

Oberlin Conservatory

MAGAZINE



TIMARA LOOKS BACK
ON 50 YEARS OF
LOOKING FORWARD

2020

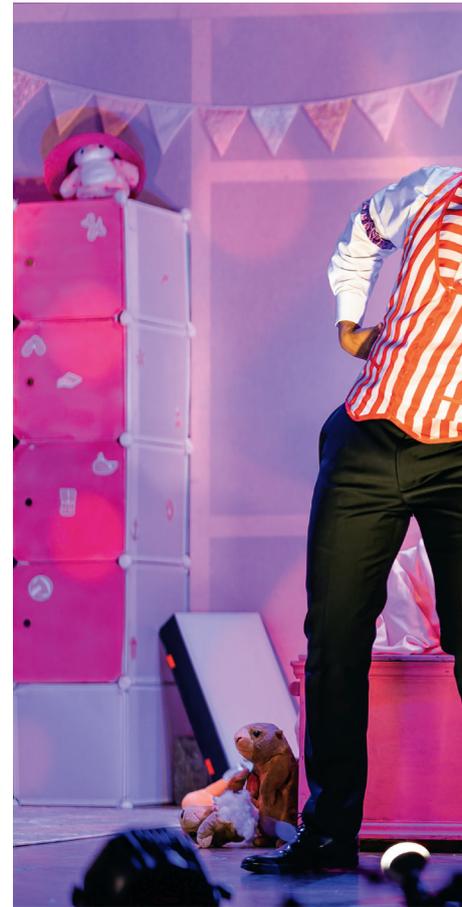
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Oberlin Conservatory MAGAZINE

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COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, YEVHEN GULENKO, COURTESY OF OBERLIN COLLEGE ARCHIVES, YVONNE GAY, DALE PRESTON '83

ON THE COVER:

For 50 years and counting, electronic music at Oberlin has thrived on a spirit of perpetual innovation. Pictured (clockwise from top left) are a Buchla synthesizer with "Milton" sequencer module, the MIDI Horn, a theremin, and the "Talbert Teletalk"—named for its creator, longtime TIMARA engineer John Talbert.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISRAEL G. VARGAS



Of Note

The stories that shaped the year at Oberlin Conservatory



Up to the Challenge

William Quillen steps into the conservatory's top job as a global pandemic emerges.

BY THE TIME WILLIAM QUILLEN ASSUMED the role of 14th dean of Oberlin Conservatory, he had just concluded a two-year cram session that taught him more about the place than most others would ever know.

Quillen arrived in Oberlin in summer 2017 as associate dean for academic affairs. His first task was to spearhead the conservatory's reaccreditation, an arduous process required throughout higher ed that involves an exhaustive examination of the institution's delivery on its curricular mission.

At the same time, Quillen became a leader of Oberlin College and Conservatory's academic and administrative review, a similarly exacting internal study that drew upon the resources and input of faculty, staff, students, and others. Out of that yearlong process came the One Oberlin initiative, a roadmap intended to guide the institution into an era of sustained excellence, enhanced student outcomes, and long-term financial sustainability.

Though he had been at Oberlin for just over two years, Quillen had experienced the conservatory as few others have, and he quickly grew familiar with its inner workings. By January 2020, at the conclusion of an extensive national search, he formally assumed the position of dean.

And then the virus hit.

Just over two months into his leadership, Quillen was thrust into the role of guiding the conservatory through the seemingly endless twists and turns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Quillen, the conservatory

nimbly responded to the challenges, reconfiguring an entire curriculum—in a matter of mere days—to be effectively delivered in a virtual format for the remainder of the semester.

For Quillen and others in Oberlin's senior leadership, the acute challenges of early spring gave way to a summer of strategic planning for any number of possible scenarios that could emerge in the months ahead, each potential path forward developed to ensure a robust educational experience and an unquestionably safe environment for all.

In a year in which little has gone as expected, Oberlin itself remains comfortingly reliable.

"There are several qualities about this place in particular that make it such a joy and an honor to be a part of," Quillen says. "First is the artistic and intellectual vitality that results from being united with the college. In some ways, studying at Oberlin is like being part of a year-round festival environment. It's a place where artists and scholars can immerse themselves in this community and truly revel in their work.

"I am also struck by the quality of relationships here, in terms of student-to-student, faculty- and staff-to-student, and colleague-to-colleague interactions. That doesn't just make it a pleasant place to work; it's also a big part of the secret sauce for our creative vitality. Because people generally feel supported and nurtured here, they are willing to go out on a limb and try new things and be open-minded in ways you won't find in other conservatory environments.

"These qualities, maybe more than anything else, will guide Oberlin through challenging days like those we all have experienced as well as the continued bright days ahead."

Quillen himself pursued a path in music that has taken on multiple facets. Trained as a tubist and musicologist, he previously served as legacy and major gifts officer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, following earlier stints in the administrations of the Berkeley Symphony, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the San Francisco Symphony. He taught at the University of Cambridge, where he was a research fellow, and at the University of California at Berkeley, where he completed his MA and PhD in musicology. He earned a BS from Indiana University and conducted additional studies at the Moscow Conservatory on a Fulbright grant. His research interests revolve around Russian music and music of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Quillen succeeds Andrea Kalyn, a longtime Oberlin administrator who served as dean from 2013 through 2018 before becoming president of New England Conservatory.

"I am excited that Bill will continue to provide thoughtful guidance and leadership as dean of the conservatory," Oberlin President Carmen Twillie Ambar said at the time of Quillen's appointment. "He has demonstrated a vision for excellence and creativity that will allow Oberlin College and Conservatory to maintain its position as a leader in higher education for decades to come."



Oberlin Students Teach Orchestra in Uruguay

THREE OBERLIN STUDENTS AND faculty member Louise Zeitlin took part in an 11-day trip to the South American nation of Uruguay for a collaboration with musicians in a community orchestra. Their excursion, which happened just three weeks before the start of classes in fall 2019, was made possible through the generosity of their host city of Mercedes and the efforts of Oberlin parents dedicated to supporting advocacy and volunteer initiatives for students.

Alison Chan, a first-year student in the College of Arts and Sciences, grew up in Oberlin studying violin and chamber music at the Oberlin Community Music School. She was joined in Uruguay by double-

degree student Gabriel Cruz-Ruiz, a second-year flute performance and chemistry major who performs in Oberlin's Brazilian Ensemble. Also making the trip was second-year college student Sophia Diez-Zhang, who chronicled the experience in photos and video. Her parents, Kevin Zhang and Uruguay native Virginia Diez, were driving forces behind the exchange.

Chan (pictured above left) and Cruz-Ruiz worked with members of Orquesta Participativa de Soriano and conductor Nacho Algorta, who was preparing the ensemble for a performance with a city choir and the famous Uruguayan singer Chacho Ramos.

The concept for the collaboration was developed by Diez shortly after she learned about Oberlin's longtime ties to the nation of Panama, where conservatory students have

worked with a community orchestra every year for the past three decades. Diez's connection to Algorta made the Uruguay experience possible.

"With this trip, I was trying to tie together all the threads of my life," she says. "It is so rewarding that I can help create bridges between a college I really believe in and people who have shared values. It accomplishes something that is very close to my heart."

Chan and Cruz-Ruiz led daily private lessons, master classes, and sectional rehearsals, in addition to their contributions as members of the orchestra. Chan also led a workshop on violin playing, Cruz-Ruiz discussed the music and history of his native Puerto Rico, and Zeitlin—an associate professor of community engagement—presented on music pedagogy for a group of teachers from the Mercedes Conservatory.

End of Life Festival Marks Start of New Year

Sibbi Bernhardtsson has long been fascinated by the music that composers create late in their lives.

"It's interesting that many of them turn to chamber music, and they start writing work that is more intimate and more experimental," says the professor of violin. He learned from his colleagues at Oberlin's Allen Memorial Art Museum that the same is often true of artists outside the world of music.

Bernhardtsson channeled his intrigue into *End of Life, End of Time*, a two-day exploration of mortality and late-career works by artists across the creative spectrum. Through performances, poetry readings, lectures, discussions, and a gallery talk, the festival incorporated artistry and insight from faculty, staff, and students across the institution.

End of Life, End of Time came about in part through a desire by Bernhardtsson and numerous Oberlin colleagues to perform Olivier Messiaen's 1941 *Quartet for the End of Time*, which was composed and premiered while Messiaen was imprisoned in a German POW camp early in WWII. Bernhardtsson performed the work with fellow professors Richard Hawkins on clarinet, Darrett Adkins on cello, and Haewon Song on piano.

In all, 18 Oberlin faculty members took part in the festival's four concerts, in addition to the Oberlin College Choir (performing Purcell's *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*) and a student string orchestra, which presented a movement from Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 135.



Historic Window Finds a Place in the Sun

PERHAPS THE GRANDEST JEWEL AMONG ALL of Oberlin’s structures past or present, Warner Hall was an imposing edifice built in the Richardson Romanesque tradition and situated at the northwest corner of College and Professor streets. For 80 years—from its construction in 1884 to its demolition in 1964—old Warner served as the heart of Oberlin Conservatory, with its 800-seat concert hall, 150 practice rooms, faculty studios, classrooms, and no shortage of striking architectural features.

The building was razed in December 1964, in conjunction with the celebrated arrival of a new conservatory complex diagonally across the street. Today, King Memorial Hall occupies the space where Warner Hall once rested. The only vestiges of its regal forebear are the numerous stone friezes that were salvaged and reinstalled as public art in nearby campus locations.

In his long-running quest to unearth the stories of Oberlin’s people and places, local historian Sid Comings ’69 held fast to a long-held rumor that one of Warner’s stained-glass windows had also survived, after having been carefully removed from its perch above the doomed building’s main entrance before the wrecking ball fell (see photo, far right).

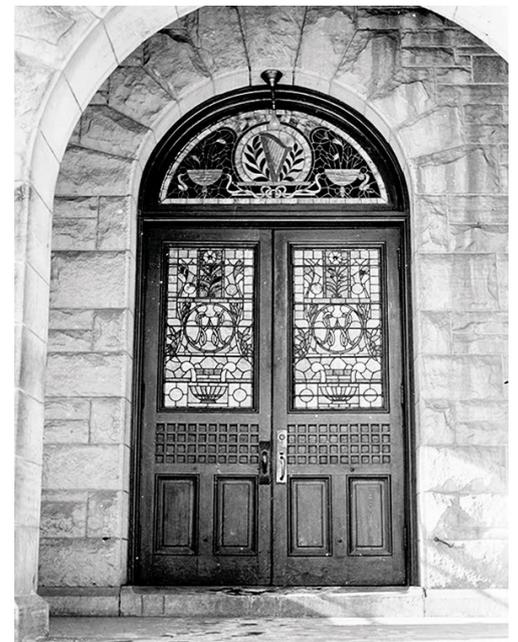
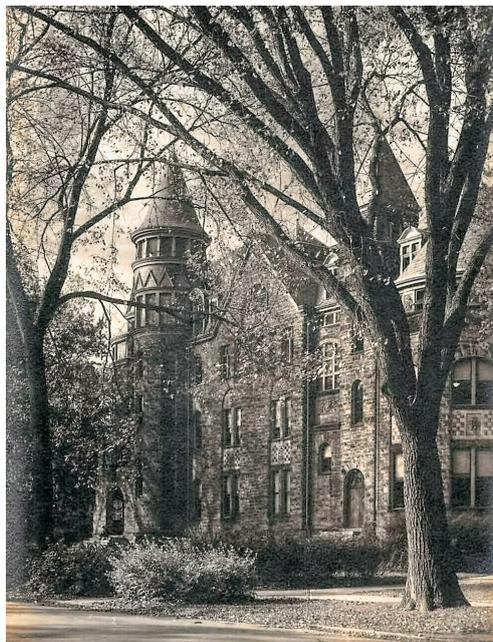
With help from Oberlin administrators, Comings tracked down the orphaned window, which he found high up in a storage loft, cloaked in a lifetime of dust but otherwise virtually undamaged.

Framed in sky-blue glass with a background of peach tones, the window depicts a harp with green laurels on either side, flanked by a pair of flat-topped vessels that bear the simulated grain of wood, each one sprouting tendrils of leafy flora. The window’s numerous touches of brown glass match the substantial oaken frame that encases it.

With enthusiastic support from the conservatory, the window was restored to its former glory by the Whitney Stained Glass Studio in Cleveland. By early 2020, it came to rest over the main entrance of Warner Concert Hall, the “space-age gothic” venue designed by famed

architect Minoru Yamasaki and completed in 1963, during old Warner Hall’s final days.

“We are so grateful for Sid’s enthusiasm for Oberlin’s history and for his determination in bringing this relic from our past back to life,” says Michael Straus, the conservatory’s associate dean for operations, who ushered the window from storage to restoration to reinstallation. “We are also happy to have identified such a fitting location for the window to be displayed: over the entryway of the conservatory’s present-day Warner Hall, where it can once again serve as a welcoming beacon to guests for generations to come.”





Takács Beethoven Prize to Debut in 2021

Peter Takács has made the study of Beethoven's piano compositions his life's work. Now the longtime Oberlin professor has been honored with an anonymous donation that supports the creation of the Peter Takács Beethoven Prize.

A \$5,000 cash award will be presented annually to an Oberlin piano major who excels in performing works by Beethoven. The inaugural competition will take place in December 2021, coinciding with Beethoven's birthday.

The prize was established in fall 2019 in recognition of Takács' acclaimed recordings of the complete Beethoven piano sonatas. The competition's format will conform to that of the piano department's other juried competitions: Faculty will select finalists during a semifinal round, and guest judges will adjudicate the finals and choose the winner.

"I was honored and humbled to learn of this incredibly generous donation to Oberlin," says Takács. "This is truly meaningful to me. I have devoted a large part of my work to the music of Beethoven."



Conservatory musicians often pursue interests in the College of Arts and Sciences. Here, students use EEG monitoring to conduct multisensory research related to brain function.

College, Conservatory Establish New Collaborative Programs

OBERLIN HAS INCORPORATED five new interdivisional programs of study that transcend traditional institutional boundaries and establish a new level of collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences and the Conservatory of Music.

Implemented in fall 2020, these new programs offer Oberlin students innovative educational opportunities that will help them build successful 21st-century careers in a host of fields including music, visual arts, media, science, and business.

Drawing on Oberlin's deep strengths in music and the liberal arts, the programs allow students to minor in Music and Cognition,

Music and Popular Culture, Interdisciplinary Performance, and Arts and Creative Technologies. A fifth program, in Arts Administration and Leadership, may be selected as an integrative concentration. All five programs are available to all Oberlin students.

Conservatory students already take advantage of courses offered in the College of Arts and Sciences virtually every semester of their Oberlin experience. For the first time, those conservatory students now may pursue minors in the college, and college students may pursue minors in music as well.

The new offerings also complement Oberlin students' existing robust opportunities to pursue their education in both the college and the conservatory, including the Double Degree Program. Attainable in five years or fewer, the Double Degree was created at Oberlin more than 100 years ago and continues to serve as

a worldwide model for interdisciplinary education.

The interdivisional programs are the first to be formally adopted out of the institution's One Oberlin initiative, designed to forge new connections between the college and conservatory, to develop new educational and cocurricular opportunities for students throughout campus, and to more fully utilize the remarkable resources already at students' fingertips.

"We are fully leveraging Oberlin's unique resources to bring what only Oberlin can to interdisciplinary studies, preparing our graduates for the types of careers they will have in the 21st century," says Oberlin College President Carmen Twillie Ambar. "This collaboration, embraced by our faculty, captures the spirit and opportunity that shape the innovative work taking place under the banner of One Oberlin."

New Scholarships Support TIMARA, Voice, Piano, and String Students

OBERLIN CONSERVATORY INITIATED three new scholarship funds in the 2019-20 academic year, each one drawing upon the generosity of valued members of the Oberlin community.

As Technology in Music and Related Arts (TIMARA) celebrated the 50th anniversary of electronic music at Oberlin, the department also announced the creation of the TIMARA Founders Fund, which was launched in fall 2019 with a crowdfunding effort led by generous contributions from composer and accordionist Peter Flint Jr. '92, Oberlin residents Arlene and Larry Dunn, and TIMARA professor Tom Lopez '89.

The fund supports two annual scholarships—the Olly Wilson Prize and the John Clough '53 Prize—as well as other TIMARA initiatives designated by faculty.



The Founders Fund is the first endowed fund in the history of electronic music study at Oberlin, and the Wilson and Clough prizes—named for former professors who laid the groundwork for electronic music studies here—are the first to be dedicated solely to TIMARA students. The inaugural prizes were presented in May 2020 to Piper Hill '20 and Mobey Irizarry Lambricht '20.

In February 2020, the conservatory announced the

creation of the Daune Mahy Endowed Scholarship for voice students. The fund was created by Mahy herself, whose 39-year tenure as voice professor at Oberlin concluded in spring 2019.

Spring also marked the creation of the Alice I. Takemoto '47 Endowed Conservatory Scholarship, which supports the studies of a piano or string student. It was funded by Takemoto, who was one of nearly 40 students of Japanese heritage to be admitted to Oberlin

during WWII, at a time when their families had been relocated by the U.S. government to internment camps. Takemoto (pictured, with string faculty members Sibbi Bernhardsson, Catharina Meints, and Kirsten Docter) was 16 at the time she began piano studies at Oberlin.

The first Mahy and Takemoto scholarships will be presented in 2021.

“The generosity that has been demonstrated by each of these donors is really just one of many ways that these individuals have advanced the music world for the better,” says Sally Takada, an officer in Oberlin’s Office of Advancement. “Their philanthropy is a culminating gesture of many years of dedication and passion for music and learning. We are incredibly grateful to have the support and friendship of these individuals, who are committed to supporting musical excellence for generations of students to come.”

Learn more about supporting these funds or other Oberlin causes at <https://advance.oberlin.edu/donate>.

Students Share Beethoven Research with Cleveland Audience

Oberlin Conservatory has a long history of guiding its students toward interactions with the world beyond campus. In recent years, that emphasis has resulted in curricular opportunities to study music criticism, make music with residents of a local prison, teach children in a Northeast Ohio homeless shelter, and much more.

In spring 2020, students engaged in long-form writing projects through a new partnership with Ideastream, the parent company of Cleveland’s public radio and television stations. The projects

were part of a seminar on Beethoven taught by musicology professor Charles McGuire.

The collaborative approach grew out of McGuire’s interest in encouraging scholarship that appeals to audiences beyond academia. “Speaking to and writing for the larger, non-academic audience is one way to get the wider population to see the importance of the humanities,” he says.

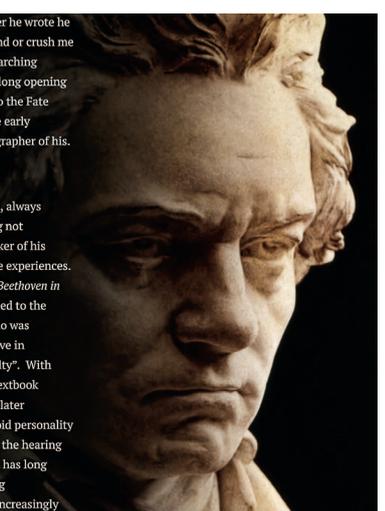
Instead of writing term papers for final projects, McGuire’s students attended a long-form story workshop presented by Ideastream digital projects manager Kevin Anderson. They then wrote stories—either individually or in groups—on aspects of Beethoven’s life and music. Top projects were selected for inclusion on the Ideastream website.

“This collaboration provided a

unique opportunity for students to create a digital experience about Beethoven on a platform that was totally new to them,” says Anderson. “They rose to this challenge and wowed me with their innovative

Ludwig Van Beethoven, Bust by Hugo Hagen c.1892

Fate knocking on the door is an incredibly ominous way to read life, always waiting scared to open the door. This paranoid outlook is something not abnormal for Beethoven. It in fact could be described as a clear marker of his personality. A personality that was a culmination of Beethoven’s life experiences. Peter J. Davies explains this in his book “*The Character of a Genius: Beethoven in Perspective*” writing; “In Beethoven the predisposing factors which led to the development of a paranoid personality were a cruel, inept father who was particularly sadistic toward him as a child; a mother who, while active in managing the household, did not protect him from his father’s cruelty”. With this basis of Beethoven’s childhood, it is clear that he exhibits the textbook building blocks that lead the development of paranoia. Davies even later dedicates an entire subsection of his chapter on Beethoven’s paranoid personality just to the effect of Beethoven’s deafness on his paranoia as he says the hearing impairment can have a profound effect on paranoid individuals. “It has long been established that paranoid tendencies are aggravated by hearing impairment”. This unfortunate string of events making Beethoven increasingly



spirit. Not only did their projects meet the academic standards of the conservatory—they successfully engaged and enlightened Ideastream’s classical music audience.”





East Meets Midwest

“THE WORLD COMES TO OBERLIN” IS an expression we fondly use to describe every year on campus—a reference to the extensive array of guests to the college and conservatory who share perspectives and artistry representing the far corners of the earth.

The phrase took on new meaning in autumn 2019, as Oberlin pulsed with the sights and sounds of distant cultures representing traditions of the Far East and elsewhere.

In November, a cultural exchange with China resulted in a performance of Cantonese opera scenes in Warner Concert Hall (pictured) and interactions with touring artists from the Hong Kong Academy’s School of Chinese Opera. The exchange marked the academy’s first visit to Oberlin, following numerous Winter Term excursions to China in recent years by Oberlin students. In addition to their presentations on campus, the guests also fascinated a young audience through an interactive demonstration at a local grade school.

In October, the musicians of the Zohn Collective and members of La Coperacha Puppet Company of Guadalajara, Mexico, presented a collaborative performance of *Portals*, a scenic cantata by composer Ricardo Zohn Muldoon that evocatively

explores traditions of Mexican culture and intersections between the disparate art forms employed. The Zohn Collective boasts extensive ties to Oberlin, including soprano Tony Arnold ’90, flutist Molly Barth ’97, and longtime Professor of Conducting Timothy Weiss.

In the span of one week beginning in late September, audiences were treated to a performance of Japanese Noh theater from Tokyo’s historic Kanze School of Noh, an evening of music by Indian classical sarod player Rajeev Taranath, and the music and dance of the Balinese ensemble Çudamani, as well as an interactive gamelan and dance workshop with the visiting musicians. The Allen Memorial Art Museum presented a complementary series of exhibitions throughout the fall semester highlighting East Asian decorative arts, Japanese theatrical art, and more.

“It is exciting that we have the opportunity to experience this ancient art form and that we can actually play a role in sustaining it,” Professor of Music Education Jody Kerchner said in the days leading up to the Hong Kong Academy’s visit. “We talk a lot about environmental sustainability on this campus. This is *cultural* sustainability.”



Community Music School Student Appears on NPR's *From the Top*

For 17 years, Oberlin Conservatory's Community Music School has shared the conservatory's mission of supporting the teaching, creating, and performance of music at the highest level. This year, one of the school's standout musicians, 18-year-old violist Natalie Brennecke, demonstrated the power of that mission.

Brennecke won the opportunity to perform on the NPR-distributed radio program *From the Top*, a weekly showcase of exceptional young classical musicians from across America. Her February appearance, recorded in Fairfax, Virginia, featured the second movement from Miklós Rózsa's *Viola Concerto*. A national broadcast was released to NPR stations in September 2020.

Brennecke was also one of just 20 students nationwide named a 2020 Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist, which includes a \$10,000 award presented by *From the Top* and sponsored by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Brennecke began her studies at the Community Music School, or CMS, at 5 years old. She converted to the viola 10 years ago and took up studies with Louise Zeitlin, who also serves as director of the school and associate professor in the conservatory's Division of Pedagogy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement. Brennecke is a member of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra and was a winner of its 2020 concerto competition.

"The Community Music School does a great job of supporting students who want to go for music," says Brennecke, who will continue her studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music. "I would be nowhere if I didn't have the support of the people at CMS. They provide so many ways for you to grow as a musician."

The Community Music School offers instruction to musicians of all ages regardless of their socioeconomic background. Its enrollment has more than quintupled since 2005—a development that also increases the strain on its available resources to support scholarships for students in need. Contributions can be made at <https://advance.oberlin.edu/donate>.

Oberlin Exhibition Tours Historically Black Colleges

A ONE-OF-A-KIND EXHIBITION created by the Conservatory Library tells the story of one of the most prolific jazz musicians of the 20th century: concert performer and session man Milt Hinton, whose seven-decade career intersected with everyone from Dizzy Gillespie and Cab Calloway to Barbra Streisand and Paul McCartney.

Playing the Changes: The Life and Legacy of Milt Hinton initially appeared at Oberlin and in several northern Ohio venues, including the Cleveland Public Library, followed by a six-month stay at Tuskegee University in Alabama. It is now on the road for a tour of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) across the United States that will extend beyond 2021.

In addition to his music, Hinton was a talented photographer who captured thousands of unguarded moments with his fellow musicians on the road and in the studio. In 2014, Oberlin established a relationship with the Hinton estate that included the transfer to Oberlin of four prized basses and countless other artifacts amassed by Hinton throughout his life.

