

Oberlin

OBERLIN ALUMNI MAGAZINE

WINTER/SPRING 2024



**SARAH LYONS CHASE '10 IS RUNNING A THRIVING,
THIRD-GENERATION DAIRY FARM. | PAGE 16**

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MAKING BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

In November 2023, the Oberlin Opera Theater presented Benjamin Britten's acclaimed chamber opera *Albert Herring*. This production, which was double cast with students from Oberlin's Vocal Studies Division and performed with the Oberlin Chamber Orchestra, was a collaboration between Opera Director Stephanie Havey and music director Michael Sakir '06. Upon his return to Oberlin, Sakir said, "It's an honor, a joy, and, in some ways, a reset for my creative spirits."

PHOTO BY YEVHEN GULENKO

ON THE COVER

Sarah Lyons Chase '10 at Chaseholm Farm.

PHOTO BY © B. DOCKTOR







Oberlin Invests in Students, Now and Always

SOMETIMES, IT'S HARD TO SEE PROGRESS WHEN YOU ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE WORK.

I'm reminded of that when construction fences and the hum of heavy machinery hide the bold infrastructure initiative we are undertaking as a campus community.

But if we look past the machines, the dust, and the dirt, we see the Oberlin of a not-so-distant tomorrow: an Oberlin that will have met the challenge of carbon neutrality through the completion of our Sustainable Infrastructure Program and which welcomes future generations of students to new residence halls.

Of course, our efforts to support students extend far beyond our physical infrastructure.

The first year of our Internship+ program, which offers third-year students up to \$5,000 in support from Oberlin as they take part in summer internships, research, and other professional opportunities, is in full swing with the Class of 2025.

We launched the ObieExpress, a free shuttle that connects students with thriving neighborhoods and businesses throughout the Cleveland area, allowing Obies to experience arts, recreation, and shopping opportunities like never before.

During Winter Term, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Ashby Business Scholars program, through which a new cohort of students gained insight and experience from a range of business leaders, much as previous generations of scholars embarked on professional paths through their own Ashby experiences. (More on that on page 28.)

This semester, Oberlin began offering a confidential teletherapy service that provides free professional mental health services to all students every day of the year, whether on or off campus. This offering, in partnership with Uwill, complements our already extensive campus counseling services and represents the latest step in our steadfast commitment to fully supporting the health and wellness of every student.

But just as we invest in students, Oberlin is also intentionally investing in our faculty and staff. It's a key reason why we've started implementing the recommendations of an extensive compensation study conducted over the past two years. These efforts aim to ensure that Oberlin continues to attract and retain the most outstanding faculty and staff in every office and academic department on campus.

There's always a lot going on on this campus and always more to be done. You might say that the dirt and dust have begun to settle, and the vibrancy of our work and campus is now more clearly seen.

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR

President, Oberlin College and Conservatory

Oberlin

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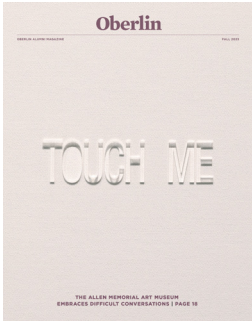
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POSTMASTER

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TIMES CHANGE

Over 20 years ago, Oberlin published a 2002 calendar showcasing 12 works of art from the Allen Memorial Art Museum. Years later, I was looking through my copy of that calendar and was stunned to realize that the Greek vase featured on the April page was painted with an image of a woman being subjected to sexual violence. The caption read, “Greek; Attic, Amphora (sub-nikosthenic type), c. 520-510 B.C. Painted pottery.” I still remember how angry I felt. Once again, an artist had used a woman’s violation and trauma as subject matter for decorative art. And over 2,000 years later, curators had seen fit to select that work (out of the vast collection available to them) for display in a glossy calendar, without considering this woman’s violation and trauma even worthy of mention.

Fast-forward to the Fall 2023 *OAM* (“The Art of Difficult Conversations”), in which the AMAM’s Sam Adams observes, “There are so many images of sexual assault that appear throughout art history. . . We [often] put these things on view, and we talk about the mythological importance or the style, the formal elements. To me, that perpetuates rape culture.” I couldn’t agree more. You’ve come a long way, AMAM.

CLAIRE HUANG KINSLEY ’89
Toronto, Ontario



CAT IS FOR COOKIE

@oberlincollege made a post about the Cat and the Cream’s cookies!?! Well, I couldn’t resist myself and tried to recreate the cookies with different mix-ins, including M&Ms, raisins, craisins and @ghirardelli squares. DELICIOUS! #IMissOberlin

LISA M. KPOR ’11
via Instagram

CORRECTIONS: In the Fall 2023 issue of *OAM*, the credit line for the Yoko Ono artwork that appeared on the cover was inadvertently omitted. The correct wording should be: Yoko Ono (born 1933), *Touch Me*, 2007, Die-cut plexiglass on canvas, Gift of Douglas Baxter (OC 1972) in honor of the artist’s grandfather Eijiro Ono (OC 1887). Additionally, Hanna Raskin ’98’s byline was accidentally left out during the editing process for her Thought Process feature “For Sake’s Sake.” In Class Notes, Amy Maude Helfer ’03 was “the alto soloist,” not “an alto soloist,” with New York City Opera in the U.S. premiere of Lera Auerbach’s *Symphony #6, Vessels of Light*. And the Losses note about Mary Jane Corry ’46 erroneously attributed her studies to Paul Hindemith; in fact, she studied with one of Paul’s relatives.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH OBERLIN!

Update Your Address

Have you recently moved? Share your new contact info online. go.oberlin.edu/oam-address-update

Submit a Class Note

You can now submit a class note (along with a photo) online. go.oberlin.edu/submit-class-notes

Connect on Social Media

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Send letters to the editor, story tips, and pitches to alum.mag@oberlin.edu. If you are submitting a letter to the editor, please specify that your note is for publication and also include your class year and how your name should appear in print.

Around Tappan Square



SAVE THE DATE! Homecoming and Reunion Weekend will take place September 27-29, 2024. Oberlin welcomes all alumni back to campus, especially those celebrating fall reunions: the 15th (Classes of '08, '09, & '10), 35th (Classes of '88, '89, & '90), and 65th (Classes of '58, '59, & '60) clusters. As these photos from 2023's festivities demonstrate, expect fun and connection galore! Details: go.oberlin.edu/homecoming and go.oberlin.edu/reunion





HIGHEST HONORS

2023 Alumni Award Winners

Each year the Oberlin Alumni Association's Awards Committee selects five distinguished alumni to be honored for their contributions to the college, their communities, and society. Congratulations to our newest winners! Read more about their accomplishments: go.oberlin.edu/alumni-awards

2023 Alumni Medal: Cynthia A. Brown '74

2023 Distinguished Achievement Award: Phan Wannamethee '51

2023 Distinguished Service Award: Dr. Joseph Graves, Jr. '77

2023 Outstanding Young Alumni Award: Dr. Alexandria Cunningham '16

2023 Alumni Appreciation Award: Ed Milner '79



NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Athletics Department Earns LGBTQ Honors from NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) named Oberlin the LGBTQ Institution of the Year. The honor, announced in January 2024 at the NCAA's annual conference in Phoenix, recognizes one NCAA Division III school or conference annually for its continuous assessment of and reflection about LGBTQ needs, strategies,

and goals while creating and supporting programs aimed at increasing LGBTQ cultural and practical competencies for all student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and staff. Oberlin dive coach Lucas Draper '23, a former member of the team, was also a finalist for the NCAA's LGBTQ Student-Athlete of the Year Award.

CAMPUS NEWS

Oberlin Expands Partnership with Posse Foundation

Oberlin is expanding its 17-year partnership with the Posse Foundation, a national nonprofit that teams up with selective U.S. colleges and universities to provide scholarships and leadership training for outstanding students from more than 20 cities across America. Since 2006, Oberlin has welcomed more than 170 Posse Scholars from Chicago. In fall 2025, the first Posse Scholars from Houston will begin studies alongside the 19th Chicago cohort. "We are proud to grow our long-standing relationship with Posse Scholars because the model really works," says Oberlin President Carmen Twillie Ambar. "The Posse Foundation got its start more than three decades ago, inspired by a student who said, 'I never would have dropped out of college if I'd had my posse with me.' That simple but powerful message has led to countless success stories at Oberlin and other institutions that deeply value equal access to education." All Posse Scholars receive four-year, full-tuition scholarships from Oberlin. A \$500,000, five-year grant from the Posse Foundation supports additional costs associated with each Posse Scholar's schooling. Read more about this expanded partnership at: go.oberlin.edu/posse

COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT; COURTESY OF THE OBERLIN ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT



PEAK PERFORMANCE

Conservatory Students Go West for Winter Term

Oberlin students and their faculty mentors devoted Winter Term to collaborating on a pair of immersive musical projects at Hidden Valley, an institute of the arts located in Carmel Valley, California. The projects—a TIMARA/dance collaboration and a chamber music intensive—culminated in public performances at Hidden Valley in January. The bucolic locale also played into

the Winter Term itinerary of the Oberlin Sonny Rollins Jazz Ensemble, which performed at the Hidden Valley Theater in addition to an engagement at SFJAZZ's Miner Auditorium in San Francisco. Since its founding in 1963, Hidden Valley has fostered artistic excellence through a diverse array of music education programs for youth, emerging artists, and adults.

MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

Oberlin Faculty, Alums Win 2024 Grammy Awards

Oberlin had a big night at the 2024 Grammy Awards. Horn professor and composer Jeff Scott won Best Classical Compendium for his composition *Passion For Bach And Coltrane*. The recording features performances by Imani Winds (whose Oberlin alumni members are flutist Brandon Patrick George '08, oboist Toyin Spellman-Diaz '94, and bassoonist Monica Ellis '95) as well as jazz percussionist Neal Smith '96.

The Grammy for Best Opera Recording—The Metropolitan Opera's recording of Terence Blanchard's *Champion*—was given to multiple people, including two alums: violinist Laura McGinnis '83 and music librarian Nishana Gunaratne Dobbeck '09 in the MET Orchestra, as well as Rosalie Sullivan '99, an alto in the Metropolitan Opera Chorus.

The LA Phil's recording of Thomas Adès' *Dante* won Best Orchestral Performance. Numerous alums are orchestra members, including principal clarinet Boris Allakhverdyan '06, associate principal viola Ben Ullery '04, oboist and solo English horn player Carolyn Hove '80, associate principal oboe Marion Arthur Kuszyk '88, and bass trombone John Lofton '77.

Bass-baritone Dashon Burton '05 won his third Grammy, as his group Roomful of Teeth took home Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for 2023's *Rough Magic*. "The American Project," a collaboration with pianist Yuja Wang and the Louisville Orchestra, won Best Classical Instrumental Solo. Members of the orchestra include violist Jennifer Shackleton '94 and principal bassoonist Matthew Karr '78.

In addition to these winners, numerous Oberlin alums and conservatory faculty (including Professor of Conducting Timothy Weiss and Professor of Advanced Improvisation and Percussion Jamey Haddad) received Grammy nominations this year.



ALUMNI HONORS

Two Alums Named National Book Award Finalists

Oberlin alums were well-represented at the 2023 National Book Awards. **Aaliyah Bilal '04** was nominated in the fiction category for the debut short story collection *Temple Folk* (Simon & Schuster, 2023), described by *Publishers Weekly* as a book that “depicts African American Muslims exploring their faith and seeking liberation in the 1970s.” In the

non-fiction category, **John Vaillant '84** was a finalist for *Fire Weather: A True Story from a Hotter World* (Knopf / Penguin Random House, 2023), which examined “the wildfire equivalent of Hurricane Katrina”: the May 2016 conflagration that decimated Fort McMurray, the hub of Canada’s oil industry and America’s biggest foreign supplier.



FACULTY AWARDS

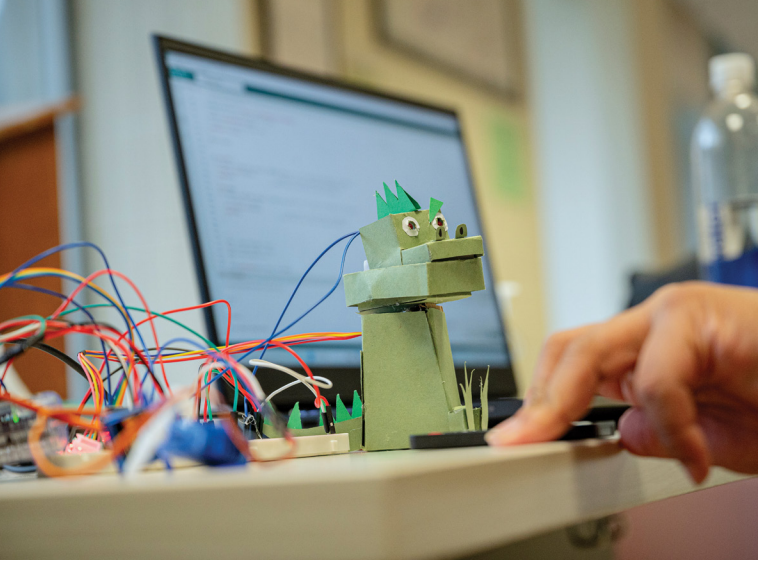
Matthew Rarey Wins 2024 Charles Rufus Morey Book Award

Matthew Rarey, chair of the art history department and associate professor of African and Black Atlantic art history, won the prestigious 2024 Charles Rufus Morey Book Award from the College Art Association (CAA). The award “honors an especially distinguished book in the history of art, published in the English language,” and is among the highest recognitions for

scholarship in art history. Rarey’s book, *Insignificant Things: Amulets and the Art of Survival in the Early Black Atlantic* (Duke University Press, 2023), “traces the history of the African-associated amulets that enslaved and other marginalized people carried as tools of survival in the Black Atlantic world from the 17th to the 19th centuries,” notes the publisher.

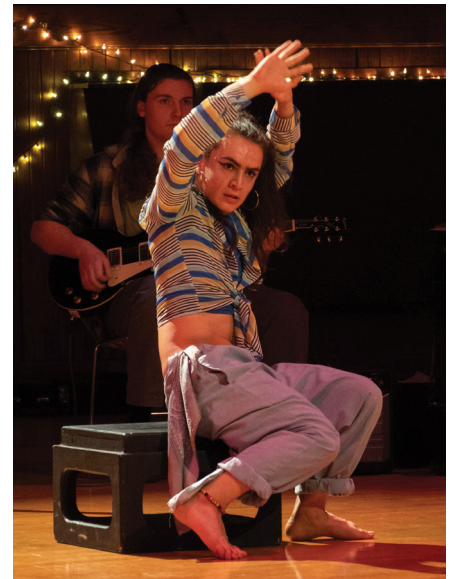
JOHN SINAL; TASHA PINETO; TANYA ROSEN-JONES '97

Around Tappan Square



WINTER TERM WONDERLAND

Oberlin students made the most of their 2024 Winter Term experiences, pursuing dozens of projects on and off campus involving things like in-depth research in biochemistry and magnetic materials, intensive language classes in Yiddish and Hebrew, and studies of mindfulness and meditation. Some students traveled abroad—doing collaborative comic-making in Nepal, exploring electronic music with TIMARA in Berlin, and learning about museums, historical memory and politics in Egypt—while others headed to Washington, D.C. for congressional internships. Closer to home, students explored collaborative coding and letterpress printing, planned for Drag Ball, participated in a Kosher-Halal Co-op Revival, and received training in documentary songwriting.



MIKE CRUPI (TOP ROW); AINA TASSO, CADY HURLBERT (MIDDLE ROW); NATHANIEL LIU, MIKE CRUPI (BOTTOM ROW)

TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT

\$5M Gift Supports Oberlin Business Programs and Curriculum



Alan L. Wurtzel has spent his entire career helping businesses thrive. Under his leadership of Circuit City, including a 14-year tenure as CEO, the consumer electronics and appliances retailer grew into a top-performing Fortune 500 company. Wurtzel also has been an active investor in startups and served on the boards of multiple public and private companies, including Office Depot.

Now future generations of Oberlin business leaders will be able to follow in Wurtzel's footsteps, thanks to a transformative gift made by the 1955 Oberlin graduate and his wife, Irene. The Wurtzels have committed \$5 million to establish the Alan L. '55 and Irene R. Wurtzel Endowed Fund for Business Education, which will provide the support necessary to enhance business education at Oberlin. The \$5 million gift is contingent on raising an additional \$5 million, as the goal is to encourage other donors to support an expanded business program at Oberlin.

"We are excited and deeply grateful for this gift," says Associate Professor of Business Eric Lin. "In addition to academic excellence, Oberlin has deep strengths in creative domains and social change. We want to build a program that complements these long-standing traditions and integrates well with the college and conservatory. And we want to introduce opportunities to build new capabilities. With this generous support, we'll be able to do all these things—and build a world-class business

program that prepares our students to make an outsized impact on the world."

Currently, Oberlin's integrative concentration in business covers foundational areas including accounting, economics, management, and ethics, as well as emerging fields such as social entrepreneurship, sustainability, and technology.

The Wurtzel Endowed Fund will allow Oberlin to expand the curriculum, inclusive of business and nonprofit organizations, and provide internships, mentoring, and experiential learning. The fund will also support salaries and benefits for faculty and staff and bring business leaders and short-term faculty to campus.

An honorary Oberlin trustee, Alan Wurtzel is widely recognized as a highly engaged, fiercely loyal, generous, and inspiring member of the Oberlin community.

"In this day and age, a college education costs in excess of a quarter of a million dollars," he says. "Parents and students need assurance that when they graduate, they can get a job, repay any debts, and support a reasonable lifestyle. Hopefully, this gift and the matches it inspires will enable Oberlin to attract a wider group of students and equip them to find meaningful employment."

Oberlin will create an ad hoc advisory committee of internal and external representatives to advise on the business program and focus on raising funds for the \$5 million match.

LISTEN TO

RUNNING TO THE NOISE

A monthly podcast with

**PRESIDENT
CARMEN
TWILLIE AMBAR**

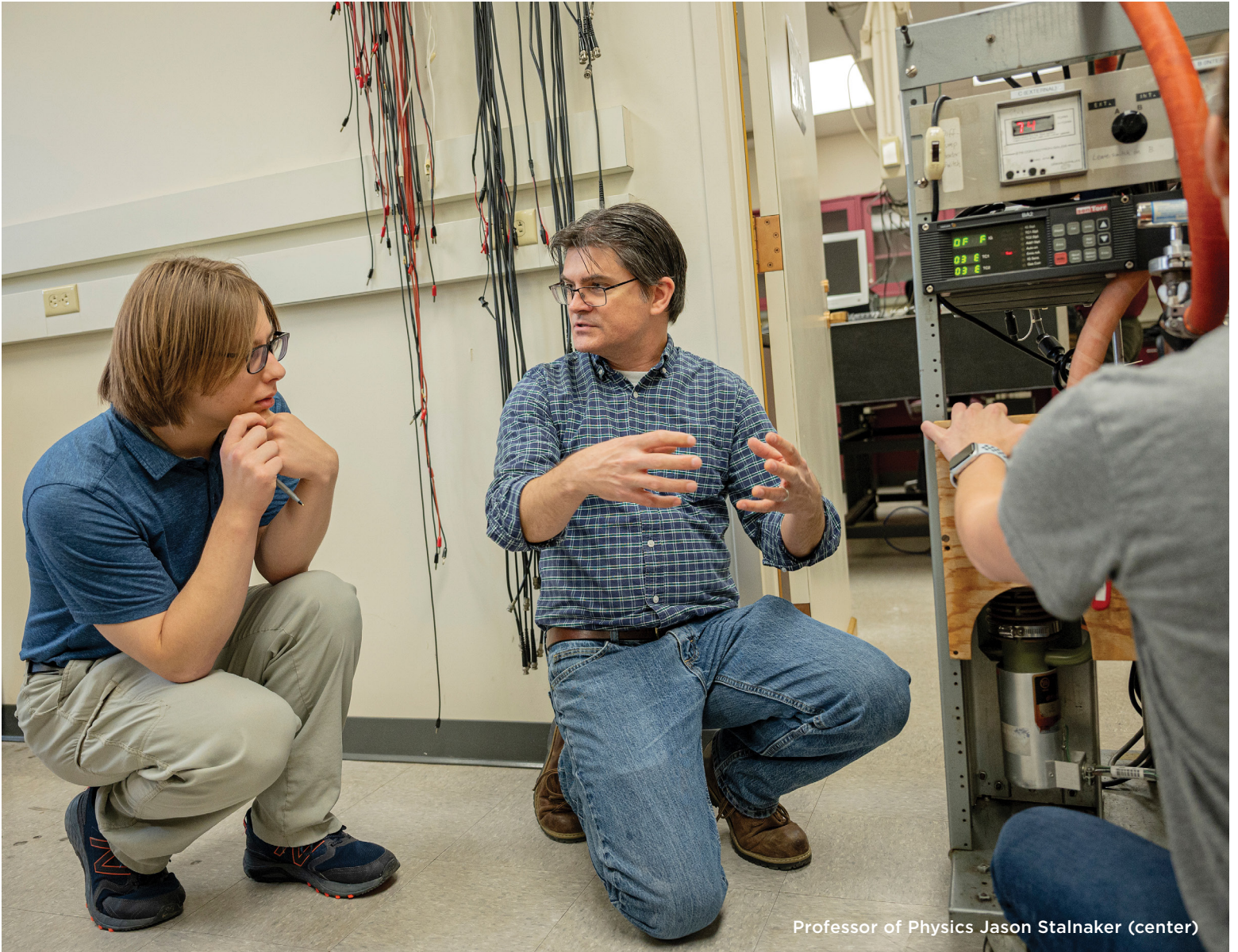


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oberlin.edu/running-to-the-noise

Thought Process



Professor of Physics Jason Stalnakar (center)

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

No Ordinary Matter

BY ANNIE ZALESKI

Oberlin researchers are part of a global effort to detect and understand dark matter.

