

SPRING 2021

MGSA

MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

A NEW ERA

MEET DEAN JASON GEARY

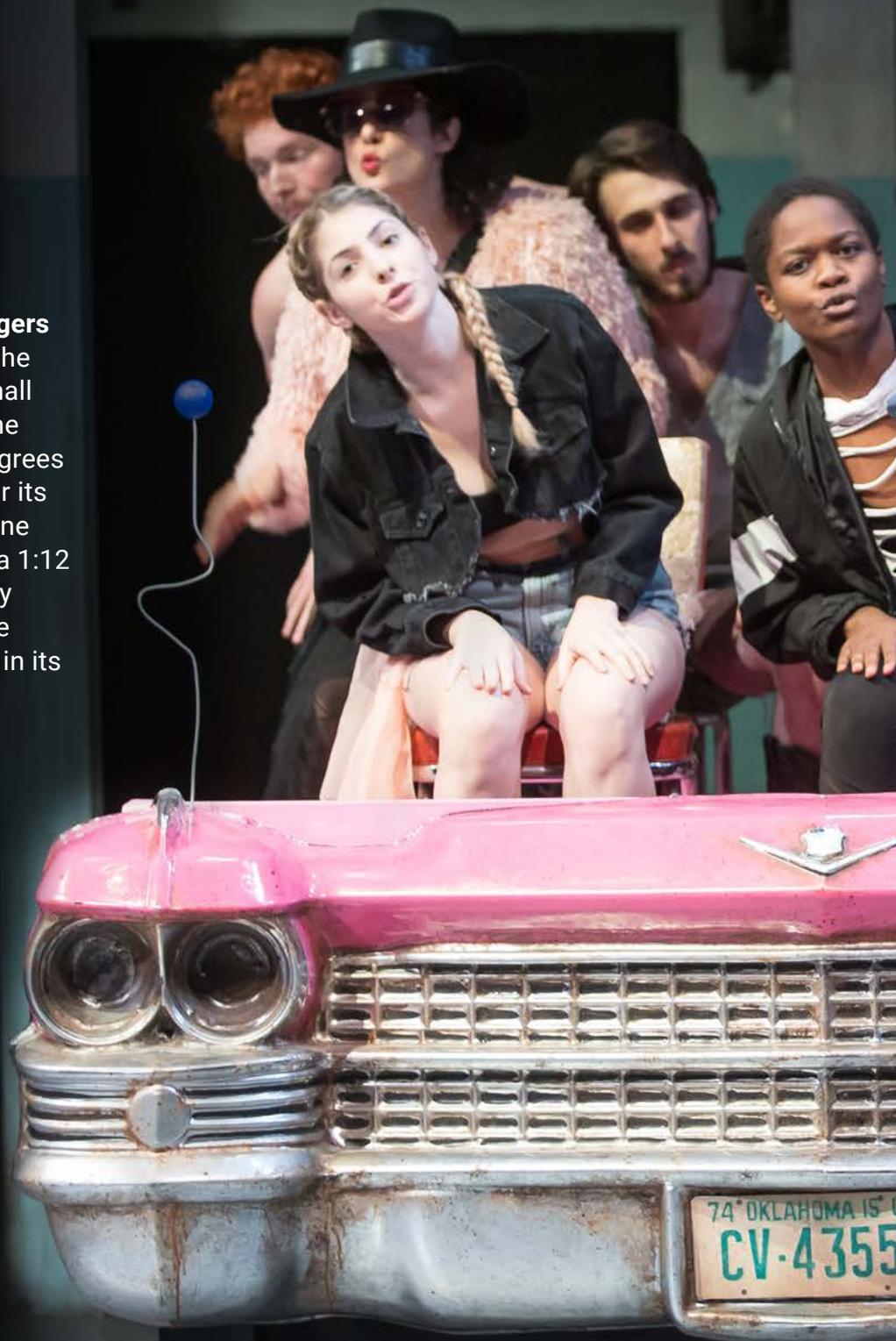
Creating Through COVID | Farewell To Stanley Cowell | Dance & Parkinson's



RUTGERS
Mason Gross School
of the Arts

TAKE NOTE

The Wrap has named the **Rutgers Filmmaking Center** among the Top 50 Film Schools—no small feat, especially if you consider that the center has only been offering BFA degrees since 2015. The center gets kudos for its “easy access to Manhattan’s film scene without paying Manhattan rent,” and a 1:12 faculty-student ratio in a conservatory setting. In addition, *Variety* named the program among the top in the nation in its latest Entertainment Impact Report.



Rutgers Theater Company's fall 2019 production of *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play* with Gabriel August Kessler, from left, Maia Karo, Faith Evan Wilansky, Graham Poore, Candace Grace, Matthew Petrucelli, Magali Trench, and Sofia Duemichen.



Dance Magazine named alum **Oluwadamilare Ayorinde** one of “25 to Watch” in 2020. “Ayorinde transforms himself each and every time he performs, in pieces by drastically different choreographers... His passion is unquestionable, transforming any work brought his way,” says dance writer Charmaine Warren.

Rutgers Filmmaking Center faculty **Mollye Asher** took home an Oscar at the 93rd annual Academy Awards as part of the team that produced the Frances McDormand film *Nomadland*. The film won Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress in a Leading Role. The film garnered a Golden Globe and two Independent Spirit Awards as well.

Believe the rumors: This fall, tickets to all of our events at the Mason Gross Performing Arts Center and the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center will be available online! Once we are ready to present a slate of in-person performances, visit masongross.rutgers.edu to purchase tickets.

LETTER FROM THE DEAN

While I never could have imagined my inaugural year as dean occurring in the midst of a global pandemic, I have found it to be an exhilarating and rewarding one all the same. Seeing faculty, staff, students, and alumni respond to the demands of the moment gave me special insight into the creativity and imagination of the Mason Gross community. Especially inspiring were the ways in which students collaborated across departments within the school to create stunning works of art in a virtual space.

The school has also taken part in important national conversations happening within the arts and more broadly. A schoolwide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee comprising faculty and staff, and with input from students, was created last spring and has been charged by me with engaging the wider Mason Gross community on ideas for fostering more inclusive programming and curricula. Such issues strike at the heart of a fundamental question around which I have also been having robust dialogue with faculty, staff, students, and alumni, namely what the role of a conservatory should be in preparing students both for professional success and to emerge as leaders prepared to tackle the post-pandemic challenges that will be faced by the arts and by our rapidly changing world.

Answering this question also means thinking about how we leverage the opportunities of being part of a leading public research university like Rutgers. I have already begun exploring ways in which we can enhance partnerships and research collaborations between the arts and other disciplines on campus, and I am thrilled to see the outcome of an upcoming “speed-networking” session during which faculty from Mason Gross and the School of Public Health will have the opportunity to share ideas and possibilities with an eye toward receiving seed funding to support the most promising projects that arise.