From that collection emerged *Playing the Changes*, which showcases dozens of Hinton's finest photographs and tells the story of his life in music. Each host venue also coordinates related academic offerings and other programming, and students at each school take part in a practicum on exhibition installation led by Heath Patten, Oberlin College Library's curator of visual resources.

In July 2019, *Playing the Changes* began its scheduled two-year HBCU tour with three months at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (pictured). From there it took up residence at Morgan State University in Baltimore through December. The exhibition was on display at Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina when the COVID-19 pandemic forced museums and galleries everywhere to close their doors. Its travel plans remain in flux as cities and states across the U.S. continue to assess guidelines for reopening.

When the tour is cleared to resume, the exhibition will appear at Hampton University in Virginia, North Carolina Central University, Fisk University in Nashville, and Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Playing the Changes is generously supported by the Berger Family Foundation.



Students collaborate with Hollywood composer Adam Cohen '91 (left) during a film-scoring intensive at Oberlin that drew upon the conservatory's extensive resources.



Conservatory Launches Recording Arts Program

Oberlin's fertile creative climate has been united with the expertise of the conservatory's own audio professionals for a new program in Recording Arts and Production. Slated to debut in fall 2021, it offers studies leading to both a one-year Professional Certificate in Recording Arts and a two-year Artist Diploma that incorporates both Recording Arts and Production.

Designed for students who have completed undergraduate degrees, the programs are embedded in Oberlin's bustling conservatory concert environment, offering an ideal training ground for careers in the recording arts, with a multitude of opportunities for hands-on learning and a distinctive emphasis on engineering and producing classical and jazz music.

Students in the program will experience group and individualized instruction, take part in recording projects involving Oberlin's nine concert halls and across a range of

musical styles and mediums, and engage with master engineers and producers in residence each semester. Graduates will be uniquely prepared for essential roles in a number of highly skilled audio professions.

"Constant opportunities to apply developing skills are the cornerstone of this program," says Paul Eachus, Oberlin's director of Conservatory Audio Services. Eachus and Conservatory Audio Services Associate Director Andrew Tripp serve as codirectors and primary lecturers of the Recording Arts and Production program.

"For Oberlin and especially for our students, these newly established courses of study represent a natural extension of our emphasis on musical excellence," says Dean of the Conservatory William Quillen. "Perhaps nowhere in the world is there a climate more conducive to learning the craft of audio production than Oberlin, and we are beyond delighted to utilize our unrivaled facilities and outstanding faculty-staff to prepare aspiring audio professionals for fulfilling careers in the field."

Ambitious ‘LvB250’ Series Pays Tribute to Beethoven

The 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven’s birth inspired worldwide celebrations throughout 2020, and Oberlin developed an ambitious schedule of events to honor the master. While initial plans called for dozens of concerts from February through December, the slate was cut short in mid-March when students across America were sent home in response to spread of the novel coronavirus.

Over four evenings in February, voice students presented concerts covering Beethoven’s complete lieder, a project led by professor Thomas Bandy.

Also in February, conductor Raphael Jiménez and the Oberlin Orchestra launched a survey of Beethoven’s nine symphonies with a program of the first two symphonies and the infamous *Wellington’s Victory*.

The Arts & Sciences Orchestra, under the direction of Tiffany Chang, picked up the torch in early March with the Complete Incidental Music to *Egmont*, Op. 43, with faculty soprano Kendra Colton, musicology professor Steven Plank as narrator, and a pre-performance lecture by musicology professor Charles McGuire. McGuire also led a Winter Term project devoted to Beethoven’s nine symphonies.

Just one week before campus closed, 20 student string quartets took on the enormous task of performing all 16 Beethoven quartets and the *Grosse Fuge* in five concerts—a project in the works since the previous year. Oberlin is the only institution in America that presented the complete Beethoven quartets—performed by students—in the tidy span of a single weekend.

Conservatory Claims Record Number of Fulbright Finalists

FIVE STUDENTS WITH TIES TO Oberlin Conservatory have been named Fulbright Finalists for 2020-21, a record year for an institution already renowned for producing Fulbright honorees.

Among this year’s finalists, four were current students who graduated in May; a fifth finalist is a recent alumna who applied through Oberlin.

The conservatory’s five Fulbright Finalists for 2020-21 and their areas of study are as follows:

Rania Adamczyk ’20 (double degree in composition and cinema studies): English-language



teaching assistantship in India.

Sophia Bass ’20 (degree in musical studies): study of Carnatic music in India.

Maggie Kinabrew ’20 (double degree in vocal performance and math): study of Finnish song in Helsinki, Finland.

Karisma Palmore ’20 (double degree in flute performance and independent major in Romance languages): study of flute and influence of foreign languages on learning in Rennes, France.

Celina Kobetitsch ’18 (degree in piano performance): study of organ in Leipzig, Germany.

Dating to 1946, the Fulbright U.S. Student Program is the nation’s largest international exchange program, with approximately 8,000 grants awarded annually in support of graduate study, advanced research,



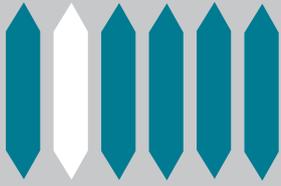
and teaching in more than 160 countries around the world. The Fulbright Program is administered by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, with support from numerous foreign and domestic organizations.

“The Fulbright Program is a transformative experience for students,” says Dana Jessen, director of Conservatory Professional Development at Oberlin. “Not only are they engaging on a professional level with leading practitioners in their field; they are also immersing themselves in the culture of the country where they reside. During their time abroad, these students serve as cultural ambassadors as well as Oberlin ambassadors throughout the world. Many report back that the experience was life-changing for them, both personally and professionally.”

All told, 13 students representing Oberlin College and Conservatory were named Fulbright Finalists for 2020-21. Oberlin has long been a leading producer of Fulbright students and has been named to Fulbright’s Top Producing Institutions list for 11 consecutive years.

The conservatory’s previous high-water mark for Fulbrights in a single year was four, which happened in 1959.





OBERLIN MUSIC

THE OFFICIAL RECORD LABEL OF THE OBERLIN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC



Longtime collaborators Harbison and Colton reunite for a recording that spans three decades of the composer's output. Joining them are the Contemporary Music Ensemble, led by Timothy Weiss, as well as oboist Peggy Pearson and pianists Kayo Iwama and Sanford Margolis.



Rands' Concerto for English Horn was commissioned in honor of Oberlin Conservatory's 150th anniversary and written for Professor Robert Walters, who appears with the Oberlin Orchestra, under the direction of Raphael Jiménez, in this world-premiere recording.



James Wood's evocative sextet for percussion channels his fascination with bodies in motion, from avian migration to cloud formations to stampeding buffalo. *Cloud-Polyphonies* is performed by the Oberlin Percussion Group, under the direction of Michael Rosen.



These premiere recordings of three works by Oberlin faculty composers include Stephen Hartke's *Willow Run* with saxophone soloist Noah Getz '97, Elizabeth Ogonek's *The Water Cantos*, and Jesse Jones' *One Bright Morning* with soprano soloist Olivia Boen '17.

Celebrating the artistic vision and extraordinary talent of Oberlin faculty, students, and alumni.

www.oberlin.edu/oberlinmusic



**IN RECOGNITION FOR HER VISIONARY WORK AS
A SCHOLAR, COMPOSER, AND GLOBAL LEADER,**

**WE HONOR SHIRLEY GRAHAM DU BOIS,
OBERLIN COLLEGE AND CONSERVATORY ALUMNA,
CLASS OF 1934 (A.B.) AND 1935 (A.M.),**

**WITH THIS PLAQUE IN THE OBERLIN CONSERVATORY LIBRARY—A PLACE
WHERE SHE BLOSSOMED DURING HER YEARS AS A STUDENT.**

**THIS PLAQUE IS A REPLICA OF THE TRIBUTE INSTALLED
IN HONOR OF GRAHAM DU BOIS BY OUR INSTITUTION
AT THE W. E. B. DU BOIS MEMORIAL CENTRE FOR
PAN AFRICAN CULTURE, IN ACCRA, GHANA ON JULY 3, 2018.**

FEBRUARY 27, 2020



Into the Light

A little-known composer earns a place of honor at Oberlin.

By Erich Burnett

SHIRLEY GRAHAM DU BOIS IS KNOWN AS A GROUNDBREAKING composer as well as a playwright, author, musicologist, civil rights activist, and nation builder. The problem, until recently, was that relatively few people knew of her at all.

A yearlong tribute to the remarkable Oberlin alumna, who earned a bachelor's degree in the college in 1934 and a master's degree in the conservatory the following year, began in fall 2019 and is slated to conclude with a production of an opera she completed and produced as a student. That work, much like its composer, has been lost to history for the better part of a century.

By the time she arrived in Oberlin at age 34, Du Bois had already studied at Columbia University, Howard, Morgan State, and the Sorbonne. After returning from Paris, she began work on *Tom-Tom: An Epic of Music and the Negro*, which evolved into a grand-scale opera that follows the transformation of four characters as they journey from Africa to the New World. She finished it in a feverish three-month writing spree during her second year at Oberlin; it premiered in 1932 to rave reviews and an audience of 25,000 for two performances in mammoth Cleveland Stadium, as well as a broadcast audience on NBC television. Du Bois herself directed the premiere and cast it entirely with Black performers—some 500 of them in all. Plans to mount the opera at New York's Madison Square Garden ultimately were scuttled by the mire of the Great Depression.

Du Bois, recognizing that sweeping operatic works were not an especially certain route to prosperity, went on to become a prolific author of plays, biographies, and novels, and an enthusiastic supporter of Black rights with the NAACP and other groups. A member of the American Communist Party, she renounced her U.S. citizenship in 1961 and relocated to the African nation of Ghana with her second husband, fellow author and activist W.E.B. Du Bois. There they helped develop the nation's telecommunications industry, and Ms. Du Bois became director of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's television division. She later resided for a time in Cairo and traveled frequently across Europe, Asia, and Africa; she lived in Beijing at the time of her death from breast cancer in 1977.

Beginning in fall 2019, Oberlin honored Du Bois through a series of programs that grew out of the Oberlin Center for Convergence, or "StudiOC," a point of intersection between the college and conservatory that fosters interdisciplinary study of complex subjects. From StudiOC emerged a learning community called The Student as Artist and Intellectual: Gleaning from the Legacy of Shirley Graham Du Bois. Taught by faculty members Fredara Hadley (ethnomusicology) and Tamika Nunley (history and comparative American studies), it promoted experiential learning methods through the

completion of student projects inspired by Du Bois.

The StudiOC community itself was inspired by a chance meeting in the Oberlin archives between Hadley and Nunley, who both were researching the life and work of Du Bois. Their deep dives followed visits to Ghana by visiting religion professor A.G. Miller and Africana studies professor Darko Opoku two years earlier. As Miller learned firsthand of Du Bois' legacy, he began an initiative to raise her profile at Oberlin—including two subsequent Winter Term trips to Ghana, where Oberlin students served as interns at the Du Bois Memorial Centre.

A November 2019 "salon" in Stull Recital Hall served as a public introduction to Du Bois' life and legacy. It included excerpts from *Tom-Tom* featuring conservatory singers Anthony Anderson '22 and Matteo Adams '20, and discussions with trumpeter-composer Daniel Spearman '16 and Africana studies and theater professor Caroline Jackson Smith about *Tom-Tom* and other Du Bois works.

The StudiOC community's research culminated in the creation of an interactive book on Du Bois and display panels that tell the story of her life. The panels were scheduled to be displayed at Oberlin's Mary Church Terrell Library through spring 2020, then be relocated to Ghana for use by the Du Bois Society. In February, a two-day symposium entitled "Intersections: Recovering the Genius of Shirley Graham Du Bois" included the debut of the StudiOC book that bears the same title and a series of lectures. It opened with the dedication of a plaque in honor of Du Bois—an exact replica of a memorial erected in Ghana—installed at the entrance of the Conservatory Library.

"Shirley Graham Du Bois is a quintessential Obie," Hadley told *The Oberlin Review*. "I think she loved Oberlin, and she represents so much of what all of us try to do well here as faculty, students, and staff. We like to think that we train young people who can go out and change the world...and she does that many times over."

To this day, the Cleveland premiere of *Tom-Tom* remains the only production of the work in its 88-year history. Its score had vanished until a researcher at Harvard University unearthed a copy of it among other papers by Du Bois in 2018. Initial plans called for a staging of *Tom-Tom* at Oberlin, to be directed by Jackson Smith in December 2020. The opera will remain in the shadows for now, a momentary victim of COVID-19. But it will return to the stage someday sooner than later, its power felt more fully today than perhaps its creator ever imagined. ■

Learn more about Shirley Graham Du Bois at go.oberlin.edu/graham-du-bois.



Conductor Joseph Hodge leads the orchestra in a rehearsal of *The Wild Beast of the Bungalow*, Oberlin's Winter Term opera for 2020.



IN WITH THE NEW

THE OBERLIN OPERA
COMMISSIONING PROGRAM
TURNS STUDENTS INTO
COLLABORATORS ON WORLD-
PREMIERE PROJECTS.

BY ERICH BURNETT AND
CHARLOTTE MASKELONY '21

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MOZART AND VERDI ARE AMONG OPERA'S finest composers, but they're crummy when it comes to feedback.

This unfortunate reality gave rise to the Oberlin Opera Commissioning Program, the mission of which is unmistakably straightforward: Bring living composers to campus to collaborate with Oberlin students.

For each of his three years teaching and directing Winter Term operas at Oberlin, Assistant Professor of Opera Theater Christopher Mirto has managed to do just that. Now he has a mandate to do it.

"I kind of see my job as figuring out how to say *yes* to anything the artist needs," says Mirto, who will oversee each commission. "I want to give them as much latitude and resources as possible so that they can dream."

Launched in 2019, the Oberlin Opera Commissioning Program was made possible with support from Elizabeth and Justus '71 Schlichting. The first project in the pipeline was Rachel J. Peters' *The Wild Beast of the Bungalow*, which was given its world premiere as Oberlin's Winter Term opera in January 2020.

In early September, the New York-based composer made the first of several trips to Oberlin for a week of workshopping the piece with a student cast and crew. Students sang the entire score, extensively discussed the work, and created a recording. Formal auditions for the production were held in November.

Peters returned to campus in January, along with librettist Royce Vavrek, as the show drew nearer to opening night.

"The fact is, American opera is really its own animal, and it's evolving all the time," says Peters. "Why not have the students be a part of that evolution? This is my first true chance to work with undergraduate students on a full production, and they have been terrific!"

Though new to the stage, *Wild Beast* has been



gestating—to borrow Peters' term—since 2008, when Vavrek suggested they team up to write an opera based on Canadian writer Sheila Heti's short story "Mermaid in the Jar," which explores the cruel possessiveness of a young girl and her unusual pet.

Wild Beast came to Mirto relatively close to completion, but future works funded by the Opera Commissioning Program will be developed from start to finish over a three-year span.

NURTURING ARTISTS—AND AUDIENCES—OF TOMORROW

The program's roots extend to Andrea Kalyn, dean of Oberlin Conservatory from 2013 to 2018, who was an advocate of the concept from its earliest days. Before departing Oberlin to become president of New England Conservatory in early 2019, she ensured that the program's foundation was in place.

A former English major at Oberlin, Justus Schlichting sold his healthcare financial services company in 2011 and began to commission, with his wife, a wide range of music projects the following year—some 30 of them annually, according to a 2018 interview with *Financial Times*. (Among the beneficiaries of the Schlichtings' generosity was violinist





Students sing the praises of *Wild Beast's* creative team. "Their guidance helps us make this show our own," says soprano Caroline Wolfe '21 (pictured).



Christopher Mirto (seated, third from right) and Rachel J. Peters (second from right) workshopped *Wild Beast* with students in fall 2019.

Jennifer Koh '97, who received funds to help pay off the loan on her Stradivarius in exchange for commissions from a number of her composer friends.)

A self-described "super-hardcore commissioner of new music," Schlichting and his wife have worked with some 179 composers and funded 200 pieces that have premiered since 2012, with 76 additional works in the pipeline. Their support is fueled by a desire to develop audiences for classical music for generations to come.

"And how do you bring in young audiences?" Schlichting asks. "You play music from composers of their time. You put enough new music in front of an audience, and what eventually happens? They go *Wow, this is good stuff*. It can be hard, and it can take a couple of years, but I have seen it happen.

"At Oberlin, students are going to be a part of this process right from day one. I can think of nothing more valuable for young musicians than to be a part of the creative process from the start. It is the essence of what musicians are all about: to continue to grow and bring vitality to the art form."

A MATCH MADE IN OBERLIN

The Wild Beast of the Bungalow was unleashed on the world in January 2020, but it was born years earlier at a Chapters bookstore in Alberta, Canada, where a teenage Vavrek stumbled upon Heti's collection of short stories. One of them caught his attention in particular: a gritty, page-and-a-half-long tale about a girl tormenting a mermaid trapped in a jar. Vavrek was hooked.

"Certain moments remain with artists throughout our entire lives," he says. "I've carried 'Mermaid in the Jar' with me for years."

Formerly a student with Peters at New York University's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, Vavrek reconnected with the composer at the Public Theater in New York during Susan Bernfield's play *Stretch (a fantasia)*. The curtain opened on Peters playing her own composition: a piece for electric typewriter and strings.

"It blew my mind," says Vavrek. "I knew right then: I have to engage with this amazing compositional voice." Years later, Peters and Vavrek hit it off, collaborating first on a song,

then on an 18-minute "Mermaid in the Jar" minidrama, and finally on *Wild Beast*.

Oberlin students first met the beast at the fall 2019 workshop, where they devoted a week to rehearsals, coachings, and discussion that informed the version of the show that would premiere in Warner Concert Hall just a few short months later.

For Peters and Vavrek, the key to a stage-ready work lies in the details. "Performer feedback is invaluable," says Peters. "It allows tiny changes that refine the opera."

In his first two years at Oberlin, Mirto directed *Angel's Bone*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera by Du Yun '01, and *Proving Up* by Missy Mazzoli. Vavrek was the librettist for both works, which—like *Wild Beast*—both involved extensive interaction between creative team and cast.

"I'm thrilled to play a role in bringing living artistry to campus," says Mirto. "It's revelatory for our students to be able to ask living artists a question and to see the amount of work that goes into an opera."

"It's just a different way of thinking about the music too," says Peters. "If you're working on Verdi, that score is the gospel, and you can't ask him a question about it. You're also not contending with 150 years of performance tradition in terms of how to perform a given aria."

On the night before the workshop cast was scheduled to cut a recording, Vavrek rewrote a lullaby that was part of the libretto. The cast sang the new version the very next day.

For students, moments such as these underscore the exhilarating malleability of new music.

"It's like glass shattering," says tenor Mac Atkinson '21, who sang in the *Wild Beast* workshop and performed in the 2019 production of *Proving Up*. "The composer can just sit with a hard copy of the score and decide, 'Yeah, cross that out and write this instead.' That was an incredible moment."

"It's exciting to try things and play with original intention," Vavrek says. "Take the lullaby, for instance: We cut a verse, and it's so much better. Workshops reveal those opportunities."

They can also be deeply rewarding, especially in how the relationship between creator and

"I CAN THINK OF NOTHING MORE VALUABLE FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS THAN TO BE A PART OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS FROM THE START."

BACKSTAGE MAGIC

OBERLIN PRODUCTIONS DISPEL THE MYTH THAT OPERA IS JUST FOR CONSERVATORY MUSICIANS.

More than 40 Oberlin students, faculty, and others convened to produce the world premiere of Rachel J. Peters' *The Wild Beast of the Bungalow* in January 2020.

Singers and instrumentalists made the music happen, but toiling behind the scenes was a team of equally passionate fellow students consumed with their roles as production assistants: untangling the countless artistic and logistical issues involved in staging an opera, and researching the cultural, historical, and societal factors related to the work.

Though they had all joined forces for a conservatory production, nearly half of them pursue their studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. It's one of many ways Oberlin, with its single campus dedicated to both a liberal arts college and conservatory of music, nurtures a singular environment for interdisciplinary study and creation.

"We're all passionate, we're all here for a reason, and everyone brings something different to the table," says Kitty Schwartz '20, an English and history double major who served as *Wild Beast's* assistant director, providing feedback to director Christopher Mirto, running a second rehearsal room, and recording staging notes.

Joining her backstage was politics major Alec Perlow '20, who researched and analyzed the opera's influences, plot, and music as a dramaturg. Together, the direction and dramaturgy teams collaborated to create an informed world and bring it to life onstage.

Though neither Schwartz nor Perlow imagined a career in performance, both were drawn to Oberlin for its vibrant musical community and its extensive opportunities for students of all majors.

"I do research all the time," says Perlow, who graduated with Schwartz in May. "There's different kinds of research, but a dramaturg's work is very similar to academic work: Find the material, make sure it's credible, and then present it in a clear and concise way.

"At a place like Oberlin, many people excel at this kind of thinking—and in an incredibly diverse range of subjects," Perlow says. "That expansive, intellectual culture means that skills for my major help me understand an opera's themes and motifs."

Both Schwartz and Perlow envision careers in arts leadership, and both arrived at their paths through their experiences on campus and through participation in Oberlin's Music Leadership Career Community, one of several groups that unite Oberlin students, alumni, parents, and faculty around shared interests in various employment sectors.

"The ability to try a little bit of everything was a huge part of why I chose Oberlin," says Schwartz. "It's great to know that my varied interests don't have to be separate parts; they can work together and influence one another. And I think that's the really special thing about being here. Learning to think critically and creatively for my liberal arts courses absolutely helped me develop a story from libretto to stage." —*Maskelony*

performer provides a conduit for instant feedback. "It's empowering," says Atkinson, "because when you get it right, the composer is like *That's exactly what I pictured!* From the mouth of the composer, you're doing great."

"*Beast* continues to teach me independence as a performer," says Caroline Wolfe '21, who sang the lead role of Girl in the workshop and the premiere production. "Rachel and Royce have been so generous in their mentorship, and their guidance helps us make this show our own."

In three consecutive years as librettist on Oberlin's Winter Term operas, Vavrek has been afforded the rare opportunity to build connections with students over time and to chart their development. Baritone Colin Anderson '20 was cast in all three of the operas Vavrek has worked on at Oberlin.

"I remember working with Colin in the chorus of *Angel's Bone*. His voice has just grown so much!" the librettist says. "I've had this amazing relationship with Oberlin students, and to watch them evolve as artists is just surreal. I'm continually impressed by their commitment to their work."

CULTURE OF CREATIVITY

In April 2020, Oberlin announced the second work to be developed through the Opera Commissioning Program: *Alice Tierney*, by composer Melissa Dunphy, winner of a 2020 Discovery Grant from Opera America. Together with librettist Jacqueline Goldfinger, Dunphy will prepare her opera through interactive experiences with Oberlin students, culminating in a world premiere on campus in January 2023. Unlike *Wild Beast*, the project will be created—start to finish—entirely under the Oberlin Opera Commissioning Program.

The commission continues director Mirto's mission of creating opportunities for underrepresented composers and librettists. All four of Mirto's Oberlin productions to date have been written by women.

"Women, especially, are significantly underrepresented across the opera world in terms of creative positions and as administrators," he says. "So I decided to institute change where I could: When considering future Winter Term operas for Oberlin, I seek opportunities to draw upon the talents of female artists as well as artists of color. This helps provide significant creative opportunities for those who need them most, and it also resonates well with our students, who are keenly attuned to disparities such as these throughout the arts."

Inspired by Dunphy's experiences with her husband as amateur archaeologists, *Alice*



Wild Beast's cast, crew, and creative team share the stage of Warner Concert Hall.

“WE NEED TO CULTIVATE GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS WILLING AND ABLE TO EXPLORE EVERY ASPECT OF THE VOICE.”

Tierney focuses on the perspectives of archaeologists who unearth clues surrounding the mysterious death of the titular woman. Dunphy and Goldfinger will engage in workshops with conservatory students in addition to interactions with creative writing, theater, and other departments in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Over the next two years, *Alice Tierney* will be developed at the same time existing works are scheduled to be brought to the stage for Winter Term 2021 and 2022—meaning that Oberlin students will collaborate with not one, but two artistic teams at the same time. The constant waves of creative energy will keep Mirto and his students more than busy. And that’s just fine with them.

“They’re brilliant,” Peters says of her student collaborators. “They’re at the top of their game, and we were really spoiled by being here. The earlier we can expose young musicians to new work as a pathway to a career, to being fulfilled as an artist, and to staying in dialogue with everything that’s

happening in the world, the better.”

Of course, the ongoing global impact of COVID-19 will influence the schedule of Winter Term operas at least for the coming year. (Already this fall, Mirto has transitioned previously scheduled student workshops with Dunphy and Goldfinger into virtual sessions.) But eventually a sense of artistic normalcy will return, and with it the same imperatives will resurface.

