

MASON GROSS

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

# A MONUMENTAL FAREWELL

KARA WALKER ENDS HER TENURE AT RUTGERS ON A LARGE SCALE

245

ENTERING UNDERGRAD STUDENTS

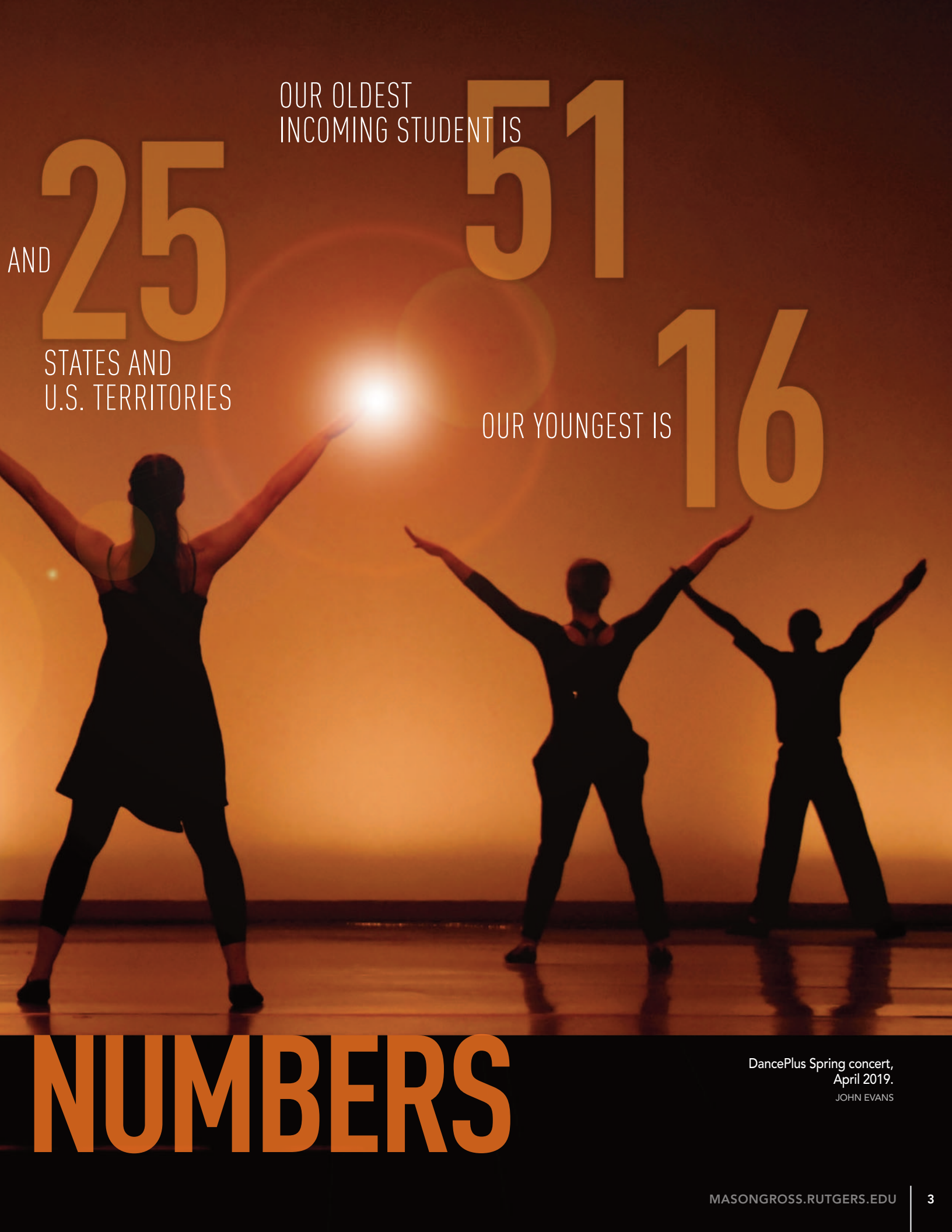
FROM 7 COUNTRIES

79

ENTERING GRAD STUDENTS



OUR ENTERING FALL 2019 CLASS,  
**BY THE**



OUR OLDEST  
INCOMING STUDENT IS

51

AND

25

STATES AND  
U.S. TERRITORIES

OUR YOUNGEST IS

16

NUMBERS

DancePlus Spring concert,  
April 2019.  
JOHN EVANS

## A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM DEAN

**I**t is an honor to be appointed by Chancellor Christopher Molloy to serve as the interim dean of Mason Gross School of the Arts. I am taking on this role while the university conducts a search for a new dean to replace Dean George B. Stauffer. I began my career at Rutgers at the same time as George, and I have seen the school grow in ambition and stature over the past 19 years. As a faculty member in the Department of Art & Design and recently as its chair, I have experienced new facilities, new colleagues, and new programs across Mason Gross. The changes in all areas of the school, from new spaces for the performing arts to the establishment of programs for the BFA degree in film and MFA degrees in dance and design, have been inspiring. The school is in healthy shape and is now poised for the next phase of its development as a powerhouse of creativity, collaboration, and experiment. Our new dean's task will be to guide the school through future challenges and establish Mason Gross in the international arena.

Over the next year, with the help of my colleagues, my aim is to keep the school in strong shape for the incoming dean. I am learning in depth about our departments and programs, particularly about the students, faculty, and staff who make them what they are. Mason Gross is a wonderfully complex and unique institution, and even after almost 20 years there is a lot more for me to discover.

— Gerry Beegan



KEITH MUCCILLI