Dark matter is named so because it is composed of particles that do not absorb, reflect, or emit light. However, physicists have long known that this exists because of the effect it has on astronomical observations. For instance, dark matter can explain the way stars in a galaxy orbit around its center.

“The question is, how do you detect dark matter?” asks Professor of Physics Jason Stalnakar. “One possibility is that the interaction between dark matter and ordinary matter might be similar to the way matter interacts with a magnetic field.”

Stalnakar is part of a worldwide collaboration of scientists searching for evidence of dark matter fields using magnetometers based on alkali atoms. In fact, Stalnakar’s lab is one of only four undergraduate-only institutions collaborating in the Global Network of Optical Magnetometers for Exotic Physics Searches, or GNOME.

The researchers have set up a network of magnetometers and are coordinating

experiments with the goal of detecting and collecting data on dark matter.

“We have a pretty good understanding of ordinary matter, but if we look out in the universe and we look at the way stars move in galaxies, we see that apparently 80 percent of matter out there is not made up of the matter that we know of and are familiar with,” explains Stalnakar, whose research is funded by a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation.

“It’s something that is not basic atoms made up from quarks and electrons. It doesn’t interact with or emit light, and we don’t see light scattering off of it. We don’t know exactly what it is at this point.”

Looking for Signals

Scientists working on the project believe that dark matter fields could produce a signal pattern that can be detected by magnetometers at multiple stations of the GNOME network distributed around the world, including Germany, Serbia, Poland, Israel, South Korea, China, Australia, and several labs in the United States.

Stalnaker has expertise in building atomic magnetometers—instruments that can measure very small magnetic fields. By spreading the magnetometers across the world, researchers can stream data at the same time and look for correlations between locations. If the Earth passes through some very large structure, the hope is that it will be detected by the GNOME network and produce a signal pattern—a sign of a global dark matter interaction.

An article published in *Nature Physics* in late 2021 included three Oberlin alums as coauthors: Sun Yool Park '19, Perrin Segura '20, and Dhruv Tandon '22. All three participated in the honors program in physics and did their research on some aspect of the GNOME project. Stalnaker says the article was an important milestone for the collaboration, as it reports the first limits the GNOME network has placed on a potential dark-matter candidate.

Park, a PhD student at the University of Colorado at Boulder, was also the lead student in the construction of the first generation of the magnetometer. “She was the driving force behind getting it up and running,” says Stalnaker. “It’s really quite impressive.”

Mentoring Future Physicists

At Oberlin, Stalnaker and his student collaborators are also leading a different analysis designed to look for dark matter in the form of axion stars. These axion stars would be large-scale clusters of dark matter particles. Segura and Tandon—graduate students at Harvard and Stanford, respectively—worked on this effort for their honors theses.

“This is a great project for students because they have been able to take control of the analysis, and they get to do really cool things,” Stalnaker says, noting that students also have opportunities to present their data at national conferences and international GNOME collaboration meetings.

Ehsan Nikfar '25 is working on the axion star analysis—but he’s also worked on another project related to GNOME, the Search for Non-Interacting Particles Experiment (SNIFE),

alongside Eduardo Castro Muñoz '23. In fall 2023, Stalnaker, Castro Muñoz, and Nikfar co-authored a paper in *Physical Review D* on a search for magnetic signatures of hidden photon and axion dark matter in the wilderness.

This paper grew out of summer research where the trio took to the woods to capture information about dark photons. “Dark photons, or hidden photons, are candidates for dark matter,” Castro Muñoz says. “So the kind of signal we’re looking for should be able to be detected all over Earth. It doesn’t have a big amplitude; it has a really long wavelength.” Although they didn’t detect dark matter in this first run, “we found new limits for the 1-5 Hz range,” Castro Muñoz says, which helps the researchers refine their focus.

Nikfar, an international student from Herat, Afghanistan, joined Stalnaker’s lab as a scholar in Oberlin’s STRONG program (Science and Technology Research Opportunities for a New Generation), which provides early research opportunities with faculty mentors. Nikfar says that collaborating with his faculty mentor has given him experience in solving real-world problems and helped him develop the skills necessary to do research.

Castro Muñoz, a physics and Hispanic

studies major from Copiapó, Chile, says his work on the dark matter experiments and data analysis has made him a better computer programmer and deepened his love of physics.

“Seeing the applicability of the abstract concepts I have learned in class has made me see the beauty in physics,” says Castro Muñoz, now a graduate student in physics at Yale University.

Stalnaker says the nature of dark matter is one of the most important questions in fundamental physics, and “it has been exciting to work on figuring it out with Oberlin undergraduate students.”

After all, scientific research isn’t a solitary pursuit—and Stalnaker is always looking for ways to ensure students excited about physics have a chance to explore.

During Winter Term 2024, he sponsored a group project on dark matter research. Students developed and operated sensors for experiments based on hands-on work with optics, electronics, and data acquisition systems. No prior experience or specific coursework was necessary—the only prerequisite was an interest in physics.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY AMANDA NAGY.

Learning Labs

During Oberlin’s fall 2023 Lab Crawl, students observe Assistant Professor of Biology Gaybe Moore '15 demonstrating infection in the in vivo model of *Galleria mellonella*.





RECIPE

Secret Sauce

BY HANNA RASKIN '98

Once OSCA's membership secretary, Maggie Bayless '77 now helps food entrepreneurs hone their businesses.

Nearly every Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) member in the 1970s had to give serious thought to the organization's relationship with the college and the environmental consequences of eating meat. But on top of participating in those animating debates, OSCA board members also had to determine who could join a co-op in the first place.

"It was really high pressure," said Maggie Bayless '77, who in her senior year served as OSCA's membership secretary.

Even though slots were distributed through a lottery, Bayless' classmates begged for special consideration: One even tried to sway her with a quarter taped to congressional letterhead, swiped from the office where he was interning. But during Bayless' tenure, OSCA came up with a workaround. Instead of drawing names from a hat, the board programmed a punch card machine in Mudd Library to randomize applications and spit out a list.

Although Bayless didn't know it at the time, the process improvement foreshadowed her future career. In 1994, after a dozen years of collaborating with the collection of businesses that grew out of Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Bayless founded ZingTrain. A kind of ongoing colloquium for progressive business owners, ZingTrain helps its seminar takers find tools and master methodologies to strengthen their organizations.

In short, ZingTrain teaches well-meaning food entrepreneurs (and everyone else who signs up for its courses) how to overcome system glitches that threaten to undermine their passion or derail their vision.

Bayless said she often encounters people who are surprised that Zingerman's is willing to share its approach to leadership development, staff training, and self-management, among other topics. But in keeping with her cooperative background, Bayless can't imagine monopolizing valuable information.

"I'm not interested in policing what other people are doing," she said. "That's such a downer. If it improves the overall level of customer service, that's great—and we learn more ourselves by teaching. It's just that abundance mentality."

While Bayless credits Zingerman's founders Ari Weinzweig and Paul Saginaw with fostering that mindset, Weinzweig in

turn credits Bayless with working "quietly, consistently, collaboratively [and] caringly." When Bayless stepped back from day-to-day ZingTrain responsibilities in 2020, Weinzweig wrote, "Some people say they're 'in it to win it.' I think Maggie's always been in it to help others around her come out ahead."

The daughter of two Oberlin graduates, Bayless grew up visiting campus: The school was such a steady presence in her life that she didn't apply anywhere else. At Oberlin, she studied German literature. Soon after graduation, she got a job at First National Bank of Chicago. But her college boyfriend had moved to Ann Arbor, "which seemed like this cool, groovy town," so she relocated to join him.

Almost immediately, their romantic relationship ended. But Bayless' relationship with Ann Arbor was just beginning. She'd met Weinzweig when the two were waiting tables at the same restaurant, and she became an informal advisor to the deli when it opened in 1982. Bayless worked Saturday counter shifts while she earned her MBA from the University of Michigan and stayed close to the operation as instructional design emerged as her dominant professional interest.

"When the world news is really depressing, I teach a seminar and realize there are all of these people doing great work," she said. "It isn't making headlines, but it makes life worth living."

Spoken like a true OSCA membership secretary.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA-BASED HANNA RASKIN '98 IS THE CREATOR OF THE *FOOD SECTION*, A NEWSLETTER COVERING FOOD AND DRINK IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH.

Recipe: Risotto alla Sbirraglia

"Risotto is my go-to," says Maggie Bayless, who's partial to short ingredient lists. But she insists on using the best rice, cheese, and olive oil for this favorite recipe, adapted from Norma Wasserman and Judith Barrett's 1989 collection of risotto preparations. According to the authors' headnote, this chicken risotto tracks back to Harry's Bar in Venice.

View the recipe: go.oberlin.edu/Secret-Sauce

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Happy Return

BY ERICH BURNETT

Oberlin was Samia Mansour's top college choice. Now years removed from her graduation, she chose it all over again.

It's been a few semesters since Samia Mansour '10 was a religion student at Oberlin. In the years that followed her graduation, she worked for Oberlin College Hillel and for Cleveland-area nonprofits that support interfaith couples and families, as well as women and gender non-conforming individuals. Along the way, she completed a master's degree in social work from Case Western Reserve University.

In fall 2023, Mansour returned to campus as assistant dean and director for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life. It's a role that interacts closely with students and complements the work of her colleague, Multifaith Chaplain David Dorsey. We caught up with Mansour to learn more about her student years and the journey back.

You originally came to Oberlin from nearby Canton, Ohio. What appealed to you about it at the time?

So many things! Oberlin was the first school I visited, and I absolutely fell in love. I compared every other school I visited to Oberlin, so when it came time to apply, I knew Oberlin was my No. 1 choice. Oberlin was so different from the community and school I was coming from, and even though it's not far from where I live, I used to joke that I needed a passport to come to Oberlin.

I felt like a big fish in a small

pond in high school. I had so many dreams, interests, and things I was passionate about, and I didn't feel I had a place to put that energy. I was a first-generation and low-income student as well, so I knew that college was my only real chance to make it out and be able to pursue my passions. Oberlin's historic achievements inspired me; I felt represented by the progressive and inclusive campus environment. I appreciated the commitment to global learning, and I loved the quirkiness of Oberlin students. My life was changed by my decision to become an Obie.

How did your career path take shape?

I honestly didn't come to Oberlin with any specific career aspirations. My first goal was to make it to college, and I knew I wanted to find a path to do good in the world. I was confident I would find my way and wanted to keep my options open.

Looking back, I think I had a hard time imagining all the possibilities of what could be. As the first in my family to attend college, no one I knew had a job or career they loved; work was a means to a paycheck. Folks didn't have an opportunity to pursue their passions, and so I didn't know what it would look like if I did. I started by taking classes that piqued my interest and ultimately found that I couldn't stop taking courses in the religion department. I was on a spiritual journey of my own, and once I opened that door, there was no closing it. Every role I've held after Oberlin has been in the realm of religious and spiritual life.

A few years after graduating, I decided to get my master's in

Samia Mansour



social work. I believe that social work skills are universally transferable; you can find social workers in all kinds of organizations and roles. I knew that in whatever position I took, I thrived when working with people and supporting them on their path. And so social work felt like a natural fit. It opened up many possibilities for where my future career could go and gave me a lot of tangible skills.

I often wished that I was one of those people who knew exactly what they wanted to be in the world; I thought that would be so much easier! But I am grateful for my journey, the incredible people I've met, and the experiences I've had along the way.

Tell us about your role on campus.

My role is focused on working with student groups, supporting student needs as they relate

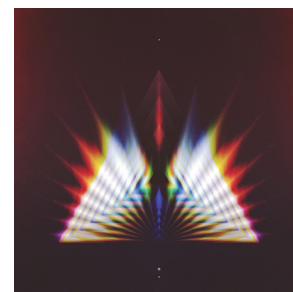
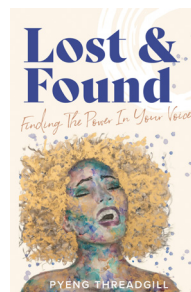
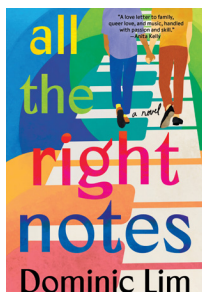
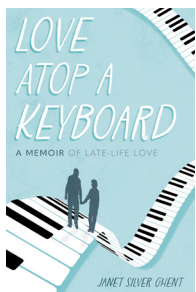
to religious and spiritual life, and working collaboratively with other departments in the Center for Intercultural Engagement. However, I am still learning what this role is and can grow into, and I am open to learning more from folks on campus about what they would like to see from our office.

What's your favorite thing that's changed about Oberlin since you were a student?

There are many new opportunities for student support and career development that I don't remember from when I was a student. New courses and concentrations and professors—I wish I could be a student again! Student life has evolved in a wonderful way since I was here, and I love to see all of the collaboration and restructuring that better serves student needs.

RECENT RELEASES

Sound and Vision



Books

MEMOIR

Love Atop a Keyboard
Janet Silver Ghent '64

MASCOT
For Janet Silver Ghent, the end of her first marriage opened up new opportunities ranging from a fuller embrace of Judaism to a deeper kind of love. In her memoir *Love Atop a Keyboard*, the longtime journalist takes readers along as she navigates single life in her 50s, dates a bewildering array of not-quite-right guys, and crafts the cute singles-ad copy that eventually leads her to The One. As Janet and Allen strike out on new adventures, life throws a few unexpected detours. But the story of their warm and harmonious connection (they sing together in chorales) makes for a witty and entertaining read. It's reassuring, too, to see that *joie de vivre* isn't only reserved for the young. —Karen Sandstrom

FICTION

All the Right Notes
Dominic Lim '96

FOREVER
In this affecting, relatable debut novel, Dominic Lim skillfully and joyfully unpacks the decades-long love story between pianist-composer Francisco "Quito" Cruz and Hollywood heartthrob Emmett

Aoki. The pair first met in high school choir class and, across the decades, found their lives diverging and intersecting in often surprising ways. *All the Right Notes* alternates between flashbacks to their younger days—including detail-rich chapters about Quito's time as an Oberlin student—and the present time. The structure creates satisfying suspense, leading to a story that skillfully twists and turns through poignant threads about family, romance, and music. —Annie Zaleski

FICTION

The English Experience
Julie Schumacher '81

DOUBLEDAY
In her 2014 epistolary novel *Dear Committee Members*—a biting, hilarious sendup of academia that won the Thurber Prize for American Humor —Julie Schumacher introduced the world to Payne University English professor Jason Fitger. Her 2018 follow-up, *The Shakespeare Requirement*, subjected Fitger, now a department chair, to a string of indignities. *The English Experience* finishes the trilogy by sending our reluctant hero across the pond with a gang of students for "Experience: Abroad," a program he objects to for numerous reasons

—starting with the pretentious colon. *The English Experience* puts a delightful exclamation point on Fitger's adventures —although he might object to that, too. —KS

NONFICTION

People, Planet, Design: A Practical Guide to Realizing Architecture's Potential
Corey Squire '08

ISLAND
Can better building design be a positive force for human health, social connection and a warming planet? In *People, Planet, Design*, architect Corey Squire makes a compelling case that it can. In the 21st century, Squire writes, we should be beyond treating sustainability as a subset of architecture. "Today there is just design: good design that addresses relevant issues and bad design that turns a blind eye." One solution is ending the overemphasis on how buildings look and tending to other attributes, including acoustics, air quality, defense against the elements, and more. This elegantly written treatise argues that integrating holistic values in the design process is essential if we are to elevate built spaces and improve their impact on their occupants and the planet. —KS

CREATIVE MEMOIR

Lost & Found: Finding The Power In Your Voice
Pyeng Threadgill '99

PYENGNYC.COM
This galvanizing creative memoir by Brooklyn vocalist/composer and voice and movement teacher Pyeng Threadgill begins with an invitation to readers: "I hope this book gives you the opportunity to both hear yourself and find, or follow, your voice." Via a combination of poetry and autobiographical vignettes divided into three sections—Your Intuitive Voice, Your Sonic Voice, Your Artistic Voice—the book is a wise, empathetic guide to living a richer life and getting in touch with your creative self. Threadgill offers thought-provoking personal insights and vivid stories; memorable moments include growing up in 1980s New York City and a trip to India during Oberlin's Winter Term that becomes a transformative writing retreat. —AZ

Albums

Spark and Earth
Mario Diaz de Leon '04

DENOVALI RECORDS
Mario Diaz de Leon's band Luminous Vault combines seething black metal vocals and death metal riffage with aggressive electronic flourishes. That same spirit of genre



collision infuses the producer-composer's instrumental solo effort *Spark and Earth*; for example, jagged electric guitar riffs puncture percolating synth programming and ethereal modern classical textures on songs like "Cruces" and "Templo." Other moments reflect a more spiritual bent: The '80s-inspired electro of "Mirror Spirit" resembles a classic video game soundtrack, while the meditative "Breath of God" is evocative and emotional. —AZ

Fool's Croon EP
Kiéla Adira '18

SELF-RELEASED

At Oberlin, Kiéla Adira was part of the CLR Collective alongside longtime friends and collaborators Andre Cardine '18 and Daniella Pruitt '19. This creativity-focused artistic collective provided the Chicago singer-songwriter with a supportive foundation, as evidenced by the elegant music on her latest EP, the sterling *Fool's Croon*. Across six songs, Adira covers eclectic ground—R&B (the piano-driven "Loves Me Not"), soulful pop ("Blue"), and jazzy neo-soul ("Charity")—while a collaboration with Demetrius Rhymes, "Sky Is Falling," ends with a Prince-caliber electric guitar solo. —AZ

Jazz at Oberlin

The Dave Brubeck Quartet

ORIGINAL JAZZ CLASSICS SERIES

In fall 2023, Craft Recordings issued a beautiful pressing of the historic Dave Brubeck Quartet LP *Jazz at Oberlin* as part of its ongoing Original Jazz Classics Series reissues. One of the earliest examples of cool jazz, the live concert recording occurred at Finney Chapel on March 2, 1953, and had a massive impact at Oberlin. It gave birth to the student-run Oberlin College Jazz Club—now known as the Oberlin Jazz Society—and ultimately Oberlin Conservatory's Jazz Division. Pressed on 180-gram vinyl with all-analog mastering from the original tapes, this reissue does justice to the legendary concert. —AZ

Rough Magic

Roomful of Teeth

NEW AMSTERDAM RECORDS

Roomful of Teeth, which features Dashon Burton '05, kicked off 2024 by winning a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for Contemporary Voices for 2023's *Rough Magic*, a collection of mesmerizing vocal arrangements and boundary-defying compositions. —AZ



Join us for
All In For Oberlin!

On April 10, 2024, you have the ability to go All In For Oberlin and create opportunities for current Oberlin students through participation in our annual giving day. Your gift—of any size—will directly impact the student experience. Together, we can support a future of endless possibilities for our students. If you'd like to make your All In For Oberlin gift after April 10, use the QR code and we'll make sure your gift is counted!

CREAM OF THE CROP

Third-generation dairy farmer Sarah Lyons Chase '10 is milking to the beat of a different drummer—and thriving in the process.

BY HANNAH VAN SICKLE

Upstate New York in October is a feast for the senses. It's a region with a rich history of agriculture that's rife with rolling hills in hues of green and gold as far as the eye can see, punctuated by grain silos and plastic-wrapped hay bales dotting the soon-to-be-fallow fields. Brittle corn stalks rustle in the breeze, and the staghorn sumac is ablaze, its crimson canopy undulating in step with the surrounding landscape.

Transition abounds especially throughout the Hudson Valley's Dutchess County, an area spanning 78 square miles of hilly terrain bordered by the Taconic Mountains and the Hudson Highlands, where hand-lettered signs boast the last of summer's sweet corn and advertise pick-your-own apples. Dutchess County is also the home of Pine Plains, a rural hamlet named for the abundance of conifers still dotting the valley. Located 94 miles from New York City, Pine Plains was founded in 1823 and is home to a scant 2,200 people. Save for dairy farming and horse breeding, its biggest claim to fame is the fact that Barnum and Bailey Circus once housed its show animals at local farms during the winter.





Sarah Chase '10, Em Ambrose, and Jamie Gerber '13 plus their dog Monday outside Chaseholm Farm's self-serve Farm Store.

The Chase family has bred dairy cattle for three generations at Chaseholm Farm, located on a sprawling 330-acre tract of fertile land northeast of Pine Plains proper. Following in the footsteps of her father and late grandfather, Sarah Lyons Chase '10 took over the business in 2013 and became a farmer at age 24.

A decade later, she's turned Chaseholm Farm into a 100% grass-fed, USDA-certified organic dairy—and she's now milking every last drop out of a lifestyle that, in large part, has become unsustainable for many young farmers like herself. Across the Hudson Valley, small dairies are falling by the wayside, a byproduct of rising costs and dwindling profits. For a conventional dairy farmer, producing a gallon of milk costs more than it yields when sold to the dairy cooperative. That she owns and runs Chaseholm Farm is a rarity: According to the American Farmland Trust, only 4.1% of dairy operations in the United States have a woman as principal operator. On many fronts, Chase has slowly parted ways with tradition in favor of forging her own path—one paved with intention at every turn.

Ecology, Economy, Engagement

As a new farmer, Chase's main goal was to prioritize the ecology of her land by implementing holistic land management. It's a seismic shift imbued with reciprocal benefits for her animals, the land, and those stewarding it for the next generation. A whole-farm planning system introduced by ecologist Allan Savory in the early '80s, holistic land management helps farmers better manage agricultural resources in order to reap sustainable benefits. Environmentally, this means using the animals to heal the land (in lieu of harmful fertilizers and pesticides); economically, this translates to crafting a product (in Chase's case, 100% grass-fed milk) that consumers will pay her a living wage to produce; and socially, it boils down to hosting regular events—things like live music, burger nights, and honky tonks—aimed at connecting neighbors and building community.