“We need to cultivate generations of artists willing and able to explore every aspect of the voice,” Vavrek said mere weeks before the nation shut down in March. “We’re in a golden age of contemporary opera, and it behooves young performers to learn the tools to participate. I hope that through undergraduate contemporary opera, we’re proving the many ways to find not only a career, but also artistic satisfaction.” ■

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F O N D M E M O R I E S O F T H E F U T U R E

**TIMARA'S LANDMARK ANNIVERSARY OFFERS
CAUSE FOR REFLECTION—AND DIFFRACTION,
DIFFUSION, REVERB, AND MORE.**

**BY MIKE TELIN '84 AND ERICH BURNETT
ILLUSTRATION BY ISRAEL G. VARGAS**

When music and electricity intersected for the first time, Oberlin ingenuity made it happen.

In 1874, former Oberlin student and educator Elisha Gray invented a small keyboard that emitted single-note tones generated by electromagnets and steel reeds. Called a “musical telegraph,” the device came to be regarded as the world’s first electric musical instrument. It was introduced one year prior to another of Gray’s creations, the telephone.

Nearly a century later, a similar spirit of innovation shared by a pair of Oberlin faculty composers provided the foundation for Technology in Music and Related Arts, the groundbreaking program better known by its acronym, TIMARA.

Now 50 years removed from its founding at the turn of the 1970s, TIMARA continues to illuminate the intersections of technology and artistry. It welcomes participants who pursue a limitless array of interests, and it sets them on a course toward a similarly boundless variety of careers.

But what exactly is TIMARA? For half a century and counting, TIMARA is whatever its practitioners make of it. And it’s also something more. >>>

A BLACK COMPOSER making his way in the mostly white world of academia, Olly Wilson knew well the plight of underrepresented populations. He addressed this theme frequently through his compositions, which often drew upon relatively new innovations in electronically influenced composition and performance. During Wilson's time as a professor of music theory at Oberlin from 1965 to 1970, he played a key role in the establishment of the first courses in electronic music as well as the first focused study on the African American experience. He also won first prize in the 1968 International Electronic Music Competition at Dartmouth College—the first competition ever devoted to electronic music.

Wilson's colleague, John Clough, was a former Oberlin student who returned to teach music theory in 1955. Clough meshed his musical sensibilities with a great love of math; during a year of research in 1968, he developed the composer's programming language TEMPO and an Interactive Real-Time Music Assembler, or IRMA. Clough was instrumental in obtaining Oberlin's first synthesizer—an early Moog unit—as well as Scully tape recorders and an IBM System 360/Model 44 mainframe computer, the first computer used for music processing. This crucial equipment was secured through a \$94,100 National Science Foundation grant that was extraordinary not only for its size, but also for its purpose of advancing the study of electronic and computer music. Almost overnight, Oberlin had become a hub for electroacoustic exploration.

By the fall of 1969, the first class in electronic music—taught by Wilson—appeared in the Oberlin course catalog. It was followed in spring 1970 by courses on computer sound generation (taught by Clough) and tape-based studio techniques.

Though Wilson and Clough both departed by 1970, their groundwork was pushed forward by other like-minded musicians among the conservatory faculty. One of them was Edward Miller, a dynamic composer who arrived in 1971 and whose name is scrawled in pencil atop a 1972 document proposing the formal establishment of an electronic music program at

Oberlin. The new creation, Miller asserted, would be referred to as “Technology in Music and Related Arts,” and it would serve conservatory students as well as college students focused on the arts. In the years to come, Miller continued to memorialize the department's steady growth through annual reports.

The TIMARA major—at the time available exclusively as part of a double major—first appeared in the 1973-74 course catalog. By the end of that year, composer Gary Lee Nelson was appointed to the TIMARA faculty, beginning a highly influential tenure of more than three decades.

In its early years, the fledgling program occupied vestiges of space wherever it became available, often because of its reliance on cumbersome, essential equipment. Its home base was always the unadorned basement of Bibbins Hall, which a prescient Wilson noted in the late 1960s would make a fine home for the study of electronic music.

Tom Lopez, a 1989 Oberlin graduate and a member of the TIMARA faculty since 1999, began studying TIMARA—in the basement—in the mid-1980s. “People who came down would be inclined to run away,” he says. “It was filled with empty harp cases and naked lightbulbs hanging from the ceiling.”

For a time, TIMARA also inhabited space in the basements of Talcott Hall dormitory and the physics building, where professor Robert Moore taught a class on electronic music that incorporated Oberlin's gigantic IBM computer. “He taught us the principles of digital music-making, and we wrote our own oscillator in Fortran” recalls John Strawn '73, a double-degree student who was among the first to benefit from the newly developed curriculum. “We used punch cards,” says Strawn, a specialist in patent litigation related to software and signal processing. “I still have them!”

In those days, programs written by faculty and students were shipped off to Princeton University to be digitized—a process that took weeks and often yielded dispiritingly poor results. By the latter half of the 1970s, support from Oberlin's Computer Services Center allowed TIMARA to circumvent the Ivy League

and yielded digitized files within a day or two.

Beginning in 1975 and for the next decade, TIMARA housed its computer music production facilities on the fourth floor of Mudd Learning Center, a transition that allowed students to access the college's new Xerox SIGMA9 mainframe computer. The following year, Nelson completed development of his Music Programming Language, or MPL, which spawned a spree of creativity upon its introduction to students that fall.

It was Nelson who played perhaps a larger role than anyone in shaping TIMARA over the 30 years that followed. An internationally trained composer and former tubist, he brought a fascination for digital synthesis at a time when the rest of the department was still figuring out its analog instruments. Shortly after arriving, Nelson was asked by Miller to swap the analog synthesis courses Miller had been teaching with the music theory courses that had been assigned to the new guy. Miller, after all, considered himself a composer first, and much less a technological wizard.

Nelson was all too happy to oblige.

“The next fall, the analog students arrived to find Satan standing on their altar,” he recalls. “I had patched their beloved Moog to the hilt, playing what became my only composition on the instrument. Their first question was *How did you do that?* I replied, ‘From working with the theories and planning needed for digital synthesis.’”

As that first day of class neared its end, Nelson began unpatching the Moog. “Each student yelled some version of *No! Stop! What are you doing?* The rule in those days was: If you get something you like, record it, because you will never hear it again.”

On the second day of class, incredulous students were treated to the same piece reproduced by Nelson.

“TIMARA had analog students and digital students,” he says. “They barely spoke to each other—and the analog students, not at all to me.”

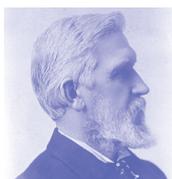
But Nelson's words betray the memories held dear by those who studied with him.

“Gary was welcoming of any artistic voice that any student brought to the studio,” remembers

ELECTRONIC MUSIC AT OBERLIN: A BRIEF HISTORY

1874 >

Former Oberlin student and educator Elisha Gray invents the world's first electric musical instrument.



1955 >

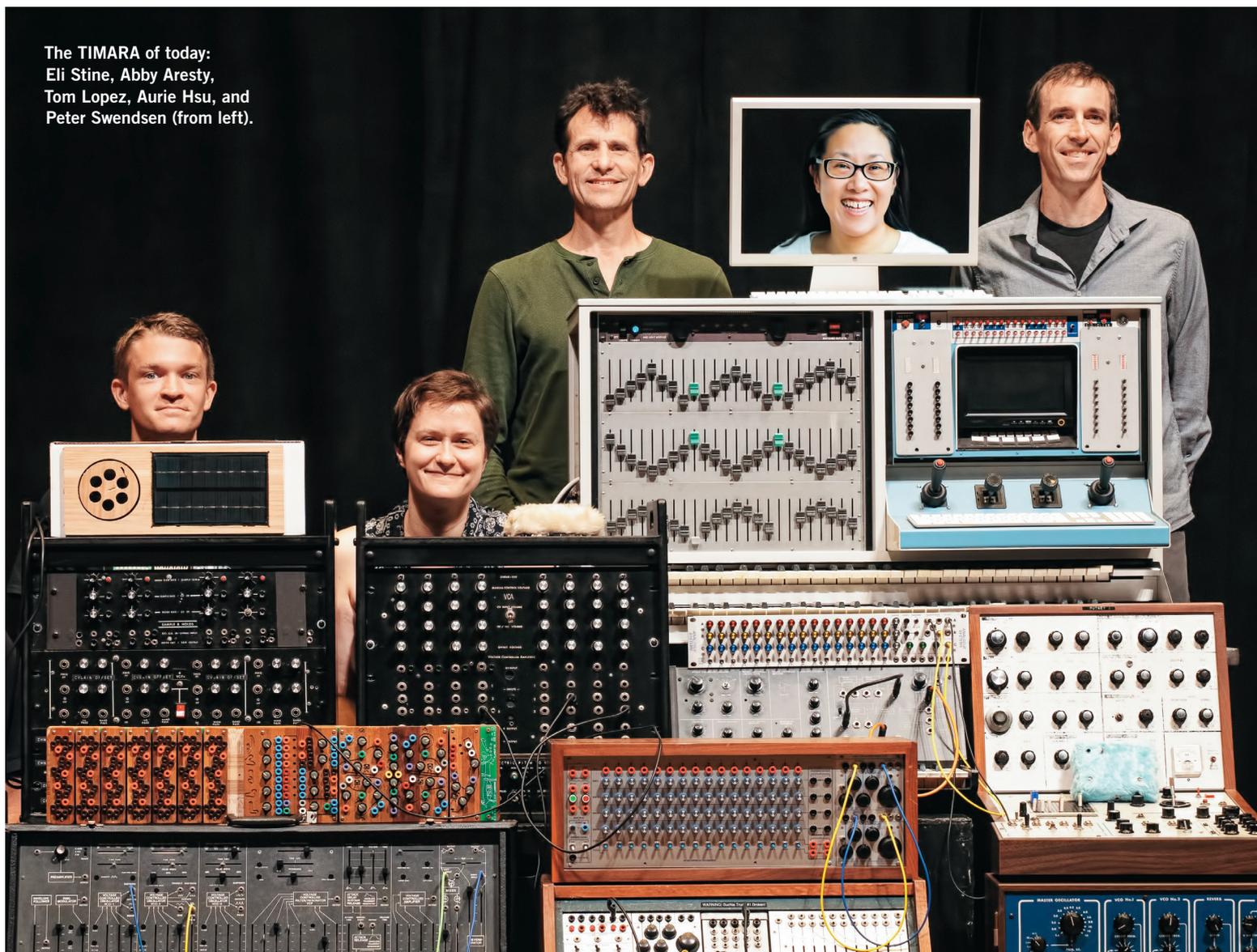
John Clough '53 is hired to teach music theory. His interests eventually gravitate toward computer music.



1965 >

Olly Wilson joins the music theory faculty. He brings a fascination with composing electronic music.

The TIMARA of today:
Eli Stine, Abby Aresty,
Tom Lopez, Aurie Hsu, and
Peter Swendsen (from left).



Lopez. “He did not insist that students write in serial technique or any other technique. He was very open to student personality, and he appreciated their creativity. That willingness to let people find themselves was part of the atmosphere he created.”

In some ways, Nelson was finding himself along with them. He refers to the decade from 1978 to 1988 as the department’s “Golden Era,” marked by great advancements in technology

and resources for Oberlin’s students. During that time, he teamed up with TIMARA engineer John Talbert to create numerous innovative musical devices, with Nelson often writing sound-producing programs and Talbert fashioning the hardware through which they were implemented. Their most notable collaboration was the MIDI Horn, which capitalized on the advent in 1983 of Musical Instrument Digital Interface technology.

Nelson played the device in more than 200 performances worldwide.

Talbert’s career at Oberlin stretched from 1978 to 2017; his retirement was feted through a multi-day “Talbertronic” festival attended by TIMARA devotees past and present—including Nelson, who had retired a decade earlier to similar fanfare. “John Talbert is a legend and was the person who made TIMARA work,” he says today.



1968
Clough earns a \$94,100 NSF grant that enables the purchase of Oberlin’s first electronic music equipment.

1968
Clough develops algorithms for a new programming language and Interactive Real-Time Music Assembler.

1969
Oberlin offers its first classes in electronic music and computer sound generation.

1972
First use of the term “Technology in Music and Related Arts” appears in a new-program proposal.

1973
TIMARA is formally established, with six courses offered in its first year.

Together, their tinkering produced a generation of TIMARA magic.

“Gary was engaged artistically as well as technologically,” says Peter Swendsen, a 1999 TIMARA graduate and a member of the faculty since 2007. “Gary had this sort of research side of things: He and John were doing things that today we would call ‘new interfaces for musical expression,’ at a time before such a thing really existed. But Gary also came from a serious musical background. Early on, he set the tone for TIMARA’s high level of musicianship as well as the emphasis on technology and invention. Those things might not have all been combined in one place if a different person had been the steward of TIMARA through all those years. That was one of the traits of Gary’s that I really respected and learned from very early.”

By 1989, TIMARA’s operations were consolidated in Bibbins Hall. The nondescript basement had been reconfigured to be a more fitting home, replete with two quadrophonic studios, a recording studio and control room, two faculty offices, a computer workstation lab, tech room, and lobby.

That same year—20 years after the first classes were taught—TIMARA became a stand-alone major.

“Part of what made TIMARA special for me was that we were down in the basement together and we were free to experiment,” says composer and accordionist Peter Flint ’92, who launched a career in sound engineering and design for theater and computer games after earning his degree in TIMARA. (In 2019, Flint was a core supporter of the TIMARA Founders Fund, the first endowed fund earmarked solely for TIMARA students. It was named in honor of the department’s progenitors, Wilson and Clough.)

Andy Russ ’92 was a sophomore when TIMARA settled into its permanent home. More than just improved confines, the move included a rollout of enhanced technology.

“I was sort of at the cusp of using analog synthesizers and reel-to-reel tape, and the program tried to embrace as much of the new technology as possible,” he recalls. “I remember doing classes on sampling on digital audio

workstations or manipulation with different kinds of synthesis techniques.” After earning degrees in TIMARA and dance, Russ went on to serve as music supervisor for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and later as artistic coordinator of Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project. Today he is artistic director of the Passive Aggressive Novelty Company, an interdisciplinary performance group.

Throughout its history, TIMARA has sat at the forefront of evolving technologies—from its initial mainframe computers hidden across campus, to the arrival in the mid-1980s of Mac Plus computers that reduced digital-analog conversion times from days or weeks to a single minute, to the fleet of Macs that filled a newly christened computer music lab in 1995, to the department’s complete makeover in 2017. The space now includes distinct studios for recording, multichannel diffusion, analog synthesis, and media production; a newly created makerspace; a fully loaded gear depot; a third faculty studio; and a multipurpose exhibition and teaching space.

“What’s been really important about our renovation and expansion has been the way it supports the evolution of our students,” says Swendsen. “We’ve been able to retain the historical instruments and the direct link to the musical practices that they help us teach. We’ve been willing to try new technology without jettisoning the old.”

THROUGHOUT THE department’s history, TIMARA musicians have toiled out of sight of their classical contemporaries upstairs—but certainly not out of earshot. “We always had problems with the professors upstairs,” engineer John Talbert said in 2017. “They were constantly calling me up and saying *Turn it down!*”

But for all the curiosity and consternation, TIMARA also had kindred spirits upstairs—most notably composition professors including Edward Miller, Ronald Pellegrino, Randolph Coleman, and Conrad Cummings. Oberlin’s hiring of Cummings in 1980 signaled the first formalized blurring of faculty lines between TIMARA and the rest of the conservatory.

“They wanted somebody to teach two-thirds time in TIMARA and one-third in music theory,” recalls Cummings, whose 10-year tenure on the faculty concluded with a stint as chair of TIMARA. “I thought *that sounds like fun.*”

Cummings arrived to a department that was more stylistically freewheeling than he could have imagined. “God bless Gary Nelson’s heart,” he says. “We had students who were passionate about the standard academic avant-garde, we had students who were passionate about the New York City downtown experimental scene, and then there were students who were passionate about new-age punk with an artistic twist. Everyone was respected. It was a great environment to be part of.”

From the beginning, TIMARA valued collaborative ties with students and departments all over campus. In 1972, Pellegrino taught the first electronic music workshop, which welcomed individual and group projects that incorporated live performance using electronic instruments, synthesizer-based composition, synthesis of audio and visual composition, and more. It also encouraged mingling with sculptors, choreographers, and other student artists.

Initially a piano performance major, Frankie Mann ’76 remembers Pellegrino as a “one-of-a-kind” composer. “He believed in having an active performing career, and he had one himself,” she recalls. “He also encouraged collaboration across the board and wanted us to go out into the world and see what was there.” A former Fulbright Student who was a member of the first TIMARA graduating class, Mann did exactly that: She became a central figure in New York’s avant-garde music scene of the 1970s and ’80s, and later wrote music and audio software for Eventide Clockworks, Atari, Children’s Television Workshop (creator of *Sesame Street*), and others. “I ended up having a career in technology and music,” she says, “which is what TIMARA is all about.”

Howard Fredrics ’84 entered Oberlin as a composition major with thoughts of becoming a film composer. He too was bitten by the TIMARA bug and declared it as a second major.

1974 >

Gary Lee Nelson joins the TIMARA faculty, beginning a tenure of 33 years at Oberlin.



1975

Computer music production facilities are relocated to Mudd Learning Center, home to the college’s mainframe computers.

1976

Nelson unveils his Music Programming Language, which leads to a boom in composition among Oberlin students.

1977

TIMARA graduates its first class of five students, all of whom were required to complete a major in another subject.

1978 >

John Talbert is hired as TIMARA program engineer and hardware developer, beginning a 40-year Oberlin career.

“BY THE END, YOU’VE NOT JUST MADE MUSIC—YOU’VE CONSTRUCTED IT WITH YOUR HANDS.”

AMY X. NEUBERG

“My interests and my path were changed by my experiences in the TIMARA program,” Fredrics says. “I became much more interested in experimental music and less committed to the notion of a commercial music career in the film industry.” He began writing music for dance, including a piece composed for electronics and hair dryer. “People sometimes forget about the *related arts* part of TIMARA!” says Fredrics, a composer, sound designer, and audio engineer for dance, film, and theater.

Aurie Hsu ’96 was a piano performance major who first felt the spark of TIMARA through Randolph Coleman’s Composition for Applied Majors course, which was geared toward classical musicians who had never considered writing their own music. “That etched in me the beginning of wanting to compose and being interested in electronic music, because he was such a staunch experimentalist,” recalls Hsu, who today is a member of the TIMARA faculty. “It was kind of anything goes—and for me, *everything went*. You know Oberlin students!”

“It’s always been a little bit of a land of misfits... in a fun way,” says Swendsen. “Some of that is our physical location being a little bit removed from everyone else. Then and now, there’s always been a little sense of it being a world unto itself—not, we hope, to the exclusion of other worlds. But TIMARA has always supported that sense of being a community.”

“When I was a student, everybody in TIMARA was always doing something very different from

everybody else,” he says. “And if you look at almost any class of our students from year to year, that spectrum still exists. No two of them are doing exactly the same thing. In a way, I think that helps foster that sense of community. There’s this sense that nobody is an expert at everything, and everybody’s exploring something new while they’re doing the thing they’re really focused on. So there’s a lot of helping out and a lot of skill-sharing and a lot of collaboration.”

Soon after joining the faculty in 2007, Swendsen recognized an increasing desire among conservatory students to draw upon TIMARA’s resources.

“There was a growing number of students who were interested in contemporary music, and their repertoire was starting to include a lot of electronics and a lot of tape parts,” he says. “It was starting to infiltrate a lot of majors that didn’t have anything to do with TIMARA. And so a lot of violinists and cellists were starting to come downstairs and say *I need a microphone for this! What am I going to do?!*”

By 2008, Swendsen introduced TECH 170: Electroacoustic Interpretation and Performance Practice, a sort of gateway course for non-TIMARA majors who might otherwise venture into the basement with some trepidation. It is taught today by Aurie Hsu.

TIMARA counts among its family countless “honorary majors,” those—like Hsu—who grew close through interdisciplinary ventures

involving other corners of campus, from scientists to dancers and all points in between. “Throughout the years, we’ve always had really consistent and impactful community members who weren’t even TIMARA majors or minors,” says Swendsen. “I’d like to think that our community is even bigger than it appears on paper.”

Amy X. Neuburg ’86 earned her Oberlin degrees in linguistics and voice, but found her path molded by TIMARA as well. “Students in the composition department discovered that I was interested in singing new music and asked me to premiere their pieces,” she recalls. “Some of them were working with electronics, and the combination of voice and electronics was really intriguing to me.”

Neuberg was influenced by Conrad Cummings’ Introduction to Electronic Music course and by a computer music class taught by visiting instructor Denise Ondishko. “I had a religious experience in the studio,” she says. “Back then, it was a very physical place. Everything was done with big two-inch tape, and you were plugging things into each other, running across the room turning knobs, seeing the kind of giant play station of your sound come together. By the end, you’ve not just made music—you’ve constructed it with your hands.”

AT THE HEART of TIMARA’s appeal, from its formative days to today, is a universal passion to *create*. Early on, that often required devising the means to create. “There was very little equipment that you could just buy,” says Lopez.

Shawn Decker ’81 arrived at Oberlin writing string quartets, but soon gravitated downstairs.

“I learned how to write computer code, and that absolutely changed my direction,” says Decker, a professor in the sound department at the Art Institute of Chicago. “By the time I finished, I was doing mostly electronic and digital-media-based work. Back then, we were literally building the gear ourselves, so it was extremely experimental.”

“That dichotomy of those who want to perform and those who want to write code has been there all along,” says Lopez. “But nowadays, we have



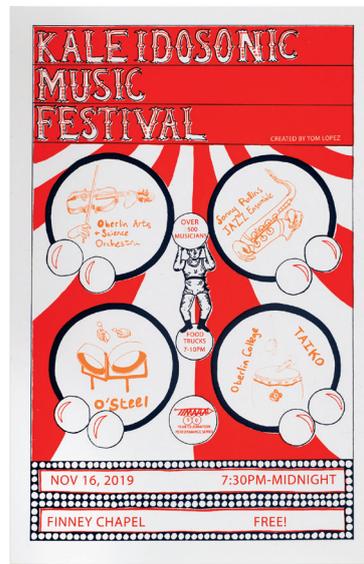
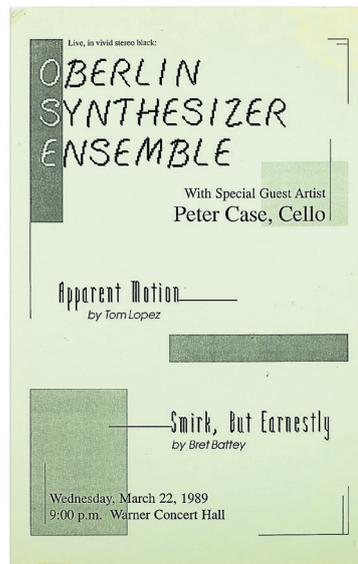
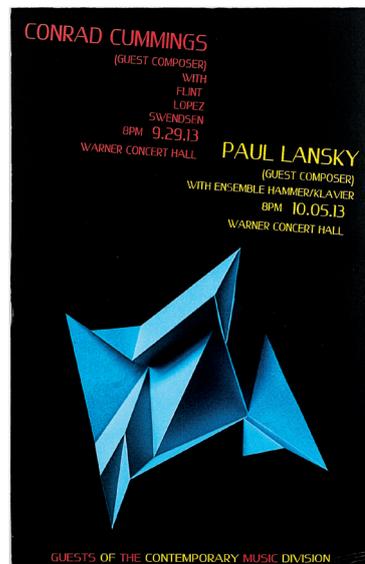
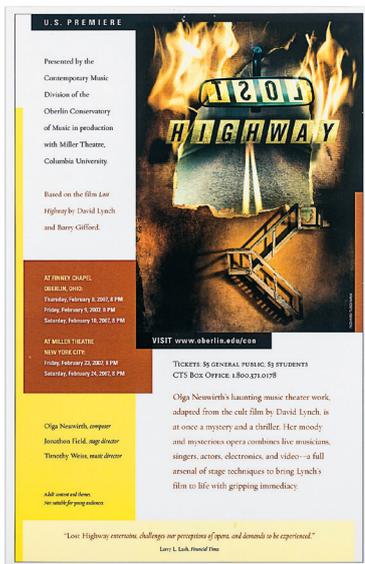
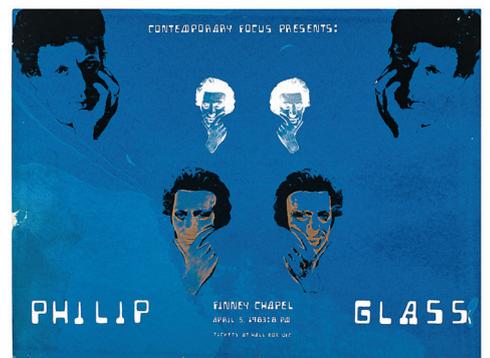
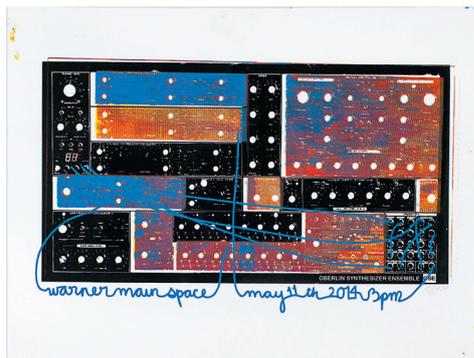
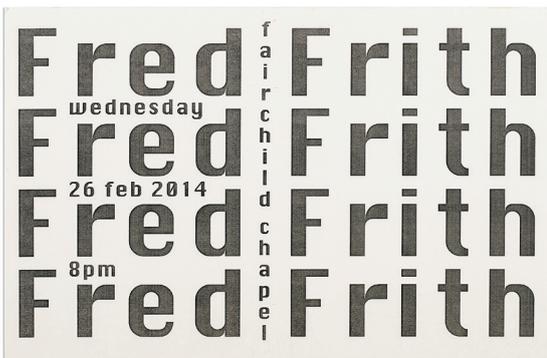
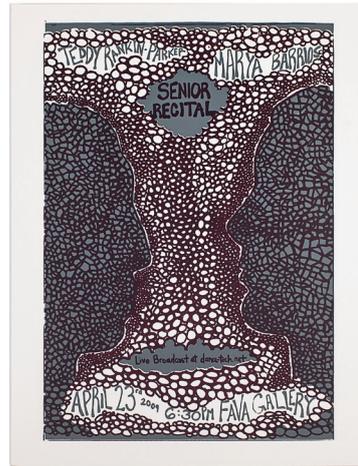
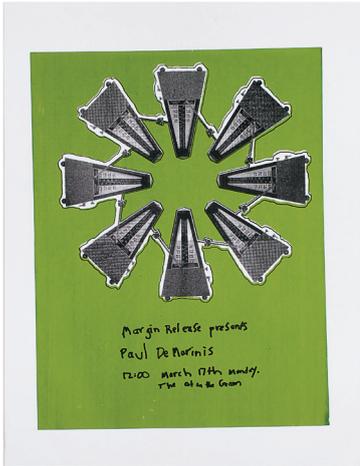
1980 >
Composer Conrad Cummings is hired to teach music theory and technology; he later serves as head of TIMARA.