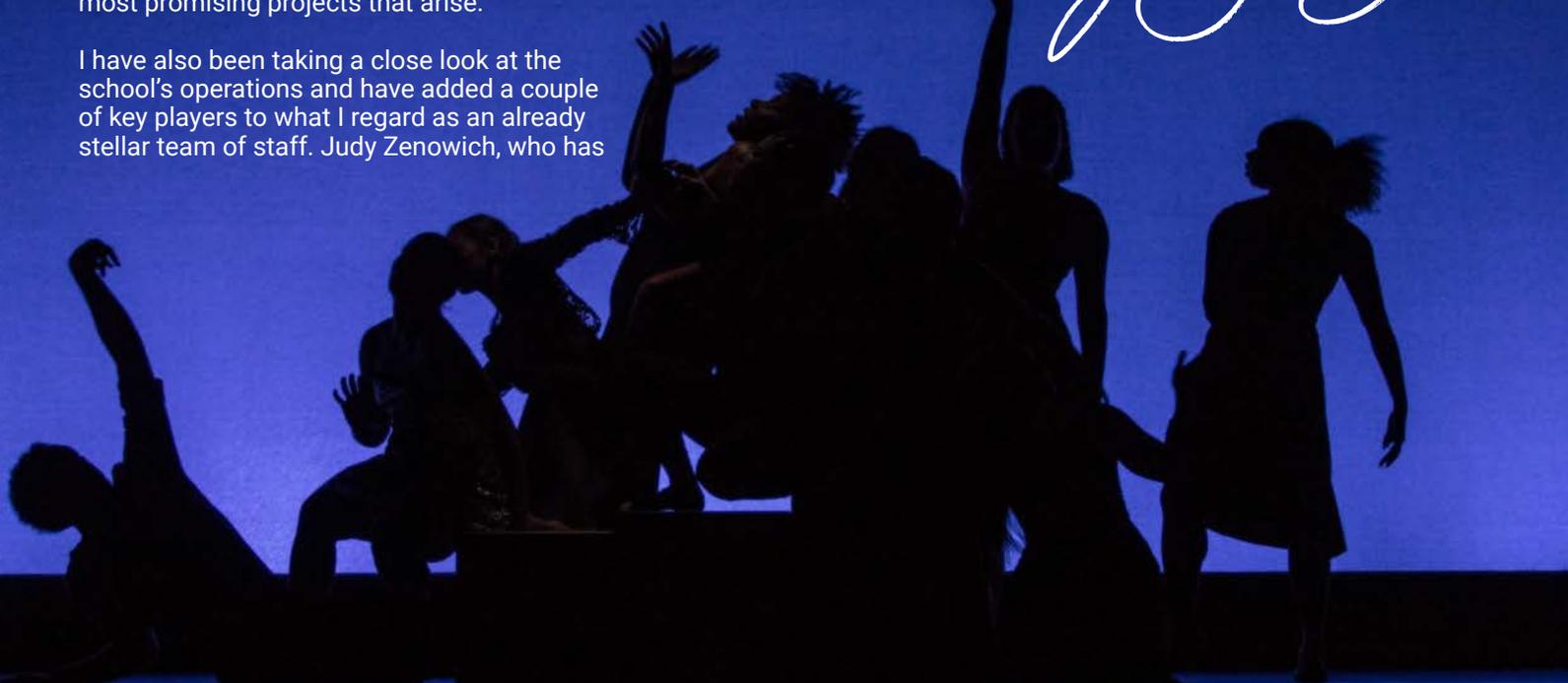
I have also been taking a close look at the school’s operations and have added a couple of key players to what I regard as an already stellar team of staff. Judy Zenowich, who has



Geary at Nicholas Music Center on April 2, 2021.

KEITH MUCCILLI

years of experience at Rutgers and in the corporate sector, has joined us as associate dean for finance and administration, and Rebecca Cypess left her role as associate director of the Music Department to become the school’s new associate dean for academic affairs. Both have already made tremendous contributions and will be vital as we build upon the foundations of the Mason Gross legacy to reach new heights of excellence, inclusivity, and impact. I’m excited about the road ahead and the possibilities for the future!



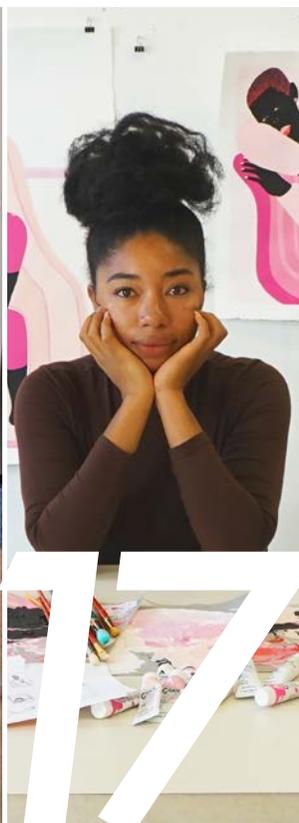
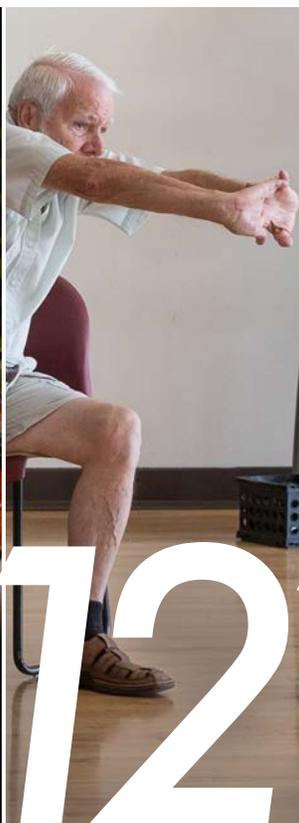
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From left: KEITH MUCCILLI; COURTESY OF GRACE LYNNE HAYNES; KEITH MUCCILLI; NICK ROMANENKO; RAUL AYALA

OUR LEADERSHIP

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Judy Zenowich, **Associate Dean for Finance and Administration**
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Patrick Stettner, **Director of the Rutgers Filmmaking Center**

ON THE COVER: Dean Jason Geary, April 2, 2021. Photo by Keith Muccilli.

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MOVING MASON GROSS FORWARD

**DEAN GEARY
OUTLINES NEW
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE SCHOOL,
INCLUDING
LEADING RUTGERS'
RESEARCH
MISSION THROUGH
THE ARTS**

By Risa Barisch

Jason Geary has always viewed change—moving to a new city, choosing a different career path, taking a new job—as a chance for reinvention.

Embracing the unknown has “made it easier to accept change and realize that you can start over, you can create a new life for yourself,” says Geary, the new dean of Mason Gross School of the Arts who arrived last July from the University of Maryland School of Music. “It kind of prepares you for the monumental changes that you encounter in life.” Among those, he notes, was moving to New Jersey with his wife and two sons in the middle of a pandemic.

Geary has crisscrossed the country several times since high school, when he and his family relocated from Bakersfield, California, to Aurora, Colorado, where his father launched a successful business and entrepreneurial career after years of working on the railroad following a brief stint playing football in the NFL.

Starting anew wasn't easy, but Geary remembers being excited.

“Bakersfield is not the California of postcards,” Geary says with a smile, “so it didn't feel like we were leaving much behind. I also felt like it was an opportunity to reinvent myself in some way, a clean slate.”

Geary began teaching himself the piano at age 11 and by 16 was winning state competitions, one of which led to a performance as soloist with the National Repertory Orchestra at the Keystone Music Festival in Colorado.



Geary, a trained pianist and musicologist, onstage at Nicholas Music Center.

KEITH MUCCILLI

“The arts and humanities can be on the leading edge of grappling with some of society's most pressing challenges—some of the questions that define our very existence and time.”

He returned to California to earn a piano performance degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he won competitions resulting in performances with the school's orchestra and at New York City's Alice Tully Hall, and became the first in his family to graduate college.

As much as he loved the piano, Geary found himself increasingly drawn to the academic side of music, and soon transitioned to musicology as a graduate student at the University of Michigan.

“I read a lot as a child, I enjoyed writing, and I always kind of knew I wanted to be a teacher,” Geary says. “My experience with music history during my undergraduate years connected the passion that I had for playing the piano, and music in general, with this part

of me that was more the stand-up-in-front-of-the-classroom educator—that was what ultimately drove me to pursue musicology as something that combined my love of academics and music.”

Choosing musicology over performance was a decision that Geary says he thought long and hard about as he weighed leaving behind the joy of practicing the piano for several hours each day to make time for research and writing. But once he landed the opportunity to attend Yale University to pursue a PhD, the move to academia felt just right.

“That was another moment where I felt like the courses I was taking and the stimulating interaction with my professors and classmates confirmed for me that this was the life I wanted to live,” Geary says.

