex Benoit, ice dancer and Oakland University theatre major, was featured on an NBC national news spot called "Going for the Gold." Alex and his partner Elliana Pogrebinsky recently competed in the 2017 Audi Cup of China, held Nov. 3-5 in Beijing, and the 2017 Internationaux de France, held Nov. 17-19 in Grenoble. The events are part of the 2018-19 ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating, a senior-level international invitational competition series. "We are so incredibly proud," Benoit said. "We had the best skate of our season and the audience was so supportive of our commitment and passion. It was such an incredible feeling to know that we put it all out there!" You may also have seen Alex in the role of Cheech, one of the male leads in OU's rendition of Bullets Over Broadway, a musical based on a screenplay written by Woody Allen and Douglas McGrath.

Marcus; Or the Secret of Sweet was featured Nov. 15 on *Education Today* with WWJ Radio 950AM Reporter Laura Bonnell. A provocative, poignant and sometime humorous story of 16-year-old Marcus Eshu coming to terms with his sexual curiosity and a dream that haunts him, *Marcus; Or the Secret of Sweet* brings us to days before hurricane Katrina and follows Marcus on a journey of self-discovery after the funeral of his best friend's father triggers a need in Marcus to know more about his own father, who he doesn't remember. You can listen to the *Education Today* segment [here](#).

Theatre student **Emily Hadick** is playing Hope Harcourt in the The Encore Musical Theatre



Ali Woerner and Thayer Jonutz of Take Root debuted their underwater dance film "Ripples From The Skin We Shed" during their season opening concert on Oct. 14 at Red Bull Art House. (Photo courtesy Sam Paraventi/Minty Photography)

past student Donovan Chambers is in the ensemble. Hadick and Robinson previously worked together on The Encore Musical Theatre Company's production of *Sweeney Todd*, which ran Sept. 28-Oct. 22. Hadick played Johanna, while Robinson played Toby.

Erica Kennedy, an Oakland University sophomore majoring in musical theatre, was recently named Miss West Michigan in the 2018 Scholarship Pageant. Kennedy, who has been competing in the Miss America Organization for seven years and was named *Miss Congeniality* in the 2017 Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant in June, says that being a musical theatre major has helped her in pageant competitions. At the same time, her pageant experience has helped improve her public speaking and performance skills for theatre. "Words and actions matter whether onstage or backstage, and people will remember kindness long after the competition is over," Kennedy said.



OU's dance students performed sections of Nijinsky's "Rite of Spring." (Photo courtesy JLBoone Photography)

The Oakland Chorale, under the direction of Michael A. Mitchell, traveled to Eastern Michigan University on Nov. 10 to participate in *Sing for Justice, Michigan!*, an interdisciplinary event that calls for musicians, artists and scholars from across the state to consider their role as ambassadors for change on social issues. The event was hosted by Eastern Michigan University and the Michigan American Choral Director's Association.

On Sept. 9 OU's dance students took part in a lecture-demonstration led by "dance royalty" Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, one of the ballet world's most prestigious dance and design teams. They performed sections of Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, as reconstructed by Hodson and Archer, while the history and significance of the dance was explained. The event, which was standing room only, took place at the Eisenhower Dance Laboratory Theatre in Rochester.

Milica Govich, a special lecturer in theatre at Oakland University, wrapped filming *Mel*, a short film by Tanner Havens (Ha Film). Tanner wrote the script along with OU alumna **Erin Ellis**. Tanner's wife, **Kayla Havens**, is also an OU grad and serve first assistant director and photographer on the project. One of the film's producers, **Collin Crick**, was a student in Milica's Theatre 100 class several years ago! Follow the film's progress on Instagram [@havensfilm](#). Once completed, you'll be able to view the trailer at [havensfilm.com](#).