Maxim Bouffard, from left, Walker Clermont, Allie Novell, Mahkai Carroll, Kirby Davis, Slater Ashenhurst, and Nick Thrive in Rutgers Theater Company's spring 2019 production of *The Rehearsal*.



# MASON GROSS

"Rutgers made it clear they were not only looking for good actors, but good people as well, which I really appreciated."

— *First-year BFA actor Sydney Shiotani*

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## A NEW STAGE

Mason Gross makes its debut as a member organization at the newly constructed New Brunswick Performing Arts Center



## A MONUMENTAL FAREWELL

Kara Walker ends her tenure as Tepper Chair on a large scale



## WORLD CLASS

Students spend the summer honing their artistry and traveling the globe

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Photo of Kara Walker by Ari Marcopoulos.

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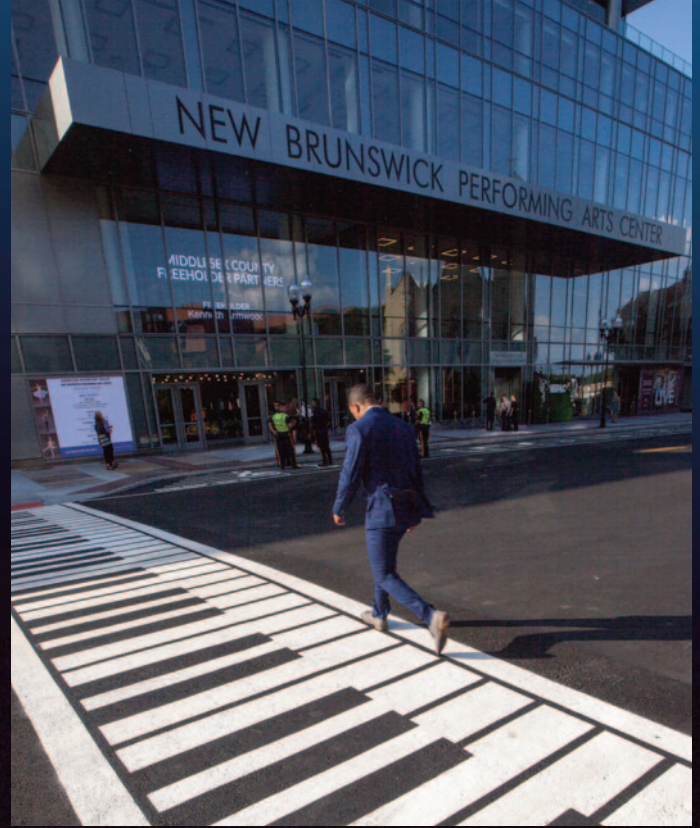
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# A NEW STAGE

Mason Gross begins performances at the 72,000-square-foot NBPAC

On September 4, the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) opened its doors with a private gala that included over 450 invited guests, including New Brunswick mayor Jim Cahill and Rutgers University president Robert Barchi. The evening featured performances by the center's four member organizations—American Repertory Ballet, Crossroads Theatre Company, George Street Playhouse, and Mason Gross School of the Arts—in the 463-seat Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater. Mason Gross Dance alumni Nina Guevara, Kristina Kong, Sawyer Newsome, Amelia Sagrabb, and Isabella Vergara and students Jeeseon Chung, Kristen Fry, José Lapaz-Rodriguez, and Charles Milliken took the stage to perform *Heaven on One's Head*, choreographed by faculty member Pam Tanowitz. Mason Gross presents seven events this fall at NBPAC—for the full listing, visit [masongross.rutgers.edu/calendar](http://masongross.rutgers.edu/calendar).