“It took a while to get there but, ultimately, I never looked back.”

ARTS FOR ALL

Geary's professional path took him back to the University of Michigan, where he taught musicology and served as associate dean at the School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and then on to the University of Maryland, where he was the director of the School of Music and special advisor for the arts within the College of Arts & Humanities.

Geary began his role as dean of Mason Gross in July 2020, outlining a leadership plan based on what he calls his three core pillars: collaboration; community engagement; and inclusive excellence, which encompasses issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

He says he was drawn to Mason Gross because of its location, both within a major research university and in the greater New York metropolitan area, as well as the chance to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and address larger social issues through the arts.

"Those kinds of opportunities are really rich at a place like Rutgers," says Geary, citing examples like the Dance & Parkinson's community movement classes and an emerging partnership between Mason Gross and the newly established Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice that will explore ways in which the arts can help illuminate issues of racism and social inequality. "The arts and humanities can be on the leading edge of grappling with society's most pressing challenges—some of the questions that define our very existence and time."

Geary was instrumental in guiding Rutgers University–New Brunswick to join the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru), which helps research universities develop interdisciplinary arts-integrated research, curricula, programs, and creative practice.

The school's first related initiative will build on the foundation of the Dance & Parkinson's program to create the Integrated Dance Collaboratory, which will serve as a hub of research with other disciplines including medicine and psychology to explore how dance can help people with autism, traumatic brain injury, and other medical conditions.

Joining a2ru "happened with Mason Gross out in front, leading the charge," says Geary, who serves on the executive board of the alliance. "That's an example of how the arts can be at the core of the university's research mission as opposed to being on the margins, which is often the case, where you're fighting for a seat at the table."

"My experience has prepared me well to position the arts and Mason Gross to be leaders on campus in terms of academic excellence that defines not just who we are as a school but who Rutgers is as an institution, and what our reputation is nationally and globally," Geary adds. "The arts can be at the front and center of that."

RESHAPING THE SCHOOL

While Geary has his sights set far and wide across the university, he's also focused on the needs of Mason Gross students. Through work groups, town halls, and small virtual gatherings held throughout the year, Geary has gathered feedback from students on topics ranging from curriculum reform to career development.

"Students are very interested in a curriculum that reflects the diversity of our student body and our state," says

Geary. "The issues of representation and equity and inclusion are important to them, and are values that they want to see enshrined in the heart of institutions, including Mason Gross."

Geary says he is committed to "thinking in ways that are bold and innovative" about curriculum, including greater exposure to different artistic traditions outside of the western European canon and the role of representation and race when it comes to casting, programming, guest artists, and faculty.

A strong educational foundation and plenty of hours in the practice room or studio or on the stage are invaluable, Geary says, but there's a greater responsibility for school leadership to think about the kind of preparation that students need, especially in a post-COVID world where "the professional landscape is shifting dramatically under our collective feet."

"It means thinking about how that expertise or studio training relates to other disciplines," says Geary, "how it relates to community, what it means to make a living as a visual artist, designer, filmmaker, musician, dancer, or actor in 2021, and how that might mean cultivating a set of skills that weren't necessarily highlighted 50 years ago, or 10 years ago, or even two years ago."

With such bold proposals, though, Geary is careful to point out that his goal is not to undo Mason Gross, but to move it forward in a way that benefits its students and leads to increased visibility for the school.

"It's not a dismantling of the conservatory model, but rather a rethinking of what it means to be a conservatory in the 21st century," Geary says. "It's not giving up those things we wish to conserve, but it's integrating other kinds of opportunities and experiences."



TAKE 5

A PIANO, A PRESIDENT, AND WHAT MAKES JERSEY UNIQUE—DEAN GEARY GIVES ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO HIS LIFE

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

My grand piano. In addition to being a beautiful instrument, it has worked well as decor in all six of the houses we've lived in over the last decade and a half.

WHICH TALENT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE?

The ability to eat and not gain weight. I love eating and hate working out, so I hope this counts!

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Former President Barack Obama. Apart from his pathbreaking achievements, I admire his equanimity, his willingness to listen to a multiplicity of voices, and his ability to communicate effectively. These are qualities I try to emulate as a leader.

WHAT PROFESSION OTHER THAN YOUR OWN WOULD YOU LIKE TO ATTEMPT?

A lawyer—had I gone to law school, which I once briefly considered, I would have wanted to become a prosecutor and eventually a politician.

YOU'VE LIVED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. WHAT IS ONE THING ABOUT NEW JERSEY THAT YOU'VE FOUND DIFFERENT FROM ALL OF THESE PLACES?

It would have to be the dearth of left turns. I've seen these jughandles in other East Coast states, but New Jersey takes things to another level entirely. Not being able to pump my own gas is also unique, but that one I don't mind as much, especially considering the winter we just had.

FACULTY NEWS



KEITH MUCCILLI

In fact, another word for legacy might actually just be community.”

Dance Teacher Magazine spoke with faculty **Ani Javian** about grading during COVID-19, which in Javian’s classes has involved self-assessment and self-reflection beyond the studio (or home dance space), as well as activities like drawing, poetry, and taking walks. “With everything that’s been going on this year, I’ve been thinking a lot about the ways that our movement practice relates to the world around us,” Javian says. “Why are we training in dance? Looking inward will make a difference in how students then extend themselves outward into the world.”

Department of Art & Design faculty **Patrick Strzelec** (left) received the 2020 International Sculpture Center Outstanding Educator Award. Strzelec was featured in the January/February issue of *Sculpture* magazine in a Q&A about teaching and the inspiration he draws from his students at Rutgers. “When you come from a middle-class family, with no serious background in art, attend a large public institution, and are often the first family member to attend college, and you choose to focus on art—that is inspiring,” he says. “There is more than courage involved. There is a desire for freedom, expression, love, and passion. They are gutsy young people. I suppose they remind me of myself to some degree.”

Congrats to Associate Dean for Academic Affairs **Rebecca Cypess** on her new recording with The Raritan Players, *In the Salon of Madame Brillou*.

Dance’s **Pam Tanowitz** and her company, Pam Tanowitz Dance, returned to the Joyce Theater in December with two works: *Gustave Le Gray, No. 2* and a new, site-specific work, *Finally Unfinished: Part 1*, created in collaboration with Tanowitz’s dancers while in quarantine via Zoom and performed throughout the empty Joyce Theater. The program was a Critic’s Pick in *The New York Times*: “... this theater that has been dark and empty for most of this year becomes animated by elegant, eccentric, brilliant dance,” Brian Seibert writes in his review.

Actor and director **Cameron Knight** of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts will take over as head of BFA acting this fall. He replaces **Barbara Marchant**, who is retiring after more than two decades with the Theater Department.

Department of Art & Design faculty **Steffani Jemison** is featured in *Harper’s Bazaar* in an article about the Studio Museum in Harlem. “As a younger person, the idea of legacy always seemed really abstract,” she says in the piece, published on February 26. “Legacy described the

way that torches get passed from one generation to the next, super formal. Legacy was a very distant concept. And what I learned from the Studio Museum is that legacies are built. They’re built with intention. That legacy is rooted in very real relationships between real people.

4 QUESTIONS FOR DIDIER WILLIAM



ALEX NUNEZ AND THE FOUNTAINHEAD FOUNDATION

Department of Art & Design's **Didier William** joined the faculty in fall 2019 as a professor of expanded print. In a *New York Times* profile on the Haitian-American artist, Laurel Graeber says that William's works "incorporate collage, oil paint, and acrylic as well, making them as multifarious as the Afro-Caribbean diaspora itself."

Much of your work is on wood, not canvas.

The rigid and somewhat brittle surface of wood provides a material that has some resistance to my authorship, which I like. It's an organic material, so inconsistencies and blemishes in the surface are natural, and I love that. It effects a kind of organic collaboration—a midway point between readymade and something fabricated.