“You have to adapt and change,” says Chase, clad in a black zip-up hoodie, blue jeans, and baseball cap, her ginger-hued hair brushing against freckled cheeks in the breeze. “This method asked me to think about what I wanted from my life, and I was primarily interested in working with these animals that I love to make a positive impact on this land that means so much to me.”



Members of Chaseholm Farm's herd enjoying a hearty snack.

She's standing outside the modest, milk-white dairy barn her grandfather built in the 1930s. From within the 33-stall space, which serves as the farm's winter housing and milking parlor, the quiet lowing of dairy cattle at rest mingles with the rhythmic pulsing of a suction-based pipeline milking system and swishing tails swatting at lazy stable flies. It's just after 9:00 in the morning, and Chaseholm Farm's milking manager is making quick work of emptying each cow's swollen udder so the animals can get back to doing what they do best: grazing on grass.

“My herd has to go out and work for their food as nature intended,” Chase says. It's a delightfully simple big-picture process: As they graze, the animals simultaneously fertilize the fields, work their manure into the ground, and stimulate new growth before moving onto fresh pasture rich with forage, the diverse array of plants, grass, and legumes they eat. After a period of rest and regrowth for the pasture, the herd returns to the same location, now lush with fresh forage.

Switching up the herd's feeding habits is just one change Chase made at Chaseholm Farm. What began with healing the land led to a fascination with cattle genetics, as evidenced by the farm's most prized players: a herd of 25 spotted Holstein-Jersey cows of her own design, born with the grass-specific genetics needed for the animals to prosper on forage. These bovines don't resemble conventional dairy cows: They've adapted to their environs by becoming lower to the ground, developing bigger muzzles, and increasing their rumen capacity. “The goal is a healthy cow that can produce a decent amount of milk on grass alone,” Chase explains, noting each cow averages 35 pounds (roughly 4 gallons) daily.

Having made huge strides in replenishing degraded soil, improving ecosystem function, and building biodiversity, Chase set to work on her next goal: breaking the long-held tradition of milking at sunrise and sunset. The seemingly unconventional decision irrevocably changed her life as a dairy farmer. During 2018's particularly wet fall, Chase watched as her herd struggled to



“This method asked me to think about what I wanted from my life, and I was primarily interested in working with these animals that I love to make a positive impact on this land that means so much to me.”

navigate the muddy laneways en route to pasture. Not only did they expend extra calories while covering a significant distance to reach their destination, they also had to turn around within hours to be milked.

Chase and her team quickly started employing a different schedule: milking at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. one day, followed by milking at noon the next, before returning to 6 a.m. the day after that. Eventually, both weekend days became noon milking days, to the delight of employees who came to enjoy something unheard of in the dairy business: regular hours that don't require them to rise before dawn. In November 2022, Chase made a final push to adopt a once-a-day milking schedule across the board. After running the numbers, she discovered only a negligible reduction in milk production.

Family Business

Chase remains an early riser by choice as opposed to necessity. Day-to-day tasks vary according to the season and can include mending fences, mowing fields, raising bulls, and harvesting the beef cattle—all

done with an eye toward increasing efficiency and building a rewarding way of life.

Each morning, Chase's older brother, Rory, buys the bulk of Chaseholm Farm's raw milk for Chaseholm Farm Creamery, which he founded in 2007. At the on-site Farm Store, multiple flavors from the creamery's cheese aging cave—including Chaseholm Camembert and Nimbus Triple Cream—keep company in self-serve coolers with whole-milk yogurt, raw milk, and diverse cuts of meat. This sales practice positions the pair of savvy farmers at the helm of what has become a burgeoning business model not only in the Hudson Valley, but also across the country: working in concert with the land and animals to create hyper-local products and selling directly to the consumer.

Keeping things all in the family is nothing new for Chaseholm Farm. It's been a working dairy farm since the early 1930s when Chase's grandfather, Dr. Kenneth Fulton Chase—a prominent local dentist and dairyman—combined a trio of smaller farms to create Chaseholm. (The moniker is based on a Dutch word meaning “an island unto itself.”) Chase's father, Kenneth Barrett “Barry” Chase, took over after his father's 1971 death and ran the farm for 36 years.

The youngest of three children, Sarah Chase was the sibling keenest on pitching in to help her dad on the farm. She learned to milk using her grandfather's tried-and-true dump-station milking system and fondly recalls receiving a serendipitous gift on her 10th birthday: a dairy calf named Maywine. But despite this growing interest

in the farm's day-to-day operations, Chase felt no obligation to stay home and take over the reins. In fact, she was encouraged by her parents to pursue her own interests and earn a college education. Her dad earned a master's degree, while her mom earned a master's degree and a doctorate in literature.

Given the rural region from which she hailed, Chase sought a liberal learning community in which she might spread her wings and discover new facets of herself. Oberlin's history of admitting women and Black students long before other colleges caught her attention; she applied early decision and was accepted. “I was eager to find out what this progressive college was all about,” Chase recalls of the environment. She pictured herself learning about the great writers, feeding her curiosity, and expanding her understanding of the world.

More than 500 miles from home, Chase devoured every opportunity presented to her. The geology classes she took with professor Steve Wojtal fascinate her to this day, especially in relation to the land she currently farms. Chase was also captivated by her first-year seminar, Religion and the Environment, taught by then-chair of the religion department (and current College of Arts and Sciences dean) David Kamitsuka. (Chase counts Kamitsuka and his wife, Francis W. and Lydia L. Davis Professor Emeritus of Religion Maggie Kamitsuka, as particularly inspiring professors.) Situated at the intersection of religion and the environment, the seminar allowed her to cultivate long-held interests like spirituality in the natural world.



Chase and wife Jordan Schmidt, who held their wedding at Chaseholm Farm in 2016.

Chase instinctively leaned in to learn more about what she saw as interconnected topics and took every class she could in religion and gender, sexuality, and feminist studies, completing both majors and writing her thesis by the close of her third year. “I dove into my studies within my majors so fully that I had a bit of tunnel vision,” she admits. Although Chase considered getting a job at a nearby dairy farm south of Oberlin, she was too busy on the rugby pitch to make the farm part of her travels. In retrospect, she’s glad: “It might have ruined me for starting my own [farm].”

Exploring all these topics ultimately caused Chase to bump up against some big questions, namely where a queer young woman like herself fit into the big picture. “The opportunity I had to dive into identity at Oberlin was as powerful as my coursework there,” says Chase, who found the atmosphere at the college to be open, accepting, and understanding. This allowed her to expand in ways she hadn’t while growing up.

Following graduation, Chase planned to return home, which in some ways felt like a step backward when compared with peers securing internships and jobs. “I remember moments of feeling nervous about my choice but also being unwavering about it,” she recalls. However, attending Oberlin

helped Chase realize how much she valued Chaseholm Farm and being close to land and nature. Equipped with a larger worldview than she had when she set out for Ohio—coupled with a bit of anxiety about how her newly shaved head would be received back home—Chase returned to Pine Plains.

At the time, taking over the farm was out of the question. Her father leased the family farmland upon his retirement, convinced the economics of conventional dairy farming, which were tight during his tenure, were unsustainable for the long term. Instead, Chase set to work milking cows at Hawthorne Valley Farm in nearby Ghent and making cheese with brother Rory.

These things boosted her confidence and renewed her connection to her community. Her brother’s entrepreneurial perspective was particularly eye-opening—“Working at the creamery helped me realize there was a different direction worth exploring in dairy,” Chase says—and ultimately made her want to take over the family farm. Luckily, she would have a chance: Chaseholm Farm’s lessee coincidentally wanted out of the farm business just six years into her father’s retirement. With 14 animals original to her father’s herd as a starting point, Chase forged ahead.

It Takes a Village

From the beginning, Chase and her wife, Jordan Schmidt (whose own career in the field of food access makes hers an invaluable voice on the farm), had the good fortune of being shepherded in their dairy journey by other like-minded folks who were using new-old ways of stewarding the land and making a living. Chase was mentored by local sheep farmer Jennifer Phillips, a professor in the environmental studies department at Bard College who imparted knowledge about grazing management and technique. In Sharon Springs, two hours northwest of Pine Plains, she met Paul and Phyllis Van Amburgh, who were hard at work stewarding Dharma Lea Farm—one of the founding farms of Maple Hill Creamery, America’s original 100% grass-fed organic dairy.

“Paul and Phyllis became like a second set of farming parents to us,” says Chase, acknowledging the many ways in which the veteran farmers influenced the young couple. “They recommended old books to read, coached us in grazing management, helped us think about business planning, and geeked out with us about dairy genetics.”

Chase likewise counts her connection to Pine Plains as a huge advantage, as she lives among a circle of local residents with jobs adjacent to dairy farming, including a milk tester and a bulk tank repair person, who have facilitated her transition to owner/

operator of Chaseholm Farm and supported her tenure with genuine enthusiasm. In the enclave where Chase lives and works, women are ruling the roost—from her veterinarian and neighboring veggie and livestock farmers to most of her employees.

“We’ve [also] been a queer dairy farm from the get-go, which is great,” Chase says, noting she’s proud to have cultivated an LGBTQIA+ community smack dab in the midst of a place where the queer community, if present when she was growing up, was not visible to her. Many of Chaseholm’s workers also identify as queer, drawn to the ethos of the farm and the values permeating the work being done there.

Over the years, Chase and Schmidt, who married on the farm in 2016, have both given back to the region as thanks for the support and expertise they’ve received. For example, neighbors in need can benefit from Chaseholm Farm products at no cost to them thanks to the Food Sovereignty Fund. Founded by a local nonprofit at the height of the pandemic, the fund is working to increase access to regionally produced food and protect the bottom line of small,

regeneratively managed farms led by owners like Chase, who come from historically marginalized backgrounds.

The model creates a win-win by paying Chase a fair price for her products and distributing them at no cost to individuals facing food insecurity. “By working toward something bigger, we’ve made [our life] feel really whole,” she says.

Old Methods, New Problems

Still, challenges abound. The wealth gap in Dutchess County is big: According to the Economic Policy Institute, income inequality in New York state is sky high. In fact, a 2018 study revealed that among the top 1% of earners in the state, the average income was a whopping 44 times the average income of the remaining 99%—the most extreme disparity nationwide. While many neighbors are struggling to make ends meet, abundant wealth among a certain percentage of the community makes it possible for Chase to make a living, despite the historically daunting economics of dairy farming.

Changing climate conditions can also cause problems. Unpredictability ranks high

on Chase’s list, especially when it comes time to make hay. “It used to be easy to find a three-day window without rain,” says Chase, who chuckles aloud recalling stories from “old timers”—not unlike her father—who knew if there was a thunderstorm one afternoon on the farm, they’d be good for four days before the next one rolled through.

Ditto for long-term power outages at the height of summer, which translate to Chase getting up every hour to run her tractor generator in order to keep the walk-in freezer and store coolers running. Rising temperatures are also an issue, considering that the animals are designed to spend their days outside grazing. “If it’s really hot, it becomes too stressful for the cows to remain outdoors,” Chase says.

In the ensuing years, Chase has adapted by ensuring adequate shade in each of the paddocks and putting off milking until noon when necessary to shield the herd from the hottest hours of the day in favor of grazing at night. Chaseholm Farms’ soil is also better equipped to thrive in wet and rainy weather rather than drought conditions—a



“Working at the creamery helped me realize there was a different direction worth exploring in dairy,” says Chase, who made cheese with her brother, Rory, following graduation.



direct and tangible correlation to Chase's multi-paddock grazing efforts over the past decade. "Rotating the cows and waiting for grass to fully recover allows deep roots to develop and gives our soil more water-holding capacity, which reduces erosion," she says. These benefits are slow to dry up, even during a summer 2022 drought.

New Times, New Approaches

In March 2023, as part of the town's bicentennial, Chase and her father attended the premiere of the documentary *Our Farms, Our Farmers*, in which they both appeared. In a Q&A following the screening, Barry Chase recalled the once-vibrant farming community for the audience. "Back in the 1940s, there were 40 dairy farms just in Pine Plains," he told the *New Pine Plains Herald*, before pointing out that figure has dropped to just four in 2023.

But if Chase's dad worried about his daughter during the early days of her ownership, he was convinced her approach was the only way forward once she reached the five-year milestone. Ten years in, he's even more certain.

At Chaseholm Farm, Chase regularly hosts queer-friendly community events like Dairy Drag, which debuted in 2021 during Pride Month to celebrate the Hudson Valley's diverse population. "It's a celebration of queerness in a rural space, which feels special because it's not found all that often [there]," Chase explains of the now-annual drag shows.

At some point, Chase realized that she was drawing on the skills she gleaned as a bartender-turned-manager at the 'Sco, where she booked bands and helped program Drag Ball. "[Working there] was probably my first go at inventory management and trying to learn about the products we were selling to better serve our customers," Chase says. Among other helpful habits she developed there: supporting local breweries; late nights counting the till (and having to account for the total); tapping a keg; and asking tough customers to leave.

An Air of Celebration

Just after sunset on a glorious Saturday in late October, with a bonfire blazing and colored lights spilling from within the decades-old dairy barn, a sold-out crowd of more than 200 people gather in the shadow of the towering grain silo for Dairy Drag. Energy is high: It's Chaseholm Farm's 2023 season finale, timed well before the snow flies.

"I could have done things the way they had been done before—but it wasn't going to work in a real, sustainable way."

A cacophony of voices swells in the dark as attendees nosh on wood-fired pizza, gather at picnic tables, and sip turmeric lattes made with bone broth and whole milk produced on site. In a testament to Chase's bustling business and entrepreneurial success, a steady stream of foot traffic heads in and out of the farm store buying all manner of provisions—paper sacks of freshly dug onions, sweet potatoes, frozen pork roasts, and beef short ribs.

Local families with young children keep company with visitors from New York City, all of whom delight in coming together in the most unusual of spaces to celebrate life's simple pleasures and be entertained by veteran performers hailing from various locales including Hudson (a city three times the size of Pine Plains, just 25 miles away) and by a first-timer from The Big Apple. While Chase laughs when asked if she knows all of the people who turn up for Dairy Drag—she does not—she does feel

unequivocally supported by her community.

"There's some spirituality in it for me," Chase says of having both caused and been able to witness the continued evolution of the very land upon which she was raised. Before long, the crowd begins to move en masse into the barn to fill the stalls recently vacated by cows such as Frau, Mona, Fuss, and Yodel, eager to support a pillar of life in Pine Plains that has nourished and sustained so many.

As dance music drifts through the dusty rafters and the dairy barn's center aisle becomes a catwalk strewn with crumpled dollar bills, Chase sees multiple layers of meaning. "I'm watching the drag performers, feeling the audience's energy fill the space while thinking about my father and grandfather milking the cows," says Chase, reflecting on a career that's both rooted in her family's history and distinct from it. "We've lived and breathed dairy farming our whole lives, but it's not the same [as it

has been]; every part of it, I have been able to make it my own and make it better for me [and my wife], in the place and time we're at right now, and what makes sense for our life."

Chase notes the many things needed to pull off this epic feat—among them something perhaps unexpected: The crimson-hued Boston ivy swathing the barn's clapboard exterior, heavy with clusters of blue-black fruit, boasts broad perennial leaves that create a living green barrier between the slanting autumn sun and her one-of-a-kind herd.

Ultimately, Chase is proud of and grateful for her life "on this farm, on this land" and what it represents. "I could have done things the way they had been done before—but it wasn't going to work in a real, sustainable way." ■

HANNAH VAN SICKLE IS A MASSACHUSETTS-BASED FREELANCE WRITER.



Chaseholm Farm's Dairy Drag event gives the spotlight to performers such as Hudson, New York-based dancer and DJ Davon (pictured).

GP SELVAGGIO

SOUNDS OF CHANGE

Associate Dean Chris Jenkins wrote the book on conservatory reform.

BY ERICH BURNETT

When Chris Jenkins became Oberlin Conservatory's first associate dean for academic support in 2014, he was stepping into a role nobody had previously held—at Oberlin or just about anywhere else.

Jenkins works closely with Oberlin students experiencing challenges of all shapes and sizes. Often, they are people of color or identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. And they often share frustrations Jenkins himself can trace back to his own conservatory days. A classically trained violist, Jenkins earned a bachelor's degree at Harvard, which he followed with graduate studies at New England Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, and Columbia University.

For generations, music conservatories have clung to ideals of the Western classical music canon at the expense of other musical traditions. For many students, this pervasive lack of diversity and inclusivity leads to feelings of marginalization.

Jenkins says Oberlin is not immune to similar challenges—and the criticisms invited by them. But he also praises Oberlin's proactive ongoing initiatives aimed at bringing equity to the conservatory experience—moves, he notes, that align with the institution's historical commitment to expanding access.

In recent years, Oberlin initiated a significant rethinking of its music theory curriculum, created a minor course of study in African American music, established new faculty positions that focus on these traditions, and significantly expanded repertoire selections to be inclusive of a multitude of cultures and experiences.

Jenkins himself teaches two courses that once might have seemed unimaginable: one on the racial politics of classical music and another on hip-hop. His Oberlin experiences also inspired his new book, *Assimilation v. Integration in Music Education: Leading Change Toward Greater Equity* (Routledge Press/College Music Society), which examines long-standing issues among U.S. conservatories and recommends strategies for addressing them. And today he's also completing a DMA in viola performance at the Cleveland

Institute of Music and a PhD in musicology at Case Western Reserve University, with an emphasis on African-American musical aesthetics.

We caught up with Jenkins recently to discuss the book, his motivations for writing it, and his reasons for optimism in the future of music education.

You have experienced preprofessional music education as a student, teacher, and administrator. Across those experiences, how did your passion to pursue research—and to be an agent of change—in this area take shape?

My desire to talk about how conservatories should change really comes from my experiences with students at Oberlin. It was Oberlin students, and to an extent other faculty and staff, who encouraged me to think differently about conservatory education and consider the negative impacts of this educational model on students. I will say I never had any thought that I would become a musicologist, which probably speaks to the extent to which that field is generally unappealing for people of color.

In the book, you assert that the issue of diversity should be approached through the lens of aesthetics. In conservatories, that generally refers to musical ideals that are directly related to Western classical music—everything from how a note should be played to how a musician should dress. It's about what various groups value about art over time and why. How can examining aesthetics lead us to a more equitable and inclusive educational model?

So I started working with the American Society for Aesthetics in 2016, thanks to Professor of Africana Studies Charles Peterson, who invited me to be part of a panel at one of their conferences. I feel obligated to take a moment and point out the importance of Black people supporting other Black people in academia because literally everything I've done professionally since is a result of Charles' invitation to present at that ASA conference.



I subsequently won a grant from the ASA to write about the aesthetics of African American classical music. It was because of that publication that I was invited to apply to be a musicology doctoral student, in addition to earning a DMA. But this was also the impetus for me to begin viewing conservatory education through the lens of aesthetics.

Basically, the realization I arrived at was that the aspects of the conservatory environment that many people find alienating—that I find alienating, for sure—relate to aesthetics: what people find ideal or most beautiful. Music students are always oriented toward a type of aesthetic idealization in their performances. But that idealization extends beyond music into our speech, dress, bodily movement, and all aspects of personal expression and conduct—on stage, in studio class, in lessons, and in peer-to-peer interactions. It is the pressure to align with these unspoken aesthetic codes that cause a lot of distress for students of color in conservatories.

The general theme of the book is that the aesthetics of conservatories do not resonate with many members of communities of color and that if we aim for demographic change—to recruit more students and professionals of color into orchestras and conservatories—we’re essentially approaching diversification as a project of assimilation. We actually have to change our institutions—to change not just the repertoire, but also how we think about making music, to include other traditions, harmonic and melodic languages, and ways of approaching music. I don’t mean this in an appropriative way, but rather for example: If the intention in any given conservatory is to increase its percentage of Black students, then perhaps our musical language should also change to reflect the cultural backgrounds of those students. Right now, conservatories are trying to make those demographic changes without changing internally.



Your book might be considered an examination of music education aimed primarily at those in charge of shaping and delivering that education. What would you hope a *student of that education* might take away from the book?

Students have far more influence and power than they perceive, but this change is usually beyond the horizon of their graduation. Change in academia is really slow. This is true and not just a stalling tactic by the faculty and administration. But change is possible; it’s just on an extended timeline. Oberlin has been around for almost 200 years, so the reality is that nothing substantive and irreversible is going to happen in a timeline of two or three years. Students—especially undergraduates—sometimes struggle to fully exploit their potential as change agents because it’s hard to spend time agitating for change that will not affect your own student experience.

So I’d say that it is important for students to consider how to improve conditions explicitly *not* for themselves or even their peers, but for

future students whom they will never know. I’m not saying students don’t ever do that—just that it’s not the most common approach in my experience. Students are capable of exerting significant influence over the institution if, through the leadership of student groups and continual peer education, they can sustain activism for a single goal and cooperative negotiation with the administration over a time frame of five, 10, or more years.

Also, I would love for students to take away from the book the message that people who work at their schools can experience long-term growth and change from interactions we have with students. When presenting about this book, I talk about the journey that I went through to arrive at the place where I am now, and my own journey was very much precipitated by conversations with students. I can definitely think of situations nine or 10 years ago that I would handle completely differently now, and that’s because of the long-term impact of my experiences with generations of students. That’s a big part of why I wrote this book: to impart some of what I’ve learned from those experiences. And I would invite faculty and administrators not to be reflexively dismissive of student input and activism.