Clockwise from top: Our dance students and alumni in their opening performance; Crossroads Theatre Company treasurer John Hinds (from left), Crossroads artistic director, Mason Gross theater faculty, and Rutgers College alum Marshall Jones III, Associate Dean for Advancement Linda Christian, and Interim Dean Gerry Beegan; and Mayor James M. Cahill greeting visitors outside.

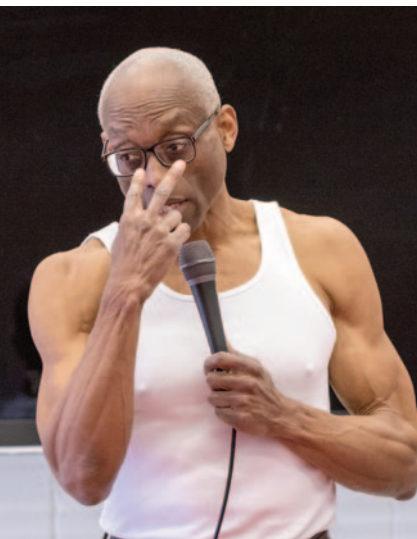


A well-stocked mind is a cultured mind. As makers, you have to figure out what moves you...What's important to you? How does beauty and truth operate in your day-to-day? How are you going to be authentic? Do it like a brave [expletive], because you often fail.

**Be courageous.**



— MacArthur Genius and legendary choreographer Bill T. Jones, speaking on March 13 to our dance students. We are grateful for his wisdom.



PHOTOS BY KEITH MUCCILLI

## WHY YOU SHOULD GIVE

"I would not have gone to Rutgers if I hadn't received a scholarship, so it has made all the difference. Once I found out I had been given money to pursue filmmaking, it changed my life. I would encourage someone to donate, because the kindest thing you could do for a person is to provide them with an education. It's an investment in an individual, an endorsement of someone's aspirations. I chose to earn a film degree because it was always the one consistent source of inspiration and drive in my life. Movies have always been there for me, and I want to return the favor."

— 2019 alumnus Abe Urquilla, BFA Filmmaking



Urquilla in a cinematography class with Professor Alan McIntyre Smith and Isabella Rodriguez.

KEITH MUCCILLI

To give, please email [alumni@mgsa.rutgers.edu](mailto:alumni@mgsa.rutgers.edu).

*Classics Today* calls the Raritan Players' new recording, *Sisters, Face to Face: The Bach Legacy in Women's Hands*, featuring faculty **Rebecca Cypess**, as well as Yi-heng Yang, an "enchanting disc."

Many congrats to **Nancy Rao** of the Music Department: In March, at the annual conference of the Society for American Music (SAM), she received the Lowens Book Award, one of the society's most prestigious honors and SAM's only book award, for her book *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America*. Rao's publication was selected from a field of 42 books.

# FACULTY & STAFF NEWS

The glass mural installation by Department of Art & Design faculty member **Stephen Westfall** in the New York City Subway's 30th Avenue Station in Astoria, Queens, has been selected as part of the Americans for the Arts 2019 Public Art Network (PAN) Year in Review, which recognizes outstanding public art projects. The PAN Year in Review received 361 applications, their largest set of submissions in more than five years from public art programs and artists from across the United States and beyond.

Dance faculty member **Pam Tanowitz** is a recipient of a 2019 Herb Alpert Award. The selection panel for this category said that Tanowitz was chosen because of "her unwavering commitment to her uncompromising artistic vision, rigorous sense of craft and composition, and for beginning again with each new work."

During the summer, Dean of Students **Mandy Feiler** got "creepy" and "kooky" in a production of *The Addams Family* alongside alums Beth Moore (BM Music Ed.) and Lori Cunningham (BFA Dance) at Plays-in-the-Park in Edison, NJ. Moore served as musical director; Feiler took on the role of Alice Beinecke; and Cunningham was a Ballerina Ancestor.