Many of your works feature bodies or backgrounds covered with eyes. Your works seem to behold the viewer.

For me, looking isn't just about a stable, singular process, it's something that takes place in the present moment between the bodies in my paintings and the curious viewer. The eye motif developed out of an urge to make this process physical. It grew out of an attempt to trace the process of looking and bearing witness. The repeated eye forms work to make physical the otherwise unseen circuitry of looking and being looked at. Here I'm very much thinking about Michel-Rolph Trouillot. His text

on the function of historical silences, *Silencing the Past*, has been an important one for me. In it he argues, "Historical representations—be they books, commercial exhibits, or public commemorations, cannot be conceived only as vehicles for the transmission of knowledge, they must also establish some relation to that knowledge." This greatly resonates with me, particularly in terms of how I think about the body and representations of human form.

How has geography shaped your work? You were born in Haiti and then moved to Miami as a child. Now you live in Philadelphia and teach in New Brunswick. How do these places seep into your work, if at all?

Probably most directly, the geography of the places I've lived have influenced my aesthetics and the aesthetics of the different places I've lived continue to influence my work. I immediately think of color with this question, and I think it's hard not to think about South Florida, where I grew up, as one of the primary sites that helped build my relationship to a kind of cultural aesthetic that I associate with a particularly diasporic experience. As you might know, South Florida is home to the largest Haitian population outside of the country

of Haiti. Additionally, it is also home to many others across the Latin American diaspora. In this remaking and re-mapping of home, I think a very unique and peculiar aesthetic is built, wherein color, surface, and texture are projected onto everything from textiles, to architecture, the landscape, to the food, even the language. And so there is a kind of rich tapestry, an evolving grit that is characteristic of South Florida's material culture. It's not uncommon in South Florida to see brilliantly colored homes with terra-cotta rooftops and bright green porches. The South Florida sun also illuminates everything with a piercing, blinding luminescence. These are very much the colors that I source in my paintings.

In my work I also try to take what are thought of as usual or typical associations with color and re-distribute them. Bodies and landscapes can exchange scale and surface. I try to take colors we would associate with architecture and bring them into the body, colors we would associate with sky and bring them into the ground, and vice-versa. In this kind of reassessment of the picture

plane I'm attempting to create an alternative space in which the viewer can certainly find familiarity, but they're intentionally slowed down. Even when things are sort of explicitly

familiar, I try to disassociate them from the usual cultural symbols to which they are attached.

Additionally, I think I must say that my mom is a chef. She has a Haitian restaurant in Miramar, Florida, and so I grew up constantly surrounded by delicious Haitian food and Haitian cooking (which if you know anything about it, is really spicy and colorful and flavorful with rich ingredients. Haitian food comprises an incredibly layered palette), and I often like to say that the way that I think about painting and art is very much the way that my mom thinks about cooking and food.... My associations and relationships to color in the print shop have always been analogous to food. There's a beautiful synchronicity for me that exists between the alchemy of printmaking and the alchemy of cooking.

You've mentioned a teacher who believed in you as an artist when you were young. Can you talk about the significance of that faith—and your parents' devotion to your education as an artist?

It's critical for young artists to feel supported. I've benefited from a great deal of support even before I had a clear vision of who or what I wanted to be. This laid the groundwork for the persistence I've relied on as a working artist and teacher. My parents' support not only reminded me that I was loved and cared for, but that what I had to say was important and that I deserved to be heard. We owe young artists this affirmation.

"It's critical for young artists to feel supported. I've benefited from a great deal of support even before I had a clear vision of who or what I wanted to be. This laid the groundwork for the persistence I've relied on as a working artist and teacher."



Two Dads, 64-inches-by-50-inches, wood carving, acrylic, collage, and ink on panel. COURTESY OF DIDIER WILLIAM.

Student & Alumni News

Music doctoral student **Adrienne Baker** was part of the four-member woodwind section that created music for *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical*. The event streamed in January to an audience of millions. Performing while socially distancing in a studio was the first time Baker had played with other musicians in person since the pandemic began. "It brought back to me how magical that really is," Baker said. "One of the great things about the arts is the ability to nonverbally communicate, to move together and do cues together, have musical conversations in the moment." The online event co-starred theater alum and three-time Tony Award-nominee **Kevin Chamberlin** as Auguste Gusteau.

It's confirmed: *Sex and the City* is returning, with co-stars Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon, and theater alum **Kristin Davis**. The HBO Max reboot, titled *And Just Like That...* will follow the women as they navigate love and friendship in their 50s during 10 episodes. Production in New York City was set to begin this spring.

Acting alum **Katie Do** is one of six playwrights participating in the inaugural Sóng Collective's Viêt Writers Lab, a community of Vietnamese artists from the United States and Canada who spent

several months developing new works to be presented as readings in June.

Congrats to senior Dance Department students **Cassidy Rivas** and **Julia Foti**, whose work will be shown at the 2021 American College Dance Association Screendance Festival.

Film student **Keeks Rogers** and four Rutgers scientists made *UTUQAQ*, a short, lyrical documentary in the Arctic serving as a kind of ode to the disappearing ice. The film is available to stream through Field of Vision.

Recent costume design grad **Ashley Kong** is a winner of the 2020 CosBond Creator Contest for her cosplay replica of the Thorin Oakenshield costume from Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* film trilogy. Kong's creation took a whopping 234 hours over 6 months to complete!

Theater alum **Tom Pelphrey**, a breakout star on *Ozark* and co-star in the Oscar-nominated film *Mank* (both streaming on Netflix), was named one of *Variety's* 10 Actors to Watch 2020!

In February, dance alum **Myssi Robinson** was profiled in *Dance Magazine*. Choreographer David Dorfman said of Robinson: "When she moves, her aliveness seeps through every pore."

Art & Design Department alum and best-selling author **Nell Painter** was appointed chair of MacDowell's board of directors. She takes over for novelist Michael Chabon. Past chairs of the New Hampshire-based

organization include Aaron Copland and William Schuman. Artists in seven disciplines live and work at MacDowell for a period of up to eight weeks. Painter's memoir, *Old in Art School: A Memoir of Starting Over* (which details, among other things, her time at Rutgers), was a 2018 finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

In the fall, MM percussion student and BM alum **Andrew Bambridge** was featured on WNET's All Arts *Rising Artist* series. The series profiles creative student talent at New York City-area universities. Bambridge also performed a live concert from home in a series that the school co-sponsored with the Rutgers University Alumni Association. Bambridge presented music on marimba. You can view the series, called *House Music*, on the RUAA's Facebook page.

Music alum and Silk Road Ensemble member **Cristina Pato** has received the Committed Artist Award from the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation. Pato also appears in a video playing Galician bagpipes along with pianist Arturo O'Farrill on a rendition of Carla Bley's "Útviklingssang" and is one of several artists from around the world, including Yo-Yo Ma, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Angélique Kidjo, featured in a recent video recording of Peter Gabriel's 1980 protest song *Biko*.

Downbeat Magazine named jazz guitar student **Ilan Eisenzweig** among the winners of their Student Music Awards!

Dance alum **Kyle Marshall's** work during COVID leads to world-premiere works this summer

By Risa Barisch

Life during lockdown was productive for choreographer and BFA'11 dance graduate **Kyle Marshall**. Over the last year, the 2018 NY Dance and Performance "Bessie" Jury Award winner was able to reconnect with himself and his family during the down time while also creating several new works.

First and foremost for a dancer, though, is staying in motion.

"Improvisation was a way I stayed physically curious," says Marshall. "Moving in my living room and in outdoor spaces allowed me to connect to my inner impulse and to my environment."

To push himself artistically, Marshall directed and edited collaborative digital dances with his company, Kyle Marshall Choreography. A new work, *Hudson*, premiered in late December as part of Operation Unite Education and Cultural Arts Center's Kwanzaa Celebration, featuring performers and alumni Oluwadamilare Ayorinde, Bria Bacon, Mimi Gabriel, and Myssi Robinson.