1984
Talbert completes a prototype “MIDI Horn,” which emits MIDI signals that interact with Nelson’s sound-producing programs.

1986
TIMARA acquires its first Macintosh Plus computer, drastically reducing the time required for D/A file conversion.

1987
TIMARA receives \$25K gift from the Crystal Trust, followed over the next six years by \$80K from the Presser Foundation.



EASTMAN
SATURDAY 04.12
BORN UNDER LIGHTS & SOUND
PERFORMANCES EVERY 15 MINUTES
8PM TIMARA COMPLEX

SUNDAY 04.13
GUTS // GROOVES
6PM WARNER DANCE STUDIO

TUESDAY 04.15
SPEAKING TO AND THROUGH
LEFTOVERS
BROTHERS
8PM CLONICK HALL

RECITAL

TOM'S IN
May 12th, 2015 @ 7PM, Fairchild Chapel

Lyn Goering Dana Jessen Joo Won Park Tom Handman-Lopez

Six Sides
by Cesar Alvarez
Sculpture & Electronics
with Ann Marie Alvarez, BC '97
(Voice & Choreography) Peter Evans
Trumpet

Warner Concert Hall
Sat. Nov 9, 2002
4:30 PM

New Student Works
8pm

Warner
Monday/December 13/1999

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST
4:30 PM
WARNER CONCERT HALL

Bounce!
BY
TOD MACHOVER
(MUSIC, HYPER-INSTRUMENT DESIGNER, AND COMPOSER)

WITH
ROBERT SHANNON
ON HYPER KEYBOARD

Honors Recital
Oberlin Conservatory of Music

Tom Lopez, *composer*
John O'Neal, *voice*
Nathan Pawelek, *horn*
Rose Shlyam, *piano*
Amy Kimberling, *violin*
Jeremy Denk, *piano*

Friday
March 3, 1989
Warner Concert Hall
8:00 p.m.

TIMARA REUNION FESTIVAL

10 Concerts with Returning Faculty & Alumni
www.timara.oberlin.edu
May 7-12 2007

SERGEI KURIOKHIN
Extraordinary
Soviet Avant-Garde Musician

Presents A
MUSICAL SPECTACLE
"Mr. Kuriokhin is a true discovery...exhilarating music"
San Francisco Chronicle
The New York Times

Sunday, November 6, 1988
Finney Chapel
8:00 P.M.
\$5 General \$2 OCID

Tickets available at the door
or call
Central Ticket Service
216/775-6169

Tal Rosner
Designing Time
Talk

3-3:30pm
28th October 2008
TIMARA Studio 2
Oberlin

The Oberlin Conservatory of Music TIMARA Department presents
three special guests from the forefront of electroacoustic music:

the future sounds of now

alvin curran
29 September - 10 October

Public Lecture
Friday, 3 October, 4:30pm
Bibbins 223

Oberlin CME
Saturday, 4 October, 8:00pm
Warner Concert Hall

Concert
Wednesday, 9 October, 8:00pm
Warner Concert Hall

www.timara.oberlin.edu/isa
Fall 2008

Devin Frenze & Christian James
Junior Composition Recital
April 9th 8pm Warner Concert Hall

CHOWNING
CONCERT
TIMARA

QUADROPHONIC COMPUTER MUSIC
FROM PENNSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC 11/6/81
WARNER CONCERT HALL - FREE

GORDON MUMMA
Guest Composer GORDON MUMMA

CONTRALZ lecture with Nicholas Fillion
November 4, 2010 at 8pm
Bibbins 223

Video Presentation
November 15, 2010 at 8pm
Hatlock Auditorium

Throughout TIMARA's history, the expressiveness and individuality of the department's practitioners can be seen in the artwork created to promote their events. These posters are enduring artifacts that constitute their own chapter of the TIMARA story; many of them still adorn the walls of the studios today.

Explore a gallery of TIMARA art through the years at go.oberlin.edu/TIMARA-posters.

TIMARA CELEBRATES ELECTROINCLUSIVITY

TIMARA commemorated its landmark anniversary throughout 2019-2020 with events involving students, alumni, faculty, and friends from the community and beyond.

The festivities opened with the Crafting Sound Symposium, coordinated by TIMARA technical director Abby Aresty and held over two days in October. The events—including workshops on robotic percussion and paper circuit-making, interactive exhibitions, and more—culminated in a concert in the Birenbaum Innovation and Performance Space.

In November, TIMARA presented the signature event of its anniversary year: Kaleidosonic, a marathon surround-sound performance that overtook Finney Chapel and drew upon the efforts of some 500 musicians from the college and conservatory, as well as the Oberlin community. It featured musicians on stage, in the aisles, the balcony, lobby, and even outside.

“This will not be a traditional concert experience,” TIMARA professor Tom Lopez promised in advance of Kaleidosonic.

So while a MacBook was indeed used to manage the flow of sound around the



room—in addition to multiple mixing boards, effects processors, and more—Kaleidosonic was more about the Oberlin High School Marching Band and the Oberlin Choristers, the Northern Ohio Youth Orchestra and the Oberlin College Black Musicians Guild, as well as singers, bagpipers, taiko drummers, gamelan players, and more.

In early March, the celebration continued with back-to-back days of music: Exquisite Electrophonics, which showcased student works across a variety of media in historic Fairchild Chapel, followed by Sound in the Round, in which TIMARA faculty led an immersive exploration of

surround-sound technology in Oberlin’s newest venue, the state-of-the-art Irene and Alan Wurtzel Theater.

The anniversary year concluded with the release of a new LP recording, *Electroacoustic Music at Oberlin, Vol. 2*, featuring the work of 11 student and faculty composers.

“What was so rewarding about our anniversary year, and especially about Kaleidosonic, was that, for me, it was the epitome of everything I have learned from TIMARA,” says Lopez. “It should be a hub for creative community. And while technology itself is exciting, the technology works in support of artistic vision.” —Burnett

more people who sort of say, ‘Yeah, the technology is cool, but I want to *interact* with it.’ Of course, we still have folks who want to sit under lamps at computers too. Both threads are alive and well!”

Unlike most majors at Oberlin, TIMARA’s ranks are often filled by students who drift toward the basement through word of mouth. Many ultimately add TIMARA to round out a double degree.

As it happens, Decker’s own daughter, Sally Decker ’14, studied creative writing at Oberlin but worked with Peter Swendsen on projects combining poetry and sound art. She now enjoys a career as a composer and teaches electronic music to elementary schoolchildren.

“There are lots of really interesting, creative, and intelligent college students here, and we want them to discover us as early as possible,” says Lopez. “We welcome students from all kinds of different fields—especially from computer science and cinema studies—and more and more of them are coming to us through the art department.”

That may be no coincidence. Oberlin’s Studio Art Department is home to one of TIMARA’s staunchest advocates: Associate Professor of Integrated Media Julia Christensen, who began her Oberlin teaching career in TIMARA.

“I’ve always crossed over between these different realms, and I’ve found that students at Oberlin do too,” she says. “My role here has always been to be the bridge—or help find the bridge—for students who are interested in those intersections.”

Over the last 20 years, TIMARA’s growth can be measured not only by its enhanced technology and increasing numbers of students, but by its deliberate emphasis on inclusivity.

Arriving at Oberlin in 2007, Christensen taught for four years in both studio art and TIMARA. During that time, she founded WAM!, the Women and Art Music Ensemble, which consisted of female students playing experimental music by living women composers. Intended to further encourage

- 1989**
TIMARA first offered as stand-alone major; new facilities open in Bibbins Hall.
- 1993**
TIMARA receives its first PC, a gift from Greg Hendershott '86, founder of the software company Cakewalk.
- 1994**
TIMARA joins the World Wide Web with one of the first websites on campus.
- 1995**
A new computer music lab opens, featuring nine Mac workstations, each equipped with extensive software and hardware.
- 1996**
TIMARA incorporates video editing, and a new studio is outfitted with video decks, monitors, and a MEDIA 100 editing system.
- 1999**
Former TIMARA student Tom Lopez '89 joins the faculty.

women to engage with TIMARA, the initiative attracted participants from all over campus.

“It’s not a new thing for women to be interested in technology and electronics, but the platform has opened up to recognize that a little more fluidly,” says Christensen. “Part of it is that it was hard for a young woman to commit to getting a degree in electronic music when she hadn’t seen a lot of other women doing that. But when there is a platform for women and they see that women are doing it, it becomes more apparent.”

Since at least the 1980s, TIMARA has benefited from the expertise of a long line of female practitioners, among them visiting faculty Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, Kristine Burns, and Lyn Goeringer. Its first full-time female faculty member was Aurie Hsu, who arrived in 2015. She was followed in 2017 by Technical Director Abby Aresty.

Today, half of all TIMARA majors are women or identify as non-gender-binary. It’s a level of parity that remains unheard-of in most electronic music programs around the country.

“Composition itself is a field that has inclusivity issues that are important to address,” says Aresty. “I’ve had the experience of being ‘The only person in the room.’ So of course, that is part of what motivates some of my work. I know what it feels like to feel like you don’t belong, and I know the ways those feelings can inhibit your learning. It can keep you from asking the questions you need to ask.”

In her first year, Aresty developed the Girls Electronic Arts Retreat—or GEAR—a TIMARA summer camp that engages young girls in hands-on projects intended to foster curiosity and creativity. She has since conceived numerous other projects steeped in social awareness and also devised a community-based learning course intended to inspire participants young and old to pursue intersections between science, technology, engineering, math, and the arts. Aresty’s efforts often coincide with programming presented through StudiOC, Oberlin’s hub for interdisciplinary learning, which draws on resources from the college and conservatory.

“When I arrived at Oberlin and in TIMARA, it felt unlike any other space I had been in, in

terms of gender diversity,” she says. “It’s not like other schools, and it’s not like the field more broadly. It also just *feels different*. It feels like you can learn without having to be something you’re not.”

Aresty and her TIMARA colleagues continually engage in conversations about increasing intentionality as it relates to diversity and striving to forge early connections with students of all backgrounds and experiences.

“A lot of people did some heavy lifting to make it a smoother entry into the field than it used to be,” says Hsu. “I had great role models who had to come up through the ranks in difficult ways, who are at the top of their craft and have mentored others as well. I hope that I can also contribute to that cycle.”

THE ADVENT OF ever more powerful computers and software has flipped the TIMARA model in some ways.

“You no longer need a studio in an institution,” says Hsu, whose research interests include a wearable wireless interface designed for belly dance. “You can make music in your room.”

This reality has also reshaped attitudes about what it means to be a creator. “If you are working in multimedia, creating or composing can mean developing software or building a physical hardware system, or writing notes down on staff paper,” Hsu says. “It can mean improvising. So I think people are becoming renaissance figures again in that they have their feet in many different modes of working.”

And with TIMARA, not surprisingly, everything old is eventually new again.

“We’ve been around long enough to see how those sorts of trends cycle back around,” says Swendsen. “The first piece of gear we bought was an analog synthesizer. Many places got rid of that kind of equipment in the late ’80 and early ’90s, when digital gear started becoming widely available. There has been a real resurgence of interest in analog synthesis in the last decade, and that has helped us realize how lucky we are to have it.”

Thanks to the creation of TIMARA’s makerspace in 2017, many students have become technological “crafters” who enjoy

building their projects from the ground up, much as earlier generations did out of necessity. To Swendsen, it represents another way TIMARA has come full-circle.

“There’s a resurgence in making as part of the creative act itself: not being solely reliant on the technology that the industry provides for you, but making the technology yourself as part of the artistic process.

“We’ve managed to build a living, breathing studio complex that evolves both on a small scale, from year to year and class to class, but also on a level where we’re not just following the field; we’re part of the investigation into what the field is. We want to be grounded in the history of that field, but also looking forward to the things that are coming.”

And what exactly is coming?

“The beauty of all this is that we really don’t know the answer to that question, but we know that we can trust in the process that has gotten us this far,” says Swendsen. “We’re pretty upfront with our prospective students about this too. We say, point blank, that we don’t know what we’ll be teaching when you are seniors.

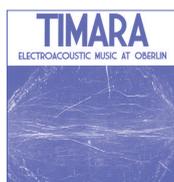
“The event horizon in our field is such that we can be competent in the foundational elements of what we teach and the history and practice and craft—all the things that are more timeless. But when the actual field evolves and the technology evolves, it’s almost silly to look more than a couple of years ahead at any moment. We have to trust those processes to keep unfolding.”

“We feel comfortable telling students *You may know more about some technology than we do*,” says Lopez. “We’re going to teach you how to think critically about technology and how to get the most out of your creative voice.

“I don’t know what technology we will be teaching in the years ahead, but I hope, in the spirit of TIMARA, we will still be learning collaboratively and that we will still be holding events with artists across campus, around Cleveland, and all over the world.” ■

MIKE TELIN '84 IS VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF CLEVELAND CLASSICAL AND A TEACHER OF MUSIC CRITICISM AT OBERLIN. HE STUDIED BASSOON PERFORMANCE IN THE CONSERVATORY.

2001 >
TIMARA releases the first in a series of recordings featuring students, faculty, and alumni. Six additional releases would follow.



2007
TIMARA contributes to Oberlin’s world premiere of the Olga Neuwirth opera *Lost Highway*; Peter Swendsen '99 joins the faculty.

2015
Aurie Hsu '96 becomes the first female faculty member hired into a permanent TIMARA position.

2017
TIMARA studios are fully renovated and expanded; Abby Aresty named TIMARA’s technical director.

2019
Oberlin honors Oilly Wilson and John Clough by establishing the TIMARA Founders Fund to recognize outstanding students.

P L A Y I N G

T H R O U G H

T H E P A I N

G L O B A L C R I S I S S I L E N C E D

C A M P U S I N S P R I N G 2 0 2 0 .

I T D I D N ' T S I L E N C E O B E R L I N .

Oberlin spin on NPR Music’s Tiny Desk Concerts—that honored the women’s suffrage movement.

At the same hour across campus, Oberlin’s weekly Jazz Forum concert went down at the Cat in the Cream, but hardly in its usual fashion: This time, out of necessity, empty seats took the place of the usual lunchtime throng that packs the coffeehouse—numbers that would have exceeded Ohio’s newly imposed restrictions on public gatherings.

The Oberlin Orchestra, still three weeks out from an April performance that was to feature Beethoven’s monumental Fifth Symphony, transformed its final afternoon rehearsal before shutdown into a tearful, improbably joyful performance in Finney Chapel. It was witnessed by a sparse, emotionally spent audience that wandered into Finney either by word of mouth or by the sound of notes wafting through the chapel windows. For the seniors who took part—some of whom took up the invitation to sit in with the orchestra even though they weren’t on the roster—it amounted to a surreal farewell to the concert stages of Oberlin.

Later that afternoon, bassoon professor Drew Pattison teamed up with several colleagues for a performance in Kulas Recital Hall. It would be the last of the semester’s faculty recitals to permit a live audience of any kind.

In that same moment, the Oberlin College Choir seized upon an opportunity to move up a performance that had been slated for five days later—well after students were now required to leave campus. Guest conductor Noah Horn ’07 led an impassioned performance—beginning with “Deep River” by 1908 Oberlin graduate Nathaniel Dett—on the same Finney Chapel stage where the orchestra had played a short time earlier.

A handful of students shoehorned impromptu degree recitals into any available performance space that day, as countless other recitals scheduled for later in the semester fell off the books out of necessity—or at least uncertainty.

Così fan tutte, the Mozart opera that was set for four glorious performances in Hall Auditorium, had been hastily trimmed to two performances before an audience of family members. The finale came Friday

night: a staging that was livestreamed to the world from a venue that one day earlier had no infrastructure to support such a broadcast. It was made possible through the effort of faculty and staff from multiple corners of campus who ensured that the technology and expertise were available in time.

Within 72 hours of that frenetic day, most students had cleared out their dorms and retreated for home, for how long they were far from certain. Others sheltered in the off-campus housing they had called home for the past six months. And some had no option but to remain on an Oberlin campus that, with the virtual flip of a switch, had been transformed from its usual spring bustle to an otherworldly calm.

And the faculty and staff, the earliest adopters in the sudden shift to remote learning, set about the task of developing an intensive and engaging online experience that would be ready to implement in the span of less than two weeks and that would carry their students through to May. As the weeks wore on, those students sometimes carried their teachers too.

What follows is a chronicle of some of the remarkable experiences brought about by the era of COVID-19. It’s been a year of learning and labor, with plenty of both for everyone. ▶

IN THE MOMENTS just after everything started falling apart, Oberlin started coming together.

During that second week of March, as fears surrounding spread of the novel coronavirus began to escalate across Ohio and around the country, campus officials announced their once-unthinkable decision to send students home for spring break a full week early, and likely for the rest of the year. Upcoming concerts began to vanish from the schedule, and the conservatory imposed restrictions on the size of audiences for any that remained.

The events that unfolded on Friday, March 13—what suddenly became the final day of classes on campus in spring 2020—foreshadowed the herculean efforts that would follow in the weeks and months ahead.

On that day, 10 student performers gathered in the Conservatory Library at noon for a “Tiny Ref Desk Concert”—an



OUR CORONAVIRUS CURTAIN CALL

A student pianist recalls the concerto he chased for years and the Oberlin moment that will last a lifetime.

On the afternoon of Friday, March 13, the Oberlin Orchestra convened in Finney Chapel for a routine rehearsal that each musician knew would be anything but routine. It would be a premature run-through of a program that was not scheduled to hit the stage for another three weeks.

That final rehearsal included Liszt's daunting Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major with soloist Liam Kaplan '20, one of four winners of the 2019-20 Senior Concerto Competition. The pianist and orchestra had not previously rehearsed the piece together, but it had become clear there would be no future opportunities to do so.

Though closed to the public, the rehearsal was attended by a couple dozen students, faculty, staff, and others who had heard of it by word of mouth. Everyone in the room felt the weight of the moment and the astounding power of the performances. The final notes were followed by thunderous applause, tears,

and embraces that in the days ahead would become all but forbidden. By that evening, those same students were dismantling their rooms and preparing for their journeys home.

Here, Kaplan shares his reflections on the concerto he has cherished for half his life and the Oberlin afternoon he will never forget.

When I was 11 years old, I studied double bass in addition to the piano, and my parents took me a few times per year to see our local New Jersey Symphony perform at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. We would always sit on the far right side of the auditorium near the front, right by the double basses. I often dreamed about joining the bass section of a professional orchestra.

During one particularly memorable concert, I saw Terrence Wilson, a wonderful pianist from my hometown of Montclair, perform the Liszt A major concerto. I was

absolutely captivated by the colorful and passionate piano part, especially in the moments when the piano pairs with one other instrument—near the beginning, the French horn and oboe, and later, the solo cello and flute. I fell in love with the piece and decided immediately that I wanted to be on that stage someday playing it.

I bought the sheet music and began learning it, but at that point in my life it was far too difficult for me to wrap my hands around. I tried being patient, practicing very slowly and deliberately, one note at a time. But after nearly a year of effort, it wasn't going anywhere, so I put it away. Fast forward to the summer after my freshman year in Oberlin, and I decided to try again. I spent much of that summer at the Meadowmount School of Music, and the entire fall semester of my sophomore year working on the concerto. After thinking about the piece for so many years, I was very proud of the

progress I had made in tackling all of the challenges in the various fireworks Liszt sprinkles throughout the work. That December, I entered the Wideman International Piano Competition in Shreveport, Louisiana, where I didn't advance to the final round. Nonetheless, it was a valuable experience for me to prepare the piece to such a high standard.

When the time came to decide which piece I should play in the Oberlin Senior Concerto Competition, I quickly realized that Liszt's second concerto was the closest to my heart. At that point I had lived with the piece for half of my life, and I had so many memories wrapped up in the melodies and harmonies. When I learned that I had won the competition, I was overjoyed that I would be able to play a piece that means so much to me personally, with so many of my close friends from Oberlin in the orchestra and in the audience. It felt like a perfect capstone to the transformative four years I spent at the conservatory.

When we all learned that the semester would change to online classes, Raphael Jiménez reached out to me and offered to do a single run-through of the Liszt concerto. I wasn't originally scheduled to rehearse with the orchestra for another week or two, but I was very glad to grab the chance before most students had to pack up and return home. We treated the rehearsal on the last Friday of classes like a concert. He talked through the trickiest spots in the score where the tempo changes, and then we played through from start to finish. The performance was a little bit rough around the edges, which is to be expected without any rehearsal, but it was incredibly passionate. The string sections were augmented by several graduating seniors who were not originally in orchestra, but wanted one last chance to play with the Oberlin Orchestra. I was so moved by all of my classmates who came together to play with so much joy in the face of a difficult situation. It was an incredibly cathartic moment, and I burst into tears at the end. Then the orchestra performed an extremely energetic account of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to "end the year on C major," as Maestro Jiménez said. I was so glad that we could have the closure of this ad hoc concert before scattering worldwide to our very distant homes.

Kaplan and his fellow Concerto Competition winners will return to Oberlin to perform their concertos at dates to be determined.

THE ONLY STAGE THAT'S LEFT

Conservatory launches "Oberlin Stage Left," a virtual celebration of Oberlin's people and music.

Online celebrations of the conservatory's exemplary musicians are nothing new to Oberlin. Online experiences that don't lean heavily on the hundreds of meticulously prepared concerts that happen on campus every year? That's sort of a different story.

In mid-April, the conservatory launched "Oberlin Stage Left," a series of online programs featuring faculty and students, as well as guests from throughout the musical world. It was created to build connections through music at a time when connections of any kind were in especially short supply.

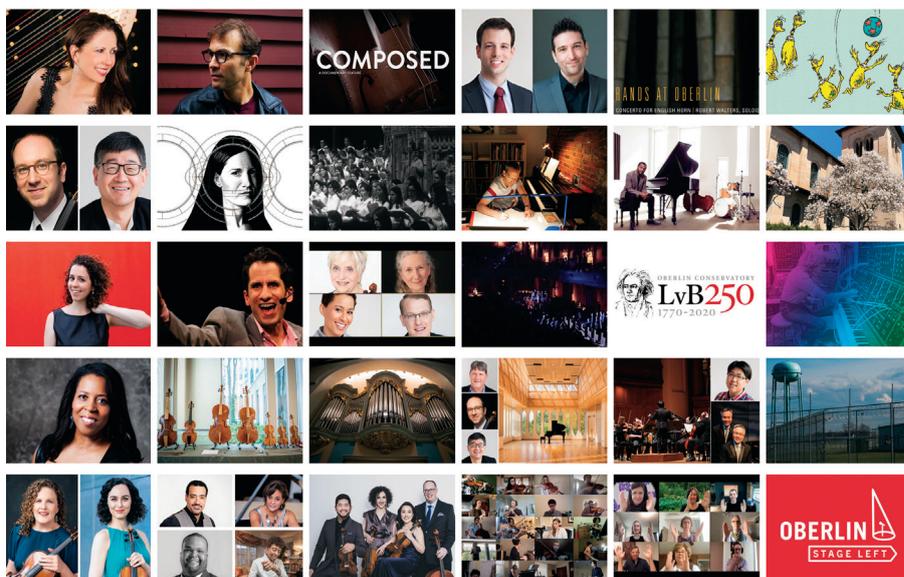
"It will be fun, it'll be informative, it'll be distinctly *Oberlin*," Stage Left's presenters promised. "And it will carry us all through the days till we share the music together—in person—again."