We'd like to welcome the following full-time faculty members, all of whom are new to the Mason Gross School in the fall 2019 semester: In the Art & Design Department, **Heather Hart**, Tepper Chair **Park McArthur** (see page 7), **Jeanine Oleson**, **Mindy Seu**, and **Didier William**; in the Dance Department, **Alessandra Williams**; in the Music Department, **Kenneth DeCarlo**, **John Giampietro**, and **Kristen Wallentinsen**; in the Theater Department, **Lee Savage**.

Dance faculty Pam Tanowitz working with our students.





# Why I Made This:

## Amee Pollack

BY RISA BARISCH

The work of mixed-media and book artist Ameer Pollack, which she describes as “handmade social commentary,” takes significant political and cultural ideas—the history of women’s suffrage, modern urban living, our digital lives—and presents them on a scale sometimes measured as small as three inches square.

Pollack, the undergraduate program advisor in the Department of Art & Design, created many of these three-dimensional, fold-out book-sculptures with her artistic partner and close friend, Laurie Spitz, who passed away in 2017. Works by Spitz & Pollack, as their collaboration was known, are in the permanent collections of over 50 organizations including the Brooklyn Museum, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design



KEITH MUCCILLI



AMEE POLLACK

Museum, New York Public Library Print Collection, and Yale University.

To continue the legacy of her partnership with Spitz, Pollack has created *Bench of Our Times*, a painted aluminum sculpture modeled after one of the last artists’ books the two created. It was installed last spring in front of the Lafayette Building on South Second Street in Highland Park, NJ, a former elementary school that has a new life as a condominium complex where Pollack resides.

Pollack partnered with fabricator Dan Lomax to create the bench-sculpture, which depicts children’s building blocks with decidedly mature modern themes—App, Kardashian, Multitask, Zantac—that Pollack says is a reflection on both connection and disconnection, but ultimately, community.

“The cautionary commentary about our world is still there, but the work also becomes a place to sit and connect with someone else, with yourself, or nature,” Pollack says. “The form of a bench really resonated with me because two people could sit there and have a conversation like Laurie and I did all the time.”

The bench is also a nod to famed Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, who lived in Highland Park while he taught design at Rutgers in the 1960s and whose children attended the Lafayette School.

“Much like Lichtenstein altering or ‘re-composing’ comic books, Laurie and I have also re-composed existing children’s blocks and my book illustrations,” Pollack says. “Lichtenstein’s work perhaps was more coolly detached than ours, but both have wit. Our piece could be more jarring to the viewer, however. Given that the work is a tribute to my friend and our collaboration, there is real emotion and deep sentiment present among the virtual/social media and big pharma references—I think that juxtaposition makes the work stronger and more compelling.”

Pollack acknowledges the work’s Pop (and Rutgers) roots.

“Obviously, we owe a debt of gratitude to Lichtenstein and other Pop artists because they broke down the barriers of what source material could be borrowed and become artwork, specifically looking at popular culture and mass media,” she says. “Fifty-plus years [after the Pop art movement], *Bench of Our Times* is meant to parody, with an entirely new landscape of industries/innovations—the internet, cell phones, iPads, social media, big pharma. The figures/faces in our work are interfacing with technology instead of each other and are broken up in parts/blocks. The piece is about connection and disconnection in the Information Age.”

Ultimately, Pollack says, she hopes the bench reinforces for her Lafayette Building neighbors a rich notion of community.

“Underneath the hanging blocks that seem to defy gravity, there are two figures of children playing instruments with each other, facing each other. I hope to see my neighbors using the bench and sitting down having good, meaningful conversations together.”

# STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS



Recent Dance Department alumna **Nayaa Opong-Nyantekyi** has joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company for work on a major new project.

JOHN EVANS

Great news for jazz performance alumnus **Eric Lindberg**, whose new music video for the song *A Mighty Roar* with his band, Nefesh Mountain (offering a mash-up of bluegrass and Jewish texts), premiered in July on *Rolling Stone's* website.

Rutgers Filmmaking Center alumnus **Zack Morrison's** Emmy-winning short film, *Everything's Fine: A Panic Attack in D Major*, premiered online and received a feature on *Playbill.com*. The 13-minute film, focusing on a quarter-life crisis, includes several original songs written by Morrison and David Seamon.

Art & design alumnus **Mike Benevenia** has been awarded a Fulbright-Nehru Research Fellowship. He is living in Northern India for nine months, researching and making art.