Music faculty member **Benjamin Fuhrman's** *Prelude (for an unspecified instrument)* was published in the book *Four Centuries of Solo Mandolin Music*, which was released in October edited by mandolinist Neil Gladd. "This is the first update to the book since 1988 and has been in the works for over two years now," Fuhrman said. Another of Fuhrman's works, *...A Handful of Dust*, was accepted for performance at the *Electro-Acoustic Barn Dance Festival*, which will be held Feb. 8-10 at Jacksonville University in Florida.

Split Decision, a play by award-winning playwright and OU lecturer **Kitty Dubin**, was one of six plays selected from over 500 submissions for production in the *Old Library Theatre's* *One Act Festival* in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. Written by Dubin and directed by Bill Kaufman, *Split Decision* is about a couple in crisis who sit down with a divorce counselor to attempt an amicable and easy split.

Mark Stone, associate professor of world music and percussion at Oakland University, and composer **Dwayne Anthony** of Pontiac presented their joint effort, "*Soul Food*" on Oct. 11 at the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference in Denver. The full presentation is available for viewing at [CUMU Conference 2017](#). Later that month, Stone also participated in the bicentenary celebration of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, at the newly restored *Flagstar Strand Theatre* in downtown Pontiac. Other featured performers included: Sounding Light (chamber choir), the School of World Music & Dance (classical Indian music and dance), Spirits Rising (contemporary Native-American music), Ja Quintet for the Nightingale (Jazz), and The Voices of Oneness featuring Lady Peachena (Gospel).

Dr. Jackie Wiggins, distinguished professor of music education, was a keynote speaker at the *Musichildren'17: Music For and By Children* conference held Oct. 19-21 at the University of Aveiro in Portugal. The main goal of the conference was to "explore aspects of music for children, and music that is created by children" and Professor Wiggins' keynote address, "Children as Music Creators: Reflecting on 45 Years of Learning from Children," was a highlight. Associate Professor of Music



"Marcus; Or the Secret of Sweet" tells the story of Marcus, a 16-year-old coming to terms with his sexual curiosity and a dream that haunts him. (Photo courtesy The Oakland Post)

Leslie Littell, special lecturer in costume design and owner of Ashbridge Costume Studio, is the designer of the Wonder Woman costume seen on the cover of the latest edition of *Neighborhood SEEN* magazine. Leslie often invites OU students to work with her on Ashbridge projects, and OU dance student Megan Cannon assisted on this project. Inside the magazine is a feature on Leslie, and theatre students **Katie Person** and **Paige VanSickle** are quoted in the article. In addition, Littell was also recently published on *Taylor & Francis Online* and in the latest issue of *Dress, Issue 2* for her book review of *The Silhouette: From the 18th Century to the Present Day*, by Georges Vegarello. Her work will also be featured in the upcoming OU theatre production of *The School for Scandal* this February.



Thomas D. Mahard (right) appeared on Season 1 of Comedy Central's "Detroit" as Irv Smith. (Photo courtesy Tom Mahard)

Lynnae Lehfeldt, associate professor of theatre at Oakland University, played the role of Mrs. Schubert in *Meadow Brook Theatre's* production of *Shear Madness*. The unique comedy-whodunit takes place in the "Shear Madness" hair salon and is chock full of up-to-the minute spontaneous humor. Amy J. Parrent of *Encore Michigan* called the show "*cuttingly funny*" and praised Lehfeldt's performance as "a believable Bloomfield Hills-ish matron."

Thomas D. Mahard, a special lecturer at Oakland University for over 20 years, appeared on Season 1 of Comedy Central's *Detroit* as Irv Smith, owner of Irv and Dottie Smith's preteen and baby furniture store, in an episode called "Smilin' Jack." He will return as Irv for another episode in Season 2, which will begin airing in February. In fact, this season will be filled with many happy returns for Mahard. He will be returning to the play *And The Creek Don't Rise*, now titled *Northern Aggression*, at Tipping Point Theatre. In addition, Mahard will also return to the Dearborn Inn to portray Henry Ford at the Dinner Dance fundraiser for the Fairlane Estate. He will also return to the Meadow Brook Theatre for his 32nd production of *A Christmas Carol* and his 8th years playing Ebenezer Scrooge.



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