Marshall was also able to work on several projects that will premiere live this summer, including *Stellar*, a dance film commissioned by the Baryshnikov Arts Center, and *Rise*, commissioned by The Shed. *I and I*, a solo performance, will premiere at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center on October 15 and 16 as part of the Dance Studies Association annual conference, hosted by the Dance Department.

Marshall says the pandemic pause also afforded him time to improve his mental health through meditation, yoga, and therapy, and to find a deeper connection with his family.

"Pursuing a career in this field left less time to be with my younger siblings and parents," says Marshall. "I found curiosity in my history, trying to cook Jamaican dishes and catching up with my siblings and cousins."

What's the first thing that Marshall, who lives in Jersey City, New Jersey, will do once the region is fully open?

"I cannot wait to see anything live—dance, theater, music, a DJ, comedy, sports," Marshall says. "I really miss gathering to witness others."

CREATING THROUGH COVID



STAYING
IN
MOTION

A DOCTOR IN THE PRACTICE ROOM



Student is adding a performance degree to her medical background to treat musicians like herself

By Risa Barisch

For Laura Palm, music and medicine are natural partners.

Palm plays violin and viola and happens to have a medical degree. Her goal is to become a doctor specializing in treating injuries specific to musicians, who, like athletes, suffer from repetitive stress.

“Repeating the same motion over and over to get it as perfect as you can—that’s essentially what we do in the practice room,” Palm says. “The big difference for musicians is that it’s the smaller muscles—in the fingers or the wrist and tendons. The parts of the body are different, but the way the injury happens—and the way you prevent the injury in the future—is very similar to athletes.”

Unlike athletes, though, musicians can have trouble finding specialists to rehab their particular ailments, Palm says.

“I know of so many people in music schools, and people who have jobs in orchestras later on, who develop medical issues from singing or playing, and it’s so hard to find doctors who understand what it means to spend five hours

in the practice room,” says Palm. “It might not be possible to say ‘oh, I’ll stop playing for six or eight weeks.’”

That’s the advice Palm was given when she sought treatment for elbow pain and went from doctor to doctor searching for a practical solution. Now, Palm is working toward a doctor of musical arts degree in viola performance at Mason Gross to gain expert knowledge of the physiology of playing, she says, in order to best help her patients.

“The higher the level of my playing, the better I will understand and be able to figure out other people’s problems,” says Palm, who has a bachelor’s and master’s degree in violin performance. “But I also want to pay attention from a medical perspective so that [musicians] don’t develop problems, because I think prevention is better than treating.”

Palm grew up playing violin in Germany, where she earned a medical degree while at the same time studying at a conservatory in Cologne. At the time, she thought she might pursue a research-based medical career, but she says she always knew music would be in her life.

With the few weeks she had off during the summers, Palm traveled to Philadelphia, where she had been staying with friends to practice her English skills and studying violin at Haverford College. After earning her master’s degree at Temple University, Palm decided to pursue a doctoral performance degree at Rutgers, drawn in by professors like Todd Phillips, as well as a significant academic component and affiliated medical school, she says.

“For music students, the number-one thing always is instrumental teachers,” says Palm, who is active with the Rutgers Global Health Institute, where she serves as the co-chair of the student council’s global health education committee. “But also important to me was a strong medical school, because I knew I wanted to do something that combines my two fields.”

Palm has created a series of YouTube videos for the institute about COVID-related topics including masks, mental health, and pets, with plans for more on issues like testing and lung health.

Her contributions have earned her the council’s Student

Impact Award, as well as acknowledgment from leaders including Anthony Yung, an MD candidate at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and co-president of the Global Health Institute student council.

“Laura’s leadership and vision have made a positive impact on our student council and the greater university community,” says Yung. “The diversity of student membership in our councils brings unique perspectives and creative solutions, which further advance the topic of global health at Rutgers and beyond.”

For Palm, leading the committee is a way to tend to her medical roots while having an impact in the field.

“As much as I like music, I also started to miss medicine a little bit,” Palm says. “[The institute] has been very welcoming even though, on paper, I’m at school for music. It’s great that they’re specifically trying to get people from all schools to be part of this, because global health, as we’re now seeing, is something that affects everyone.”

Palm knows this personally, having gotten sick with COVID-19 in March 2020. Her immune system was already compromised, because Palm has suffered from recurring brain tumors for several years, requiring intense treatment and significant downtime.

“I had so many plans for the summer,” Palm says with a sigh, including studying for the board exams and making more videos. “A lot of things have not progressed as much as I wanted them to—getting sick kind of derailed my timeline.”

And yet, Palm continues to pursue her two passions at a remarkable pace. She’s working on a book with her physical therapist, who specializes in treating musicians, about exercises for string players to prevent injury. After graduating with her doctorate next year and completing her board exams in the United States, she plans to start a dual residency in physical medicine and rehab.

Despite her health obstacles, Palm says she has learned valuable lessons about herself and her path forward.

“I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy,” Palm says of the brain tumors, “but it also helped me grow a lot as a person, and I think I’ll be a much better doctor because of it. Nothing teaches you how to be a good doctor better than being a patient.”



Participants in a free movement class that Mason Gross offers to people with Parkinson's disease.

KEITH MUCCILLI

ON THE MOVE

FILM EXPLORES CLASS THAT HELPS PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S RECLAIM CONTROL OF THEIR BODIES

By Stephen Whitty
Courtesy of Rutgers Today

To be a dancer is to be in tune with your own physicality. To be fully aware of every muscle, in control of every movement. To be your body's master. It is a feeling most people with Parkinson's disease can only remember.

A degenerative disorder of the central nervous system, Parkinson's can cause stiffness, shaking, and problems with balance. It also may leave people self-conscious, and reluctant to leave their homes.

The Dance & Parkinson's program at Mason Gross, however, uses music and movement to empower them. And a film from the school's Documentary Film Lab captures just how moving, and joyful, that process can be.

"Sometimes the class is hard to get started, the folks schmooze so much," jokes **Jeff Friedman**, director of the MFA dance program. "That's something I hadn't expected – the social connections this class creates. One man told me, 'This is the only thing I come out of the house to do.'"

The free classes are offered in partnership with the American Parkinson's Disease Association–NJ Office at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital's Fitness and

Wellness Center in New Brunswick as well as at the Mason Gross Performing Arts Center based on concepts developed by Pam Quinn. A dancer and choreographer, she was first diagnosed with the disease more than 20 years ago.

"It took me a long time to come to terms with it," Quinn admits. "My entire identity revolved around movement. But then I began to think, 'I know how my body works. My dance training gives me tools. I can thwart the reality of this.'"

Later, beginning with the PD Movement Lab in Brooklyn, Quinn started bringing her ideas to nondancers, too.

MOVING EXPERIENCE

With the help of instructors, and a playlist that ranges from Glenn Miller to Talking Heads, participants at the Rutgers sessions reclaim some control over their own bodies, stepping around the floor, moving in unison to the beat.

"Dance is particularly suited to treating Parkinson's," Quinn explains. "It involves music, which is part of what's called a cueing system, a prompt that facilitates movement. It also involves visual cues, and an element of touch."

"Unlike regular physical therapy, which uses body parts in a mechanistic approach, it's a holistic experience," says Friedman, whose students often work with the enrollees. "You're using your mind and your body, challenging your whole neurological system."

The subject immediately intrigued the young filmmakers at the Documentary Film Lab, who chose it

as their project. The topic, however, provided a variety of challenges.

"Whenever you're dealing with old age or disability, you are treading in delicate terrain," says **Thomas Lennon**, an Oscar-winning filmmaker and director of the lab. "You have to push to get into the nooks and crannies of people's private lives, but not push so much that you become this bullying presence. It's a balancing act, in the filming and in the editing, and it was my job to help the students navigate that."