Piano performance alum **Jason Michael Webb** was honored in June with a Special Tony Award for his arrangements for *Choir Boy*. Webb was recognized with a Special Tony Award at the ceremony along with the late Marin Mazzie and Sonny Tilders and Creature Technology Company. Webb's award, according to the American Theatre Wing, is for "outstanding arrangements for *Choir Boy*... The show features 10 songs, a combination of gospels, hymns and ballads, all of which showcase Jason's powerful arrangements." Webb also wrote and arranged music for former President Barack Obama's 2013 inauguration ceremony.



Alumnus Eric Lindberg, second from left, and his band Nefesh Mountain, a group that combines bluegrass and Jewish musical styles.

Department of Art & Design student-athletes **Olympia Martin** and **Francesca Stoppa** were recognized by the Big Ten Conference—the oldest Division I collegiate athletic conference in the United States—as 2018-19 Distinguished Scholars. Stoppa, a design student, is a member of the Rutgers swim team; Martin, a painting student, runs on the cross-country team.

On August 30, just before kickoff of the Rutgers Football season opener vs. U Mass, theater faculty and Rutgers alumnus Marshall Jones III organized a reenactment of the first intercollegiate football game, which took place in New Brunswick in 1869, pitting Rutgers vs. Princeton. Alum **Ryan Neely** played the role of Rutgers football captain William Leggett; alum **Frank Dolce** stepped in as the Princeton captain, William Gummere. Other participating Mason Gross graduates include **Brandon Rubin**, **Baron Bass**, **Jovani Zambrano**, **Terrell Wheeler**, **Robert Esposito**, as well as **Dylan Weidenfeld**, **Victor Del Rio**, **Chris Pasi**, **Dan Drew**, **Johnny Dellaluna**, **Chisa Egbelu**, and **Tyler Conroy**, and current student **Jean-William Mackler**.

Music alumna **Patrice Jegou** won for Best A Cappella Song at the Independent Music Awards for "Lover Come Back To Me" (feat. Mark Kibble and Alvin Chea) from her 2019 jazz album, *If It Ain't Love*.

The works of MFA artist **Chloe Crawford** and recent MFA alumna **Valerie Suter** were selected out of over 500 submissions from

130 schools nationwide for the AXA Art Prize. Their works will go on a nationwide tour and are eligible for a \$10,000 first prize and \$5,000 second prize.

Music alumna **Cristina Pato** is the first musician to serve as the King Juan Carlos Chair at New York University. Pato, an internationally recognized Galician bagpipe master, as well as a classical pianist, composer, and educator, is a member of the Silk Road Ensemble established by Yo-Yo Ma and has traveled the globe with the group for many years.

Recent Theater Department alumnae **Jazmine Stewart** and **Kai Heath**, as well as alumnus **Jaime Lincoln Smith**, performed in The Public Theater's Free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Legendary director Kenny Leon helmed the production, which was a *New York Times* Critic's Pick and ran May 21 through June 23 at the Delacorte Theater in New York City's Central Park.

Music alum **Adrian Iordache** was awarded a Fulbright. He travels to Romania this fall to study a particular group of professional musicians, many of whom lack formal music training yet exhibit a high level of musicianship.

Theater alumna **Maddie Orton** is an Emmy winner: Orton won a New York Emmy Award for an episode of Public Media's *SciTech Now*. She is credited as a reporter/producer.

Theater alumna **Erin Cherry** won a Daytime Emmy Award in the Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Digital Daytime Drama Series category for her role as Brenda on the show *After Forever*, which also won Outstanding Digital Daytime Drama Series, Outstanding Directing, Writing, and Lead Actor. The show airs on Amazon Prime.

Three Rutgers Filmmaking Center students, **Kirsten Pasewaldt**, **Charles de Agustin**, and **Anna Robinson**, participated in the Telluride Film Festival Student Symposium, August 29 through September 2, open to only 50 students from around the globe.

Music alum **James Romig** was named a 2019 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his composition *Still*, for solo piano, inspired by the paintings of Clyfford Still.

Dance alum **Shakira Barrera** has parts in two acclaimed Netflix series (check her out in the third season of *Glow*, as well as *It's Bruno*), a movie on HBO, and next, she's the lead in a video game with an all-Latino cast. "I'm excited to be in people's living rooms, you know?" she says of the video game. "Kids that don't look like me playing me."