How have you seen the key takeaways of your book taking shape at Oberlin?

Especially following the summer of 2020, there were several exciting developments in the conservatory. There are many aspects of the curriculum that have changed fundamentally, especially in the area of music theory. And it wasn’t that I was leading those efforts or that my book was responsible; key members of the faculty and administration

“IT IS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO CONSIDER HOW TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS EXPLICITLY *NOT* FOR THEMSELVES OR EVEN THEIR PEERS, BUT FOR FUTURE STUDENTS WHOM THEY WILL NEVER KNOW.”

perceived they had a vested interest in doing things differently. The new African American music minor is one such example. It's exciting for me because at industry conferences, there are conversations that focus on Oberlin and what we've been doing.

And it's not a matter of that usual line that I really hate: *We've made some changes, but we acknowledge we have much further to go.* Obviously, the general conservatory environment remains alienating to many students. But also, some of the changes that have happened over the past few years are really fundamental and unprecedented in conservatory education. I don't see any of our peers doing analogous work. And some of the changes that are still in the works are, frankly, even more disruptive to that standard model in really positive ways.

These changes are especially exciting because they link the process of creative development, of becoming a creative musician, to diversity. There is a tacit acknowledgment that the standard model has evolved to inhibit creativity, partly by

suppressing the individual artist's connection to their own culture and promoting cultural assimilation and homogeneity.

What gives you hope that the state of music education in America is improving and will continue to improve?

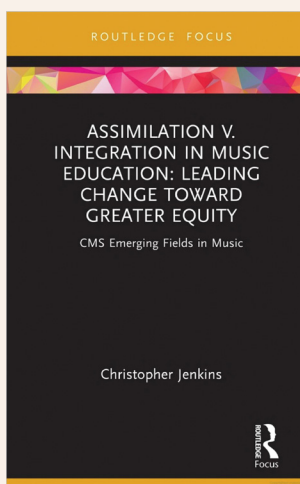
The two driving factors in the evolution—or stagnancy—of music education and classical music performance are ideology and finances. It's ironic because there are deep conversations that have been proceeding for years on both of these tracks, but the tracks are completely parallel and non-intersectional. It's difficult to nurture ideological change when doing so seems to invoke existential financial risk, and it's difficult to invest in new areas when there is ideological opposition. As long as financial models aren't failing, the incentive is to stick with them, and I totally understand this impulse. Somebody has to be responsible for keeping the lights on; that's the definition of the bottom line.

However, because America is diversifying rapidly, tastes are changing. As that happens, more conservatories and orchestras will feel sufficient pressure to experiment with new models. If those models are more financially successful than the old one, the old model will be jettisoned. I think the ideological currents have evolved faster than the financial pressures, so there is all this pressure and frustration built up behind a dam.

It's still not certain what will happen. People have been predicting the demise of American orchestras for decades—actually, since at least the 1950s. Most of these orchestras were founded in the late 19th century at the very earliest. That means that we've been expecting them to go under for the majority of the time they've been around. But the demographic change predicted in this country over the next few decades is more radical than anything we've seen before. Maybe the change that overtakes conservatory education over that time period will be just as radical. ■

BOOK EXCERPT

ASSIMILATION V. INTEGRATION IN MUSIC EDUCATION: LEADING CHANGE TOWARD GREATER EQUITY



These positions, centers, and partnerships are helpful but limited. Crucially, they cannot be expected to create deep, meaningful, and long-lasting institutional change on their own. They must operate in tandem with concerted efforts by faculty and administration to change core curricular

content and musical programming. Otherwise, students of color may get enough support to survive and to graduate, but they will not be able to fully thrive as people or musicians.

When students perceive that a school environment is hostile, they may have experienced microaggressions or had outwardly racist interactions with members of the campus community. Black students in predominantly white institutions regularly report experiencing “racial/ ethnic hostility, inequitable treatment, microaggressions, isolation, tokenization, lack of representation, and overt racism” that “diminish sense of belonging and institutional commitment.” These issues are reported or

experienced on the individual level but are systemic. There may also be proximate causes located in student life or campus culture. Even if students do not perceive an environment to be hostile, they may struggle to adapt socially, academically, or financially. Staff positions can be empowered to address some of these issues and provide various types of support by mediating conflicts, creating new student life programming, connecting students to resources, and providing emotional and cultural connection. DEI centers can offer training, sponsor guest speakers, and provide diverse extracurricular content.

But my experience has been that at root, the

institutional expression of core values is the main problem. Historically, those values have aligned with supremacist thinking that elevates white European art forms. The expression of white supremacist core values gives license to students, faculty, and staff whose own values align with white supremacy to engage in micro- and macro-aggressions. Because the core purpose of a teaching institution is to teach, core values and aesthetics are generated mostly from one place: musical choices in the curriculum.

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BY ANNIE ZALESKI

Getting Down to Business

THE ASHBY BUSINESS SCHOLARS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF INTRODUCING OBIES TO THE BUSINESS WORLD.

Two decades ago, Stewart Kohl '77 and Béla Szigethy '77 put together a Winter Term course that introduced Oberlin students to the ins and outs of the business world. As Kohl told *OAM* in 2013: “The world would be a better place if there were more Oberlin values and liberal arts training in the business world.”

Obies have certainly taken Kohl’s assertion to heart—and then some. That initial course ended up becoming the foundation of the Ashby Business Scholars program, which now encompasses two components: a discussion-heavy fall course covering

financial concepts and professional development and an experiential Winter Term program that gives scholars the chance to travel to cities like Cleveland, New York, and Boston to talk to alums about their career and workplaces.

For students, these connections and opportunities for mentorship and specialized education are invaluable. However, alums of the program also have salient takeaways about their time in the program—and their career paths since Oberlin. Here’s what they have to say:

It's easier than you might expect to find mission-aligned opportunities in business.

Jason Bent '13, who earned a double degree in economics and history, is the vice president of business operations and finance at the venture-backed health care technology company Zus Health.

Zus provides a shared data interoperability platform offering health care providers easy-to-use patient data for better-informed patient care. The company is still just a few years old, so my role covers a lot of ground. I manage the finance and business operations functions with responsibilities that include fundraising; forecasting and setting budgets; contributing to our product's pricing and packaging; and running our annual and quarterly goal setting.

Prior to joining Zus, I worked in consulting and finance roles at large companies, so I've really appreciated this opportunity to build something new. I joined the company right after it was founded with just a handful of employees, and it's been exciting and gratifying to build our foundations and adapt to each new stage as we scale up the business.

I've learned there are so many paths to take within the business world. It's well worth staying open-minded about just how many different things "business" can mean as a career path. The business world is also definitely not all rigid suits. A lot of business people want to have a positive impact through the work they do.

The Ashby Business Scholars program drove home for me the power of following up. The alumni we met during the program encouraged us to connect if we were interested in what they were doing. That nudge helped me build up the courage to actually reach out—and it was like pulling teeth to send those first few emails. But it's gotten easier and easier since then and remains an incredibly valuable skill.

And tenacity is so important. Whether you're a startup founder, applying for jobs, or just learning a new skill, it's important to continue to believe in yourself and not get discouraged when things get hard. I've found that sticking to what you set out to do is nine-tenths of the battle. **Read more:** go.oberlin.edu/Ashby-Alums

Opportunities arise when you connect with people.

Maryam Akmal '12, who earned a degree in economics, is an economist at the World Bank.

I work as an economist at the World Bank, a job that entails providing technical advice to governments around the world to help improve their education systems. My responsibilities typically include analyzing data and evidence to advance recommendations to solve various education challenges. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the opportunity to influence dialogue at the highest level and the potential to make policy impact that can improve education outcomes for children around the world.

The Ashby Scholars program offered me a first view of what working at some of the top business organizations around the world actually looked like. The exposure to the many Oberlin graduates who were doing amazing things in their careers was not only a great learning opportunity but also an encouragement to aim high as I launched my own career. For me, a key lesson from the program was on the importance of connecting with people. Some of the most pivotal opportunities in my career have resulted from conversations with the right people at the right time.

Value your network.

Rebecca Goldring '09 earned a degree in applied mathematics and is a senior associate at MSquared, a women-owned, women-led real estate impact private equity firm.

MSquared invests in and develops mixed-income housing (multifamily real estate, which includes affordable housing) all across the United States. I work in the asset management department, which is responsible for overseeing the construction, lease-up, and operation of buildings. My job is to make sure the numbers are reflecting what is happening in real life and that we're in a position to either foresee potential risks or react quickly if something unexpected occurs.

As one of a few companies focusing on this type of investment, we get to be incredibly creative in accomplishing our goals. My days are split fairly evenly between meetings and financial analysis using tools such as spreadsheets. One minute I can be on a call where we are discussing what type of tile we want to use in a bathroom; the next we can be discussing the implications of the latest Federal Reserve report.

The best part of my job is that we are an impact-oriented company. We believe we can



Ashby Business Scholars visit New York City during Winter Term.

enhance people's lives by providing quality, affordable homes and promoting income integration with access to high-quality community resources. I'm extremely lucky to have a job where I know the work I'm doing will have a positive impact on individuals as well as communities. In the finance world, it's easy to forget that we're looking at more than just numbers. This position is a daily reminder that the work I'm doing is not just a spreadsheet; it is a step in the process of bringing someone a home.

In college, I always assumed my life would go in one direction. However, after engaging in conversations with various alumni, I realized there were more options. There are so many different paths to get to a career, and you don't need to have a specific degree to be successful. Every major essentially teaches you a way to think through problems. They use different vocabulary and different methods, but in the end, you're learning how to problem-solve.

The Ashby Scholars program taught me that good companies to work for appreciate diversity in all aspects, including thought process. And the program helped me frame my story to show what an asset having an employee from a nontraditional background could be. I learned to be flexible in my thinking and to give myself space to remember that I don't have to accomplish something alone. I have a team, I have a support network, and it is more fun to share a victory than to celebrate alone. **Read more:** go.oberlin.edu/Ashby-Alums

“THIS POSITION IS A DAILY REMINDER THAT THE WORK I’M DOING IS NOT JUST A SPREADSHEET; IT IS A STEP IN THE PROCESS OF BRINGING SOMEONE A HOME.”

Seek out people who inspire you.

Evelyne White '04 earned a degree in politics and is the CEO and cofounder of SixPlus, a startup company that makes it easy for businesses and marketing professionals to source and book private event spaces.

At Oberlin, I had figured out that what mattered most was seeking out people who inspired me. For example, I walked into Paul Dawson's American Government 101 class, and my jaw dropped. I wanted to go to every class that he taught.

I started off as a double-degree major. I was considering a career in music, but I had other interests—namely environmental studies. I interned on Capitol Hill with a congressman and at the Environmental Law

Institute. It seemed like I was Washington, D.C.-bound. But I walked into Stevenson, and there was a paper sign about this new program, Oberlin Business Scholars, happening during Winter Term. And I remember ripping off a tab with information on how to apply and learn more.

I recall that whole period so vividly: buying my first suit, the photo we took, having to get professional for these interviews. And then the program itself was unbelievable. We visited so many alumni, and every single person I met exposed me to some career I had no idea existed. It was like, “Wow, you can do this with your life?”

Chris Wofford '87, who was working at Bear Stearns at the time, gave this inspiring talk. And I just said, “I want to do this. I really want to work for this guy.” We were walking toward the next visit, and I broke the rules: I snuck into an internet café for long enough to email Chris my résumé. I wanted him to know, “I just left you—and five minutes later, you've got my résumé. I'm really interested.” I ended up getting a job at Bear Stearns—my first job.

What you do as a startup founder and CEO varies so much. When you first start the company, it's just you unless you have a cofounder. I had one—they were the technology person—so I did everything except build the platform. And then as you grow the team, you're basically looking at, “Where's the biggest need?” You think about the team and the skill sets you need. As I grew the team, I hired to fill specific roles. But I also do a lot of fundraising and client development.

As a founder, you basically steer the ship wherever the ship's going—or you try to point it in the direction you want to. Sometimes the wind is just beating down the other way, and there's nothing you can do about it. But it looks like 2024 is going to be a good year. **Read more:** go.oberlin.edu/Evelyne ■



Samantha Gilfond and Evelyne White

For Oberlin students interested in business and finance, the Ashby Business Scholars program offers invaluable insights into what it's like to work in these fields.



Bridget Adu-Dapaah '25

Majors: economics with business concentration

Hometown: Chicago

Through my interactions with Oberlin alums, I gained advice on career goals and recommendations on specific classes to enhance my academic journey at Oberlin. This has helped me immensely because it's opened doors to more opportunities and broader networking possibilities. Ultimately, there is always a connection to be made with someone with insights into the industry you're interested in pursuing.



Samantha Gilfond '25

Majors: mathematics and economics

Hometown: New York City

The program has given me access to a business and finance class with Case Western Reserve University's director of investments that's allowed me to focus on key aspects of business and finance. The class emphasizes hands-on learning through case studies, informational interviews, and group work, all of which simulate real-world experiences that we will be exposed to in the workplace.



Willem Chojnicki '25

Majors: economics & psychology with business concentration

Hometown: Gainesville, Fla.

Oberlin alumni have made a significant impact on my growth and development by sharing their insights and experiences in the finance industry. I have learned a lot from them about financial modeling, consulting, and data analysis. To be able to talk with so many alumni in the finance industry who also went to Oberlin illustrates how small of a world we live in.



Adrian Alvarado '24

Major: economics

Hometown: Chicago

I loved the ability to interact with alums and ask them questions regarding plans within the industry, along with activities that enabled them to know themselves better, personally and professionally. I also met many alumni who helped our cohort better understand the recruitment process and the skills that are needed to thrive in the financial industry.



Michael Dinkel '26

Major: economics

Hometown: Silver Spring, Md.

Getting the chance to travel and meet alumni during Winter Term this year was really helpful. It was amazing that alums who have had some extraordinary accomplishments and are very busy made time for us so we could ask questions about what they do and how they got to where they are. The trip was also a great start to building relationships with the alums in career paths we're interested in.

FANCY

FOOTWEAR

By Emma Silvers

Psychologist Ted Gradman '81 is an ice skating lifer who is happiest at the rink—and has the medals to prove it.

Ted Gradman '81 vividly remembers the first time he set foot on the ice.

It was the summer of 1969, and he was 11 years old. He and his sister Janet had ridden their bikes from their small New Jersey suburb to a neighboring town, looking for something to do to cool off, and came upon an indoor ice rink.

Gradman was short for his age, and he'd always struggled in gym class. But as soon as he stepped onto the ice in his rented skates, he had a revelation.

"It just fit," he says, still lighting up at the memory. "In gym, I couldn't do pull-ups, and I was always the last to finish obstacle courses. But on the ice, I was somehow coordinated. It was tremendous fun!"

More than 50 years later, Gradman still gets excited when he talks about the sport. He's snacking on goji berries after an early Tuesday morning skate at the Yerba Buena Skating Center in downtown San Francisco, where he practices at least three times a week—and is something of a local celebrity. On this particular morning, both before and after he skates to music from *Amélie*, Gradman has brief, friendly chats with just about everybody in the rink.

He's not just here for a little light cardio. Figure skating is the central passion in Gradman's life alongside his successful career as a psychologist and his 30-year marriage.

At 65, he is one of seven people who have participated in every single U.S. Adult Figure Skating Championships event since the competition debuted in 1995, making him a member of an increasingly exclusive club of "lifers."

Gradman has saved souvenirs from every event, such as "tossies"—a colloquial term for small stuffed animals and tchotchkes that fans and supporters throw onto the ice after a performance.

He also loves a challenge. At an age when most figure skaters have hung up their blades, Gradman performs routines that include fancy footwork, spins, axels, and single jumps like salchows. And he wins accolades for them: At the April 2023 championships in Salt Lake City, Gradman landed one of his best axels, scoring a +1 grade of execution (GOE) in the 22-64 age division championship round and squeaking out a bronze medal while competing as the oldest person in the 46-65 age division. A few weeks later, he received his Medicare card.

Like clockwork, Gradman will be in the mix once again at this year's championships, taking place April 3-6 at the Serpentine Arena Winterhurst rink in Lakewood, Ohio, roughly 40 minutes away from the place that still means a lot to him.

Gradman didn't choose Oberlin College,

he says; it chose him. He'd considered the University of Pennsylvania and Wesleyan, but after sitting in on an Oberlin choreography class that was like nothing he'd ever seen before, he knew he had found his place. Gradman recalls a student performing an intricate, thought-provoking piece involving rhythmic movements in a giant, bright-white pillowcase and a last-minute dramatic arm movement. "Obies are so spirited, inventive, and exuberant," he remembers thinking.

He has fond memories of living in Shurtleff Cottage and dining in Oberlin's various co-ops, starting with the Kosher Halal Co-op during his first year. "I strolled across the street from Talcott to the conservatory almost every night for dessert—some kind of delicious concert—before heading to the library to study," Gradman recalls. "It was heaven." He spent the next few years living and dining in the vegetarian Harkness and Fairchild co-ops. His time in the former was particularly "wild," he remembers—the smell of pot mingling with the scent of fresh bread baking in the kitchen, or the time the second floor flooded because too many people crammed into the mixed-gender shower.

Perhaps even more important: Oberlin had an ice rink. Before he started in the fall of 1976, Gradman was measured for a pair of custom skates by George Stanzone, an old-world Italian bootmaker in New York City. Months later, he received a slip of paper informing him he had a package in the mail room—mailbox 1212, he recalls. "I was just jubilant. It was so thrilling. And they fit right away."

Oberlin's outdoor rink was only open in the winter and boasted a curved, snow-repelling roof. It was located in what's now the enclosed artificial turf field house, part of Knowlton Athletic Complex—but in those days, the wind got in. Gradman remembers piling on layers to skate and freezing anyway, but it was always worth it. Huddled in the little warming area, he made lifelong friends. And the skating itself was like nothing else.

"When you get on the ice, there's no friction. You push, and then you *fly*," says Gradman. "Where else can you do that?"

In the years since he graduated from Oberlin with a degree in English, Gradman has continued to find solace, joy, and community on the ice. He kept skating after moving to Berkeley, California—the Zamboni family had a rink nearby—and he found a new home at the Culver City rink in Los Angeles while he earned his PhD in clinical psychology at UCLA; he remembers midnight skating sessions as an escape from his studies. Gradman continued skating in Cupertino after moving back to the Bay Area in 1989 for postdoctoral work, and he eventually started a private practice after working as a neuropsychologist in a stroke rehabilitation unit. Today, he's an in-demand therapist specializing in cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety disorders.

Gradman decided to sign up for his first adult competition in 1990 at the urging of a Bay Area skating friend. In those early years, he shared the ice with up-and-coming greats like

Michelle Kwan, Jenni Meno, Todd Sand, and Rudy Galindo. Gradman remembers being in the "nosebleeds" while Galindo won the gold medal at a national competition in 1993. "And then I was on the same ice training with him!" he says. "Of course, he was doing triple jumps, and I was starting to work on doubles."

In 1994, another skating friend changed his life in a different way, urging him to go on a blind date with a smart, funny pediatric gastroenterologist named Hilary Perr. The

pair went tidepooling on the coast, then went to a coffee shop and talked over knishes; he read her poetry by William Carlos Williams. Five weeks later, the couple was engaged.

Gradman and Christel Mann '82 at Oberlin commencement (right); Gradman skating during the opening ceremonies for the 1996 U.S. Figure Skating Championships (below).



Perr says she saw from the start how important skating was to Gradman. But there was a bit of a learning curve: A couple weeks into dating, she went to see him in a competition and, not realizing it would be cold at the ice rink, wore shorts. “I was also under the misconception that it was a dignified sport,” she says with a laugh. “You watch tennis matches on TV, and it’s hushed, and there’s a proper way to behave. But I was shocked to see that people were shouting things while ice skaters performed.”

Prompted by Gradman’s best friend to join in, Perr recalls she yelled out the first thing she could think of—a saucy compliment about her now-husband’s behind.

Indeed, the rowdy spirit of the sport is part of what has kept Gradman hooked for so long—he refers to the mood at championships as “a giant PJ party.” It helps that whimsical costumes and musical choices are encouraged: In 2021 alone, Gradman skated to music from the 2008 animated film *Kung Fu Panda* for his technical program (with a little Chopin at the end) and to Scott McKenzie’s “San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)” for the interpretive program—the latter while dressed in full-on hippie garb from Haight-Ashbury.

He says the adult skating world possesses a strong sense of camaraderie and is generally

“I’ve had moments of elation on the ice that I don’t get anywhere else.”

very supportive. (That extends to many Obies: Over the years, Gradman’s been cheered on by Christel Mann ’82, Lauren Ungar ’81, Eleanor Piez ’82, Peter Bishop ’81, Chris Wolf-Gould ’81, David Forman ’82, and Ellen Sande ’77.) But despite the levity, participants at these competitions are serious, committed athletes—and Gradman means business even when he’s dressed a bit silly.

Alexei Folger, a San Francisco skater who’s attended several championships with Gradman, recalls a time Gradman skated through an injury as “one of the most amazing skating moments I’ve ever seen.” It was 2003, and they were at a qualifying competition to get to nationals. Because there were so few men in Gradman’s category, all he had to do to qualify was skate at all. During practice, Gradman and another skater collided, and Gradman wound up snapping his fibula—an injury that would have sent most skaters home.

“But because Ted was determined to go to nationals, when his event came, he put on his full costume; they played his regular program music; and he went out there and did the most amazing footwork sequence I’ve ever seen—on one foot,” Folger recalls. The crowd, mostly

fellow adult skaters and their friends, went wild. He hopped off the ice to a rousing ovation that day, did serious rehab—and went on to compete at nationals, placing ninth in his category that year.