Oberlin Stage Left launched April 14 with a discussion featuring Dean William Quillen and harp professor Yolanda Kondonassis, followed by a prerecorded performance of Alberto Ginastera's virtuosic Harp Concerto with the Oberlin Orchestra, a piece that appeared on the 2016 Oberlin Music recording *Ginastera: One Hundred*.

The program was broadcast three times each week throughout the spring semester and continued with weekly episodes during the summer. (Access it at www.oberlin.edu/conservatory/stage-left.) Topics ranged from irreverent Broadway sing-alongs hosted by faculty, to frank discussions on race relations, to sharing art in an era of isolation. Music, naturally, was a recurring theme, with performances by faculty soloists and ensembles as well as student groups and clips from the archives.

"We brainstormed about who our audience is—it's a diverse one—and thought about what they would like, rather than what we think they should hear," Thea Boyd, Oberlin's director of artistic programming, told Cleveland Classical in April. "It's not a 'you must eat your vegetables' type of thing."

Oberlin Stage Left returned for fall semester when it became clear conventional music-making would not. In addition to original programming, it became a conduit for broadcasting student and faculty performances from venues all over campus. —Erich Burnett





FINNEY ON DEMAND

A homegrown app allows musicians everywhere to mimic the acoustics of their favorite Oberlin venues.

In the first days of April, as Oberlin's normally bustling campus was reduced to a lonely whisper, Andrew Tripp began his quest to visit every performance space he could get to. He started in intimate Kulas Recital Hall, then stately Finney Chapel, toting a two-way speaker, a pair of omnidirectional microphones, and a portable recorder wherever he went.

He was capturing information about the way sound reverberates in each room. He hoped to transform that into meaningful data that might be useful to Oberlin musicians who might be missing those spaces more than ever.

"I had been thinking about this in the back of my head for a few years," says Tripp, an engineer in the conservatory's Audio Services Department and codirector of Oberlin's newly developed Recording Arts and Production graduate program. "It seemed to make sense that if a student

couldn't be here, we could bring a little bit of campus to them in some capacity."

What he hadn't anticipated was an actual time when students simply *couldn't be here*. The nation's response to the coronavirus changed that.

Thanks to the work of Tripp and his colleagues in the conservatory's TIMARA Department, those students now have the option of presenting their music complete with the acoustical attributes of the very venues in which they were scheduled to perform.

"The idea is simple, but it has a kind of resonance with the moment we're all in right now," says Eli Stine '14, a former double-degree student in TIMARA and computer science, and a visiting member of the TIMARA faculty. Armed with Tripp's recordings, Stine set about creating an interface that would allow musicians to easily pair their own recorded music with the

acoustic properties of their favorite Oberlin locales—even their favorite *corner* of each locale. The result of their work is an app for macOS they call ObieVerb. It can be accessed, along with an easy-to-follow how-to video, by searching "Virtual Venues" at oberlin.edu.

Users of the app simply match any recording of their playing with an Oberlin concert hall, then select a desired amount of reverb. Recordings mixed with ObieVerb can then be output through any speaker and exported in a variety of file formats.

By early spring, Tripp had gathered data in almost every concert venue throughout campus. All of them are now options in ObieVerb.

He also got additional suggestions from the ever-inventive students in his Advanced Audio Recording class. "They want me to do the old Hales swimming pool," he says. "They want me to do the racquetball courts." —*Burnett*

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A STEINWAY

For conservatory students still living at Oberlin, a week without a piano was a week too long.

For Jiaqing Luo, an interminable week had passed since seemingly everybody else had left town. An eerie calm had settled over Oberlin's typically lively campus, and an unshakable restlessness had settled over Luo.

"I've stayed in my dorm almost all the time," said the third-year student from China's Hunan Province. "Every time I see other students, we all wear masks for safety."

Luo is one of nearly three dozen Oberlin piano students who hail from international destinations that became unreachable in early spring, as fears surrounding spread of the coronavirus led to tightened restrictions on global travel. For almost all of those remaining students, sparsely populated residence halls continued to be home long after their fellow students left campus in mid-March.

As Oberlin officials took up the task of ensuring that each student was safe and well

cared-for, one glaring deficiency emerged: The piano students had no access to their artistic and creative lifeline. With college and conservatory buildings marked off-limits to ensure that safe social distancing could be maintained, a campus that boasts an incredible 240-plus high-quality Steinway pianos suddenly had none for its students to use.

"Each of our piano faculty has been in touch with our students on an almost daily basis," Professor Alvin Chow said at the time. "Many were in a fragile state, and of course their first question was usually *When and where will we be able to practice?*"

The situation took on an added dimension on Sunday, March 22, when Ohio enacted a statewide shelter-in-place order that would take effect in less than two days, further complicating access to instruments for students of the first All-Steinway School in America.

"It's certainly possible that the week these students had already spent without playing could have been the longest they've ever gone in their lives," said Michael Straus, the conservatory's associate dean for operations. "It was important for us to do whatever we could to safely reunite them with their instruments."

At the direction of Dean of the Conservatory William Quillen, Straus coordinated an effort to deliver 14 Steinway grand pianos—each weighing more than 600 pounds—to residence halls and other locations accessible to piano students who were permitted to remain on campus. Over the next two days, staff members from Student Life, Campus Safety, the Conservatory Deans' Office, Concert Production, Keyboard Studies, and Piano Technology, as well as moving teams from campus and nearby Cleveland, joined forces to uproot and relocate the pianos. Every instrument was delivered, set up, tuned—and equipped with disinfecting wipes—mere hours before the state-imposed deadline.

On the first day the pianos were available to students, 25 reservations were made through Concert Production; in the two days that followed, another 75 requests poured in, accompanied by cheerful notes of thanks from grateful students.

Jiaqing Luo, for one, took a seat at the keyboard moments after movers dropped the first of three Steinways in South Hall, where six other pianists also had been silenced in recent days. In the week since the pianos arrived, Luo practiced for four hours each day, a regimen typical of his pre-pandemic routine.

Each student followed posted protocols for safely cleaning pianos and practice areas before every session, and each was encouraged to maintain safe social distancing at all times.

"I'm very happy in Oberlin!" Luo said in late March. "I can live safely and do everything that I want to do. For now I can't go out, so I have more time to study alone and practice."

In Oberlin's Asia House, three pianists had their choice of three pianos.

"It's really comfortable for me, especially to be able to practice here in the dorm," said senior Shangru Du of northern China. "I appreciate the effort made by the conservatory. I know it's not an easy task, but I'm very grateful for it." —Burnett



Senior pianist Jianyi Gu of China was one of three dozen Oberlin piano students who were unable to return home when campus closed in March.

COURTESY JIANYI GU

SO WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED DURING OUR COVID QUARANTINE? *VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING.*

Ethnomusicology students presented a virtual puppet show in the Indonesian *wayang kulit* tradition. Violin/biochemistry major Erika Aoki completed a report on the efficacy of COVID-19 antibody testing. TIMARA students mounted a virtual Binaural Concert. Robert Walters' oboe studio took part in its own virtual Mozart Cadenza Competition. 29 musicians cut a recording of Julius Eastman's *Stay On It* in honor of the class of 2020. PI students engaged with guest artists through four virtual master classes. TIMARA presented a Silent Film Ensemble virtual performance. Clarinet professor Richard Hawkins hosted the interview program "At Home with Hawkins." Voice major Charlotte Maskelony and more than a dozen fellow students presented "Dating from a Distance," which included a virtual production of the opera *At the Statue of Venus* that raised more than \$1K for the NAACP. Numerous faculty shared their homebound practice routines in a chain of social media videos. Members of the Oberlin College Black Musicians Guild led an Oberlin Stage Left discussion on the state of the music world. Voice/math major and Oberlin ultimate player Abby Cheng won *Ultiworld's 2020 Donovan Award*. Piano pedagogy professor Andrea McAlister presented webinars for the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy. Piano professor Peter Takács lectured on Beethoven at the MTNA virtual conference. The Obertones, the men's and nonbinary a cappella group, created a Zoom video for the Jonas Brothers song "Sucker." Conservatory students shared videos about their musical lives in quarantine. Violin/economics major Yaoyao Chen completed research on data visualization platforms for COVID-19. Oboe students performed a shared recital from living rooms in multiple states. Jazz guitar major Gabriel Morales earned a Ping Student Service Legacy Award for his leadership in community service. Musicology students completed long-form writing projects on the life of Beethoven. Percussion/TIMARA major Rachel Gibson won the 2020 Allen Strange Award, presented by the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States. Voice professor Katherine Jolly led a SongFest panel on the impact of spirituals and Black singers, as well as virtual sessions for Classical Singer and Schmidt Vocal Arts. Composition/economics major Natsumi Osborn completed a report on the effects of COVID-19 on venture capital. TIMARA students led a COVID-19 morale booster and fundraiser for a local hospital and families affected by the coronavirus. Dozens of students presented a virtual 2020 Commencement Recital, made possible by the Conservatory Council of Students.



“Tappan Square lies poignantly still this morning, except a chorus of birds in the trees sings the names of today’s graduates, lofting their own version of pomp and circumstance skyward. And that not only must suffice this year, but does so in its own beautiful way. To all you students who should be here, know that you are. ‘Congratulations’ stirs in the quietness of this morning.”

PROFESSOR OF MUSICOLOGY STEVEN PLANK, SHARED VIA FACEBOOK ON COMMENCEMENT DAY

Roads Less Traveled

The new year starts with new discoveries during Oberlin's Winter Term.

An Oberlin tradition for more than 50 years, Winter Term is that window between semesters when students dedicate themselves to learning experiences far removed from their day-to-day campus routines. Sometimes that means laying the groundwork for professional projects, or deep dives into subjects off the beaten path, or cultural immersion in destinations near and far. In January 2020, more than 900 Oberlin students chose to experience Winter Term at Oberlin, while others pursued interests in their hometowns—or in Europe, South America, or any number of other locales. Following are some of the projects they engaged in this year.

Resounding Runout

When it came time for fall ensemble assignments, the musicians who make up the Kulas String Quartet were the rare first-year students to show up as a fully formed unit, which they dubbed in honor of the Oberlin recital hall that bears the same name. Support from Oberlin's Flint Initiative Grant program enabled them to round out a 12-date January tour of the Washington, D.C., area during Winter Term. It included performances at the embassies of Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, as well as a library, school, homeless shelter, and more. "The homeless shelter was one of the most touching experiences," says cellist Lourdes de la Peña, describing the calming effect their playing had on residents. "Your teachers always tell you that music is powerful, but I think you have to experience it firsthand to truly know."

Digitizing History

As the longtime faculty advisor to the student-run radio station WOBC-FM, TIMARA professor Tom Lopez was keenly aware of the voluminous stacks of old audio cartridges—public-service announcements, interviews, program promos, and more—that have been stored at the station for decades. "These tapes don't last forever," Lopez says, "so it's been on the back of my mind for a while to digitize them."

Throughout Winter Term and into the spring semester, Lopez convened a group of students to transfer the "carts"—which date to at least the 1970s—and make them available online, thus preserving WOBC's sounds of yesterday for audiences of tomorrow. What they found ran the spectrum of the mundane (football game broadcasts) to the spectacular: recordings of protests and sit-ins, rock-star station IDs, concerts, and more.

Laying Tracks in Bayou Country

Riley Calcagno '20 makes up one-half of the roots duo Vivian & Riley, which teamed up with Grammy-winning producer Joel Savoy to record an album of original music in Eunice, Louisiana. They wove their longtime love of ballads and fiddle tunes into narratives informed by events of today. Supported by a Flint Initiative Grant, the experience afforded them the opportunity to collaborate not only with Savoy, but with other acclaimed musicians born of America's Cajun and country music traditions. "I learned so much from Joel about recording, producing, tradition, and playing while down in Eunice, and I feel that the record really reflects that growth," says Calcagno. The album is due out in 2021.

A New Take on Jazz

The 11 students who make up the Genre Nova Ensemble teamed up with jazz pianist Kenny Werner for a December 2019 performance at the Cat in the

Cream Coffeehouse on campus. The following month, they joined forces with Werner as featured performers at the Jazz Education Network's 2020 conference in New Orleans. Mentored by jazz studies professor Jay Ashby, Genre Nova consists of standout musicians—a melting pot of jazz and classical players—from Oberlin's Performance and Improvisation program. Its collaboration with Werner was typical of the interactions PI ensembles routinely enjoy with guest musicians at Oberlin.

Glimpses of Organ History

Third-year organ major Matthew Dion traveled to Paris for intensive study of historical organs and repertoire, and to take lessons with keyboard masters including Marie-Louise Langlais, whose husband—the late Jean Langlais—is one of Dion's primary inspirations. "By traveling to other places, through seeing, learning, listening, and playing, we help inform our choices as musicians and develop our knowledge of



our music,” says Dion, whose project was supported by a Flint Initiative Grant.

When Sound and Light Collide

Former TIMARA student Alex Christie '09 returned to campus to lead a workshop on photosonic composition, which involves the use of light as a tool for creating and performing. With sensors and lightbulbs, students designed projects that generated light through sound, others that generated sound through light—and some that achieved both. “The photosonic composition workshop proposed a marriage of light and sound that we had scarcely explored in cinema or theater,” says Hannah Sandoz, a third-year double-degree student majoring in TIMARA and cinema studies.

Dance Like Everybody's Listening

In recent years, TIMARA has fostered numerous collaborations with Cleveland's GroundWorks DanceTheater. For Winter Term 2020, they teamed up on a project that united composers and dancers under the guidance of TIMARA professor Peter Swendsen. Students developed pieces that the performers would interpret through dance. For those on



Sonny Rollins Jazz Ensemble

both sides of the process, the experience required creative thinking and a spirit of adventure. “It was really fun because we would talk about concepts and then the dancers would choreograph something,” says Piper Hill, a fifth-year double-degree student majoring in TIMARA and mathematics. “Then I would make some sounds,

and they'd be like *Oh that's really cool!*”

Not For/got/ten

In her third-year of TIMARA studies, Oli Bentley created four sculptures that are part of the interactive multimedia installation *For/ge/t*. It examines people's interactions with the environment as well as the impact of rampant consumerism, juxtaposing images of waste with various habitats affected by it. Supported by an Oberlin XARTS grant, it was scheduled to premiere—as Bentley's junior recital—in April 2020 at an Oberlin gallery. “This will be my first-ever gallery showing, which is something I did not think I would be able to say as a college student,” Bentley wrote before her installation/recital was postponed due to the coronavirus. It will be rescheduled for a future date.

Emulating the Master

The Oberlin Sonny Rollins Jazz Ensemble carries forth the mission of the legendary sax player by immersing itself in

community initiatives in addition to sharing its artistry onstage. Made up of exemplary musicians who auditioned for membership, the ensemble visited San Francisco for a gig at the SF JAZZ Center, in addition to performances and visits with students at three Bay Area high schools. They concluded the trip with a concert and community meal at an inner-city church. “The humanity element has to be a big presence in everything young players do,” Rollins said of the ensemble that bears his name.

Movie Magic

Los Angeles composer Adam Cohen '91 returned to Oberlin to lead an intensive on scoring for TV and film. Seven college and conservatory students devoted a week to developing their craft alongside Cohen, using the conservatory's Clonick Hall recording studio as their base of operations. Each student wrote a soundtrack to scenes in a short film, with an ensemble performing each piece in the studio. “I was impressed with the variety of orchestration and



Photosonic composition

textures,” says Paul Eachus, Oberlin’s director of Conservatory Audio Services. “For some, it was their first session hearing their own music recorded, which is always exciting. They also learned very quickly that as much as possible, the details need to be ironed out before the recording session begins!”

The Art of Dresden

Eight Oberlin singers and four organists enjoyed an immersive three-week experience in the German city of Dresden. Their visit included language studies at the Goethe-Institut, a performance in Leipzig, opportunities to play on numerous organs in the region, and interactions with vocal coaches and singers from Opera Dresden. They were guided by voice professor Timothy LeFebvre and organ professors Jonathan William Moyer and Christa Rakich. “The opportunity given to me this Winter Term to go to Dresden was incredibly influential on my outlook as a performer and as a person,” third-year voice student Lucy Wallace reflected afterward.

Busy as Bees

Second-year viola major Jacqui Armbruster earned a Flint Initiative Grant to further develop the Witherbees, a jazz-folk duo she launched with collaborator Mike Lorenz. They recorded new music before a live audience, recorded six new songs in the studio, held an outreach performance, and gigged in venues across Philadelphia. “We were just grateful to be together, making music, and sharing it with our community,” Armbruster reported in the wrap-up of her project. “And I am endlessly thankful to have received funding to make these goals achievable.”

Blossoming Inclusivity

Oberlin Students for Gender Inclusivity in Music gave rise to the Phlox Ensembles, a choir and orchestra created to promote the music of traditionally underrepresented gender identities and those who support them. The choir was directed by Oberlin College musical studies major Olivia Fink ’21, and the orchestra was conducted by Sophia Bass ’20 and Nan Harrison Washburn, the



longtime music director of the Michigan Philharmonic, who presented a January lecture on women composers. The ensembles premiered works by student composers Natsumi Osborn ’21, Rachel Gibson ’20, and Kari Watson ’20. “Phlox was a hugely meaningful and inspiring project for all of us,” the group’s organizers wrote, “and we are incredibly excited to

see where our organization will go from here.”

Counted Blessings

Five college and conservatory students took part in Sonic Arts in Society, a precursor to a spring-semester course taught by TIMARA Technical Director Abby Aresty. They teamed up with a local hospital on a series of projects, including the “Gratitude Showers Challenge,” through which they created solar-powered “sundrop” circuits that emit a gentle rainlike sound and feature expressions of thanks from staffers and others at the hospital. The initiative took on new meaning in the era of COVID-19, as students helped young people and others create artistic expressions of their gratitude for the hospital workers—an effort that also developed into a fundraiser for community members in need. “We all tried to convey the complicated feeling of having hope during dark times,” says Michael Gaspari, a second-year composition major. “Working on this has been a pleasure, and I can’t wait to see what it becomes in the future!”

Learn more about Winter Term at Oberlin at new.oberlin.edu/wt-ocampus.



COURTESY TIMOTHY LEFEBVRE, OLI BENTLEY

Farewells

By His Own Admission

Longtime Director of Admissions Michael Manderen reflects on 46 years at Oberlin and the music that still moves him.

By Jeremy Reynolds '15

Michael Manderen '76 has been dancing across divisions his entire career. He kept a foot in both the college and conservatory as a double-degree student at Oberlin. In the decades that followed, he straddled the worlds of an admissions director and professional musician. And even in retirement since late 2019, Manderen continues to teach guitar and lute at the conservatory while performing at jazz clubs and Renaissance fairs and Cleveland's Playhouse Square Broadway series.

"I just happened to find the right niche that allowed me to draw on my interests in people and organization and music in a contextual way," he says. "That's been a strand throughout my working at Oberlin."

Indeed, Manderen has had a panoramic view of the institution's triumphs and its growing pains too. For thousands of Oberlin Conservatory alumni, he was also the amiable face of the place: the gentle gatekeeper who was the first point of contact—and often the one who encouraged applicants to place Oberlin on their short lists.

At the time of Manderen's own Oberlin graduation, a life spent in admissions wasn't on the agenda. But he still lived in the area, working as a freelance performer and taking on a variety of other gigs—from the commercial recording sessions in New York City he had done since high school, to assisting on campus with L. Dean Nuernberger and the early music ensemble Collegium Musicum.

By then, Manderen had also made two trips to England, where he studied lute with a number of high-level performers; they were experiences that sent him away convinced that cultivating a career so singularly focused would be "a tough row to hoe."

Instead, he enthusiastically continued his freelance performing, private teaching, and



part-time work at Oberlin until a full-time job as conservatory admissions counselor opened up in 1978. For the next eight years, he refined the conservatory search process as a member of the college admissions office. When Oberlin recognized the need to create a more autonomous conservatory office, Manderen already knew the job inside and out. In July 1986, he became the new office's first director—and its *only* director until this year. In 41 years of scouring the land for bright young musicians, Manderen worked for five college presidents, six conservatory deans, and weathered numerous administrative reorganizations, all while maintaining his performance portfolio by any means necessary.

"Oh yeah, I have this kind of lunatic other life," he jokes, a reference to his experiences as a performer, which have included climbing through windows (for a regular restaurant gig) and weathering waves of exhilaration and terror (through a couple years as first-call extra guitarist and lutenist for the Cleveland Orchestra). His home offers further testament to his lunacy, adorned as it is with some 37 instruments—including the "bass from space,"

a replica of a 16th-century viola da gamba with f-holes in the shape of lightning bolts.

"I justified my performance career to myself—and sometimes others—as a way to legitimately advise students who are crazy enough to think that there's a life for them in music," Manderen says drolly. "Many wind up doing different things that aren't quite what they pictured, and that's true for most of us."

With such storied experience comes perspective: Perspective on tectonic shifts in the talent of the world's young musicians, untold numbers of whom Manderen guided through their own uncertain first steps into collegiate life. Perspective on life as a musician balancing multiple passions in a ferocious gig economy. And perspective on Oberlin's endless evolution—including its newly implemented One Oberlin initiative, which further bolsters the historic connections between the college and conservatory, as well as its emphasis on preparing students for an ever-shifting professional landscape.

In some ways, the move toward more interdisciplinary education has roots in Manderen himself. No stranger to the benefits of broadening his educational intake, he

entered Oberlin as a history student before adding a major in lute performance.

Manderen inherited an admissions office that focused almost entirely on domestic recruiting, largely because of Oberlin's longstanding emphasis on undergraduate education. Over the years, he spearheaded a deliberate effort to diversify the student body—in terms of the kinds of students who audition, as well as their overall talent level. It was a shift informed in part by Manderen's own upbringing by his mother, who taught at the Juilliard Pre-College Division and ran a very active Broadway-oriented vocal studio in the heart of New York City, and by his aunt, who taught voice at Juilliard and privately for more than 50 years. The range and degree of talents with whom they worked was world-class—a fact not lost on Manderen, as he pondered what was possible at Oberlin.

As admissions director, he expanded regional auditions from a solitary week in New York City to an annual recruitment tour visiting up to 16 cities across the U.S. as well as Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and later China, in the years following its devastating Cultural Revolution.

"The big picture is, we internationalized the conservatory through student admissions," Manderen says. "For many years now, we have made great efforts to connect with students in China and across Asia, and that effort has been validated by the incredible talent of the international students who come here."

He became a one-man recruiting unit, making all the trips himself. To do that, he studied the audition repertoire of every instrument. "I didn't want to stop them before the really good part," he says, "especially if it was six seconds from the end!"

Manderen played a key role in the advancement of admissions and recruiting

Under Manderen, Oberlin began to seek out and attract students with deep intellectual curiosity in addition to strong musical talent.

practices throughout his career. He was a core developer of the Unified Application for Conservatories, which made it possible for prospective students to easily express their interest in a number of top music schools. He led the pivotal switch to online applications, which not only further simplified the process for students, but also revolutionized the way admissions offices everywhere conduct their searches. He was a founding member of the Independent Consortium on College Admissions in Music, a professional development organization for admissions officers at major music schools. And he played a leading role in the formation of U.S.A. Schools of Music, a consortium of major American music schools that benefit from pooling their resources for enhanced, more efficient international recruiting.

Under Manderen, Oberlin began to seek out and attract students with deep intellectual curiosity in addition to strong musical talent. This contributed to a boom in enrollment in Oberlin's groundbreaking Double Degree Program. Not coincidentally, students admitted to both college and conservatory tended to be more likely to matriculate, seeing additional value in the cost of attendance.

"Traditionally, conservatories have a symphony orchestra at the core, and faculty are positioned as a result of the needs of the orchestra," Manderen says. "There have been a number of studies over the years that have looked at those assumptions, not just at Oberlin but other competitor schools, and everybody has broadened and widened their scope to some extent."

The conservatory also became more financially competitive under Manderen's watch. Early in his career, Oberlin offered need-based assistance to students, but without the merit scholarships available today. Admissions counselors attempted to be fair and thorough in their adjudication of aid in line with Oberlin's spirit, providing support for the most deserving who couldn't otherwise attend. "A lot of music schools, including the august ones, didn't really have that concern uppermost," Manderen says. "They were basically looking for top talent, period: applicants who already showed the potential at a young age to become working professionals."

Manderen also spent untold hours responding to emails from prospective college students who hoped to participate in

conservatory classes and ensembles. For years, he notes, it was easier for conservatory students to participate in college courses and activities than the reverse.

"Oberlin has a longstanding and highly respected choral program, which has always afforded opportunities for both conservatory and college students to participate," Manderen says. "However, for college instrumentalists and singers with an interest in early music, it hasn't always been so easy to engage with the conservatory." Upon arriving at Oberlin, Manderen found a notable exception in Collegium Musicum, which invites students from both the college and the conservatory. "It represented this mingling of college and conservatory," he says. "That was what I was looking for, and I found it."