The film, *Dance | Parkinsons*, runs about six minutes. The documentary won first place in the Outstanding Documentary category at the 2020 Utah Dance Film Festival. It screened locally, at the Dance & Parkinson's symposium in downtown New Brunswick, in March 2020, and received the Community Impact award at the Austin Dance Film Festival 2020. Student filmmakers who worked on the project were: **Stephanie Bradli, Patricia de Jesus, Gina Lombardo, Kelly O'Neill, Andrea Pfaff, Christopher Rodriguez, Sam Spencer, Abe Urquilla, and Henry Wolfson**.

Lennon says the film allows viewers to see these students "performing at the highest level." They see the program's participants doing the same.

DANCE FOR ALL

As important as the emotional support or physical therapy it offers, however, this is still a dance class. It involves personal expression, performance, aesthetics. Quinn and Friedman find that artistic aspect particularly inspiring and liberating.

"I'm very interested in 'physically integrated dance,'" Friedman says. "Too often we limit ourselves and our work to what we might call 'able-bodied dancers.' Other people become invisible. This is about creating a more sensitive approach, deepening our artistry to embrace all of life's challenges."

After all, we're all aging. We're all pretty much on our way to some sort of disability."

In addition to running workshops at Rutgers and teaching at the Mark Morris Dance Studio in Brooklyn, Quinn creates dances for differently abled performers. In spring 2019, she choreographed a piece for 20 people, 14 of whom had Parkinson's. Another piece, this one featuring 50 dancers, was performed the next month, at the opening night of the World Parkinson Congress in Kyoto.

It's all become a hugely fulfilling part of Quinn's life. And no one is more surprised than she.

"I was reticent at first to get involved in this sort of therapy," Quinn admits. "I thought, 'Do I really want to be surrounded by PD all the time? Is it going to be a downer?' But it's been more rewarding than I ever expected. And while there's a part of me that still rejects my disease, rejection has its benefits, too, because with that comes a certain defiance. Not denial – defiance. And that gives you the energy to fight on."

Watch *Dance | Parkinsons* at go.rutgers.edu/Parkinsons; learn more about the student filmmakers' experience making *Dance | Parkinsons* on our podcast, *Work of Art*, available on iTunes or Google Play.

FAREWELL TO A TRENDSETTER



Stanley Cowell, professor emeritus of jazz studies, embraced the past and the future—and left a teaching legacy

By Risa Barisch

Stanley Cowell, a pianist, composer, and record label co-founder who taught on the Mason Gross jazz faculty for over a decade, died in December 2020, at age 79. His career in jazz spanned more than 50 years, and included over a dozen albums as a bandleader, beginning with *Blues for the Viet Cong* in 1969.

As a musician, Cowell was known as a trendsetter who helped shape modern jazz in the '60s but stayed true to his own sound, says alum **Marc Stasio**, coordinator of jazz studies for the Music Department. Stasio studied with Cowell in 2011–2012 as he earned his master's degree in music at Mason Gross.

"Rather than mimic the post-bop and post-modern styles of that decade as so many others did, Stanley maintained a unique, somewhat nostalgic voice," Stasio says. "There wasn't a need to compete with his contemporaries, but rather contribute alongside the energy of that era."

But Cowell also embraced new sounds and technology, both as a composer and as a performer.

"Cowell's playing epitomized the piano's ability to consolidate generations of musical history into a unified expression, while extending various routes into the future," wrote Giovanni Russonello in an obituary in *The New York Times*. "And when he needed to say more than the piano allowed, he expanded his palette," exploring electronic music with digital sound processors and incorporating new instruments into his compositions, like the kalimba, a thumb piano from southeastern Africa.

Alum **Courtney Bryan**, a student of Cowell's who earned her master's degree in music in 2007, remembers her professor as "rigorous yet patient in his pedagogy."

"There is so much I learned from him, from studying the nuances of stride styles of Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson to approaching harmony and arrangements from a very contemporary approach," Bryan says.

"I remain amazed at his groundedness in what truly mattered in life, and how his spirituality and depth of personality came through all the music he made," Bryan adds. "We will miss him greatly, and I am grateful he left us so much brilliant music to keep learning from."

In 1971, Cowell and trumpeter Charles Tolliver founded Strata-East Records, inspired by the Black

musicians' collectives of the time and dedicated to exploratory African American jazz. Although Cowell and Tolliver left the label just three years later to pursue other career goals, the label is still releasing artist-produced recordings to this day.

Cowell came to Rutgers in 2000 and was a "prestigious addition" to the Mason Gross faculty, says **Ralph Bowen**, professor of saxophone and jazz studies.

"Stanley was a world-class pianist at the top of his field," Bowen says. "Whether teaching piano, improvisation, ensembles, or composition, he had a wealth of knowledge to impart."

As a professor, Cowell, who retired in 2013, welcomed students into his studio "with a warm smile and gentle demeanor," recalls Stasio, and had an ability to translate his background in classical and traditional jazz music into relevant teaching for contemporary jazz students.

"His foundational guidance helped bring clarity to the pursuit of the piano, to understand where the instrument has been, where it can go, and how we can take part in that trajectory," says Stasio. "I think I speak for all his piano students when I say he made us love being pianists, and [helped us] remember why we were drawn to the instrument and to fall back in love with it."

Watch a concert by the Rutgers University Jazz Ensemble in tribute to Cowell, performed May 3, 2021, on the Mason Gross Facebook page: facebook.com/MasonGrossSchool.

FACING INJUSTICE



NICK ROMANENKO

Recent BFA acting grad **Alex Scoloveno** (left) created a 15-by-23-foot mosaic of George Floyd, a Black man killed last spring during an arrest in Minneapolis, with images of people who have either died fighting for civil rights, were victims of racial inequality, or were killed by the police. Scoloveno researched and found the pictures of the civil rights activists and racial injustice victims, then used an app to create a grid and invited his Central New Jersey community to help create the mosaic. "I wanted it to be not just me making it on my own. I wanted to include and enroll people," Scoloveno told MyCentralJersey.com. "I wanted to create that experience where people could come and really see the perspective and gain knowledge that they may have not had before."

WHY YOU SHOULD GIVE

"Helping people bring out their emotions and react to what they're watching is my goal for each story and film I make. My favorite part about filmmaking is going into the editing room and bringing out those emotions through how I edit the scenes," says filmmaking student and scholarship recipient **Ivanna Guerrero**. "Also, as an Afro-Latina filmmaker, seeing how the industry lacks women and POC behind and in front of the camera really discourages me and is an issue I'm very passionate about

changing. I don't want kids to have doubts if they can make it in the film industry based on what they look like. I want them to look at themselves and believe they can make it and that they're awesome because they have the talent. That's something no one can take away from them."

Your support can help students like Guerrero achieve their goals. Please consider donating to selected Mason Gross funds or events series. Learn more at give.rutgers.edu/mgsa.



COURTESY OF IVANNA GUERRERO



Department of Art & Design undergrad Ria Monga with her installation, *Growing Pains*. The piece was part of an annual public art project that spotlights social justice issues in Central Jersey.

NICK ROMANENKO

DRAWING ON COMMUNITY

Public art initiative expands mission with virtual events

By Risa Barisch

Windows of Understanding, a public art initiative that highlights social justice issues and raises awareness about Central New Jersey-based community organizations, began planning its fourth year last spring while much of the state was reeling from the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was thinking, everyone is dealing with so much right now, they're never going to want to think about an art project," says **Cassandra Oliveras-Moreno**, a cofounder of the project and a Rutgers University-New Brunswick alumna. "We had no idea who would have the bandwidth to say yes and whether the windows or spaces where we needed to show art would even be an option given the pandemic."