These days, Gradman says he’s mostly competing with himself. Skating requires intense mental fortitude—and, on the best days, an almost spiritual element as well. “I’m not all that focused on medals per se,” Gradman says. “Figure skating is an enticing amalgam of sport, art, slippery challenge, gravity defiance, connection to the universe and performance vehicle ... I’ve had moments of elation on the ice that I don’t get anywhere else.”

His wife has learned that Gradman isn’t alone in that feeling—or in his determination to keep going no matter what. “The group of skaters who do this as adults is pretty extraordinary,” says Perr, who notes that she has found ways to get involved over the years, including by making Gradman’s costumes or by throwing toy ducks on the ice, a reference to one of the couple’s inside jokes. “I’ve seen people keep going despite tremendous adversity—whether health circumstances, or they live two hours away, or can’t afford the skates or the lessons. But they still figure out ways to keep doing it.

“They fall, but they always get up,” she continues. “If that isn’t a metaphor for life, I don’t know what is.”

In Gradman’s case, he plans to keep getting back up as long as his body lets him. And when he can’t do the jumps and spins anymore, he’ll transition into ice dancing. Believe it or not, he has role models—like 84-year-old Connie Currie, the oldest skater participating at 2023’s national championships.

“I’ve only been skating for 55 years,” Gradman says with a grin. “I’m still a beginner.” ■

Gradman (below at right) celebrating his successful showing in the 2020 Pacific Coast Championships in San Francisco.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF TED GRADMAN

EMMA SILVERS IS A SAN FRANCISCO-BASED WRITER.

Gradman’s April 2024 competition will be broadcast on usfigureskatingfanzone.com. View his 2016 performance to Bach’s *Siciliano* in a

glitzy type of costume created by Lilya Dukler (who had worked with Russian ballet companies) performed in Oberstdorf, Germany.



Class Notes



THERE GOES THE SUN. THERE WAS PRECEDENT TO THE EXCITEMENT BUZZING AROUND OBERLIN DURING THE APRIL 8, 2024, TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE. ON MAY 10, 1994, THE CITY WAS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES IN THE WORLD TO VIEW AN ANNULAR ECLIPSE—AS SEEN IN THIS ARCHIVAL CAMPUS PHOTO.

1950s

1951

Phan Wannamethee, who celebrated his 101st birthday in January 2024, is an advisor to the Thai Red Cross after his resignation at the age of 98 as secretary-general of the same organization. He is also honorary chair of the World Buddhist Fellowship. A veteran Thai statesperson, he served previously in key diplomatic positions, including permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thailand's ambassador to Germany, and, later, the Court of St. James (U.K.) and

secretary-general of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

1953



Betsy Greensmith Dole wrote her first book, the memoir *Using My Voice: A Journey of Progressive Christianity and Social Activism*; it was released in time

for her 92nd birthday on November 17 and is available in eBook and paperback at Amazon. According to a press release,

“This remarkable story traces her evolution from a shy Congregational minister’s daughter into a powerful contributor to social justice and environmental causes throughout Michigan.” Among her many accomplishments: Betsy was the first female chair of the Olivet College Board of Trustees; secured initial funding for the Arcadia Dunes C.S. Mott Nature Preserve in Grand Traverse County; and founded United Church Outreach Ministry, a collaborative organization supported by 50 local churches serving families in the Southwest Grand Rapids neighborhood. Betsy’s parents, **Helen Greensmith Class of 1920**, and the **Rev. Horace Greensmith**



Rubins '53

Class of 1921 (and seminary 1924), and daughter **Peggy Dole Dolane '81** are also Oberlin graduates. ■ **Susan Moldof Goldman Rubins** is a widely published children's book author. Her newest titles are a

picture book, *Madame Alexander: The Creator of the Iconic American Doll* (Macmillan), and a young adult anthology, *The Women Who Built Hollywood: 12 Trailblazers in Front of and Behind the Camera* (Calkins Creek/Astra Books for Young Readers).

1954

Bette Leddy McDevitt shares her experience with the Raging Grannies (raginggrannies.org), groups who “sing at protests, at rallies, and on street corners—using stinging satire set to sweet music to rage about wars, issues of economic and social justice, and health care.” Bette first encountered the Raging Grannies about 15 years ago. “At a protest rally at the Nevada test site where nuclear weapons were tested, I heard some women singing,” she says. “They were the Raging Grannies, one of many such gaggles here and in Canada. They raised our spirits, and when I came home, I set about forming a gaggle of Raging Grannies here in Pittsburgh with another woman.” Bette adds that for appearances, they “use songs shared across the gaggles and sometimes write our own.”

1955



Rotberg, Pi-Sunyer '55

Daniel S. Christianson recently celebrated his 90th birthday. ■ Honorary Oberlin College Trustee

Robert I. Rotberg writes in to share news of his “strongly opinionated” newsletter, *Robert's Conflict Mitigation Newsletter* (robertirotberg.substack.com), which offers free and paid subscriptions.

“Originally, it was mostly about Putin's perfidy, Zelensky's amazing leadership, and urging the U.S. to do more to support

Ukraine,” he says. “More recently, I've written about the Israeli/Gaza tragedy. Tomorrow, I write about democracy.” Robert and **Xavier Pi-Sunyer** gathered with their families in Tanzania in July 2023. Of the 26 members from the two families who were there, the other Obies present were **Fiona Rotberg '90**, **Andrea Pi-Sunyer '87**, **Joanna Pi-Sunyer '92**, and her husband, **Michael Ballo '87**.

1956

The 2023 New York City production of *Bending Towards the Light: A Jazz Nativity* by composer **Anne Dinsmore Phillips** had multiple Oberlin ties. The new soprano who auditioned for the role of the Archangel was **Victoria Davis '15**, while one of the Three Kings was Chris Brubeck, the son of jazz legend Dave Brubeck. “I have known the Brubeck family since I was a freshman at Oberlin and sang as the ‘opening act’ on the famous *Jazz at Oberlin* concert,” Anne says. “Dave gave me permission to use his song ‘God's Love Made Visible’ when I began to write this show.”

1957

Michael Meltsner, the George J. and Kathleen Waters Matthews Distinguished University Professor of Law at Northeastern University, is retiring after 44 years. He held the endowed chair for 35 years, during which time he worked to develop the school's experiential learning mission. Michael started his legal career in 1961 and was passionate about fighting to end racial segregation and capital punishment, leading to six appearances before the U.S. Supreme Court. He represented Muhammad Ali in the case that enabled the boxing legend to return to the sport after a three-year hiatus; his activism was influential in helping to bring about Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1958

Mark R. Arnold has written a memoir, *Bylines and Ballads*, that describes his life as a Washington newsmen for Dow Jones and a jazz pianist, among other experiences. The book includes three chapters on Mark's Oberlin years, highlighting his experiences as the college's Russia rep, which found him traveling 10,000 miles in the former Soviet Union to interview Nikita Khrushchev in his

Kremlin office for 2.5 hours. Also of interest may be Mark's observations on Martin Luther King Jr., beginning with the civil rights leader's first visit to Oberlin in 1957, and a description of the author's successful campaign on Student Council to end racial discrimination in off-campus student housing.

1960s

1963

In 2016, **Bruce Frishkoff** “retired” after six years of work in Hawthorne Valley Farm store. “One of my favorite jobs,” he writes. “I got to receive delivery trucks at 6 a.m., drive a forklift, stock shelves, cut and wrap cheese, order coffee, and listen to some great rock music with a younger generation of coworkers.” Next he worked on climate change full time with Citizens' Climate Lobby—which lasted until a week before COVID hit, when Bruce was asked to be parish life director of his Catholic church in Copake, N.Y. “This is, indeed, my favorite job ever,” he notes. “I even get to accompany on keyboard at the Saturday Mass! Who could ask for more?” ■ In January, **Stephen Gunzenhauser** released a book, *Travels with Stephen: The Most Famous Unknown Conductor*, which covers 40 years of success in the music business. He was the first American conductor behind the Iron Curtain to build over 80 recordings in Eastern Europe and one of the leading recording artists of Naxos. Stephen also served the Delaware Symphony for 23 years and retired from the Lancaster Symphony after 40 years. In 2005, he created the Endless Mountain Music Festival, which features a 65-piece orchestra that performs 17 concerts in three weeks. For good measure, the book also covers the viral moment when Stephen had his baton snatched by a fan while conducting at a 1993 Philadelphia Phillies playoff game.

1965

The fall 2023 issue of the *Carter/Mondale Letter* features an article by **Robert Weiner** on the Claude Pepper law, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1978 following a meeting with the Aging Committee. The law abolished mandatory retirement at 65, with decisions from then on to be made on merit except in high-risk

Class Notes

occupations. Robert, the former chief of staff of the House Aging Committee and later a member of the Clinton and Bush White House staff, notes that this was the last print issue of the *Carter/Mondale Letter*; future issues will be sent via email.

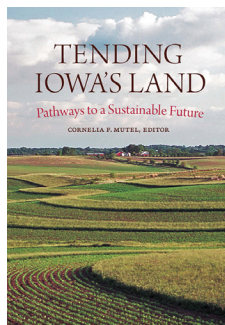
1966

In September 2023, **Burt Harbison, Sue Crissey Harbison**, and son David (who was born in 1967 at Oberlin's Allen Memorial Hospital) helped Burt's sister **Ann Harbison '75** move from Flagstaff, Ariz., to Syracuse, N.Y. See Class of 1975.

1968

Edna B. Chun writes in to share news of the publication of two co-authored books, *Transformational Music Teaching* (Palgrave Macmillan) and *The Challenges of Minoritized Contingent Faculty* (Purdue University Press), and adds, "Both books are dedicated to **Alexander D. Chun '08**."

1969



Connie Fleischer Mutel's latest book is the edited volume *Tending Iowa's Land: Pathways to a Sustainable Future* (University of Iowa Press), which summarizes how Iowa is tackling its multiple severe problems with soils,

Mutel '69

water, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. She considers this to be the capstone of her six books about the state's natural environment and notes she now hopes to spend more time reading and relaxing with her family, especially her grandkids. Connie is also grateful to Oberlin for both her scientific and creative training and for the sense that we all can make a difference if we use our passions well.

1970s

1970

Ed Klarman competed in the Pickleball Nationals in Dallas in November 2023 and won silver in men's doubles (70-74 4.0) and silver in mixed doubles (70-74 4.5). Ed

started playing after his wife of 37 years passed away. Obies visiting Naples, Fla. who are interested in playing are encouraged to contact him at eklarman10@comcast.net. ■ In 2023, **John Lawrence** published his first novel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Affair at Mayerling Lodge*, and three short stories in *The Further Undiscovered Archives of Sherlock Holmes*, continuing his historical mysteries involving the world's first consulting detective. John continues to teach about Congress at the University of California Washington Center and has published two books on congressional history, *Arc of Power: Inside Nancy Pelosi's Speakership 2005-2010* and *The Class of '74: Congress after Watergate and the Roots of Partisanship*. ■ **Thomas Newkirk** writes that he's "completed a book that explores ways the literacy curriculum in schools needs to be more democratically open." It's called *Literacy's Democratic Roots: A Personal Tour Through Eight Big Ideas* (Heineman).

1971

Maryan Ainsworth, MA '73, recently published a book, *Jan van Eyck's Crucifixion and Last Judgment: Solving a Conundrum* (Brepols), on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's titular Jan van Eyck paintings. ■ **Douglas Gillman** has studied math and religion and is now living in a Catholic assisted living center. ■ **Daniel Monti's** *American Democracy and Discontent: Liberalism and Illiberalism in Ferguson, Charlottesville, Black Lives Matter, and the Capitol Insurrection* (Routledge) will be published in 2024.

1973

Mark Maier received the 2023 American Economic Association Distinguished Economic Education Award, which acknowledges excellence in economic education at a national level. ■ **David Smukler** was named president-elect of the board of the Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS), a network of people and affiliate organizations who love participatory dance, music, and song traditions. CDSS supports events such as Oberlin's Dandelion Romp.

1974

Ted Hommel and **Don Chu '71**, who were on



Hommel '74

Oberlin's football team in 1970, reunited at the July 28 wedding reception of Ted's daughter Carrie and Don's nephew Nick. ■ **Kofi Lomotey**, the Chancellor John Bardo and Deborah Bardo Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership at Western Carolina University, is the author of more than 50 books, articles, and book chapters on urban and Black education, including 2022's *Justice for Black Students: Black Principals Matter* (Myers Education Press). Kofi has also co-edited 2020's *African-Centered Education: Theory and Practice* (Meyers Education Press); 2021's *Handbook of Urban Education, Second Edition* (Routledge); and 2023's *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education: Continuing Dilemmas, Ongoing Setbacks & New Challenges, Volume III* (State University of New York Press).

1975

Bob Atlas left his job as CEO of the Maryland Hospital Association in 2023. That five-year stint was preceded by several decades as a leader in health care consultancies, focused on health care payment and delivery strategy and policy. Bob now works a schedule of his choosing as an independent consultant and serves on the board of an organization dedicated to facilitating organ donation and transplantation in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and northern Virginia. ■ **Fran Pickin Florio** and a group of friends gathered on Zoom in October to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Friends House, the program dorm on the third floor of Johnson House during the 1973-74 academic year. In addition to Fran, attendees at the mini-reunion included **Susan Czapiewski '74**,



Frank Hubbard '74, Alex Lippitt '74, Janet Billane, Kathy Ferger, Elizabeth Beirne Lippitt '76, Peter Goehring '76, Kate O'Kane '76, Diana Barker-Smith '76, Judy Visscher '78, and Kate Kellogg Kruesi. "We plan to do another 'reunion' because we managed to miss John Hickman '76 and Lindsay French '77!" Fran adds. "Missing was Jan Heide '78, who passed away in 1996." ■ After teaching special education on a Navajo reservation, Ann Harbison has moved to Syracuse, N.Y., to be closer to family. Her brother and sister-in-law, Burt Harbison and Sue Crissey Harbison, both '66, and their son, David, flew to Flagstaff to help. "Just picture Three Old Farts and a Truck with a nephew/son driving the truck," Ann writes. During the trip, they stopped in Oberlin so David could see where he was born. Ann had not been back in 45 years and was amazed by the changes—and "can't wait for our 50th reunion in 2025!" ■ Jon Kingdon, who spent decades as a scout and executive with the NFL's Oakland Raiders, has been writing for Bay Area newspaper the *Lamorinda Weekly*. The California News Publishers Association awarded first place to his story "Donna de Varona—Olympic Gold Medalist Swimmer and Title IX Crusader" in the category for newspapers with a circulation up to 25,000. ■ Morgan,

Brown & Joy attorney Keith H. McCown has been named a 2024 Best Lawyer in the category employment law-management. ■ Glen Penfield was invited to contribute a cover article in the December 2019 issue of the magazine *AAPG Explorer*. "Unlikely Impact: The Unexpected Discovery of the Paleogene-Cretaceous Impact Crater" mentions Oberlin and the January 1975 intersession project in Guatemala which Glen did under Norman K. Grant, "which just three years later contributed to my discovery of the Chicxulub Impact crater while working for PEMEX in Mexico," he says. Glen also appeared in a Japan National Television (NHK) documentary film *Cosmic Front Next*, on the dinosaur extinction. ■ "At the time of our 1975 graduation, I never would have imagined that 48 years would pass so quickly," Monica Ulmann writes. "Following our graduation, I attended medical school at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, graduating in 1980. During those years, I met and married my husband of 44 years, David Harris, a classmate in the MD-PhD program." The couple eventually moved to St. Louis. "I initially was on the faculty at St. Louis Children's Hospital/Washington University and moved to Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital/St. Louis University

School of Medicine, where I remained on the faculty until we moved to Boston in fall 2009. I am on the faculty of Tufts University Medical School, and David is on the faculty of Boston University Medical School." Monica adds she is "beginning to think about retirement. I stepped down from my leadership roles last year. I continue teaching trainees, which I love." Outside of work, she sings in the Boston University Symphonic Choir; delights in shooting and editing photos of travels; and enjoys hiking. She and David have two children, Josh and Rachel, and two grandchildren.

1976



Engebretson '76

At an October 2023 ceremony in Los Angeles, National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) senior vice president of technology Lynn

Claudy was part of the team who accepted a technical Emmy celebrating NAB's 100 years of developing technology innovations in broadcasting. Lynn has been on staff at NAB in Washington, D.C., since 1988. ■ Tilmer Engebretson [right] and Jonathan Bor [left] were among the colleagues, friends, and family in attendance on December 5 when Ken Reisenfeld '75 [center] was awarded the Judge Learned Hand Award by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in honor of his career-long efforts to advance the rule of law worldwide and his enduring commitment to the Jewish community. "Many of his other Oberlin friends sent best wishes from afar," Tilmer writes.



1978

Kelly Rowe has a new full-length poetry collection, *Rise Above the River*, chosen by Mark Jarman as the 2021 winner of the Able

Class Notes

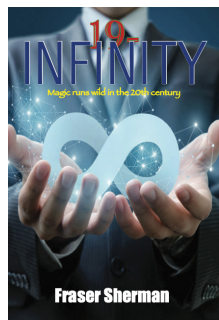
Muse Book Award for Poetry. In 2022, she also had a new poetry chapbook, *Child Bed Fever* (Seven Kitchens Press). She'd love to hear from Obies; her website is www.kelly-rowe.com.

1979

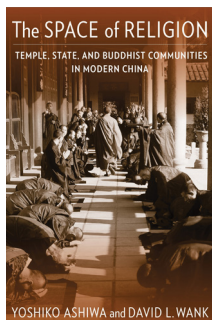
Eric R. Breslin was named the chair of the New Jersey Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers for a term of two years. Eric continues his white collar criminal practice at Duane Morris, LLP.

1980s

1980



Sherman '80



Wank '80

Ben Bolte sends in a recent photo [see second column] of himself and **John McAlpin '78** at the Belmont Hill School retirement ceremony for **Jeffrey "Doc" Fast '67** after 35 years of teaching at the school. "John also teaches [there], and I am an alumni parent and spouse of a current staff member," Ben writes. "Doc played lacrosse at Oberlin as did I—John played Ultimate—and Doc and I were both English majors." Pictured from left are Ben, John, and Jeffrey. ■ **Laura Hong** of Tucker Ellis LLP was named to the 2024 Ohio Super Lawyers list. ■ With the roots of his professional career harkening back to ExCo gerontology classes in the late '70s, **Jed Johnson** recently retired from his decades-long passion for services supporting older adults and their family caregivers. In recognition of those efforts, he received the Innovator in Adult Day Services award from the National Adult Day Services Association (nadsa.org) in September. Having recently moved to a 55-plus community in Urbana, Md., he and his husband will be exploring new adventures (and getting back into a regular swimming routine!). ■ **Perry Newman** is the new executive director of



Konbit Sante, an international NGO that works to build and strengthen health care systems in the northern part of Haiti. Its model places local solutions, cultural humility, and a collaborative approach at the center of its work. ■ Author **Fraser Sherman** has published *19-Infinity* (Behold the Book), a collection of historical fantasies set in the 1900s. "In 1974, estranged sisters who once adventured in a fantasy world have to reunite to defeat an old enemy," Fraser writes. "In 1983, a box of Stuckey's pralines drives people mad. The Wandering Jew averts the apocalypse of 1996. In these and other stories, magic turns the 20th century upside down." ■ Professor emeritus at Sophia University and visiting researcher at the Oriental Library in Tokyo **David L. Wank** co-authored *The Space of Religion: Temple, State, and Buddhist Communities in Modern China* (Columbia University Press) with Yoshiko Ashiwa. Through extensive ethnographic research grounded in historical detail, the book analyzes the practice of Buddhism in modern China and the complex relationship between Buddhism and the Chinese state.

1981

Herm Beavers, the Julie Beren Platt and Marc E. Platt President's Distinguished Professor of English and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, has been elected second vice president of the Modern Language Association (MLA), the 20,000-member professional organization of professors of language and literature. Herm, who is the author of five books and a faculty member at Penn since 1989, will assume the role of president of the MLA in 2026. He and his wife, Lisa, a New Jersey Superior Court judge, live in Burlington Township and have two children. ■ At the 2023 joint conference of the American Musicological Society and



Felman '81

the society for Music Theory, the SMT awarded **Steven Cahn's** article "Schoenberg, Al-Kindi, and the Unbound Braid" (*The Musical Quarterly*, 2021), an Outstanding Publication Award; this was his contribution to the festschrift for Leo Treitler. Steven's research at the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna was supported by the Avenir Foundation and the University of Cincinnati, where he is a professor of music theory. On that September 2019 trip with his wife Shoshana, Steven sought to recreate the unforgettable Winter Term group trip he took to Vienna with Oberlin professor Richard Hoffmann in January 1980, only in much better weather. ■ **Dr. Robert Felman** has been practicing gastroenterology in Venice, Fla., for 30 years. He plays clarinet with the World Doctors Orchestra, Northport Symphony, Venice Community Band, and various traditional jazz and Klezmer groups. He and his wife, Jennifer, enjoy spending time at their house in Arpino, Italy. ■ The law firm Lathrop GPM shares that Chambers has ranked **Eric L. Yaffe** in the Franchising category in its USA Guide 2023.

1982

Gay Thomas recently published her first children's book, *Beezy County Fair: A Bee Tale*, with illustrator Jennifer Kirkham. In the words of one Amazon reviewer, "What a lovely, fun story about thinking outside the box and working together with those that may not be like you. Wonderful morals hidden in a sweet story."