Under One Oberlin, minors in the college and conservatory are available to all students, and five new interdivisional courses of study wed music and the liberal arts. Manderen is pleased to see the progress—and pleased to be a part of it: In retirement, he will continue to offer a guitar class that is available to all Oberlin students. "Given my own path, I want to teach how to be a well-rounded musician as much as you can be on this instrument," he says. "And I can do that with Mississippi John Hurt or Big Bill Broonzy or Paul Simon or the Talking Heads."

The new initiative promises more opportunities such as those, in the interest of providing the strongest blend of educational options to the largest number of students.

"I've always known faculty colleagues, administrator colleagues, and current students who were perfectly attuned to the idea," Manderen says of One Oberlin. "These are really pragmatic plans: learning music business law and how to adapt to new professional realities, and to serve those students who were attracted to Oberlin because of the opportunity to study seriously in both divisions."

Manderen was one of them, and in a way he still is. "I'm offering a guitar class that's absolutely open to beginners. I just say, 'You're going to have to commit to this, but I'll take you from wherever you are and bring you along.'"

JEREMY REYNOLDS IS A CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC AND DOUBLE-DEGREE GRADUATE OF OBERLIN COLLEGE AND CONSERVATORY, WITH MAJORS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CLARINET PERFORMANCE. HE WAS ADMITTED TO THE CONSERVATORY BY MICHAEL MANDEREN.

If It Ain't Baroque

Even in retirement, Michael Lynn welcomes a steady fix of Oberlin.

After 43 years of teaching at Oberlin, Michael Lynn calls his spring 2020 departure a *fake retirement*. So far the term seems to fit.

The professor of Baroque flute and recorder will continue to teach and coach ensembles, and he will play on with faculty colleagues in the Oberlin Baroque Ensemble. "I'll probably do fundamentally the same job," he says. "I'm going to try to cover all the same roles."

Just a handful of weeks into what nominally is his retirement, Lynn seems gleeful to be up to his eyeballs in preparation for the 49th Baroque Performance Institute, the summer celebration of historical performance that is an Oberlin tradition and for which Lynn is unquestionably a linchpin. This year, he has been feverishly editing videos ever since the institute decided to go virtual for the first time. (The restructuring paid off: Attendees from an incredible 13 countries took part in BPI 2020.)

Lynn has also been creating videos about flutes and flute repertoire that appear on his YouTube channel, and he operates a flute website—www.originalflutes.com—that showcases the 130 or so instruments in his collection and the expertise he has amassed over the years. "I see myself as one of the principal people trying to educate people about real historical flutes," he says. "In the Baroque flute world, everybody pretty much is playing on copies of flutes made in the 18th century. But when you get to slightly later flutes, you can actually find good, existing examples of the original flutes."

Lynn considers his collection a sort of living museum, and virtually every one of his instruments can be—and *should be*—played. "The collecting bug has been a serious part of my life," he says. "I've always been interested not just in having one instrument, but in having lots of different instruments that are good at different things."

Lynn's love of performance—and especially early music—took wing in the fifth grade, when he began singing worldwide with the Columbus Boy Choir (now the



American Boy Choir). The son of a musicologist-keyboardist father and flutist mother, he was well versed in historical performance by high school, when he began taking college courses at Indiana University. He studied early music at Oakland University, then started his own publishing company, through which he sold copies of 17th- and 18th-century music. He also worked as a recording engineer and producer.

Around that same time, Lynn began teaching recorder at Oberlin. Before long, the work transitioned into an unlikely mix that catered to his varied interests: part time in the conservatory and part time in the operations division, through which he advised the college on its computer needs. He eventually became a full professor, guiding many students to standout careers of their own. He also served for 15 years as the conservatory's associate dean for technology and facilities, through which he oversaw construction of the Bertram and Judith Kohl Building and renovation of the Conservatory Annex and Finney Chapel, as well as advancements in Conservatory Audio Services and Piano Technology.

Lynn has long been a major figure in

international flute circles, presenting frequently at conferences and writing for more flute publications than you probably knew existed—at least eight of them in the past year alone.

Over the course of his career, he has notched more than 1,000 concerts (he's been counting), beginning with the boy choir and including high-powered HP ensembles such as Tafelmusik and Apollo's Fire, as well as the Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Smithsonian Chamber Players, and many others.

Lynn's activity level waned only for a brief period, when he was sidelined by a severe illness. A successful liver transplant restored him to health, and before long he returned to teaching and performing with renewed vigor.

That vigor lingers today—in Lynn's work for BPI, in his continued performances with the Oberlin Baroque Ensemble, in his teaching on campus and in presentations around the world, and in numerous other ways he shows no interest in abandoning.

"I'm really completely busy at the moment, which is fine," he says with a satisfied sigh. "My reason for retiring was not to *not* have work to do." —*Erich Burnett*

Timing is Everything

Life changed for Roland Pandolfi when he traded his piano for a horn.

“There’s an old saying,” says Roland Pandolfi, who knows his share of old sayings. “Better five years too early than five minutes too late.”

It’s Pandolfi’s answer to a question about why, after four decades as principal hornist in the symphonies of St. Louis and Milwaukee, he decided to become a full-time professor at Oberlin.

“I was playing fine. Everything was going well, but I was not going to wait till it was difficult for me and I was not able to do the job.”

It could just as well apply to Pandolfi’s latest decision, another two decades later, to step away from teaching at Oberlin. He doesn’t play nearly as often as he used to, after balancing his teaching for years with chamber music alongside his faculty colleagues, as well as runouts to Europe and elsewhere with the Cleveland Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony.

But for a man whose 80th birthday arrived with the sweltering August heat this year, Pandolfi looks about as he did when he started at Oberlin in 2001, and he feels just about as well. So this is the right moment, in his estimation, to return to his longtime home of St. Louis and free up more time for his family and for volunteering.

“I won’t be teaching,” he says assuredly. “I’ll leave that to the young players in the symphony. I’m sort of a mediocre handyman, so I might look into working with Habitat for Humanity.”

Pandolfi’s musical career took root with seven excruciating years of piano study in his Rhode Island hometown, beginning at age 7. “I hated every single minute of it,” he says today, conceding only that the experience taught him how to read music. “And if I didn’t practice, I couldn’t go outside.”

He became acquainted with horn at age 14, when his older brothers returned from New England Conservatory with an instrument young Roland had never seen. The town bands their father had played in

for years hadn’t had a horn in decades, after all.

“My brother said, ‘Play this. Not a lot of people are playing it, and maybe you can get a job with it.’” Pandolfi gladly complied. Soon after, Dad’s band had a horn again, and Pandolfi had an instrument he loved. “I was the first horn player to play in that band in 25 years,” he remembers, “and the horn I got was the horn of the last guy who played in it.”

Pandolfi followed his brothers to NEC, then took up his orchestra position in Milwaukee. Throughout his playing career, he enjoyed teaching on the side: at Northwestern University, St. Louis Conservatory, and elsewhere, including 15 summers at Banff.

Oberlin was different from the others, thanks in no small measure to the remarkable young musicians who populated his studio over the years.

“Coming to Oberlin seemed like a great

opportunity to teach really bright and talented students, and that’s exactly what it was,” he says. “It’s a really terrific place, and I had terrific students, the majority of whom pursued double degrees. And they were as committed to their horn as they were to their studies in the college.”

Those diverse interests set the stage for a variety of careers among former Pandolfi students, from orchestral musicians—a number of them have landed in major orchestras in the U.S. and around the world—to arts administrators, as well as those whose college studies tugged them in a variety of other directions.

“There’s an old saying,” Pandolfi says, neatly bookending the conversation. “Talent and 10 cents will get you a cup of coffee. Now it’s more like talent and three bucks. But you have to be smart to make use of your talent. And my Oberlin students certainly did that.” —Burnett



Redeye to Milan

The well-traveled violin professor embraces late-night lessons around the globe.

When Milan Vitek began teaching violin at Oberlin in 2001, it was partly because he had become smitten with the place during a stint as visiting professor eight years earlier. It was also partly because teachers in his European homeland are pushed out the door by age 65.

Now Vitek is stepping away from Oberlin in much the same way he arrived: as a master of his craft, not quite content to disappear simply because convention calls for it.

“When I came to Oberlin in 1993, I immediately fell in love with the conservatory and its atmosphere, and I felt the same way towards Oberlin as a town,” Vitek told his faculty colleagues in their final meeting together before his retirement in spring 2020. “As I got to know the history of the entire college, I became even more fascinated by what it stood for since its founding day.

“So when I learned that there was a teaching position open at Oberlin and was asked whether I would be interested in applying, I immediately answered *Yes*. I thus returned to Oberlin in 2001, and in spite of it being 19 years later now, it still feels like yesterday.”

The class of 2020 has moved on, and Vitek is newly retired. But he remains active with Oberlin students nonetheless, conducting virtual lessons in the middle of the night with rising seniors in Sydney and in Singapore. Much to their delight—and to Vitek’s as well—he agreed to continue teaching his three seniors through their final year. It gives them closure with their mentor, and it gives him a gradual sendoff at a welcome pace.

“It will be nice to go down slowly, so it’s not all cut off at once,” Vitek says in his trademark accent, a viscous amalgam of his native Czech and the Danish he has used for decades. “But I will miss it anyway.”

Though he had an aptitude for sports and an interest in medicine, a young Vitek was



selected by the Czech government for conservatory study and attended the Brno and Prague academies of music. Early in his career, he was a cofounder of the Prague Chamber Soloists and a member of the Czech Nonet and the Pro Camera piano trio. At age 30 he relocated to Copenhagen, where he helped launch the Danish Chamber Orchestra and secured a position with the Royal Danish Orchestra. In 1973 and 1974, he taught at Canada’s McMaster University and played with the Czech String Quartet—learning some 40 quartets in a year’s time, almost always for a single performance each.

Upon returning to Denmark in 1974, Vitek became professor at the Royal Danish Music Academy. He cofounded the acclaimed Trio Pro Arte, with which he toured Europe and North America for 25 years, as well as the Royal Danish Conservatory Chamber Orchestra. His distinguished teaching career includes 27 years as professor at the Royal Danish Academy, from which he retired to begin at Oberlin.

Vitek has conducted the Royal Danish Opera Orchestra, the Janáček Philharmonic, the Fribourg Festival Symphony, and the Czech Radio Symphony. He has taught at major music festivals and served on the juries of competitions worldwide, and he founded a long-running summer strings festival in Litomyšl, Czech Republic. His students have won numerous top competitions, including the Menuhin, Sibelius, and Washington international competitions and the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition.

He was even *knighted* in 1999 for his contributions to Danish culture.

Today, as he ponders life in retirement, Vitek looks forward to taking on a writing project he has considered for many years.

“I’d like to speak about practicing, because it’s one of the most important parts of our life,” he says. It will be a book about music, but it could just as well apply to anything. “The quality of our life depends on how good we are in our practicing time.” —Burnett

Always Room for Cello

Catharina Meints crafted a 21st-century career playing 18th-century music.

Catharina Meints forged a distinctive path for herself in an era when most others hewed to convention. Her decision resulted in a vibrant and varied career—one that left her uniquely well-positioned to guide Oberlin students toward their own innovative approaches to music.

Meints' retirement in May 2020 signaled the conclusion of a remarkable 45-year career at Oberlin, during which she taught modern cello, Baroque cello, and viola da gamba, all while holding down a seat in the Cleveland Orchestra for 35 of those years.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Meints began her career by sliding readily into the lineup of the dynamic but short-lived Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia. There she met her future husband, James Caldwell,

an oboist who also loved the viola da gamba—so much so that he bought *five of them* in hopes that his musician friends might learn the instrument along with him. Meints, for one, was hooked.

Following the demise of the chamber symphony, Meints and Caldwell played together in the National Symphony for three years, until Caldwell earned an oboe professorship at Oberlin and Meints won an audition with Cleveland. Soon she was balancing her orchestra work with a steady stream of side gigs in early music groups around Oberlin and Cleveland. Hers was an eclectic musical existence that fell short of approval from some orchestra musicians, who tended to scoff at the notion of side hustles at the time.

“When I first started in the Cleveland Orchestra, it was frowned upon that I did anything outside the orchestra,” she says. “I would have to ask for time off to go play a concert with the Baroque Ensemble, and it was like pulling teeth to get out of the orchestra. They didn't see the value in having their players doing other things.

“Nowadays, I have orchestra friends who seem to play about 10 weeks out of the year and they're upset by how *free* people are.”

In their first year at Oberlin, Caldwell and Meints singlehandedly devised the Baroque Performance Institute, which grew to become one of the world's most beloved celebrations of early music. (It would also become the topic of a memoir Meints completed in 2018, *The Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute: The Wenzinger Years*, which recounts the institute's formative initial seasons and the influence of Swiss viol player August Wenzinger, with whom she had studied from 1968 to 1971. The ebook is available on iTunes.)

When Meints started teaching at Oberlin in 1975, she logged only about two or three students per week. As the conservatory's needs grew, her immersion in teaching did too. She eventually increased to half-time, then three-quarters time after retiring from the orchestra.

“The best part of the job was teaching different things every day: having an afternoon where I would teach viola da gamba master's students, then go to a college cellist, then a brand-new Baroque cello major. And then I would coach some Beethoven, then I would come back in the evening and have a gamba consort class.”

Meints also taught an orchestra repertoire class and sectionals—“to keep my orchestra credentials up,” as she says.

“I worked hard at doing that, because I felt my best value was in the wide variety of things I did and modeled for this world, where hardly anybody goes to a single job anymore. I wanted to show that doing all these different things was a life worth living.”

Even now, it still is.

On March 12, the penultimate day of classes before campus was closed in response to COVID-19, Meints presented her final faculty recital alongside harpsichordist Mark Edwards in Kulas Recital Hall, a concert that was nearly canceled as the growing pandemic took hold. Today, Meints remembers it as one of the best performances of the Bach gamba sonatas she has ever played.

In the year ahead, she will continue to coach cello sectionals, and she will remain involved in the planning of BPI. Why usher her baby through 49 years, she figures, without sticking around for No. 50?

“I thought I wanted to make kind of a clean break from work,” she says. “But no... I don't!” —*Burnett*



Accolades

2020 Oberlin Conservatory student honors & awards

Every spring at Oberlin, the conservatory celebrates the achievements of top students with a year-end banquet. Though the show could not go on as planned in 2020, students were lauded by Dean William Quillen and their faculty mentors at a virtual ceremony held in May.



The Carol Nott Piano Pedagogy Prize

Awarded to an outstanding graduating senior for continued study in piano pedagogy.

Natasha Gwirceman '20
Piano & Math



The Earl L. Russell Award in Historical Performance

Awarded to a student majoring in Historical Performance to assist with the purchase of a musical instrument.

Nick Schrantz MM '22
Baroque Cello & Gamba

The Walter E. Aschaffenburg Prize

Awarded to a graduating senior for outstanding music composition.

Liam Kaplan '20
Piano & Composition

The Rudolf Serkin Scholarship

Awarded to a student demonstrating excellence in piano performance.

Jiaqing Luo '21
Piano



The Ernest Hatch Wilkins Memorial Prize

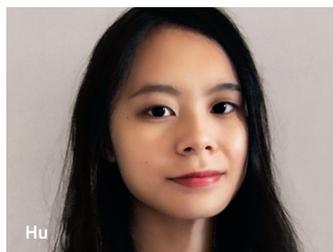
Awarded to a returning student who has demonstrated academic excellence in the three preceding years.

Christina D'Antonio '21
Viola

The Faustina Hurlbutt Prize

Awarded to an outstanding graduating student in cello, piano, violin, or voice.

Liam Kaplan '20
Piano & Composition



The James H. Hall Prize in Musicology

Awarded to a graduating senior for excellence in work in musicology.

Julia Harbutt '20
Musical Studies

Zicen Hu '20
Piano, Musicology & Philosophy

The Louis and Annette Kaufman Music Achievement Award in Piano

Awarded to the piano student showing the most progress in chamber music.

Jiaqing Luo '21
Piano



The Louis and Annette Kaufman Music Achievement Award in Violin

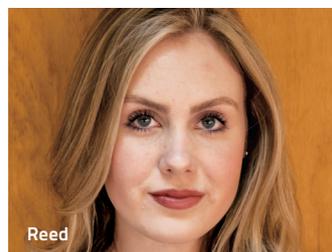
Awarded to an outstanding student of violin.

Shomya Mitra '20
Violin

The Louis and Marguerite Bloomberg Greenwood Prize

Awarded to a graduating student excelling in cello, piano, violin, or voice.

Maggie Kinabrew '20
Voice & Math



The Margot Bos Stambler '84 Professional Development Award

Awarded to an outstanding voice major of great promise.

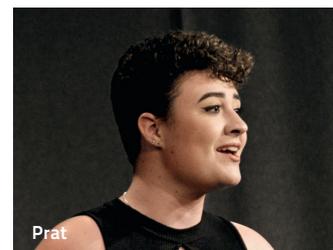
Caitlin Aloia '20
Voice

Alexis Reed '20
Voice & Biology

The Theodore Presser Undergraduate Scholar Award

Awarded to an outstanding returning student for excellence in musicianship.

Maxwell Addae '21
TIMARA & Computer Science



The Marilyn Horne Rubin Scholar

Awarded to an outstanding student of voice to support professional development.

Lexie Prat '20
Voice

The Pi Kappa Lambda Prize for Musicianship

Awarded to students judged to be the most outstanding of those elected to Pi Kappa Lambda.

Rachel Gibson '20
Percussion & TIMARA

Liam Kaplan '20
Piano & Composition

Andrew Santiago '20
Flute, Physics & Chemistry

The Piano Faculty Prize in Accompanying

Awarded to a graduating senior who has demonstrated excellence in accompanying singers and instrumentalists.

Ziyao (Annie) Huang '20
Piano



The Wendell and Bettye Logan Prize in Jazz Studies

Awarded to a graduating student who has demonstrated excellence in performance or composition.

Emmett Sher '20
Jazz Guitar



Bickett

The Selby Harlan Houston Prize

Awarded to a graduating senior whose performance in organ and music theory is of distinguished quality.

Matt Bickett BA, BM, MM '20

Organ & Historical Performance



Hill

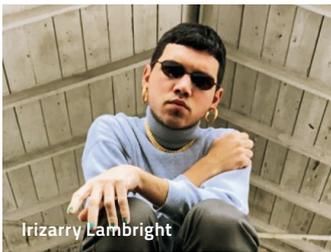
The TIMARA Founders Fund

John Clough Prize

Awarded to a TIMARA major for distinctive work within the department.

Piper Hill '20

TIMARA & Math



Irizarry Lambright

The TIMARA Founders Fund Oily Wilson Prize

Awarded to a TIMARA major for distinctive work within the department.

Guillermo (Mobey) Irizarry Lambright '20

TIMARA & Comparative American Studies



Larson



Kaplan



Lee



Aloia

2019-20 Senior Concerto Competition

Awarded annually to senior and artist diploma students.

Jane Larson '20

Viola
Penderecki's Viola Concerto

Liam Kaplan '20

Piano & Composition
Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 in A Major, S. 125

Yeim Lee '20

Violin
Brahms' Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77

Caitlin Aloia '20

Voice
Britten's *Les Illuminations*, Op. 18



Calcagno



de la Peña

Flint Initiative Grant

Awarded to innovative, motivated, and prepared conservatory and double-degree students to develop imaginative artistic projects.

Riley Calcagno '20

Violin & Comparative American Studies

Jacqui Armbruster '22

Viola

Matthew Cone '23

Violin

Jasper de Boor '23

Viola & Violin

Lourdes de la Peña '23

Cello

Matthew Dion '21

Organ

Simone Hammett-Lynch '21

Violin

Emily Hancock '21

Clarinet

Natalie Hsieh '23

Violin

Julia Klein '22

Clarinet & Latin American Studies

Anne Pinkerton '21

Oboe

LaunchU

Oberlin College and Conservatory's entrepreneurial accelerator, which awards \$35,000 annually to support the further development of top projects. First prize awarded to Twine, a student-life app developed by a team of four students including **Colton Potter '21** (Oboe & Computer Science).



Gibson

The Allen Strange Memorial Award

Awarded annually by the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States to celebrate the best undergraduate or high school electroacoustic composition.

Rachel Gibson '20

Percussion & TIMARA

The Fulbright Scholar Program

Awarded to students for their academic merit and leadership potential with the opportunity to study internationally.

Rania Adamczyk '20

Composition & Math

Sophia Bass '20

Musical Studies

Maggie Kinabrew '20

Voice & Math

Celina Kobetitsch '18

Piano

Karisma Palmore '20

Flute & Romance Languages

Class Notes



1960s

Jazz pianist, composer, and educator **Stanley Cowell '62** presented his suite *Juneteenth* with an ensemble of strings, voice, and percussion at a 2019 Juneteenth celebration at An Die Musik Live in Baltimore. He is emeritus professor of jazz piano at Rutgers-Mason Gross School of the Arts.

Sharon Davis Gratto '66, professor of music and Graul Endowed Chair in Arts and Languages at the University of Dayton, received the university's inaugural Award for Faculty Service in 2019.

Conductor and Music Director **Max Bragado Darman '69** retired from the Monterey Symphony in California after 15 years with the ensemble. Prior to that post, he conducted the Spanish orchestra he founded—Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León—from 1991 to 2002.

1970s

Houston-based musician, writer, and photographer **Eric Arbiter '72** has published *The Way of Cane: The Science, Craft, and Art of Bassoon Reed-Making*, a comprehensive and

accessible overview with step-by-step instructions, detailed photos of the process, and a companion website featuring the author's own recordings. Arbiter served as the Houston Symphony's associate principal bassoon and unofficial photographer from 1974 to 2019.

Lora Ching Deahl '72 retired after a 46-year career as professor of piano at Texas Tech University. Her groundbreaking study and book, *Adaptive Strategies for Small-Handed Pianists*, written in collaboration with Brenda Wristen, was published by Oxford University Press in 2017. Deahl presented recitals, lectures, and master classes throughout the U.S., Asia, and Latin America. Her work was recognized with the Chancellor's Council Teaching Award from Texas Tech University and the Outstanding Collegiate Teacher Award from the Texas Music Teachers Association.

Elaine Funaro '74, one of the leading performers of new music for harpsichord, has fostered a new repertoire for the instrument as artistic director of the Aliénor International Harpsichord

Composition Competition. She also recently collaborated with her adult twins, Eric and Andrea Love, on the children's book *The Harpsichord Diaries: A Musical Journey*, about a girl who travels through time and meets eccentric, talking harpsichords that bring history and music to life. An accompanying soundtrack layered with music, narration, and sound effects guides readers through the book. Unveiled at the 2019 Boston Early Music Festival, *The Harpsichord Diaries* also is performed as an audio play. Learn more at harpsichorddiaries.com.

Composer, percussionist, and bandleader **Adam Rudolph '76**, hailed as "a pioneer in world music" by *The New York Times* and "a master percussionist" by *DownBeat* magazine, has released more than 30 recordings. His Go: Organic Orchestra, a 30-piece ensemble based in New York City, collaborated with Brooklyn Raga Massive last fall to record *Ragmala: A Garland of Ragas*, released in October 2019. Its fusion of Indian classical, jazz, and West African music earned high praise from *DownBeat* for its "gorgeously complex tapestry of sounds, hues and sensations."

Thomas Rosenberg '78 was honored in January 2020 for 40 years as artistic director of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. "I have witnessed great success at the competition by Oberlin students, including such ensembles as the Jupiter String Quartet, the Jasper String Quartet, and Eighth Blackbird," he says.

1980s

Composer **Stephen Main '86** wrote *Columbus Triptych* for flutist Katherine Borst Jones' Cosmos Trio, which featured the work on its new recording, *American Premieres* (MSR Classics).

1990s

Washington, D.C.-based composer, producer, and music director **Nolan Williams Jr. '90** presented *Ethereality: Celestial Dreams and the Great Beyond* at the Great Hall of the Historic Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, a performance hosted by mezzo-soprano **Denyce Graves '85** in October 2019. The orchestral and choral production, conceived by artistic director Williams and co-presented by the Smithsonian's National



Kihlstedt '93

Museum of African American History and Culture and NEWorks Productions, featured music by contemporary Black American composers and poets alongside spirituals exploring the intersection of science and spirituality. Later that month, Williams workshopped the touring production *Stirring the Waters Across America* at the REACH; it was one of the first projects produced through the Kennedy Center's new Social Impact Arts Residency. The multimedia show highlights seminal moments of the Civil Rights movement through music, historical footage, spoken word, and dance. The work's national tour kicked off at Vanderbilt University's Langford Auditorium in February 2020; subsequent dates were canceled due to COVID-19. Attendees included **Alisha Lola Jones '03**, who moderated a post-performance talkback. A video of Williams' song from the production, "I Have a Right to Vote," was released nationwide in fall 2020 as a PSA featuring celebrities Billie Jean King, Billy Porter, Christopher Jackson (from the original cast of *Hamilton*), and others. Williams earned a BA in piano performance from the College of Arts and Sciences.