But despite the raging coronavirus pandemic, which led to a state shutdown, kept students out of the classroom, and overwhelmed hospitals, this year's Windows of Understanding, which took place in January and February, expanded, adding partner organizations, increasing its roster of artists with

an online exhibition, and finding a wider audience with virtual events.

Oliveras-Moreno, the communications and collaboration administrator in the Department of Art & Design, and her team—which includes Windows of Understanding cofounders and Rutgers alumnae Jennifer Sevilla and Tracey O'Reggio Clark—realized the importance of raising awareness about community support during a pandemic.

Founded in 2018 as an homage to the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and co-presented by Mason Gross, the project pairs artists with local nonprofits to create installations in storefronts and other public spaces that center around themes including food insecurity, public health, healing from trauma, and youth engagement.

Ria Monga, an art and design undergraduate student, was paired with the Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth Program, which operates out of Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care and provides support for communities affected by traumatic events, especially suicide—the third-leading cause of death in New Jersey for people ages 15 to 24, according to the program.

Monga's installation, *Growing Pains*, featured the title printed backwards—meant to reverse when

looking in a mirror to represent youth having a conversation with themselves in order to heal.

"I wanted to convey that no one is isolated with their emotions," says Monga, whose work was displayed in the outside case at RiteAid in Highland Park. "Negative feelings are common among our youth, which is why it is important to discuss pain and trauma to allow for healing."

Art and design undergraduate student **Frances Cruz** was paired with the Highland Park Food Pantry.

The pandemic prevented her from being able to visit the food pantry, so she relied on photos and videos from volunteers to create her installation, which depicted the volunteers serving clients outdoors.

"I wanted to convey how the food pantry is very welcoming and more than happy to help out anyone in their community who needs food regardless of their identity, which is portrayed in the racial diversity of their community as well," Cruz says.

The artwork, which hung at the Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce in New Brunswick, was a challenge to create at home, says Cruz.

"I live in a small home, so I had some difficulty deciding where to set up my drawing and workspace

without being disruptive to everything else," Cruz says.

Taking a flexible approach to the project was essential to continue the public installations during a pandemic, Oliveras-Moreno says.

"There are so many things happening in the lives of our artists and in the work of our partners that it has been completely about accommodation and trying to come up with creative solutions around how to make these things happen," says Oliveras-Moreno.

Despite complications, Windows of Understanding found plenty of opportunities to have an even deeper impact on the community this year.

In addition to the public art, an online exhibition focused on racial justice featured work by local and national artists.

Windows of Understanding was also involved with the New Brunswick Public Schools, where they piloted a racial justice workshop at the high school and showcased art by elementary and middle school participants.

"The art and events we're offering are intended to raise critical visibility in the community, that whether you're in a position to give or receive help—support exists around you," says Oliveras-Moreno.

HOPPING ON THE BANDWAGON



Faculty Richard Deane performed as part of the New York Philharmonic's pop-up concert series

By Risa Barisch

Richard Deane played his last concert with the New York Philharmonic on March 12, 2020, and then, like the rest of the city, hunkered down to endure the COVID-19 crisis.

Four months later, with New York reeling in the pandemic's aftermath, Deane, the orchestra's principal acting horn and member of the music faculty at Mason Gross, began to feel his own sense of personal anguish without the creative outlet of performing.

"It was a feeling of unfulfillment," says Deane. "[Creativity] is a part of us, and it got ripped away. Once you don't get a chance to be creative, as a creative person, you really start feeling like there's something wrong."

Enter the NY Phil Bandwagon, a mobile musical experience dreamed up by Anthony Roth Costanzo, a Grammy-nominated countertenor described by Deane as "a local star," who has

performed at opera houses around the globe.

Costanzo and a team from the philharmonic rented a pickup truck, complete with a custom logo wrap, and secured outdoor venue locations and permits. By the end of August, the Bandwagon and orchestra musicians set out on a whirlwind tour across New York City to perform works ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein in more than 90 concerts.

Deane performed with the Bandwagon over two weekends, in three concerts each day, first in a brass quintet, which included Mason Gross music faculty member **Alan Baer**, the philharmonic's principal tuba, and again in a horn quartet, which included music faculty member **Leelanee Sterrett**, acting associate principal horn.

Musicians were responsible for getting themselves to each venue, where the truck would be waiting with equipment including chairs, music stands, and amplification, along with the orchestra's stage manager and crew to set it all up.

The only challenges to the arrangement, Deane says, were playing in a mask and, by mid-October, the cold.

"All of us brass players have played outside, going back to high school, when we played in marching band, and we've all played outdoor concerts throughout our careers," says Deane. "So we're used to the logistics of the wind, and to some degree the cold. But for any musician, once you get cold, it's a little hard to play."

The mask proved to be less comfortable than the temperature drops, says Deane, who wore a face-covering that included a horizontal slit covered by a flap to allow the horn's mouthpiece to fit through.

"We're really sensitive about our lips and our mouths, and how the mouthpiece fits right on our lips, so to have that extra layer of stuff there was just distracting," Deane says. "That aspect of it was something that was hard to get used to."

Still, that level of safety allowed the musicians to get closer to audiences who showed up at city parks, in Herald Square, and in front of schools and libraries across New York City. In addition to getting to play music again with his colleagues, Deane says the best part of the Bandwagon

experience was that interaction with the audience—something he misses out on in a concert hall, where he usually is seated at the back of the stage.

“ [Creativity] is a part of us, and it got ripped away. Once you don't get a chance to be creative, as a creative person, you really start feeling like there's something wrong.”

"The first rehearsal for the Bandwagon, I felt so nervous, I was kind of sick to my stomach," Deane says. "And then we started playing, and I got so happy. Riding the bus back across town, I'll never forget, I was high as a kite—I hadn't been that happy since March."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD DEANE

THROUGH THE MIC



Acting students **Will Ehrenfreund** (left) and **Malcolm Callender** have created a podcast, *Through the Mic*, to offer a platform for artists and creatives to share their work and discuss what it means to create, especially during the pandemic. Stream the first five episodes on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

STUDENT DESIGNS TWO NEW YORKER COVERS



COURTESY OF GRACE LYNNE HAYNES

“Sojourner Truth’s story shows the [resilience] of the human spirit and represents the tenacity to move forward.”

the United States—she knew she wanted to paint a historical portrait of a Black woman—and soon learned a hard truth: that Black women were actually not able to vote in the United States until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, nearly a half-century after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

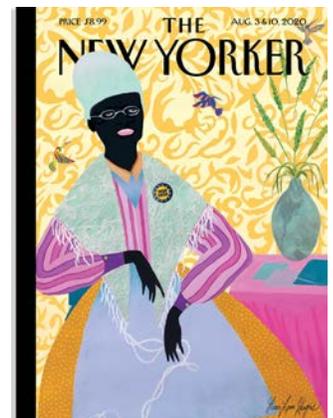
Haynes says she was “disappointed” but not exactly taken aback, “given this country’s complex history.” Truth emerged as the ideal candidate for the cover, Haynes says, because despite her prolonged and vocal advocacy for women’s rights—her “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech remains iconic, to this day—Truth “didn’t get to see the fruits of her labor.” So, the portrait, rather than a celebration of the centennial, stands as a reminder, Haynes says, “that this anniversary isn’t inclusive.”

It could also be seen as a celebration of grit, a toast to the daily, grinding work of justice—justice that eluded Truth in her lifetime. “People are looking for positivity right now and a message that is uplifting,” Haynes says, “and Sojourner Truth’s story shows the [resilience] of the human spirit and represents the tenacity to move forward.”

Despite Haynes’s choice to highlight a historical figure for *The New Yorker*, she is devoted to creating work that resonates with 21st-century viewers.

“One of my all-time favorite quotes by Nina Simone is: ‘An artist’s duty, as far as I’m concerned, is to reflect the times.’ I firmly stand by this statement, and live by it in my work,” Haynes says. “My role as a visual artist and a Black woman is to reflect on the current state of womanhood and create paintings that represent what women in my generation are feeling and going through.”