1983

Anna Huttenlocher shares the publication of a new book, *From Loss to Memory: Behind the Discovery of Synaptic Pruning* (Cambridge University Press), that "interweaves German history, scientific discovery, and neuroscience and so far has been well received." A professor of medical microbiology and immunology and pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Anna wrote the book about her father, who "first reported synaptic pruning during development." ■ **Jeff Lederer** has



released two albums on his own Little (i) Music label (littleimusic.com). *Schoenberg on the Beach* is a new jazz song cycle based on the early vocal works of Arnold Schoenberg, while *Balls of Simplicity* contains previously unheard performances of Jeff's notated works dating from 1979 to 2021. "Both albums reflect the profound influence of my composition studies with Wendell Logan while at Oberlin," Jeff writes. He continues to serve as director of jazz studies, music technology, and entrepreneurship at Long Island University Post as well as teaching at the New School. ■ **Lucia Unrau** was appointed director of Oklahoma State University's Greenwood School of Music. In addition to her degrees in piano performance from Oberlin, Indiana University, and the University of Texas at Austin, Lucia has decades of experience as an administrator and pianist pedagogue.

1984



Jaffe '84

In November 2023, President Joe Biden appointed **Peter Jaffe** as vice president, general counsel, and secretary of the Millennium Challenge Corp. (mcc.gov), an

independent U.S. government agency working to reduce global poverty through economic growth by providing time-limited

grants and assistance to countries that meet rigorous standards for good governance, fighting corruption, and respecting democratic rights. Peter joins the agency from the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, where he provided legal advice and strategic guidance on complex international matters and served as deputy chair of the firm's anti-corruption practice group. ■ **Cedric Merlin Powell** has been elected to membership in the American Law Institute, a leading independent scholarly organization of law professors, judges, and lawyers committed to clarifying, improving, and modernizing the law.

1985

Stacey Colino co-authored *The Purest Bond: Understanding the Human-Canine Connection* (Atria Books) with Jen Golbeck, caretaker of the golden retriever social media stars The Golden Ratio. The book "explores not just the social benefits of owning a dog, but the science of how dogs improve our emotional and physical health, mental acuity, and our ability to focus and absorb information."

1986

Kate Goehring won Best Performance by an Actor at the New York Shorts International Film Festival for *Bad Mother*, which also won the Grand Prize at the festival. ■ In

August, **Susan McLaughlin** retired from a 30-year career at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Her contributions there spanned domestic banking policy issues, foreign exchange reserves management, monetary policy implementation, lender of last resort, and financial market reform. She was deeply involved in the Fed's policy response to both the global financial and COVID crises, with senior management responsibility for some of the Fed's emergency lending programs in both periods. Susan is currently serving as an executive fellow at the Yale Program on Financial Stability and sings with the Cecilia Chorus of New York. From now on, Susan plans to spend as much of her time as possible traveling the world with her husband Eric. ■ **Harry Remer** has been living in a college town in western Massachusetts for 15 years, practicing psychotherapy privately and founding a local professional group working to improve therapy quality and access for clients of color. Harry also started writing and performing songs again in 2021 after 18 years away. His family consists of his wonderful wife, Emily, and their dog and cat, Poncho and Izzy. Contact him via harryremermusic.com, or hear his music on Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. ■ **Josh Shuman** shares news of an Obie reunion in Jerusalem: "The stars were bright when **Shoshana Kaminsky '87**, a rabbi in Adelaide, Australia, came to Jerusalem the same week that **Norman Birnbach '86** arrived from Marblehead, Mass." Pictured from left: Shoshana, Josh, Norman (sitting); **Rivka Moriah (Martha Webb) '89** and **Miriam Cohen Green '87** (standing). "Rivka, Miriam, and I live in Israel," Josh adds. "There was Obie swag too, including shirts and hats acquired over the years."

1987

Washington Women In Trades awarded **Gillian Burlingham** the 2022 Active Advocate Award in recognition of her support for women in skilled trades. "I'm a commercial/industrial union electrician now working as a member representative at the union hall," Gillian notes. "My family kindly tolerates me pointing out all the buildings and structures I've helped build around Seattle!" ■ **Said Ibrahim** was



EMBRACING CHANGE TO MEET FUTURE CHALLENGES

My name is Jan Weintraub Cobb, and I'm the new president of the Oberlin Alumni Association. I spent my professional career working in commercial real estate. Now retired, I spend most of the day working on nonprofit causes, and I'm taking Italian to keep my brain cells churning.

I'm also staying involved with Oberlin alumni activities, something I've done for most of my years since graduation. Because I live in Cincinnati, I'm able to visit campus fairly often, so I've had a firsthand look at the ways Oberlin has changed over time.

I had a quiet childhood growing up in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Coming to Oberlin, which was a bastion of progressivism and critical thought, was the most eye-opening thing I'd done to that point in my life. Change was something I had to embrace. Of course, Oberlin was much different then, particularly the social rules of our day. (Yes, we had to put a trash can in the doorway when we had a boy in our rooms!)

When we graduated, the world was also very different. I was uncomfortable telling my Oberlin friends that I took a job in the business world. But I always had to be comfortable embracing change. My mantra when managing a department was, "We love change. Change is good." I'd learned that people who didn't accept change were left behind.

Where Oberlin is concerned, some alumni can be understandably wary of change. After all, there's a lot to love about the Oberlin that lives in our memories. But Oberlin needs to embrace change to be nimble enough to meet future challenges—ones we know and others we can't even predict—while continuing to do its main job: educating students to meet the world with the best tools we can offer.

And Oberlin has risen to meet the challenges of the world that graduates enter today. Check out integrative concentrations focused on important topics like global health, international affairs, food studies, business, journalism, or the Internship+ program for all third-year students. The lower level of Mudd has been re-envisioned as the Center for Engaged Liberal Arts (CELA), which brings together the offices of Career Exploration and Development, Undergraduate Research, Entrepreneurship, Study Away, and many more spaces that hum with student activity and new learning opportunities.

The world is certainly always moving forward. And think back 25, 50, or even 100 years: Is Oberlin the same place it was back then? No, it's not. So I say embrace those changes—in my mind, change is good!

Jan Weintraub Cobb '71
President, Oberlin Alumni Association



Burlingham '87



Marshall '87

appointed the first Black dean at Thomas Jefferson University's Sidney Kimmel Medical College. Said was also named president of Jefferson University Physicians and elected to the National Academy of Medicine. Previously, he was chair of the Department of Medicine at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset and the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell. ■ In 2023, filmmaker, producer, and singer **Karyn Levitt** premiered *Honoring Eric Bentley: A Centennial Tribute Concert*, a film about theater legend Eric Bentley, with screenings in New York; Somerville, Mass.; and Berlin. To learn more about the film or present a screening, visit HonoringEricBentleyFilm.com. ■ **Tanera Marshall** has been teaching voice, speech, and accents at University of Illinois Chicago since 2004 and working as a dialect coach in TV and film since 2007. Tanera's latest project, the film *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, opened in November 2023. "We shot for four months in Germany and Poland in 2022 with a great team, glorious weather, and some terrific hiking in the Polish countryside on our days off."

1988

Kristen Herbert Anderson reports that she and five other Oberlin alumni recently got together to catch up—and re-created a photo they took in 1988. "In the original photo, six of us are piled on top of each other on the couch of Fuller Co-op (across the street from where we ate at Tank Co-op). For the 2023 re-creation, we chose not to pile our six aging bodies on top of each other again and merely cuddled up together on a couch." Pictured from left: **Peter Rumsey**, **Michael Morse**, **Kristen**, **Rebecca Scovel**, **Rachel Simon Holzman '89**, and **Anna Weinstein '89**. ■



Anderson '88

Amanda Udis-Kessler's second book, *Abundant Lives: A Progressive Christian Ethic of Flourishing* (Pilgrim Press), has an expected release date of May 1. People interested in learning more can contact Amanda at amanda@amandaudiskessler.com.

1989
Todd Reeser recently published *Queer Cinema in Contemporary France* (Manchester University Press), which offers a response to the question, "What is French queer cinema in the 21st century? The book traces the development of the meaning of "queer" across five major directors' careers, from their earliest, often unknown films to their later, major films with wide international release.

1990s

1991
Julia Barton is among 24 journalists in the 86th cohort of Nieman Fellows at Harvard University. She is spending the 2023-24 academic year studying sound, cinema, and rhetoric at Harvard and MIT. Julia has been vice president and executive editor of the audio production house Pushkin Industries, where she's edited podcasts including *Revisionist History*, *Against the Rules*, and *The Last Archive*. She also curated the audiobook collection *The Best Audio Storytelling: 2022*.

1992
In December 2023, the Modern Language

Association awarded its 54th annual James Russell Lowell Prize to **Matt Cohen**, a professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, for *The Silence of the Miskito Prince: How Cultural Dialogue Was Colonized* (University of Minnesota Press). ■ **Liz Horodowich**, chair of the history department at New Mexico State University, published 2023's *Amerasia* (Princeton University Press).

1993
Brian Fink was named a member at the law firm McGlinchey Stafford. Having worked previously for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, he practices with the firm's financial institutions compliance group. ■ **Tara Meeden Frazer** participated in the prestigious Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program in the 2023-24 school year. Tara lives in Durango, Colo., and teaches middle school in Aztec, N.M. After graduating from Oberlin, she did Teach for America, earned a master's degree in science education from the University of Texas-Austin, and ran a home daycare for eight years while raising three daughters. "My eldest has been attending Oberlin!" Tara adds. "She is a sophomore and is living in Harkness, just like I did!" Contact Tara at tarafrazer@yahoo.com or on Facebook. ■ **Emily Spooter Stern** is alive and well and living in Switzerland and still singing full time in the Zurich Opera Chorus. "Would love to be in contact with other Obies, particularly **Martin Rogovein**, **Rana Kazkaz**, **Walker Lewis '96**, and my colleagues from Barbershop 2000." Reach out at chaimalka@sunrise.ch.

1994
Stephanie Davis-Kahl, a librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University, received the University Excellence in Service Award for her exemplary record of faculty governance service.

1995
Christina Graves is the new chief program officer of Mainstay Life Services, a nonprofit organization providing lifelong, high-quality support services for people with intellectual disabilities and autism in Pittsburgh. She oversees the evaluation plan for all programs, ensuring the organization

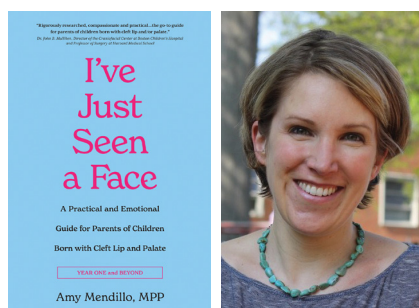
Class Notes

efficiently responds to the changing needs of the people and families served. Christina also provides executive leadership for legal, compliance, and regulatory matters and is responsible for the development and management of Mainstay's program efficiency, quality service delivery, and fiscal accountability. ■ **Erika Sanders** recently became president and CEO of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, a private nonprofit civil rights enforcement agency dedicated to combating illegal housing discrimination in Wisconsin. "I split my time between Milwaukee and St. Paul, Minn., where I live with **Adrian Hegeman '92**, and our two teenage daughters," Erika says. "Adrian, a plant biochemist, is a professor at the University of Minnesota, where he occupies the Luby Family Honeycrisp Endowed Chair for Fruit Crop Innovation. We welcome Oberlin contacts in both Milwaukee and the Twin Cities."

1996

Tamarine Cornelius earned her master's degree in data science from the University of Wisconsin—her second one, as she also holds a master's degree in public administration. Tamarine is a research analyst in the Dane County Office of Justice Reform, where she uses data to promote changes that advance safety, equity, and justice. Her favorite R package is dplyr.

1997



Mendillo '97

Amy Mendillo published *I've Just Seen a Face* (Luminare Press), a practical and emotional guide for parents of children born with cleft lip and palate. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with her family. Learn more at amymendillo.com.

1999

In May 2023, **Katherine Higgins** earned a

PhD in educational research and policy analysis at North Carolina State University. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Katherine is a chaplain and pastoral educator at Duke University Hospital and lives in Pittsboro, N.C., with her husband and daughter. Reach out at: kakihiggins@gmail.com. ■ Dancer and aerialist **Kerry Wee** produces and hosts *The Expecting Aerialist*, an interview show about motherhood and pregnancy with and about aerialists from all over the world, and *Greener Grass*, a podcast about everyday people doing extraordinary things. Kerry instructs a variety of circus apparatus in Los Angeles at Womack and Bowman—The LOFT and teaches silks online at her educational site (wrapyourheadaroundsilks.com). Kerry is a mom of 3.5-year-old Willa Mei and is happily partnered with musician and producer Asa Watkins.

2000s

2000

Abigail Harkey earned a Fulbright Distinguished Award for Teaching Research, which took her to Finland for a semester to research Finnish national sustainability and arts curricula. Abigail presented on social-emotional learning and the arts at universities and conferences in Finland and Sweden and engaged in an international consortium of artist-educators focused on the sociocultural landscape. Upon her return to Denver, she was hired as the visual arts specialist for Denver Public Schools, where her Fulbright research is informing a curriculum she is designing called Ecosocial Art. Although Abigail regrets the lack of traditional Finnish sauna culture in America, she is making up for it with Colorado hot springs. ■ **Kevin McShane** shares that spring 2024 marks the 25th anniversary of Oberlin improv comedy troupe The Sunshine Scouts. "I'm trying to put together a complete list of Scouts alumni. If you or anyone you know was a member, please get in touch at thesunshinescouts@gmail.com." ■ In October, **Lauren Viera** released her new book, *The 500 Hidden Secrets of Chicago*, via Luster, a small press out of Antwerp, Belgium. "[It's] the debut Chicago edition of the publisher's *500 Hidden Secrets* series of books featuring



Harkey '00



Duwe '01

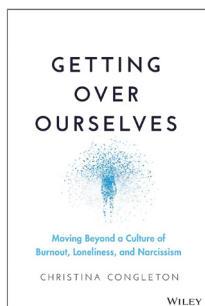
cultural world capitals from the point of view of a local writer," Lauren says. "I've spent the better part of the past year researching the book, and even after more than two decades in Chicago, I've discovered so many new-to-me things that were previously only tidbits of lore via hearsay."

2001

Allison Duwe shares that she, **Ann Rhodes**, **Elena Belle White**, **Lillian Kehler Whitsett**, **Meg Ansara**, **Laura Levin**, and **Felicia Kazer** gathered for a midlife retreat on Cape Cod. Sadly, **Eve Bratman** was unable to attend—she could not swing the flight from France where she is on fellowship with the French Institute for Advanced Studies. "Gratitude and support were the main themes, with topics ranging from career moves, parenthood, aging parents, marriage,

graphic novels, and the pros and cons of dog ownership,” Allison says. “The world’s problems were not solved, but the capacity for making the world a more beautiful place was strengthened.” Additionally, she and Felicia note they were “elated to discover their talent for ping-pong has only improved with age.”

2003



Christina Congleton published her first full-length book, *Getting Over Ourselves: Moving Beyond a Culture of Burnout, Loneliness, and Narcissism*, in December 2023. After Oberlin, Christina worked in neuroscience labs;

studied executive coaching; earned a master’s degree in human development and psychology at Harvard; and is now a leadership coach in private practice and with consultancies, including the Center for Creative Leadership. She lives outside Denver with her husband and son. (axonleadership.com)

2004

Ashlynn Manning Teng married Kevin Teng on August 27, 2022, in Charlottesville, Va., where Ashlynn teaches voice and piano. Obies in attendance (from left) include **Kristiana (Krista) McKinnon '06**, **Stephanie Rooker**, and **Emily Doubilet '06**. The couple welcomed their baby Dylan on November 2 that same year.

2005

In May 2023, **Ryan E. Holman** won first prize in the Baltimore Science Fiction Society’s annual poetry contest for her poem “Tell the Bees.” The prize included publication of her piece in the Balticon 57 issue of *The BSFAN*, which can be found online (www.bsfs.org/images/poetry/2023-win.pdf). Ryan previously won third prize in the 2021 and 2016 editions of this contest and has poems appearing in *October Hill Magazine*, *Corvid Queen*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Eternal Haunted Summer*, and *Maryland Literary Review*, among others.



2007



Braford '07

In October, the Piedmont Farm Animal Refuge in Pittsboro, N.C., received an Outstanding Animal Sanctuary award from the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

Lenore Braford is the founder and animal care director, while **Paul Drake** is the designer and construction leader. ■ The National Park Service has selected **Sally Martinez** as the new permanent



Martinez '07

superintendent of Honouliuli National Historic Site. Sally had been the acting superintendent of this site since July 2023; previously, she managed the Volunteers-in-Parks program for seven

years at Yosemite National Park. In her new role, Sally will oversee a site dedicated to telling the history of incarceration, martial law, and the experiences of prisoners of war in Hawaii during World War II. ■ **Lydia Pelot-Hobbs** published her first book, *Prison Capital: Mass Incarceration and Struggles for Abolition Democracy in Louisiana* (University of North Carolina Press) in November.

2009

Karen Wilfrid’s debut novel, *Just Lizzie* (Harper Collins-Clarion) was published in November. A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection, *Just Lizzie* follows 14-year-old Lizzie as she begins to understand and explore her asexual identity. *Kirkus* describes the book as “a welcome addition to the growing number of novels exploring and embracing asexuality.” (karenwilfrid.com/just-lizzie.html)

2010s

2010

In October, **Fancy Feast** published the essay collection *Naked: On Sex, Work, and Other Burlesques* (Hachette). Describes the publisher: “Part exclusive backstage pass, part long-form literary striptease, these essays confront our culture’s tightly held beliefs—like so many clutched pearls—about sex, communication, power, and the messiness of life on the margins of respectability.”



Toda '11

2011

Saga Briggs' debut book, *How to Change Your Body: The Science of Interoception and Healing through Connection to Yourself and Others* (Synergetic Press), emerged from an article written for the MIND European Foundation for Psychedelic Science. "The book combines expert interviews from leading institutions around the world such as Johns Hopkins and Oxford; independent research; and lived experience to connect the dots of three timely themes: interoception, psychedelics, and mental health," Saga writes. ■ **Alex La Ferla** has been promoted to principal at Amie Gross Architects. ■ **Shinri Arnie Tanimoto** notes, "I have been appointed lecturer in viola da gamba and baroque cello and director of the Early Music Princeton Viol Consort at Princeton University." ■ **Asaki Toda** and **Dylan Luers Toda '09** welcomed their second son, Sen, in May. Sen was delivered by **Ronni Getz '15** at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Magee-Womens Hospital, where both Asaki and Ronni work as certified nurse midwives. Dylan is a freelance Japanese-to-English translator.

2013

Madeleine O'Meara writes, "Marriage announcement! In February 2023, I married my partner Joel White." Obies in attendance included **Emerson Hunton '16**, **Bronwen Schumacher '15**, **Jackson Meredith**, **Sarah Orbuch '14**, **Simone Brodner '14**, **Christina Perez-Tineo**, **Phoebe Hammer '14**, **Jodi Helsel '15**, **Kate Hanick '15**, **Hannah Combe**, **Haley Nevers**, **Ilyssa Meyer**, **Noah Steinman**, and **Rachel McMonagle**.



2014

Bailey James' play *Reflections*, co-written with her friend and collaborator Obum Ukabam, was produced at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center in Tulsa, Okla., and ran for nine performances. The show featured 38 local actors and explored the history of Tulsa's 1921 Race Massacre woven together with stories from the modern day, creating a mirrored narrative that explores race

relations in the past and present. "I was a creative writing, English, and history major at Oberlin and applied what I learned for all three of those degrees to write this play," Bailey says. *Reflections* is under consideration for repeat performances elsewhere in the region. ■ **Miata Rogers** married Bryan Maldonado in June 2023 in Chicago. The wedding was beautifully officiated by Afia Ofori-Mensa, who was Miata's professor and



advisor at Oberlin. “Many Obies were in attendance to celebrate this union as well as former employees of the college,” Miata writes. Pictured from left: **Charlotte Hopkinson '13**, **Daniel Zipp '13**, **Jessica DePaz**, **Jhanus Francisco**, **Afia**, **Shani Edmond**, **Kierra Holmes**, **Alyssa Rathan**, **Erik Martinez '13**, **Purvi Patel**, and **Caitlin O’Neill '11**. ■ **Eli Stine**, who taught for three years in the TIMARA department at the Oberlin Conservatory, attended a November 2022 event called Symposium that included two additional Oberlin alumni working at Meta: **John Burnett '16** and **Katie Chase '99**. “We all work in Meta Reality Labs Research in its audio division,” Stine writes, “and snapped this pic because there was such a concentration of Obies in one place.”

2016

Austin Lewellen is a member of Kinetic Ensemble (kineticensemble.org), a Houston-based uncondacted string orchestra. In November, the group released its debut album, *Kinetic* (Bright Shiny Things), which Austin says “contains four newly composed works that consider the relationship between musical sound and the natural world.” *Kinetic* is available on vinyl, CD, and digitally. ■ **Daniel Orsen** shares the release of *Wagner’s Nightmare*, “an album of music Wagner wouldn’t like. With a slate including Mendelssohn, Satie, Liszt, and the rarely heard mega-violin known as Viola Alta, listening to this album is sure to provoke Wagner’s wrath from beyond the grave.” An EP version is available on streaming, with the full album on CD and token-gated digital access.

2017

Jacob Baron was the director of photography and editor of the initial episode of the Manhattan Neighborhood Network TV show *Don’t Mind If I Don’t*. ■ **Rose Guardino** and **Kelby Spring '16** were married in June 2023 in Bloomington, Ind., with many Obies in attendance, including former members of the soccer and baseball teams. Pictured: **Nick Theofilos '16**, **Justin Cruz**, **Mike Masella**, **Jack Brewster '18**,

John Sutherland '18, **Sam Martin**, **Macabe Camps**, **Kelby**, **Caley Watnick**, **Steve DiNanno '14**, **Rose**, **Taylor French**, **Casey McGuire**, **Caroline Oehlerich**, **Tristram Osgood '16**, **Harrison Wollman '16**, **Trace McConnell '18**, **Charlie Goetz**, **Aaron McCartney '16**, **Bennett Jackson '18**, **Robert Bonfiglio '16**, **Emilia Omerberg**, **Kyle Dominy '16**, **Louis Naiman '16**, **Ryan Bliss '15**, **Megan Herrmann**, **Jeff Schweighoffer '15**, **Molly Schweighoffer '16**, **Tom Firl '16**, **Maria Roussos '18**, and **Joe Myrick '18**.