The 2019-20 season for opera conductor **Joseph Mechavich '91** included the 2015 Talbot/Scheer production of *Everest* for the Austin Opera, the world premiere of *Riders of the Purple Sage* for the Arizona Opera, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the Minnesota Opera (with **Alek Shrader '07** in the role of Count Almaviva), and *Carmen* for the Kentucky Opera, which he currently serves as principal conductor and artistic advisor. "Under the direction of Joseph Mechavich, the Minnesota Opera Orchestra brings out all of the whimsical sweetness of Rossini's score, acting as the musical engine that keeps this comedy skipping gleefully forward and making sure that the focus upon fun is unwavering," twincities.com wrote.

Taia Harlos BM, MMT '92 was named artistic director and conductor of the Musicopia String Orchestra in Philadelphia. She also remains director of orchestras and head of the music department at Germantown Friends School, where she has been a teacher since 2008.

Lorenzo "Frank" Candelaria '94 was appointed dean of Vanderbilt University's Blair



Pulliam '98

School of Music. He most recently served as dean and professor of music at Purchase College, State University of New York.

Pennsylvania Girlchoir conductor and Temple University music education professor **Elizabeth Cassidy Parker '94** wrote the book *Adolescents on Music* (Oxford University Press, 2020), which draws on her research on the social, philosophical, and musical development of young musicians.

Imani Winds won Concert Artists Guild's inaugural Richard S. Weinert Award for Innovation in Classical Music in 2019. The ensemble boasts deep Oberlin connections, including alumni and founding members **Monica Ellis '95** (bassoon) and **Toyin Spellman-Diaz '94** (oboe). Flutist **Brandon Patrick George '08** joined in the fall of 2018. Imani horn player Jeff Scott is not an alumnus, but was appointed to the Oberlin Conservatory faculty in early 2020.

Timothy Cutler '95 is professor and head of music theory at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He published two books recently—*Bending the Rules of*

Music Theory (Routledge Press) and *The Anthology of Music for Analysis* (W.W. Norton).

Tenor **Limmie Pulliam '98** returned to Oberlin in February 2020 for a recital in Warner Concert Hall, followed by a Q&A. His 2019-20 season included appearances with the Springfield Regional Opera for its 40th anniversary gala—a foray in his signature role of Otello—and his debut with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. He looks forward to an upcoming season debut with the Santa Fe Opera.

2000s

Bang on a Can's annual marathon went virtual this year with several Obie contributors—including **Rhiannon Giddens '00**, who kicked off the six hours of live streaming music. Later in the day, **Nick Photinos '96** gave the world premiere of Susanna Hancock's *Everything in Bloom*, and violinist/violist, composer, and singer **Carla Kihlstedt '93** performed a new work written for the event. Oberlin faculty member and bassoonist Dana Jessen also joined in the fun with Paul Matthusen's *an implacable subtraction* for bassoon and electronics.



Steier '00



Arent '09

Spencer Myer '00 returned to Oberlin as a fall 2019 sabbatical replacement for piano faculty member Peter Takács. In June 2020, he inaugurated a new online solo piano recital series presented by the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy. In June and July, he collaborated with baritone Mario Diaz-Moresco on Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* for an innovative opera-by-telephone production created by **Eric Einhorn '02**. This fall, Myer begins his fifth year on the faculty of Boston's Longy School of Music.

Opera director **Lydia Steier '00** was featured in the July 2020 issue of *Opera News*. Steier, whose noteworthy and dynamic productions have earned a reputation for challenging audiences, moved to Germany as a Fulbright Student following her vocal studies at Oberlin Conservatory. In the two fruitful decades since, she has staged numerous productions ranging from traditional repertoire to contemporary works in opera companies and theaters throughout Germany. She has also directed productions for the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Los Angeles Opera.

Bassoonist **Rebekah Heller '01** joined the faculty of the New School's Mannes School of Music in fall 2019. She continues in her role as co-artistic director of the International Contemporary Ensemble.

On Site Opera, founded and directed by **Eric Einhorn '02**, has been producing site-specific productions in venues throughout New York City for eight years. When COVID-19 forced performing arts organizations to shut down, Einhorn started presenting past performances online while collaborating with his leadership team to devise a series of six free Q&A sessions with opera industry experts and an innovative production that married ubiquitous technology with opera. Conceived as the world's first telephone-based opera experience and featuring Beethoven's influential song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, it was presented as a 20-minute "immersive opera experience for a time of longing and isolation" and offered in 100 performances for one audience member at a time by a live singer and pianist duo. Prior to the performance, the audience member would receive two

"love letters" via email that contained song-text translations. The performer also interacted directly with each audience member with text by playwright Monet Hurst-Mendoza.

Steve Parker '02, a former double-degree student in trombone performance and mathematics, was awarded a 2020-21 Rome Prize and Italian Fellowship in Design for a project titled "Futurist Opera." A musician, composer, visual artist, curator, and teacher, Parker plans to create a series of instruments and wearable listening devices, and an intuitive graphic score to be used in a new form of opera. "These items will be used to create a ritual performance that employs audience members as operatic performers to examine the history of listening in conflict," writes Parker, who also serves on the faculty at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he directs the trombone studio, Trombone Choir, and New Music Ensemble and teaches courses in electronic music, sound art, new media, music business, and music marketing.

Bass-baritone **Dashon Burton '05** appears on the world-premiere

recording of Dame Ethel Smyth's 1930 oratorio *The Prison* (Chandos Records, 2020). Burton performed the work with New York City's Experiential Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of conductor James Blachly.

Double-degree alumnus **Matthew Carlson '05** (tuba performance and philosophy) was awarded tenure at Wabash College in December 2019. He joined the faculty of Wabash's philosophy department in 2014.

Matt Cook '08 was appointed executive director of the Pacific Opera Project in November 2019. He is also a Grammy Award-winning percussionist based in Los Angeles, where he performs with the Los Angeles Percussion Quartet, the experimental classical ensemble Wild Up, and the microtonal band Partch. He serves on the faculties of Fullerton College and Ventura College.

Los Angeles guitarist **Jamey Arent '09** released his first solo album in July 2019, an EP called *The Back Burner*. In addition to recording and performing his own music, he has spent time as a sideman, touring with artists like Frankie Valli & the Four



Seasons and Matthew Morrison, as well as playing on soundtracks to Netflix, Comedy Central, and TBS shows.

2010s

Maya Bennardo '11 and **Hannah Levinson '09** released their debut album as the New York City-based violin/viola duo andPlay. *Playlist* (New Focus Recordings, 2019) includes the world premieres of four works by **David Bird '12**, Ashkan Behzadi, and Clara Iannotta.

During the 2019-20 season, soprano **Sydney Mancasola '11** made her house debuts at the Washington National Opera and Teatro Municipal de Santiago as Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. She also returned to the Komische Oper Berlin to sing that role and the title role in Handel's *Semele*. Mancasola appeared as Bess in Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* at the Edinburgh International Festival and at the Adelaide Festival Centre in Australia.

The Verona Quartet, including violist **Abigail Rojansky '11**, won the 2020 Cleveland Quartet Award. With it comes a slate of concerts on series including the Buffalo Chamber Music Society, Carnegie Hall,

Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art at the Smithsonian, Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music, Harrisburg's Market Square Concerts, Krannert Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the University of Texas at Austin. They join an illustrious group of quartets recognized as Cleveland Quartet Award winners—among them the Oberlin-alumni-founded Pacifica, Miró, Jupiter, and Jasper quartets. The Verona Quartet will serve as 2020-21 quartet in residence at Oberlin College and Conservatory.

In the 2019-20 season, soprano, actress, and model **Rebecca L. Hargrove '12** performed the title role in *The New York Times* Critics' Pick production of *Acquanetta* at Bard SummerScape 2019, made her Metropolitan Opera debut in the company of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, returned to New York City Center for the gala production of *Evita*, and starred as Yum-Yum in Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado* on tour with the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players.

Baritone **Elliott Carlton Hines '12** completed his second season as



a member of the Opera Studio of Staatsoper Stuttgart, where he performed in *La Traviata*, *Der Freischütz*, *Der Schauspieldirektor*, *La Bohème*, and *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

Countertenor and Cleveland-area native **Andrew Lipian '12** returned to Oberlin as guest artist for Oberlin Opera Theater's production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Lipian recently earned a master's degree in voice from the University of Michigan.

Xiomara Mass '12 won the second oboe position with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Amelia Dicks '13 was appointed principal piccolo of the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera Orchestra.

A pair of double-degree grads, violinist **Julia Connor '14** and pianist **David Leach '14**, released their first album of original compositions as the duo Room to Spare. A painting by **Matthew Gallagher '13** was used as their album cover. Learn more at roomtosparemusic.com.

The Metropolitan Opera's 2019-20 season opened with a sold-out production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*,

which included numerous Oberlin vocal studies alumni: **Denyce Graves '85** performed the role of Maria, and **Rebecca L. Hargrove '12**, **Lynnesha Crump '13**, and **Marguerite Jones '13** sang in the chorus.

Lishan Xue AD '13 won the 2019 On Stage Classical Music Competition-Piano Solo division. She also published her first book, *Learn to Improvise Jazz*, coauthored with Tom Walsh, chair of jazz studies at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. The Chinese-language book covers a range of topics pertaining to performing and listening to jazz, and includes exercise demonstrations, play-along tracks, and tunes from Walsh and Xue. In September 2019, Xue was appointed associate professor of piano at the Guangxi Arts University in China. She is also a DMA candidate in piano performance and literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Peter Kramer '14 hosted a six-week online summer class, Music Appreciation You Always Wished You'd Taken, for the Hoffman Center for the Arts in Oregon. The weekly sessions covered musical eras,



Soltis '14



Martin '17 and Beyer '13

sonata form, the birth of piano, and more. Kramer is completing a PhD in composition at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Cellist **Juliana Soltis MMHP '14** has revived the long-lost practice of spontaneous improvisation with J.S. Bach's Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello. Performing entirely on historical instruments—including the rarely played five-string violoncello piccolo—Soltis has been touring with these works and promoting her September 2019 album *Going Off Script: The Ornamented Suite for Cello*.

Baroque violinist **Alana Youssefian '14** made her recorded debut with the 2019 release *Brilliance Indéniable* (Avie), featuring works by Louis-Gabriel Guillemain. *BBC Music Magazine* praised Youssefian's "ravishing... gilt-edged performances."

Two prize-winning Oberlin organ alumni were featured in the Independent Lens documentary *Pipe Dreams*, which follows five young organists as they compete in Canada's prestigious International Organ

Competition. Open to organists under age 35, the triennial competition is one of the most exclusive in the world.

Alcee Chriss III BM, MM '15 (who ultimately won first prize) and his friend and classmate **Nicholas Cappozzoli BM, MM '16** (third prize) are among five organists featured in the documentary. Their competition programs were noteworthy for their choices: Chriss performed his arrangement of an Art Tatum piece, and Cappozzoli brought a significant number of contemporary pieces, including a John Cage work. *Pipe Dreams* premiered on PBS in June 2020.

Hannah Hammel '15 was appointed principal flute of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in November 2019.

Violinist **Will Overcash '15** and bassoonist **Ben Roidl-Ward '15** formed the duo Wolftone in 2017. They have since been exploring and expanding the possibilities of the violin/bassoon pairing and commissioning new repertoire. Their January 2020 Midwest tour took them to Constellation in Chicago, Public Space One in Iowa City, and Duesenberg Recital Hall at Valparaiso University, where they

performed new pieces by **Jonah Haven '16**, Sky Macklay, Christine Burke, and Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson.

Emmy Tisdell '15 and **Joshua Morris '15** cofounded Ensemble Urbain, a conductorless chamber orchestra based in Montreal. They launched the group with a concert at NOMAD Life in November 2019. The ensemble also includes Oberlin cellists **Jacob Efthimiou '17** and **Zach Reff '18**.

Violinist **Sophia Bernitz '16** and violist **Marlea Simpson '17** finished their first year as fellows at the New World Symphony in Miami. Bassist **Michael Martin '17** began his fellowship with the orchestra on New Year's Eve 2019. The program allows for renewals for up to three years. They joined other Obies in the ensemble including double bassist **Andrea Beyer '13**, cellist **Chava Appia '14**, and clarinetist **Jesse McCandless '15**.

Alto sax player **Max Besesen '16** collaborated with several jazz alumni for his debut release, *Trouble*. *Chicago Jazz Magazine* gave warm praise for the ensemble, which includes **Eric Krouse '16** (piano/keyboard), **Ethan Phillion '15** (bass), **Nathan**

Friedman '13 (drums), and Ron Miles (cornet/piccolo trumpet). "Besesen demonstrates accomplished and unique compositional and performance skills," the review noted. "Thanks to him and his like-minded colleagues, this is a captivating recording that pushes the boundaries of mainstream jazz with balanced emotion and intelligence."

Joshua Blue '16 completed a two-year tenure as a Washington National Opera Cafritz Young Artist. He launched his 2019-20 season performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the National Symphony Orchestra for the opening festival of the REACH, a new space operated by the Kennedy Center. Opera engagements included role debuts as Tamino in the Maurice Sendak production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with Washington National Opera, Alfred in Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Berkshire Opera Festival.

Maurice Cohn '16, music director of the New Horizons Orchestra and assistant conductor of the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra,



McGee '18

won a 2020 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, which supports the career development of young American conductors.

Mezzo-soprano **Siena Licht Miller '16** joined the International Opera Studio at the Zürich Opera in September 2020.

In February 2020, mezzo-soprano **Elana Bell '17** covered the role of The Child (performed by mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard) in Cincinnati Symphony's production of Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Bell completed her master's degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and was selected for the 2020 Apprentice Artist Program at the Des Moines Metro Opera.

Violinist and violist **Javier Otorala '18** was selected as a 2020-22 Diversity Fellow by the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He joins four other exceptional string players in a collaborative program that combines graduate-level study with professional development and performance opportunities. Otorala completed a master's degree in viola performance at

the University of Michigan, where he studied with **Caroline Coade '88**.

Bass **Cory McGee '18** won second place in Houston Grand Opera's 32nd annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers Concert of Arias, held in 2020. McGee is one of just six new artists to join the HGO Studio beginning with the 2020-21 season.

Harpist **Parker Ramsay '19** arranged and performed music for the King's College Cambridge release *Bach Goldberg Variations* (September 2020). Ramsay is also a harpsichordist and organist who earned an artist diploma and master's degree in historical keyboards at Oberlin. He serves as codirector of the New York-based period instrument ensemble A Golden Wire and works regularly with Apollo's Fire, Academy of Sacred Drama, Shanghai Camerata, and other period ensembles in the United States. He is a staff writer for VAN magazine.

Julia Pyke '19 won the San Francisco Conservatory Concerto Competition with her performance of the Lowell Liebermann Flute Concerto in February 2020.



Ramsay '19

Mezzo-soprano **Diana Schwam '19** performed the role of Zerlina in the Bard College Conservatory Graduate Vocal Arts Program (VAP) original production of *Rest in Pieces—in Memory* in March. The newly created opera was written and conceived by VAP director Stephanie Blythe, John Jarboe (founder and artistic director of the Bearded Ladies Cabaret Company), and the 14 singers in Bard's graduate program.

2020s

Liam Kaplan '20 completed two albums during his final undergraduate year. The pianist and composer was awarded a Flint Initiative Grant from Oberlin Conservatory to record his debut album, *Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II*. He made the recording in Clonick Hall as a January 2019 Winter Term project and released it the following July. In January 2020, Kaplan recorded his composition 8 Preludes for solo piano—for which he was awarded a 2019 BMI Foundation Student Composer Award—along with the Bach *Goldberg Variations* and a 2019 work titled *Orpheus Suite* by Oberlin composition professor Elizabeth Ogonek. This project satisfied one of the

requirements for Oberlin Conservatory's singular Honors Program in Piano Performance. The recording, released in July 2020, is available on all major online platforms.

Oboist **Cassie Pilgrim '20** won St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's principal oboe position while completing her last year at Oberlin. In May 2020, she was awarded early tenure with the orchestra.

Oberlin College's East Asian Studies Program awarded the 2020 Newton Prize to **Natsumi Osborn '21** (composition and economics) for her composition *Lineage Traces*. The Newton Prize was established by Yejiro Ono in memory of Professor James K. Newton for the best works on Asian themes that promote better understanding between East and West. "*Lineage Traces* is a musical composition for orchestra that explores the dichotomy between my Japanese and American upbringings in the context of Western classical music," Osborn explains. Listen at natsumiosborn.com.

Lyric Rivera '21 won second place in the 2019 Flute Society of Greater Philadelphia's Collegiate Artist Competition.

Faculty Notes

Three conservatory faculty were honored with Oberlin College Excellence in Teaching Awards for the 2018-19 academic year. The recipients are **La Tanya Hall**, teacher of jazz voice; **Catharina Meints**, associate professor of viola da gamba and cello; and **Alexa Still**, associate professor of flute.

In June, **Deborah Campana** completed a five-year term as editor of the Music Library Association's quarterly journal, *Notes*. Campana, head of the Conservatory Library, spoke on the panel "Publishing Opportunities in Music Librarianship" at MLA's annual meeting in Norfolk, Va., in February. She now chairs the organization's publication committee.

In fall 2019, music theory professor **Jan Miyake** was a senior visiting scholar at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University. She delivered a talk titled "A-flat as Beethoven in the Funeral March from the Third Symphony" and was a lead participant in an international workshop on corpus studies and musical grammar, presenting her work on "Syntax and Form in Haydn's Symphonic Last Movements."

TIMARA Technical Director and Lecturer **Abby Aresty** was a 2019-20 Faculty Fellow with Oberlin College's Bonner Center for Service and Learning. In summer 2019, she taught a workshop on multimodal interactive storytelling for 40 college students from around the world as part of an institute on humanitarian entrepreneurship at Hong Kong's Lingnan University. She also founded the Girls Electronic Arts Retreat (GEAR), a day camp for local third- to

fifth-grade girls that fosters curiosity, creativity, and confidence through playful, collaborative projects integrating science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. The program is a collaboration between the conservatory and the Oberlin Center for the Arts. Teachers for GEAR included current TIMARA majors, graduating seniors, and Oberlin College students.



In August 2019, jazz voice teacher **La Tanya Hall** released *Say Yes* (Blue Canoe), her first full-length album in a decade. "Though her gorgeous, emotionally intuitive vocals take center stage, the expansive collection is, at heart, a collaborative effort with Andy Milne and Unison," *Jazz Times* wrote.

Associate Professor of Piano Pedagogy **Andrea McAlister** presented two webinars for the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy on the topic of teaching during COVID-19. They were titled "Teaching Collegiate Class Piano Online" and "Effective Teaching in Challenging Times and Beyond." McAlister also contributed to the special COVID-19 issue of *Piano Magazine*.

TIMARA assistant professor **Aurie Hsu '96** performed at Fata Morgana, a three-day festival of experimental music and film, artist talks, and multimedia performances hosted at the

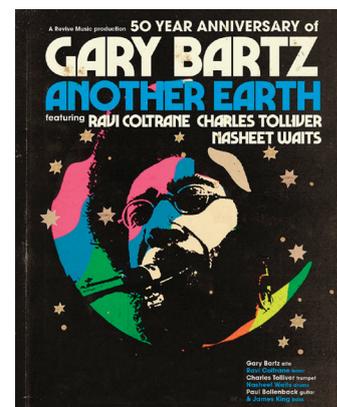
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Arts and Humanities Institute in October 2019. She presented three different sets with collaborator Steven Kemper, including pieces featuring interactive dance and EMMI robotic instruments, others with artist CandyStations improvising interactive video, and a new piece for dance, wings, and amplified processed motors with toy harp.

Associate Professor of Music Theory **Megan Kaes Long** was awarded a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies that supports a 2020-21 research sabbatical. Her project, "Complicating the Modal Paradigm in the Music of William Byrd," develops a historically grounded model of pitch structure in the composer's music. Long also published a monograph, *Hearing Homophony: Tonal Expectation at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2020), which explores how the regular rhythms and text setting of 16th-century popular song encouraged a kind of listening that we now think of as tonal.

Oboe and English horn professor **Robert Walters** is featured on the April 2020 Oberlin Music release *Rands at Oberlin* in Bernard Rands' Concerto for English Horn. The work was commissioned by Oberlin Conservatory and the Cleveland Orchestra for Walters, who performed it with the Oberlin Orchestra under the direction of conducting professor **Raphael Jiménez**.

Musicology professor **Steven Plank** presented the paper "Seeking the Historical Listener" to the graduate colloquium in

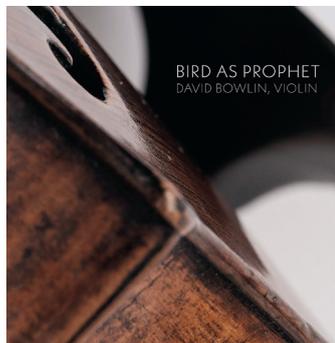
historical performance practice at Indiana University in November 2019. Plank also offered it in Oberlin as part of the Richard Murphy Colloquium Series in the Department of Musicology. He was the subject of a profile in the online music and arts magazine *Imparted* (April 2020).



Jazz saxophone professor **Gary Bartz** celebrated the 50th anniversary of his album *Another Earth* at the 2019 Newport and North Sea jazz festivals. The original recording was made with Pharoah Sanders (tenor sax), Charles Tolliver (trumpet), Stanley Cowell '62 (piano), Reggie Workman (bass), and Freddie Waits (drums). For this Revive Music production, Tolliver and drummer Nasheet Waits (son of Freddie) joined Bartz, along with Ravi Coltrane (clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone) and others.

Kathleen Abromeit, the Conservatory Library's public services librarian, was named a senior fellow for Advancement of Grinnell College Excellence, where she is mentoring a staff member from an underrepresented group for three years. Abromeit served as editor of the Music Library Association's Basic Manual Series during the past academic year. She also participated in a panel on "Publishing

Opportunities in Music Librarianship” at the Music Library Association’s annual conference in Norfolk, Va., in February 2020.



Violin professor **David Bowlin '00** performed in the inaugural concert of ChamberFest Chicago in October 2019 and served as guest principal second violin with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in January 2020. He also gave master classes in Seoul at the Korean National University of the Arts, the Longy School of Music, and Bowling Green State University. Bowlin released the CD *Bird as Prophet* (New Focus), on which he collaborated on the Martin Bresnick-penned title track with pianist Tony Cho. The recording also features two works written by Oberlin alumni: *Under a Tree, an Udātta* by Du Yun '01 is a piece for fixed media and violin anchored on a recording of Vedic chanting; *Bleu* for solo violin (2011) is a mature work written by the late George Walker '41 for his violinist son Gregory when the composer was nearly 90.

Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Aural Skills **Kara Yoo Leaman** presented two papers in the past year. “Choreographing to Common Music: A Comparison of Petipa and Balanchine Settings of Music by Drigo” was given at the 2019 Dance Studies Association

conference in Evanston, Ill. “Swingin’ Bach in Ballet: Musical and Visual Rhythms in Balanchine’s Concerto Barocco (1941)” was presented at the Music and the Moving Image XVI remote conference, sponsored by the Film Music Foundation.

Professor of Piano **Peter Takács** gave an April lecture on Beethoven piano sonatas at the Music Teachers National Association 2020 virtual conference.

In March, the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute was awarded Early Music America’s 2020 Goldberg Award for achievement in early music outreach. The 49-year-old summer institute’s faculty is led by Artistic Director Kenneth Slowik and four Oberlin Conservatory faculty members who make up the Oberlin Baroque Ensemble: **Mark Edwards, Michael Lynn, Marilyn McDonald, and Catharina Meints.**

Piano professor **Alvin Chow** collaborated in performances with Angela Cheng at the 2019 National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy and with brother Alan Chow at the Mozarthaus in Vienna. The brothers also performed as soloists with the Oberlin Arts and Sciences Orchestra. Chow gave master classes at the University of Florida, Appalachian State University, and the Haydn Conservatory in Eisenstadt, Austria. He also served on the faculties at the Classical Music Festival in Austria and the Lake Como Summer Piano School in Italy.

Piano professor **Angela Cheng** made international concert appearances with Pinchas Zukerman and the Zukerman



Angela Cheng at the opening performance of the Hong Kong Generation Next Arts Music Festival 2019, titled “Great Women Artists of the World.”

Trio in Argentina, Chile, and throughout the U.S., including performances at Dartmouth and Yale universities. In addition to concerto performances in Hong Kong, Memphis, Richmond (Va.), Rogue Valley (Ore.), Quebec, and Nova Scotia, she was an artistic partner with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra for the 2019-20 season, performing three times as featured soloist. Also in 2019, Cheng was a faculty member at the Lake Como Summer Piano School in Italy, Manchester Music Festival in New Hampshire, National Arts Centre Young Artist Program in Ottawa, and Domaine Forget in Quebec. She served on the juries of both the Van Cliburn International Junior Piano Competition and the e-Piano International Junior Piano Competition, where she gave master classes.

Ethnomusicology professor **Kathryn Metz** published “Popular Music in the K-12 Classroom and the Quest for Education Justice” in the *Journal of World Popular Music*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (December 2019).