Follow Haynes on Instagram at [@bygracelynne](https://www.instagram.com/bygracelynne).



Grace Lynne Haynes commemorates 100th anniversary of the women’s right to vote

By Laurie Granieri

Painter **Grace Lynne Haynes** accomplished something few young artists have, even before she began her MFA in design at Mason Gross last fall.

At just 27 years old, Haynes, a student in the Department of Art & Design, painted two covers for *The New Yorker*, a significant achievement at any age.

“It is exceedingly rare for an artist be featured on two covers within a single month, which is clearly a testament to the power of Grace’s unique vision as an artist,” says department chair **Marc Handelman**. “We are so proud of Grace for her stunning and moving contributions to *The New Yorker*.”

Her color-drenched, boldly patterned portrait of a Black woman in a fabulous outfit with an equally fabulous bird perched on her right palm, was featured on the cover of the magazine’s

September 7 Fall Style and Design issue. Her inaugural cover for the magazine in early August (bottom right) marked the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment with an equally bold and highly patterned portrait of 19th-century abolitionist, former slave, and women’s rights crusader Sojourner Truth flanked by hummingbirds.

Haynes, who grew up in California and studied illustration, possesses a signature style that is evident in the haute-couture paintings she’s contributed to *Vogue*. In other words, you know a Haynes when you see one: high-fashion, luxuriating poses, and of course those bold pops of color and textiles, set against flat, abstracted Black bodies.

“I’m especially fascinated by the idea of dark and light existing in one image,” Haynes, who lives in New Brunswick, told *The*

New Yorker. “When I was an undergraduate, I couldn’t find information on how to paint darker-brown skin tones, so I began painting my characters in a deep black. Since then, the color black has been the focus of my paintings. I want to challenge the notion that black represents evil and showcase how darkness can be positive and pure.”

Haynes, featured last year among Forbes’ “30 Under 30 in Art and Style,” says her first *New Yorker* commission surfaced at the last minute, after the magazine learned about her collaboration with *Vogue*. She only had a few days to submit her sketches on the topic of the 100th anniversary of U.S. women earning the right to vote, and less than a week to complete the painting.

Haynes plunged into researching the history of voting rights in



To Break Bread, Raul Ayala, 18-foot-by-9-foot, acrylic paint on Polytab.

COURTESY OF RAUL AYALA

WATCH

In a belated celebration of Beethoven's 250th birthday, DMA piano students **Alber Chien** and **Christie Cho** curated and assembled video performances by fellow DMA students **Kang Eun Seo**, **Anastasia Dedik**, **YiQiao Li**, **Santiago Lomelin**, and **Lingjun Song** as well as MM student **Abraham Alinea** and piano faculty member **Daniel Epstein**. Watch at go.rutgers.edu/Beethoven250.

READ

In December, **Donald Holder**, the Tony Award-winning head of lighting design for the Theater Department, wrote an op-ed for USITT about theater educators and remote learning, and the importance of preparing students for their careers. "We are living through incredibly challenging times, and the hardship and the loss we've experienced may have long-lasting impact," Holder writes. "I have faith that audiences will eventually return to museums and concert halls and theaters across America, and that the lights of Broadway will burn brightly once again. But our collective future ultimately depends on how we support the next generation of emerging artists as they enter an uncertain world." Read the entire op-ed at go.rutgers.edu/Holder.

VISIT

Newark-based muralist and BFA Department of Art & Design alum **Layqa Nuna Yawar** was listed among BestofNJ.com's top mural artists. Yawar's work addresses issues such as racism, injustice, and xenophobia. His newest creation, "This Guiding Light," is visible on Newark's McCarter Highway. The work documents the rising power born from Black Lives Matter protests. Yawar was featured last summer in *The New York Times* in a piece about artists thriving during the pandemic. The shutdown meant canceled commissions and a retreat to the studio, but, as Yawar said, "As artists what we do is deal with that through our work." While you're in Brick City, stop by to see Art & Design MFA student **Grace Lynne Haynes's** nearly 30-foot-tall "Sojourner Truth: Founding Mother" mural on the rear of the Project for Empty Space building. In Highland Park? Get a peek at recent Art & Design MFA grad **Raul Ayala's** mural "To Break Bread," a work that celebrates multiculturalism. "I see walls as the ideal canvas—they are a metaphor for separation—all kinds of separations...social, economic, physical," he told Street Art NYC. The mural is displayed outside Robert's Florals on Raritan Avenue.

THE LAST WORD

JEREMY O. HARRIS

“ If we don't allow failure—especially Black failure—we don't allow Black greatness.... The failure was actually the genius, was the excellence.

Our ability to do something wrong is the entryway to breaking through to the genius thing.” —Jeremy O. Harris, record-breaking, 12-time Tony Award-nominated playwright and actor for *Slave Play*. Harris was a guest of the Visiting Artist Lecture Series, hosted by the Department of Art & Design, on December 2, 2020.



MATTHEW LEIFHEIT

IN MEMORIAM

*THE MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
COMMUNITY REPORTS WITH GREAT SADNESS
THE LOSS OF ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE
SCHOOL. WE EXTEND OUR CONDOLENCES TO
EACH OF THEIR FAMILIES AND CLASSMATES.*

All death notifications included in this issue of our magazine were submitted to the university after our last issue and before going to press on this issue. We apologize for any omissions and ask that loved ones of deceased alumni, friends, donors to the school, faculty, and staff notify us by emailing records@ruf.rutgers.edu. Please be sure to include the full name of the deceased (and name as a student), death date, class year, and major. Thank you.

Emma Amos, Chair Emeritus Visual Arts and Retired Faculty, MGSA, (May 20, 2020)
W. Jeffrey Bechtel, BFA MGSA - Professional Visual Arts 1988 (January 13, 2020)
Sharon L. Bernson, BFA MGSA - Theater Arts 1980 (February 10, 2017)
Peter J. Berry, MFA GMGA - Professional Visual Arts 1989 (March 9, 2020)
Darryl J. Bott, Former Faculty - Music, MM GMGA 2007 (May 23, 2020)
DeWitt T. Budd, BS AG 1949 (February 7, 2020)
Austin M. Cahill III, MFA GMGA 1983 (May 28, 2020)
Jorge A. Casanovas, MFA - Theater 2004 (October 22, 2020)
Professor Stanley A. Cowell, Retired Faculty - Music (December 17, 2020)
Donna M. Czirjak, BFA MGSA 1983 (June 24, 2017)
Manuel S. Garrido, BFA MGSA - Art 1982, MA GSNB 1985 (February 3, 2020)
William D. Garrison, MFA GMGA - Theater Arts 1993 (March 14, 2020)
The Honorable Bernard A. Kannen, BA RC 1950 (June 6, 2020)
Virginia Ann Moravek, BA DC 1964 and EdM GSED 1977 (December 23, 2020)
L. Kenneth Richardson, BA RC 1972, MFA MGSA 1977 (May 24, 2020)
Robert Soler, BFA MGSA 1986, MBA RBSG 1992 (November 4, 2016)
Joanne A. Sullebarger, BA DC 1953 (March 25, 2020)
Floyd G. Sumner, Retired Faculty - Music, PHD-Music GSNB 1973 (April 9, 2020)
Ronald G. Targan, Esq., LLB NLAW 1951 (October 20, 2020)
Anthony R. Volpe, DDS, MS, DDS RSDM 1960 (October 8, 2020)

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THE LAST LOOK

Director Benny Safdie signs student **Jackson Clark's** sneaker after a screening of his and brother Josh Safdie's (left) 2017 crime drama *Good Time* at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center. The Rutgers Filmmaking Center brought the filmmakers to the city for a screening, Q&A, and reception on October 25, 2019, as part of the Mason Gross Presents Series.