2018

Alexa Weeks and **Benjamin Croen** were married in December 2022, with quite a few Obies in attendance. From left: **Brianna Murray '17**, **India Rowland '17**, **Harrison Heard**, **Matthew Payne '19**, **Jacob Thompson '16**, **Amy Weintraub '17**, and **Maddie Schindele '17**.

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Class Notes are prepared from a variety of sources but are drawn mainly from personal and professional news submitted by college and conservatory alums. What makes a good class note? When you’re proud to share something, we want to hear about it! Good news! You can now submit your class note (along with a photo) online: go.oberlin.edu/submit-class-notes



**Oberlin was
always a part of
my household.**

KATE ATKINSON KAPLAN '86 grew up in Buffalo, New York with two music teacher parents, Kenneth '59 and Janet Atkinson. Both attended the conservatory and remained dedicated to Oberlin, even keeping well-read copies of the alumni magazine around the house. Kate first visited Oberlin as a middle schooler and remembers being enchanted by campus, seeing it as “a place full of creativity.” When it came time to apply to college, Oberlin was at the top of Kate’s list of preferred schools.

Kate remembers her Oberlin education with fondness and gratitude. She majored in sociology-anthropology and minored in history, but also took classes in French and art criticism and spent a particularly memorable Winter Term studying viola da gamba. But she also learned valuable life lessons. As a work-study recipient, Kate served meals in the

Asia House dining hall. Later, she was a student-teacher at a local elementary school. Kate entered Oberlin with an understanding of its mission but was increasingly impressed by what she saw around her: smart, engaged students committed to changing the world.

Kate has had a successful career as a fundraiser at multiple nonprofits and in higher education, including for a small liberal arts university in Boston that reminded her of Oberlin.

When it came time to make a planned gift to Oberlin, Kate knew that she wanted to keep it simple and easy, so she named Oberlin as a partial beneficiary of her retirement account, with a gift supporting Oberlin’s general operations. That way, she could pass assets to her family while also benefiting her alma mater.

Kate’s reason for giving? “Oberlin was always a part of my household.”

We are grateful to donors like Kate, who have included Oberlin in their legacy plans. If you’d like to talk to someone about making a planned gift to Oberlin, contact the Office of Leadership and Planned Giving at (440) 775-8599 or gift.planning@oberlin.edu.

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Losses

Faculty/Staff/Friends

Simon Barenbaum, a professor who taught French language and literature and directed French plays during his time at Oberlin, died November 18, 2023. Born in 1926 in Latvia, he grew up primarily in Paris and later moved to the U.S. to study. Simon earned his PhD at Brown University, where he became a professor of French, and started teaching at Oberlin in 1956. He became a visiting professor of French at Middlebury College in 1970, launching a 22-year career with full professorship and appointment as an Old Dominion Foundation Professor. Simon inspired students with his love of French language, culture, and theater. He is survived by three children and two grandsons. ■

Robert Dodson was a talented cellist and the 11th dean of Oberlin Conservatory, arriving in summer 1999 after serving as dean of the Lawrence University Conservatory. During his tenure at Oberlin, the conservatory founded the Community Music School, which continues to link Oberlin's campus and community. In 2004, Robert became provost of New England Conservatory, after which he also served at Boston University. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he studied under Janos Starker. In retirement, Robert was a volunteer member of the Olive Fire Department. He died October 15, 2023, and is survived by his wife, two children, and four grandchildren. ■ **Robert A. "Bob" Haslun '67**, who worked at Oberlin for 34 years in a number of roles, died November 6, 2023. After earning a degree in history, he worked briefly at the Public Theatre in New York before becoming a preparatory school teacher. Bob also served as general manager for the Oberlin College Gilbert and Sullivan Players and was a founding producer of the College Light Opera Company (CLOC) in Falmouth, Mass. He and his wife, Ursula Rooth Haslun '75, served as CLOC co-producers until their joint retirement after the 2015 summer season. In 1973, Bob returned to Oberlin as assistant director of public relations and later served as assistant to Oberlin President Emil Danenberg before being named corporate secretary of the college in 1978. He retired from Oberlin College in 2007. Bob is survived by his wife and six nieces and nephews. ■ Well-known as the publisher of bestselling books including Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and John

Grisham's *The Firm*, **Stephen Rubin**, who died October 13, 2023, was also deeply committed to the preservation and advancement of classical music journalism. He launched the Rubin Institute for Music Criticism at the Oberlin Conservatory in 2011 in cooperation with then-Dean David Stull. The first Institute was held in January 2012, when 10 students wrote overnight reviews of Finney Chapel performances to be evaluated by a panel of leading critics. Stephen's generosity reached further into the field by funding publications like ClevelandClassical.com; a grant from the Rubin Institute allowed the site to begin to pay writers. In a testament to his impact, multiple students who were fellows have gone on to careers in music journalism.

1942

At Oberlin, **Margaret Ruby McKee** studied music education and played oboe, including a performance in the Oberlin Orchestra with the legendary composer and musicologist Béla Bartók. She earned a master's degree at the University of Michigan and moved to Rochester, N.Y., with her husband. After relocating to Tulsa, Okla., in the early 1950s and having children, Margaret earned her teaching certification and taught elementary school children string, wind, brass, and percussion instruments. She traveled widely after retiring in the mid-1980s, including visits to Nepal, India, Ireland, and the Panama Canal, and embarked on 10K walks all over the U.S. She died in April 2023, just before her 103rd birthday, and is survived by four children (including Robin '76) and two grandchildren (including Britton '11).

1943

Dr. Robert L. Walters, who died January 21, 2024, in his 103rd year, was a charming, interesting conversationalist until the last hours of his life. After earning a bachelor's degree in French, he earned a PhD from Princeton University and attended the Sorbonne as one of the first Fulbright Scholars. Robert moved to Canada in 1951 to take a job in the French department at the University of Manitoba. He had a long career at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) as an expert on 18th-century French literature, particularly Voltaire's scientific writing popularizing Newtonian optics and cosmology in

Cartesian France. After retiring from teaching in 1987, Robert edited texts in four volumes of Voltaire's complete works, including *Vol. 15: Eléments de la philosophie de Newton*, and traveled extensively, including to Turkey. He is survived by a daughter, two grandchildren, three stepchildren, and their families.

1945

Ellen Swasey Machamer died December 10, 2023, at age 100. She earned a degree in music education from the Oberlin Conservatory, excelling at the piano and playing the tuba in the marching band. Her education enabled her to teach all instruments (including piano and organ) and she later became certified as a guidance counselor. Both Ellen and her late husband, Andrew, joined the Navy the year after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Each wore the rank of ensign and served for the duration of World War II, with Ellen serving at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia. She later volunteered at local assisted living facilities and worked as an occupational therapist. Ellen grew up swimming in the chilly waters off the coast of New Hampshire, and she continued to swim daily for most of her life. She is survived by four children and nine grandchildren.

1948

Harvey Swack got up every day and said, "What a great day, and I'm going to make it one." His childhood fascination with cars and airplanes led to him opening a hobby shop in Mansfield, Ohio, where in addition to selling model planes and automobiles, he sold the first Barbie and Ken dolls in Ohio. When he and his late wife, Lois, moved to Cleveland, he began working in parks, and in the 1970s, he led a citizens' initiative to open Ohio's first national park, Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Harvey died October 21, 2021, and is survived by two siblings, three children (including Judith '73), and four grandchildren.

1949

Robert "Bob" Oppenheimer was an avid movie reviewer for *The Oberlin Review* during his time at Oberlin, and after studying at Harvard Law School, he went on to become managing partner at the Rochester, N.Y., firm Chamberlain D'Amanda. Bob

helped to found the Greater Rochester Health Foundation and served on its board as well as that of Unity Health System. He was a seasoned traveler, visiting China, Japan, and Israel, among other destinations, and enjoyed playing golf and curling up with a good book. Bob, who died on October 19, 2023, is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a grandson. ■ “Oberlin opened my eyes, because I had never been to a college,” **James K. Sunshine** wrote late in life. Neither of his parents had attended college. Entering in 1942, he left during his freshman year to enlist as a surgical technician in World War II. After the war, he returned to Oberlin, married Anne Fassett ’47, and graduated with a degree in history. With a degree from Columbia University School of Journalism, Jim joined the staff of *The Providence Journal*, retiring in 1995 as deputy executive editor. He returned to Ohio in 2005 to live at Kendal at Oberlin, where he died on December 27, 2023. He is survived by two children (including Catherine Sunshine ’75) and three grandchildren (including Cynthia Minter ’12). ■

Dr. David Rhoads Weimer died January 10, 2024. An adventurer from a young age, David fed his curiosity by reading prodigiously, a habit he would maintain throughout his life. He was the captain of his Oberlin fencing team and a gifted musician, performing the challenging Grieg piano concerto at 16. David was a professor of English at Rutgers University for 33 years, receiving a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to teach in Brazil. In his later years, David fulfilled his lifelong dreams of adventure and traveled to Egypt, Europe, and South America. He was also an author, penning everything from investigative pieces for *The New York Times* to academic works and suspense novels. He was passionate about human rights causes—especially ending the torture of political prisoners—and was active in Amnesty International’s work in Brazil. He is survived by children and their spouses and his four grandchildren.

1950

Jo “Joanne” Thompson Dennig was involved in politics and social activism throughout her life. At Oberlin, she met her future husband, Walter Dennig ’51, and the couple married in 1954. They settled in Freiburg, Germany, and had four children. Joanne was a member of various German peace movement organizations and a

voracious reader who exhibited love, humor, and commitment to her family and friends. She died on May 12, 2020. ■ **Tom Glastras** majored in piano performance at Oberlin and then continued graduate studies in musicology at Indiana University. After a five-year teaching appointment at Knox College in Illinois, he returned to IU, where he earned a master’s degree in library science. He was hired as a reference assistant there and enjoyed a lengthy career as an academic librarian specializing in government documents before retiring as head of the reference department. Tom was an avid reader, environmentalist, and woodcarver and was active until his passing at age 97 on June 9, 2022. He is survived by three nieces as well as longtime friends.

1951

Detroit-born **Julia Hail Ferreira** earned a bachelor’s degree in kindergarten-primary education at Oberlin before attending the University of Oregon and earning a master’s in education. A kindergarten and preschool teacher, Julia enjoyed civic activism and the outdoors. After establishing herself in Oregon, she managed local Democratic and land-use campaigns; she also led day hikes for multiple hiking groups, and with daughter Linda ’81, she climbed most of the glaciated peaks of the Pacific Northwest. Over the years, Julia exhibited her artistic skills on campaign materials for many groups including the League of Women Voters. She died August 17, 2023, preceded in death by her husband of 63 years, Dick Ferreira ’50, and survived by three children and five grandchildren. ■ **Ruth Anne Schoonmaker Hood** died January 3, 2024.

At Oberlin, where she earned a degree in religion with a minor in sociology, she met and fell in love with Malcolm Woodhams Hood ’51. Ruth Anne worked in Christian education in a United Methodist Church and as a teacher’s assistant in various schools. After retiring from Guilford County Public Schools in North Carolina, she volunteered for 24 years at the Friends Historical Collection (now the Quaker Archives) at Guilford College and for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as a regional representative. She was a longtime member of New Garden Friends Meeting, serving in multiple capacities. She is survived by five children and seven

grandchildren. ■ **Marti Ruth Kanin** studied piano and cello at the conservatory before earning a master’s degree in cello at Indiana University. She moved to West Lafayette, Ind., in the 1950s, and then played in the Santa Fe Opera’s orchestra in the 1970s before relocating to New Orleans. There, Marti played cello with the New Orleans Symphony until its closure in 1991; she then returned to Indianapolis, teaching cello and taking care of her parents. After a long, enriching life that was filled with music, she died July 13, 2023.

1952

A professional sculptor and member of Art Plus Gallery, **Nancy Lewis Cole** was also a founding member of Threshold Rehabilitation. After graduating from Oberlin, she earned a degree in occupational therapy from Wayne State University. The following year, Nancy married E. James Morrissey ’53, and the couple, who were married for 69 years, had four children. After raising her children, she returned to occupational therapy, specializing in infant care at Easter Seals. Nancy was a strong member of the Reading Monthly Meeting of Friends, leading their First Day School for years, along with serving as clerk and a member of the worship and care committee.

■ **Kazuko Tanaka** died February 1, 2024. Her son shares that she “always valued her time at Oberlin and appreciated the school’s effort to welcome her, especially so soon after World War II when Japanese were not always welcome.” Kazuko’s father, Hiroshi Hatanaka, and brother Tadashi Hatanaka ’61 also attended Oberlin.

1954

While at Oberlin, a junior counselor introduced **Ruth Elaine Watson Gandek** to her future husband, the late Rev. Walter T Gandek ’52. Walt proposed to Ruth by hiding the ring in a puzzle box, writing, “Life is like a puzzle ... easier if two people work it together.” They were married in 1954. Together, Ruth and Walt were active in numerous churches across New Jersey, and as their three children became more independent, Ruth directed her energy toward building her own career, gravitating toward social work, where she could positively impact the lives of people in need. ■ **George W. Harding III** became an actuary after graduating from Oberlin with a

bachelor's degree in mathematics. The Akron native worked with two insurance companies and later as an actuarial consultant with his company, Value Planning Inc.; he also was a fellow with the Society of Actuaries and a member of the American Academy of Actuaries. George was also a pilot of a small plane and used that to travel all around the United States. He died November 3, 2023, and is survived by his wife and three children. ■ A vocal performance major at the conservatory, **Alice Hotopp** received two honorary awards plus a graduate teaching assistantship upon graduation. Professionally, she performed with the Gilbert and Sullivan Players on Cape Cod; toured with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians; was selected as the Official Ohio Soprano for the 1976 National Bicentennial Chorus; and sang recitals, oratorios, and symphony performances throughout the Midwest. Alice also taught at Antioch College and retired after 30 years of teaching voice at the University of Dayton. She maintained a private voice studio in her home until her death on December 16, 2023. Alice is survived by her husband, three children, and three grandchildren. ■ Having earned her master's degree in ceramics from Antioch College, **Joan Lord Johnston** immersed herself in pottery, creating pieces that were functional yet striking. She was also involved in the local culture of Shepherdstown, W.Va., where she settled with her husband in 1989. Joan repaired books at the town library, participated in the Potters Bowl fundraiser for Good Shepherd Caregivers, shopped at the farmers market, and walked around town every day. She died July 13, 2023, and is survived by three siblings, four daughters (including Julia '87), and six grandchildren. ■ Hailed by former colleagues as one of the 20th century's most important Chinese linguists, **Tsu-Lin Mei** moved from China to the United States in 1949, five years before he graduated from Oberlin with a mathematics degree. After studying and teaching at Harvard and Yale, Tsu-Lin arrived at Cornell University in 1971 and would go on to chair the Asian studies department. His research focused on Chinese historical grammar, Chinese historical dialectology, Old Chinese morphology, and Sino-Tibetan comparative linguistics. Tsu-Lin served as the Hu Shih Professor of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at Cornell between 1994 and his 2001 retirement, after

which he continued his research and was a visiting professor at Stanford University, Tsinghua University, and other academic institutions around the world. Tsu-Lin died on October 14, 2023, and is survived by his wife, three children, and four grandchildren.

■ **Shirley Ann Shaffer Roe** worked with renowned musicians Aaron Copeland and Leonard Bernstein after graduating from the Oberlin Conservatory with bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance. A native of Elmira, N.Y., Shirley performed with the Toledo Symphony and at church; she and her husband sailed the world, and she taught her much-beloved baking skills to those she knew. She died November 4, 2023, and is survived by three nephews and four nieces. ■ **Anne Marie Carleton Wright** was born in Beirut and spent most of her youth living in the Middle East, mainly Syria and Lebanon. After graduating from Oberlin, she moved to Cambridge, Mass., where she met her future husband. The two lived in Europe and traveled around the globe during their 68-year marriage. Anne was a passionate volunteer who worked with the Girl Scouts, Girl Guides, and American Red Cross, among other organizations. As a member of the United Church of Christ of Chapel Hill, she served as a deacon, taught Sunday school, and sang in the choir. Anne died on November 6, 2023, and is survived by her husband, three children, and four grandchildren.

1955

Dr. Geraldine "Gerrie" Collins studied piano at the Oberlin Conservatory with Professor Emil Danenberg before earning master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Mississippi and North Texas State University, respectively. She spent the majority of her career at Mississippi State University, where she was a professor of piano until her retirement as professor emerita in 1991. Gerrie died on March 4, 2023, and is survived by her niece, Elizabeth; an endowed piano scholarship is being established in her honor at Mississippi State.

■ The **Rev. Jo Anne Steinheimer Wright** died January 28, 2024. A Ford scholar, Jo was active in the Head Start early childhood program, the League of Women Voters, and Trinity Episcopal Church before receiving the call to enter the Episcopal priesthood. She enrolled at Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. In 1986, she

earned her Master of Divinity degree, was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Kansas, and became the first woman to lead a parish in the diocese at St. Luke's Church in Wamego, Kan.; the following year, she was ordained a priest. In 1999, she moved to Vinita, Okla., and became rector of St. John's Church; there, Jo met and fell in love with Mary Mortlock, and they lived together until Mary's death in 2017. Jo is survived by four children (including daughter Elizabeth '80 and son Kennedy '86), daughters-in-law Julie Kaufman '80 and Nicki Belfiore '86, son-in-law Tom Linder '78, and 11 grandchildren (including Micah Kaufman Wright '13 and Savannah Wright '27).

1956

Dr. A. Murray Evans was a field botanist and specialist in the taxonomy of pteridophytes (ferns). He and his first wife, the late Mary Comstock Evans '56, met at Oberlin and went to Taiwan for two years to teach English as representatives of the Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association. Murray, who earned a PhD in botany from the University of Michigan, became a professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and shared his passions for plants and their habitats with generations of students. For decades, he was also a leader at the Wildflower Pilgrimage in Gatlinburg, Tenn., and located and photographed hundreds of species in the wild for the definitive 1985 publication *A Field Manual of the Ferns & Fern-Allies of the United States & Canada*. He is survived by his wife, Diane (Dee) Montie '56 and three children (including Karin Evans '82). ■ **Winifred Ankers Falcon** majored in English at Oberlin and earned her master's degree in English as a second language at Teachers College. She taught in Afghanistan and New York City and eventually became the volunteer president of the Morningside Junior Library in Manhattan. Winifred's passion for libraries and helping people become readers led to her joining the New York Public Library Branch Council. In the early '90s, she lived in Paris as No. 2 officer of the American Aid Society, and throughout her life, she enjoyed traveling, cooking, concerts, and ballet. Winifred, who died on July 16, 2023, was thrilled that one of her children, Roger Falcon '92, attended Oberlin. ■ **Dr. Fredrick John Seil** was a celebrated neurologist

Losses

whose groundbreaking work on regeneration helped expand the field of neurology. A premedical major at Oberlin, he earned his medical degree at Stanford University. In 1966, Fredrick was drafted into the U.S. Army Medical Corps, where he divided his time between the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology and the National Institutes of Health. As director of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Regeneration Research Programs, he helped spearhead research on neural regeneration; he was the cofounder of two ongoing international symposia on the topic and taught medical students and residents. His wife, Daryle Faith Wolfers '56, passed away in 2005, and the next year, Fredrick moved to Berkeley, Calif., to live with Lannon Leiman. He died June 29, 2023, and is survived by two sons, two grandchildren, and a sister. ■ Longtime Las Vegas resident **Dr. Henry Soloway** died January 6, 2024. After earning a degree from Oberlin College, he studied medicine at State University of New York, graduating in 1962. After medical school, Henry served in the military from 1967 to 1970 and then moved to Las Vegas, where he became a partner in the practice of laboratory medicine with Associated Pathologists Laboratories. Those who knew Henry will remember him as a critical thinker, teacher, innovator, tireless student, writer, editor, friend, parent, role model, and inspiration. ■ **Nancy Toy Young**, who died January 9, 2024, earned degrees from Oberlin and Western Reserve University. She was a librarian, primarily with the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore; the U.S. Army in Germany; and the White Plains Public Library in New York, from which she retired as chief of adult reader/information services. In retirement, she was a volunteer at multiple organizations including several nursing homes. She is survived by a brother and two nieces.

1957

Lee Davies died on February 14, 2023. ■ **Phyllis Ann Wagner Spisak** died November 8, 2023. She taught fourth and fifth grade before deciding working as a church organist would allow more flexibility to raise her family, kicking off a career that also found her working as a choir director and director of music and starting the Bells of Grace handbell choir at Grace Episcopal Church in Baldwinsville, NY. Phyllis is

survived by her husband, three children, and multiple grandchildren.

1958

Lois Baum was an associate program director for Chicago classical music station WFMT from 1964 until 2009 and worked as a station archivist for several years after retiring. She produced and oversaw the production of countless broadcasts on the station, including Studs Terkel's radio program *Critic's Choice* and syndicated broadcasts from the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She died on June 17, 2023, in Woodbridge, Conn., and is survived by her husband, two siblings, and two stepchildren (including Deborah J. Ketai '75). ■ **Richard "Dick" Leighton Hilt** earned his PhD in physics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and later taught the subject at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colo., for 55 years. During his sabbaticals, he studied geophysics at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, Calif. A music and theater appreciator, Dick sang with the Colorado Springs Chorale and the opera choruses at the Colorado Opera Festival. He was also a passionate cat lover who adopted 12 cats over the course of his 58-year marriage. Dick died on October 31, 2023.