Voice professor **Katherine Jolly** performed at the National Association of Teachers of Singing national conference in June 2020, featuring Evan Mack’s song cycle *Preach Sister, Preach*. She presented “Mindful Yoga for Singing” at the Northwest Voice Conference: Art and Science of the Performing Voice in Seattle. Jolly also taught national virtual master classes for Classical Singer, Schmidt Vocal Arts, and SongFest in May and June.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Conducting **Tiffany Chang '09** was awarded a 2020 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, which supports talented young American conductors early in their professional careers.

Flute professor **Alexa Still** performed at numerous summer festivals in 2019—including Round Top (Texas), Interlochen (Mich.), and Hidden Valley Music Seminars-Northern California Flute Camp—and live on Interlochen Public Radio. She also presented a guest lecture and concert of music

Faculty Notes

written by New Zealanders as part of Missouri Southern State University's Oceana Semester. Two world premieres marked the beginning of 2020: In February, she premiered and recorded Michael Fine's *Concierto Del Luna* for flute and guitar with guitarist Jason Vieaux and conductor Philip Mann and Ensemble Bravura in Texas; Still's faculty recital on March 19 was the first of Oberlin's concerts to be presented exclusively on livestream and featured a premiere of Valerie Coleman's *Amazonia*.

Professor of Conducting **Raphael Jiménez** visited the National Conservatory of Seoul and one of 40 orchestras in South Korea's El Sistema program in November 2019. He conducted a rehearsal and master class at Seoul Arts High School and led the orchestra for the 2019 Asia Pacific Activities Conference Festival, an ensemble of 86 students representing six different schools from China, Japan, and Korea. In an interview on Korean cable television, Jiménez spoke about his experiences as a member of the Simón Bolívar National Youth Orchestra in Venezuela's El Sistema program. The trip culminated with his attendance at the seventh annual Oberlin Conservatory Alumni Concert in Seoul. Alumni performers and attending Oberlin faculty (pictured from left) were pianist Minjung Kim '08, pianist Tae Kim '08, professor **Haewon Song**, Jiménez, pianist Hyunhye Choi AD '07, flutist Hyun Joo Ro '03, flutist Balgeum Lee '11, pianist Minjeong Lee AD '04, pianist Sungha Lee BM '02 and AD '07, and pianist Jungwon Kim '11.



Visiting Professor of Organ **Christa Rakich '75** released a new album on the Loft label, a tribute to her teacher Yuko Hayashi. It is the premiere recording of the Richards-Fowkes organ in Goodson Chapel at Duke University Seminary, and it includes works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Johanna Senfter, James Woodman, Carson Cooman, and Rakich's own transcription of Cécile Chaminade's Concertino for Flute and Orchestra, featuring flutist Wendy Rolfe '74.

Harp professor **Yolanda Kondonassis** was nominated for a 2020 Grammy Award in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category for her world-premiere recording of Jennifer Higdon's Harp Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic

Orchestra led by Music Director Ward Stare. The work appears on the album *American Rapture*. The concerto, commissioned by Kondonassis and six American orchestras, won the Grammy for Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

Violin professor **Sibbi Bernhardsson '95** was appointed artistic director of the Harpa International Music Academy, a summer festival for young string players in Reykjavík, Iceland. He also gave performances at the 2019 Harpa International Music Academy, at Vermont's Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, and for the Fredonia (N.Y.) Fall String Festival, as well as with Musikiwest in Palo Alto (Calif.), the Concordia Chamber Players (Penn.), and Musica Viva at Virginia Tech University.

Recorder and Baroque flute professor **Michael Lynn** participated in the 2019 ANIMUSIC Organological Congress in Belmonte, Portugal, in September 2019. He presented the paper "The Flute of Pierre Gabriel Buffardin and His Rebirth" and performed the closing concert with Swiss historic flute specialist Jörg Fiedler.

Assistant Professor of Opera Theater **Christopher Mirto** made his Cleveland theater directorial debut in Will Eno's play *Wakey, Wakey*, which ran in October and November 2019 at Dobama Theatre in Cleveland Heights.

Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and Anthropology **Jennifer Fraser** received a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities to produce a multimedia website that shares knowledge of the musical and sociocultural features of *saluang*, a West Sumatran vocal genre. Last summer, Fraser presented the paper "Building Community through Music: Working at the Interface Between Applied Ethnomusicology, Community Music, and Community-Engaged Learning Pedagogy" at the 45th International Council for Traditional Music World Conference at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

Dana Jessen, director of professional development and associate professor of contemporary music and improvisation, performed as a featured soloist at the San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, Cleveland's Uncommon Sound Series, and the Splice Festival. Her chamber ensemble Splinter Reeds presented the world premiere of a new work by Michael Gordon that also featured Roomful of Teeth and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Splinter Reeds was in residence at Boston University and Wesleyan University, with additional performances at New York City's Permutations Series, Pitzer Concert Hall in

Davis, Calif., and at the Chico State New Music Symposium. Since the arrival of COVID-19, Jessen has presented solo performances on Chicago's Experimental Sound Series Quarantine Concerts and the Bang on a Can Marathon.

Dang Thai Son had a busy season performing, giving master classes, and judging competitions, with travels taking him from North and South America to Europe and Asia. Concert appearances included Paris; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Tbilisi, Georgia; and six cities across Japan. He served on the juries of the Busoni International Piano Competition in Italy and the Chopin International in Beijing. He gave master classes at Philadelphia Young Pianists' Academy, Frost Chopin Festival and Academy in Miami, Chopin International Academy, Orford Music Academy in Canada, Geneva University of Music, Lake Como Piano Academy in Italy, Kirishima International Music Festival in Japan, and Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, where he was named an honorary professor.



Chris Jenkins, the conservatory's associate dean for academic support, won the 2020 Irene H. Chayes New Voices Award from the

American Society for Aesthetics for his paper "Aesthetics of Classical Music: Assimilation vs. Integration."

Organ professor and department chair **Jonathan Moyer AD '12** released the recording *Voices of the Hanse* on the Gothic label in September 2020. For this project, he performed on the 1637 organ by Friederich Stellwagen in the Jakobikirche in Lübeck, Germany.

Soprano **Kendra Colton '83** released the album *Late Air* on the Oberlin Music label in February 2020. The recording showcases the vocal music of John Harbison and reunited Colton with piano collaborators Kayo Iwama '83 and Oberlin Conservatory Emeritus Professor of Piano **Sanford Margolis**. The Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, under the direction of **Timothy Weiss**, and oboist Peggy Pearson also perform on the album.



Newly appointed Associate Professor of Horn **Jeff Scott** composed *Homage to Paradise Valley*, a 25-minute work that evokes the spirit and creativity of the titular, racially segregated Detroit neighborhood in the mid-1900s. The piece received a virtual premiere by the



Akropolis Reed Quintet in July 2020. Scott is a member of Imani Winds.

Jazz trumpet teacher **Eddie Henderson** released his latest album, *Shuffle and Deal* (Smoke Sessions), in July 2020, three months in advance of his 80th birthday. It features a mix of familiar standards and original compositions by his wife, Natsuko Henderson, and his daughter, Cava Menzies. It also finds him leading a stellar quintet, including pianist Kenny Barron, saxophonist Donald Harrison, new Oberlin jazz bass teacher **Gerald Cannon**, and drummer Mike Clark.

Bass teacher **Derek Zadinsky's** debut solo recording *Bach + Brahms* was released on the Oberlin Music label in August 2019. He recorded his own transcriptions of Bach's third cello suite and Brahms' Sonata No. 1 in E Minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 38, using a custom-built five-string bass that includes a high C string.

Composition professor **Elizabeth Ogonek** composed the chamber concerto *where are we now* for pianist Xak Bjerken. It was premiered by the Oberlin Contemporary

Music Ensemble, under the direction of **Timothy Weiss**, in December 2019. The uniquely scored work—for solo piano, percussion quartet, and male vocal sextet—was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation. A recording of the piece is forthcoming on the Oberlin Music label.



Trombonist, composer, arranger, and jazz studies professor **Jay Ashby** joined the all-female DIVA Jazz Orchestra on the live concert recording *DIVA + The Boys*, released in 2019. It was named WRTT's Jazz Album of the Week in November. Ashby also contributed the tune "With Deference to Diz," which *All About Jazz* calls "a sunlit old-line swinger." The *Rochester City Newspaper* lends further praise: "Jay Ashby plays a gorgeous trombone solo on his own arrangement of Ivan Lins' and Vitor Martins' 'Noturna.'"

Losses

In honor of faculty who died in the past year



Organ professor and dean remembered for wisdom, kindness, and musicianship

DAVID S. BOE (1936-2020)

David S. Boe, a beloved professor of organ and the ninth dean of Oberlin Conservatory, enjoyed an Oberlin career that spanned an incredible 46 years, from 1962 to 2008. Deeply passionate about his teaching, he also excelled as an administrator, first as associate dean beginning in 1974 and eventually as dean of the conservatory from 1976 to 1990, in addition to interim periods in that role before and after.

Oberlin's expansive, world-renowned collection of organs and the conservatory's famed emphasis on historical performance can be traced in part to Boe's unwavering passion. His leadership, together with that of his Organ Department colleagues, resulted in the acquisition of Fairchild Chapel's Mary McIntosh Bridge Memorial Organ (crafted by John Brombaugh, Opus 25) in 1981 and Finney Chapel's Kay Africa Memorial Organ (C.B. Fisk, Opus 116), installed in 2001.

Born in Duluth, Minnesota, Boe began piano lessons at an early age but switched to organ by the start of high school. He earned degrees from St. Olaf College and Syracuse University, where he studied with Arthur Poister, a former longtime professor at Oberlin. As a Fulbright Scholar, Boe studied with Helmut Walcha at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Frankfurt, Germany. There he met Sigrid North, who like Boe was the child of a pastor. They were married in her father's church before returning to America, where Boe began teaching at the University of Georgia.

The same year he arrived in Oberlin, Boe also assumed the role of organist and music director of First Lutheran Church in nearby Lorain, a position he held for more than four decades. The church, with Boe's guidance, commissioned the first major instrument crafted by now-legendary organ builder John Brombaugh in 1970.

Boe himself was a celebrated organist who appeared in concert and on radio across Europe and the United States. For generations of Oberlin students, his virtuosity paired seamlessly with his kind and patient nature. Over the course of his career, he taught hundreds of young organists and harpsichordists, many of whom went on to become top performers and teachers as well.

Boe's achievements as chief administrator, likewise, were numerous and far-reaching. In his earliest years, he ushered in the study of ethnomusicology, expanding the scope of Oberlin's teaching far beyond the bounds of Western music and foreshadowing an ever-evolving shift toward the study of world music in conservatories everywhere.

Fueled by the great success of the Baroque Performance Institute, the annual summer music festival founded at Oberlin in 1971, Boe spurred the development of a wide-ranging suite of summer programs designed for precollege students as well as dedicated amateur performers. His vision gave rise to the summer programs of today, which host hundreds of musicians on Oberlin's campus from June through early August.

Boe led the \$1 million renovation of Warner Concert Hall, the stately venue at the heart of the conservatory that was constructed during his first year of teaching. He oversaw a \$2 million expansion to the Conservatory Library, one of the most highly regarded music libraries in all of higher education.

In 1988, as decades-old tensions between the U.S. and Soviet Union began to dissipate, Boe cofounded the American-Soviet Youth Orchestra, the first arts exchange produced jointly by two countries. The orchestra consisted of more than 100 U.S. and Soviet student musicians under the baton of Leonard Slatkin, Zubin Mehta, and other acclaimed conductors. It continued through 1991, with heralded performances in dozens of major cities and in countries throughout the world.

In 1989 the conservatory launched the Technology in Music and Related Arts (TIMARA) Department, signaling the formal

arrival of a program whose groundbreaking Oberlin roots can be traced to the mid-1960s. A sturdy supporter of the program, Boe had come to recognize that an increasing number of young musicians were turning to synthesizers to approximate the experience of playing gargantuan pipe organs; more than 30 years later, Oberlin's TIMARA Department continues to be a leader in the creation of electronic music.

A comfortable leader at the conservatory and elsewhere, Boe was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Kappa Lambda, which he served as national president for a four-year term in the 1980s. He was also secretary of the National Association of Schools of Music from 1981 to 1987 and vice president of the American Organ Academy.

"David's years as dean were rich ones, marked at times by exciting new initiatives, but also by a quiet and confident nurture of the school's tradition," says Steven Plank, a professor of musicology at Oberlin. "But above all, he was also always a caring friend, whose advice was wise, whose door was open, and whose smile and quick laugh sustained the years with welcome grace."

Boe stepped away from the conservatory in 2008; four years later, he relocated with his wife to Chicago to be closer to family. The Boes maintained connections with Oberlin through alumni and friends who came to Chicago. In 2011 Oberlin Conservatory established the David S. Boe Chair in Organ Studies, the institution's first endowed professorship named after a current or emeritus professor. It was made possible through a gift from Oberlin trustee Frederick R. Haas '83 and the Wyncote Foundation. That same year witnessed the naming of the David and Sigrid Boe Organ at Peace Community Church in Oberlin.

In February 2016, the Boes returned to campus for the dedication of the Brombaugh organ commissioned for their Oberlin home, which they had donated to Oberlin four years earlier. That instrument, named the David S. Boe Organ and installed at the front of Fairchild Chapel, was celebrated in a performance that included Jonathan William Moyer, Oberlin's David S. Boe Assistant Professor of Organ and chair of the Organ Department.

It would be Boe's final visit to Oberlin. "I witnessed a brief exchange between Mr. Boe and John Brombaugh that I will always

hold dear in my memory,” Moyer says of the organ dedication. “With the gleaming façade of Brombaugh’s Opus 25 behind them, I saw John lovingly look David in the eye and remark with the sincerest tone in his voice and smile on his face: ‘You have done remarkable things in your life!’

“Indeed he has,” Moyer adds. “Thank you, David Boe.”

Boe died April 28, 2020, from complications due to COVID-19, after an extended battle with Parkinson’s disease. He is survived by his wife, two sons, and four grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to Oberlin College and Conservatory in memory of David Boe. Please visit [advance.oberlin.edu/donate](https://www.oberlin.edu/donate) and designate your donation as “David Boe Memorial Gift.”

Trumpet prodigy appeared with major orchestras nationwide

RYAN ANTHONY (1968-2020)

Ryan Anthony was a child prodigy whose unbridled glee and unfaltering humility remained ever-present throughout a brilliant career that started with a two-year stint as an assistant professor at Oberlin Conservatory.

He emerged as a precocious performer in part by winning the *Seventeen* magazine/General Motors Concerto Competition at age 16. He went on to earn two degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music before launching his teaching career at Oberlin in 1998. By summer 2000, Anthony was granted a leave from Oberlin so he could take up touring with the Canadian Brass, with which he performed for three years. In 2004 he joined the Dallas Symphony and rose to its principal position two years later. He also taught at Southern Methodist University and served for a time as chair of its winds, brass, and percussion department.

While holding down his roles in Dallas, Anthony also appeared as principal trumpet with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the symphonies of Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Colorado, and in the sections of the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra, among other renowned orchestras. Through it all, he was universally hailed for his bold and beautiful sound, as well as his gentle nature.

“What I remember most of Ryan was his

ease and love of playing,” recalls former Oberlin trumpet major Kyle Lane ’99, general manager of the Charleston Symphony. “I always tried to get him to play so I could hear how he did things. He was a very natural player, and I remember him smiling whenever he performed.”

In 2012 Anthony began treatment for multiple myeloma, a rare cancer of the blood that led to him enduring painful procedures and countless hospital visits for the next eight years. As cancer ravaged his body, Anthony’s spirit continued to shine through—most notably through his increasing role in fundraising for cancer research. He was honored by the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation with its Spirit of Hope award in 2016 and its Courage and Commitment award the following year.

Anthony died June 23, 2020, leaving his wife Niki and two children.

Dutch craftsman cared for Oberlin’s renowned organ collection

JOHN G.P. LEEK (1929-2019)

John G.P. Leek was an organ craftsman in his native Netherlands before relocating to America, where he served for a dozen years as Oberlin Conservatory’s curator of organs and later launched the organ company that still bears his name.

Born the youngest of 11 children, Leek was a cabinetmaker’s apprentice before his 10th birthday; by the time he turned 11, he was working in organ-building shops. He became an apprentice at the Bernard Pels & Sons Pipe Organ Co. and rose to journeyman builder for several firms.

Leek immigrated to America with his wife Maria in 1961 and accepted a position with the Walter Holtkamp Company in Cleveland, remaining with the organ builder for three years. From 1964 to 1976, he served as curator of organs at Oberlin, caring for the instruments at a time when the conservatory overflowed with organ students.

He left the conservatory to open the Leek Pipe Organ Co., which he operated until his retirement in 1992. After 39 years in its original location in Oberlin, the business moved to nearby Berea, Ohio, in 2014. Leek remained a resident of Oberlin for many

years and was active with Sacred Heart Catholic Church for a half-century.

“My overwhelming memory of John was just how fun it was to be with him,” says John Bishop ’78, a former organ student who went on to work in Leek’s shop for six years. “He was perennially cheerful. And he taught me everything. His willingness to share what he knew and his pleasure in seeing me do something well was really important to me.”

Leek died November 15, 2019, leaving his wife of 59 years, a daughter, two sons, and four grandchildren. His son James continues to helm the family business.

Ensembles manager and librarian later founded concert series

CHRISTINE HAFF-PALUCK (1955-2020)

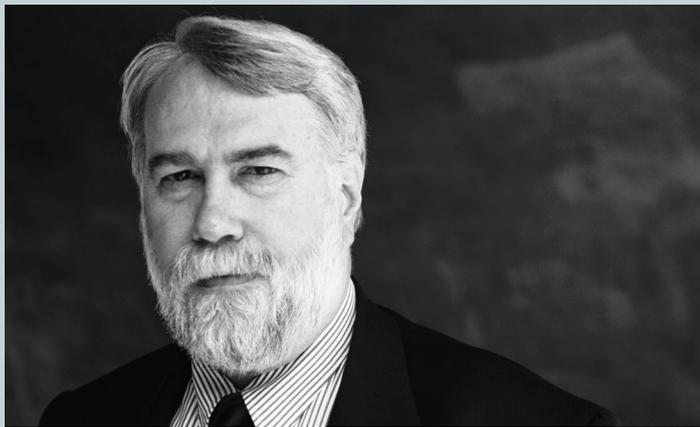
A pure love of music—especially mentoring young musicians and presenting concerts that stoked their interest—fueled the work and the life of Christine Haff-Paluck for more than 40 years.

She served from 2003 to 2008 as ensembles manager and librarian at Oberlin Conservatory, a position through which she worked closely with students. She later transitioned to similar roles with the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra and the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she was director of performance and community programs. In 1991 she founded the nonprofit Arts Renaissance Tremont in the historic Cleveland neighborhood and continued to be a driving force in its presentation of free community concerts for almost 30 years.

Through it all, she inadvertently cultivated the reputation of a selfless promoter of music and musicians, shying away at every turn from attention for herself.

“Chris’ commitment to music in our community was extraordinary,” Darrett Adkins, an associate professor of cello at Oberlin, expressed in one of dozens of heartfelt tributes shared in honor of Haff-Paluck on Cleveland Classical. “She believed that music mattered, and that people wanted and needed it in and of their own community.”

Haff-Paluck died April 25, 2020. She leaves her husband Gerald and many adoring family members and friends.



Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Christopher Rouse '71 created deeply emotional, evocative works

Christopher Rouse '71, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer whose music has been performed by every major orchestra in America and by many prominent orchestras worldwide, died September 21, 2019, at age 70.

As news of Rouse's passing began to circulate, his lifetime of work was described by news outlets as "fast and furious," a blend of "rage and delicacy," and "vivid, colorful, and emotionally powerful." It was all of that and more, and it poured from the genius of a humble man with a dry but well-calibrated sense of humor, who despite his prolonged success continued to dwell for many years in the modest Baltimore home where he was raised.

Rouse developed a passion for music—and creators of music—at a young age, first through rock and roll and by age 6 through classical music; his introduction came through an LP record of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony presented to him by his mother. (He would go on to amass a considerable collection

of records and composers' autographs throughout his life.)

By age 7, he was composing his own music.

At Oberlin, Rouse studied under Richard Hoffmann. He continued his education with a master's degree and doctorate from Cornell University, and he was awarded a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. His principal postgraduate teachers included George Crumb and Karel Husa.

Rouse taught composition for more than 20 years at the Eastman School of Music, where he also created a course on the history of rock and roll. Other appointments included the Juilliard School and the University of Michigan, where he had first developed his affinity for composing for orchestra—in part through a spur-of-the-moment assignment to write a five-minute piece for the school's large ensemble.

"I became, I would honestly say, typecast as an orchestra composer, but that's fine with me," Rouse later said. "I love writing for the orchestra. I would

think I would rather write for the orchestra than anything else."

One of Rouse's first major works, *Symphony No. 1*, was commissioned by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 1988 and went on to win the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award. Over the course of his career, Rouse penned five more symphonies, 12 concertos, and a requiem.

Death—especially the loss of loved ones and friends—played a pivotal role in Rouse's output, a tendency that earned him the nickname "Mr. Sunshine" among associates in the Baltimore Symphony, with which he was composer in residence in the 1980s and which he later served as its advisor for new music.

Rouse won a Pulitzer Prize in 1993 for his *Trombone Concerto*, which was dedicated to Leonard Bernstein and composed immediately after his death. Rouse earned a Grammy Award in 2002 for Best Contemporary Classical Composition and was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

"I had always associated Christopher Rouse's name with impressive scoring, including bombastic writing for percussion," says Alexa Still, Oberlin's associate professor of flute. "So when I first heard his *Flute Concerto*, I was stunned. I was compelled to listen to it over and over and over again, and particularly the first and last movements. It struck me as perhaps the most beautiful music I had ever heard."

In writing the five-movement concerto, Rouse was informed in part by his ancestral connection to Celtic music and culture—much like Still—but also by the tragic abduction and murder of a 2-year-old English boy at the hands of two 10-year-olds.

"Maybe it isn't surprising that I find it deeply moving, to the point that quite honestly tears well up in my eyes just thinking of the melodies," says Still. "But it is also a finely crafted work. The more I studied the score, the more I understood the depth of complexity and intricacy of the motifs, harmony, layers of voices, structure, and even orchestral scoring. It is remarkable."

In January 2013, Rouse took part in Oberlin's *Illumination Tour of New York City*. It included a DiMenna Center performance of Rouse's *Compline* by the Contemporary Music Ensemble. One day later, the Oberlin Orchestra presented the New York premiere of Rouse's *Iscaariot* at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Raphael Jiménez. Prior to the concert, Rouse appeared as part of a panel discussion entitled "Forging the Future: The Successful Creation, Transmission, and Celebration of New Music."

Jiménez, Oberlin's director of orchestras and a professor of conducting, marvels at the profound emotion that seems to pour out of every Rouse piece. "Every conductor loves composers who write really well for orchestra, and he loved the orchestra," says Jiménez. "He was a symphonist and somebody who drew phenomenal sounds out of our instruments. Christopher Rouse did great things for the repertoire."

Rouse leaves his wife, Natasha Miller Rouse; two children from a previous marriage; and three grandchildren.

Rouse's final work, *Symphony No. 6*, was given its world premiere by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra nearly a month after his death.



JULIE GULENKO '15

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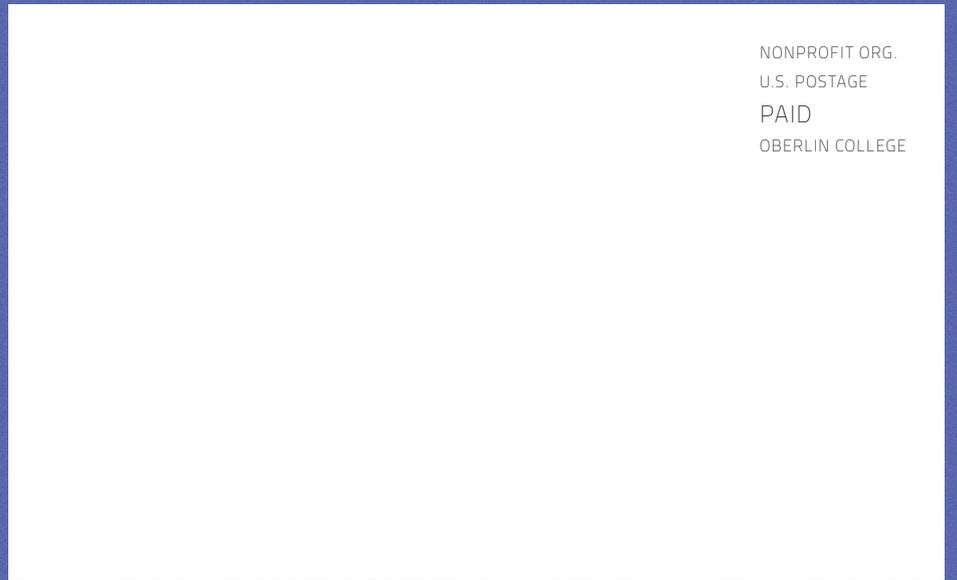
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RACHEL GIBSON '20, EXCERPTED FROM HER BLOG POST
“THE STRANGE, WEIRD THEORY OF GOODBYES,” MAY 2020