1959

After graduating from Oberlin, **Francis Guy Bondurant** earned a master's in library science from Western Reserve University and a master's in art history from Hunter College and completed two programs at the Parsons School of Design. Francis retired as a member of the faculty of New York University, and in retirement, he visited culture centers and friends in the United States and several countries. He died July 31, 2023. ■ **Eleanor Anne Carlson** earned a master's degree from Indiana University and a PhD in musical arts from Boston University. Eleanor was on the faculties of Emmanuel College, the New England Conservatory, and Plymouth State University. As a professor at Southern Massachusetts University, she became the chair of the music department and served as president of the Massachusetts Music Teachers Association, a board member of the Music Teachers National Association, and an advisor to the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra, among many other activities. She performed extensively in Boston, New York, Paris, and London. An avid traveler, Eleanor

managed to set foot on nearly all the continents. She died on September 10, 2023. ■ **Charles Shortt Roess** died on July 17, 2023. ■ After Oberlin, **Elizabeth "Beth" Watson** earned a master's degree in education from the University of Hartford and, after a stint as a teacher, opened a needlepoint shop in central Connecticut. She later turned to her lifelong love of art, obtaining her master's in fine arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. She also studied at the Art Students League of New York; while there, she met fellow artist Bob Elliott, with whom she lived for the rest of her life. Eventually, Beth bought a house in southern France and spent many happy years there, painting and enjoying rural French life. She died on November 25, 2021, and is survived by Bob and her two sons.

1961

Donald S. Drucker was born in Chicago and graduated from Oberlin with a degree in political science. After a short stint in the U.S. Army, he worked at IBM, Fairchild Semiconductor International, and Saga Foods before taking a position in the human resource systems division of Advanced Micro Devices. In retirement, he enjoyed reading, water exercise, and cheering on Chicago and San Francisco Bay Area-based sports teams. He died August 31, 2022, and is survived by his wife, daughter, and numerous relatives and friends.

1962

Annetta Monroe studied at the Mozarteum Academy of Music in Salzburg, Austria, and Columbia University before performing as a vocalist in the United States, Canada, and Europe. She recorded for Disney (including the original soundtrack for the "it's a small world" attraction), Universal Studios, Warner Bros., 20th Century Fox, and MGM Studios. Annetta joined the music faculty of the University of South Florida, where she taught for more than 30 years and sang as a guest artist with the university's orchestra and chorus. She was also a soprano soloist with the Florida Orchestra, taught at young artist programs, and strengthened the arts in her community by cofounding the Spiritual Renaissance Singers of Tampa. Annetta died April 9, 2021, and is survived by her USF colleague and dear friend Ann Hawkins, as well as many friends and students.

1963

John Perazich was born in Buffalo, N.Y., but proudly described himself as a native of the District of Columbia. He attended D.C. public schools; studied law and taught at George Washington University and the Georgetown University Law Center; and worked at the Legal Aid Agency through its transition to the Public Defender Service. In 1973, he cofounded the law firm Schaeffer, Perazich and Kolker, and his expertise as a trial attorney led him to teach at Harvard Law School. A passionate Washington, D.C. and Baltimore sports fan, John was also an agent for several athletes in the 1970s and '80s and helped create the NCAA's Big East Conference. He died August 8, 2023, and is survived by his wife, three sons, and a brother.

1964

After graduating from Wyoming Seminary, **Carol Munday Lawrence** entered Oberlin, earning a degree in sociology, and later became a member of the Peace Corps, where she taught English to French-speaking students in Lomé, Togo, in West Africa. Carol then earned a master of arts degree from Boston University and became an associate producer at WGBH-TV, where she worked on the Black programming series *Say Brother*. She also produced and directed a short film series, *Nguza Saba*, and became the first Black woman to independently write and produce a nationally broadcast television series—*Were You There?* (1981), which chronicled critically important but then unsung figures in Black culture. Carol was a consultant to Francis Ford Coppola on *The Cotton Club* and post-production supervisor for Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* and *To Sleep with Anger*. Carol is survived by a daughter, a brother, and loving friends and colleagues.

■ **Linda Anne Wheeler Lester** was a cheerleader through her college years and participated in dressage activities until her death, including being an official at horse shows. She was also a strong proponent of the Montessori approach to early childhood education. In fact, since there were no Montessori schools in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., when her family arrived, Linda and a close friend created one. Forty-five years later, the Montessori Learning Center is still alive and well. Linda's family has deep

roots at Oberlin; she's the granddaughter of Wayne B. Wheeler, the architect of Prohibition, and the niece of Robert W. Wheeler, who was an Oberlin trustee and endowed the Robert W. Wheeler Professor of Voice chair in the conservatory. She is survived by her husband of almost 60 years, Arthur Lester '61, two siblings (including Christopher '62), and three children.

1965

Renowned organist and choir director **Brian E. Jones** died November 17, 2023. After earning a degree from the conservatory, where he was greatly influenced by Professor Haskell Thomson, Brian landed a teaching position at Noble and Greenough School, where he conducted numerous choral groups and expanded the music program. Concurrently, he completed the Master of Music program at Boston University. In 1984, Brian fulfilled his childhood dream when he was appointed director of music at Trinity Church Boston. Over the next two decades, he developed one of the finest church choirs in the United States. In addition to his success as a choral conductor, Brian also enjoyed a robust solo organ career, performing concerts and dedicatory recitals in churches and cathedrals throughout the U.S. and England. He is survived by his husband, two children, and four grandchildren. ■ **Dr. Sandy C. Morse III** enjoyed a 45-year career at the National Institutes of Health, where he led the Laboratory of Immunopathology. His research spanned many areas of science—including animal models of AIDS—and he mentored hundreds of young scientists. Sandy was a summa cum laude graduate of Harvard Medical School and published nearly 400 scientific papers. Sandy loved fishing, music, reading, the Chicago Cubs, silly jokes, and his family and friends. He died on September 11, 2023, leaving four children (including John Morse '91) and five grandchildren. ■ **Janet Southwick O'Rourke** studied trumpet and piano performance and after graduating received a full scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she earned her master's in trumpet performance and performed with the Cleveland Orchestra. She began teaching at Hawken School, where she met her husband. In 1978, the family moved to Overland Park, Kan., where Janet became

involved in the local chapter of the American Association of University Women and the Kansas City Musical Club. She taught private piano lessons and served as an accompanist and had a thriving birthday cake decorating business. Janet passed away on June 6, 2023, and is survived by her husband and two daughters.

1966

Robert Merritt "Rob" Gardner died November 27, 2023. He earned a master's degree and PhD in dramatic arts from the University of California and later joined the faculty of Gustavus Adolphus College. He spent 36 years there as a professor of theater, during which he directed plays; taught courses in acting, directing, and theater history; and spent a year as an exchange professor at Kansai Gaidai University in Hirakata, Japan. Later, he resumed study of the Russian language and traveled to Moscow and St. Petersburg, where he lived with Russian families and studied at the storied Moscow Art Theatre. Rob is survived by his daughter and four stepchildren.

1967

Polly Portia Adams Brown, who died September 8, 2023, followed up her bachelor's degree in German from Oberlin by earning a master's in linguistics from Michigan State University. She intended to teach English overseas but met her husband in her first year of graduate school; the couple settled in San Diego. While taking care of their two children, Portia continued to pursue languages, music, and her global vision. She worked for and volunteered with Alliance for African Assistance in San Diego and worked as a teacher of English to speakers of other languages and director of an international student exchange program. She is survived by her husband, two children, and four grandchildren. ■ After earning a degree in history, **James Harris "Jim" Guard** joined the Air Force, going to officer training in Texas and on to pilot training at the rank of first lieutenant. He continued his education at Colorado State University, where he earned a degree in accounting and became a certified public accountant. At Texaco, he was responsible for accounting for half the globe. In retirement, Jim taught math at Dixie State

College (now Utah Technical University), served as president of Habitat for Humanity of Southwest Utah, and worked as an election judge and election judge trainer. Jim is survived by his wife, sister, two sons, and five grandchildren. ■ **Joan Robinson** died in February 2023. ■ After earning her a PhD in Germanic Philology from the University of Pennsylvania **Glenys Waldman** became the first professionally trained librarian and first woman to hold the position of librarian and curator at the Masonic Library and Museum of Pennsylvania. A member of the Reading Choral Society, she loved listening to classical music and observing nature. Glenys, who died on May 1, 2023, is survived by her sister and three stepchildren.

1968

David Smith Corwin practiced veterinary medicine in Maine for 40 years, having opened his own practice in 1980. He met his wife, Carol Brewer '68, in 1964 at Talcott Hall, and while at Oberlin played football and majored in biology. A native of Greenport, N.Y., David enjoyed cross-country motorcycle trips, mountain biking, sailing, and spending time with family. He is remembered best for his sense of humor, breakaways on the football field, and loyal friendship. David died August 13, 2023, leaving behind his wife, three children, and two granddaughters. ■ After graduating from Oberlin, **Frances Hagberg Graham** studied law at the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, Minn. From there, Frances practiced labor, employment, and school law with the firm Peterson, Popovich, Knutson and Flynn and entered private practice before becoming chief operating officer of MINCEP Epilepsy Care, led by her husband. The two worked tirelessly to improve knowledge and understanding of epilepsy and its treatment. A member of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, Frances gave her time and financial support to multiple conservation and equal rights causes. Frances died August 1, 2023, and is survived by two brothers and multiple nieces and nephews. ■ **Paul Sherer** died September 5, 2022.

1969

Kim Herzinger died in August 2023. ■ **Michael George Knowlton** earned a

master's degree in education from the State University of New York at Cortland and a doctorate from Syracuse University. He worked in school administration and was the superintendent of the Valhalla Union Free School District in Valhalla, N.Y., and the Summit Public School District in Summit, N.J. After retiring in 2004, Michael and his wife, Lunetta Jane Bennett '69, relocated to Venice, Fla., where he became an expert on and collector of bonsai. Michael remained devoted to his time at Oberlin and regularly met up with 15 of his best friends from the school and their spouses. He died June 7, 2023, and is survived by two children and three grandchildren (including Windley Virginia Knowlton '22).

1971

Peter T. Reeves enjoyed a long career as a software designer. He worked for financial services firms and several small businesses in the Boston area and helped transition small businesses into the information age with customized software solutions. He was dedicated to his family and had a great passion for music, which he passed on to his children. He died November 8, 2023, leaving his wife of 50 years, Judy Belgrade '71; their three sons, Ari '98, Evan '99, and Daniel '03; and six grandchildren.

1972

Stephen Dunn died May 18, 2023. ■ **Ray Nelms McKelvain** was a teacher and dean of the arts at Idyllwild Arts Academy. A piano performance major at Oberlin, Ray earned a master's in music from the University of Texas at Austin and later taught at East Carolina University. He performed with the LA Opera, the Redlands Symphony, the Idyllwild Master Chorale, Two t' Suite, and the Joshua Tree Philharmonic and served as organist for many churches. Ray founded and directed ARTS ED PLUS: College Counseling and was education director for the arts programs at the Hi-Desert Cultural Center's Arts|Tech Academy. He died December 13, 2023, and is survived by his longtime partner, as well as a sister (Ann M. Harrell '74).

1973

A member of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra for 35 years, double bass player **Walter Maurice "Reese" Wininsky** was

also a composer who won an Emmy for the soundtrack to the PBS documentary *The Making of Milwaukee* and conducted his original composition "Festival 50," which celebrated a half-century of the MSO. An avid traveler who loved visiting the American West and Southwest with his brother, Walter also used his travels to try to visit every U.S. National Park. He died on September 30, 2023, and is survived by his wife, son, and brother.

1974

Peter H. Schweitzer, rabbi emeritus of the City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism and the first Humanistic Rabbi in New York City, died December 20, 2023. He was deeply committed to social justice and began his many decades of activism as an undergraduate protesting the Vietnam War and organizing within the feminist movement. Peter was also a collector of Jewish Americana, a mountain climber and hiking enthusiast, and the author of multiple books; recently he published *Dear Uli*, a detailed reconstruction of his family's story of being stuck in Europe during World War II. He is survived by his wife, son, stepdaughter, and two grandchildren, along with many cousins, friends, and congregants.

1975

Mark Alan Conrad spent his career as an educator, labor lawyer, and manufacturing executive by building on the discipline, teamwork, and leadership qualities he developed in the classrooms and on the playing fields of Oberlin, where he played baseball and football and was scouted as an NFL prospect. He taught history and coached at Oberlin High School before earning his law degree at the University of Toledo. After working as a labor lawyer for Libbey-Owens-Ford Co., he became vice president, secretary, and general counsel of Aeroquip, then vice president of human resources for TriNova. He died March 25, 2023, and is survived by his wife.

1978

Russell William Baxter's work resulted in the state of Virginia's waters running more clear. After graduating from Oberlin, Russell attended the University of Virginia, where he earned a master's in urban and

environmental planning. He worked for nonprofit, state, and regional agencies and served in the Virginia governor's cabinet as assistant secretary of natural resources and deputy secretary. He was also a devoted cyclist who competed in road, mountain, and cyclocross bike racing. Russell died July 24, 2023, and is survived by his wife, sons, and two brothers (including Donald L.M. Baxter '76). ■ **David Sandy Cooper**, who died June 2, 2023, was a unique person with a big heart and a zest for life. At Oberlin, he played football and rugby and studied piano one Winter Term under Scott Shaw '77. Queen could regularly be heard blasting from his room in Zechiel House. After earning his bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology, David spent his young adult life in different factory, sales, and management positions before joining UAW Local 2000 at Ford's Ohio Assembly Plant, from which he retired. One of his greatest accomplishments was the strong and loving bond he built with his family; he is survived by his wife, three sons, a brother, and three grandchildren.

1979

Amy Paivinen Coull died October 15, 2021. A Phi Beta Kappa chemistry major, she established a career in technical writing and communications at the biotechnology company Millipore Corp., where she met her husband. After pausing her career to raise her family, she went back to school and obtained a BFA in sculpture from Mass College of Art. Her art studio was her sanctuary, and from it came amazing works that decorated her home and appeared in art shows. Amy is survived by her husband, two sons, her mother, and two siblings.

1984

Jane Marker Grein died August 3, 2022. After earning a degree in psychology, she enjoyed a 37-year professional career, which included 32 years as a medical litigation specialist at the Stamford, Conn., law firm Silver Golub and Teitell. The mother of a child with special needs, Jane was always a forceful advocate for her son and for all children with disabilities. She is survived by husband Mark W. Grein '82 and a son.

1985

Dr. David Golumbia was an associate

professor in the English department of Virginia Commonwealth University. A prolific scholar and critic, he was an expert on cyberlibertarianism, bitcoin, blockchain, and the logic of computing and wrote multiple books on these subjects, including *The Politics of Bitcoin: Software as Right-Wing Extremism*; *The Cultural Logic of Computation*; and the forthcoming *Cyberlibertarianism*. He was also an editor at the humanities journal *boundary 2* and contributed to *The Baffler* and *Critical AI*. David died September 14, 2023, and is survived by his parents and sister.

1987

Dana Eisenstein spent the bulk of her professional career teaching and performing piano and was an accomplished accompanist. In addition to studying at the Oberlin Conservatory, she studied at Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Later in life, she turned her focus to human health and healing, earning a master's degree in nutritional science from the Maryland University of Integrative Health and becoming an avid student at the Los Angeles School of Homeopathy. She raised her children with unswerving devotion and brought light, love, and beautifully knitted hats to everyone she knew. She died May 20, 2023, and is survived by her mother, two children, two siblings, and her ex-husband.

1990

Stephen Eliezer Bickel died Nov. 1, 2023. After earning a master's degree in biology from MIT, Steve worked at the environmental consulting firm D+R International, where he became executive vice president of innovation and a partner; among other things, he managed EPA Energy Star programs and expanded the use of data analysis. He later cofounded the nonprofit LibertyHomes, which has the goal of upgrading homes for all families, regardless of income, to make them affordable, and energy-independent. Steve is survived by his parents, a sister, and three daughters and their mother, Eliyana Adler '91.

1994

Tina Jayaweera dedicated her career to promoting energy efficiency and minimizing society's environmental impact, most

recently as a senior advisor with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. She earned a physics degree from Oberlin and a PhD from Cornell University. Tina was a supporter of many environmental groups and chose a soil transformation—human composting—as her final farewell, symbolizing her commitment to sustainability even in death. She died October 23, 2023, and is survived by her husband and two daughters.

2015

Samuel Anthony Seseck was a gifted musician who played electric and acoustic bass, including in the Portland band Husky Boys. Born in Chicago, Samuel studied philosophy at Oberlin and admired the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. He died September 21, 2023, and is survived by his parents and a sister.

2024

Tyler Reid died November 27, 2023, after an extended illness. A passionate animal lover, Tyler was a consummate performer who possessed an effervescent personality and passion for life. At Oberlin, Tyler built on a love of the sciences and arts by majoring in neuroscience with a minor in music and will likewise be remembered by friends and professors as a creative, joyful, and kind force. Tyler is survived by a large, loving extended family and many Oberlin friends.

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Our alumni have asked Oberlin to share news of classmates passing in a more timely way, a request that can't often be accommodated in OAM, which publishes three times a year. Moving forward, we will add death notices that are submitted to us to a new OAM webpage that will link to online obituaries published by a newspaper, funeral home, or legacy website. This will offer readers a more timely announcement and a more complete picture of the lives and accomplishments of our deceased community members. Beginning with the next issue of OAM, Losses will print only the names, class years, and death dates of alumni, faculty/staff, and friends, along with the URL of our new webpage.

Going forward, please submit death notices by emailing alum.mag@oberlin.edu with the link to a published online obituary or a letter confirming the date of death. Please type "Losses" in the subject line and include the class year of the deceased. You can also mail a printed obituary to Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 247 W. Lorain St., Suite C, Oberlin, Ohio 44074.

“Black women have been vanguards of social justice, scholarship, and community-building, but are undervalued and discounted by society. However, as Cooper argued, the unique nexus of being Black and being a woman provided a framework for liberation that emphasized uplifting girls and women alongside boys and men.”

Angela T. Tate, women’s history curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, describing the impact of the pioneering educator **Dr. Anna Julia Cooper Class of 1884**, the “Mother of Black Feminism”

“One critic calls the two lead characters, Bob and Marcus, ‘a gay Nick and Nora’—possibly the nicest compliment I’ve ever gotten.”

Erwin N. Griswold ’25 professor of politics emeritus **H.N. Hirsch**, in a *CrimeReads* essay about penning a gay detective series

“I wanted to write my own music, I wanted to express myself. ... I was a shy person in terms of performance. So it was just a spirit of, ‘If you have something to say, get up there and do it.’”

Liz Phair ’89, on how Oberlin’s eclectic band scene gave her courage

“Journalism is all about lifelong learning. And anybody who is a journalist is so lucky to be paid to not work, but to learn, to basically spend our lives meeting people, going places, understanding things you otherwise would never learn. And you get that start at *The Oberlin Review*.”

Peter Baker ’88, Chief White House correspondent for the *New York Times*, describing how Oberlin launched his journalism career during a conversation with President Carmen Twillie Ambar on the *Running to the Noise* podcast

“That’s how I came to live with a James Rosenquist and Robert Rauschenberg print in my room. It exposed me to this idea of what a museum could do for its constituents.”

Sarah Jesse ’02, director of Rochester, N.Y.’s Memorial Art Gallery, on the impact of art rental on her career

“I used to say many times as soon as Beyoncé puts the banjo on a track my job is done. Well, I didn’t expect the banjo to be mine—and I know darn well my job isn’t done—but today is a pretty good day.”

Rhiannon Giddens ’00, sharing that she’s playing banjo and viola on Beyoncé’s global No. 1 hit “Texas Hold ’Em”

“Surrender to the uncertainty and be open to the world and also true to your values and what you hold dear. Work with good people that you want to work with—and work on projects that you believe in.”

Oscar-winning film producer **Shane Boris ’04**, sharing life lessons on an episode of the *Running to the Noise* podcast

“It’s a good way to break the ice when I come into a classroom. And a few students did ask me about the show the first day of class. It created a nice kind of friendly environment, and we were able to chat about my silly answers or my wrong answers.”

Professor of Economics and department chair **Ron Cheung** in *The Oberlin Review* on whether students enjoy talking about his *Jeopardy!* appearances

“I was very excited to be able to explore without all of the traditional boundaries being tied to it. No one was going to tell me: ‘This is the canon of works. This is how it needs to be played.’”

Phyllis Chen ’99, enthusing about the toy piano in *The New York Times*

Sustainability Matters at Kendal at Oberlin

An arboretum on the grounds of a vibrant retirement living community? What a great idea! Kendal at Oberlin is now a Level II arboretum, accredited by ArbNet. This is just one example of our community's commitment to improving and protecting our environment. In partnership with Oberlin College and the City of Oberlin, Kendal at Oberlin residents and staff are focused on sustainable practices.

Learn more at kao.kendal.org/sustainability.



Photo by Dale Preston

Kendal residents have moved to Oberlin from 38 different states, and many are Oberlin College alumni and former faculty. Contact us today to learn more about our life plan community, located less than one mile from Oberlin College and the Conservatory of Music.

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“The opportunity I had to dive into identity at Oberlin was as powerful as my coursework there.”

**SARAH LYONS CHASE '10, WHO RUNS
THE NEW YORK-BASED CHASEHOLM FARM**