Look for theater alums **Brian Dykstra** and **Christopher Livingston** in Broadway's much-anticipated *The Great Society* at Lincoln Center Theater. The show opened September 6 and was brought to the stage by the team that created the Tony-winning *All the Way*.

# A MONUMENTAL FAREWELL

KARA WALKER ENDS HER TIME AT RUTGERS BY PRESENTING A WIDE-RANGING EXHIBIT OF GRAD STUDENT AND ALUMNI WORK IN NEW YORK CITY

BY RISA BARISCH

To close out her four-year tenure as the Department of Art & Design's Tepper Chair in Visual Arts, Kara Walker wanted her students, past and present, to go big—72,000-square-foot big, with an exhibition of their work presented at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in New York City.

Aptly named *Kara Walker Presents: The Colossus of Rutgers*, the exhibition ran from May 11 to 25, 2019, and was the capstone of an investigative journey led by the prominent contemporary artist around themes of memory, memorials, and monuments. Almost 30 Mason Gross MFA students and recent alumni created paintings, video installations, performances, sculpture, photography, and media that reflected on their study, research, and travels with Walker, which took them to Atlanta (2016–17), New Orleans (2017–18), and across New Jersey (2018–19).

Including students in her deep dive into race, sex, gender, and history was an idea Walker was committed to from the start of her tenure at Rutgers, which began in fall 2015.

"I like the thought of throwing an idea out into a group of eager students and hashing through it," Walker said in a 2015 interview. "We can have an extended conversation about what I'm thinking about and what they're thinking about art and civil duty and space and race."

## MONUMENTAL TASK

The historical and cultural significance of monuments, in particular, was a topic that student Erik Thurmond admits he had not deeply considered before joining Walker's 2018–19 cohort.

"One of the most incredible things about working with Kara was a moment early in the semester where I had proposed a kind of feel-

good celebratory piece about the queer communities in Newark in the '90s, taking this gentle approach to the project, and she really pushed me to think about where there were tougher issues to get into," says Thurmond, a performance artist. "Her questions begged me to search for something less fluffy."

Thurmond's ideas morphed into the performance piece *The One and Only*, which was presented over four hours at the Colossus opening reception and included eight other identically dressed men cast as "Erik Thurmond." It was a "tongue-in-cheek" monument to himself, he says, with a bit of a dark side.

**I'M PROUD TO HAVE MET THESE ARTISTS AND THINKERS AND TAKEN SOME BIG JOURNEYS WITH THEM.**

— Kara Walker

"What happens if I make this kind of dastardly move to say, OK, all of you have to pretend to be me?" Thurmond says about the work, which explored systems of power and ideals of masculinity, among other subjects, relying on improvisation and game play among the performers. "In that way we're creating this piece where we're building a monument to myself that is continually falling apart, and poking fun at that idea."

Alumna Bea Orlandi '18 created the animated video *EW! Elephantine Workout (On Design and Depression)*, a reformulation of a work she performed at the end of her year with the Atlanta cohort, for the *Colossus* show. The work touches

on colonial and female history, white supremacy, and fascism, and how these forces influence everyday design.

"It was a way to make sense of a lot of things, and try to fill them with this important history and establish that every time you see a shoe or a vase, that's what's behind that shape," Orlandi explains. "That thinking is what I understood as a monument."

Orlandi's cohort, known as *The Atlanta Ladies Memorial Association (ALMA)*, had traveled with Walker in 2017 to her ancestral home in Georgia to research stories and spaces that define the American South. For Orlandi, the trip, which

Bea Orlandi, *EW! Elephantine Workout (balance apparatus) + Topsy's*, 2017-2019.  
Materials: Charred wood, copper, denim, flying blanket.

## REMAKING HISTORIES

Indeed, Walker charged *Colossus* participants to “explore a region of America, a region of the mind, or their immediate surroundings, and discuss historical legacies embedded in stone, bronze, earth, blood, speed, language, etc.,” as she wrote in the invitation to the *Colossus* exhibition, which was included in *NYC X Design 2019*, the city’s annual showcase of design.

Alumna Yu Rim Chung '18 was part of both *ALMA* and the 2017–18 *Black Mold* graduate research group that traveled to New Orleans, named for the “the sordid watery influences in and around” the city, Walker wrote in *Time’s Up*, her farewell essay to her students.

The group was “immersed in the legacies of slavery and creolization, music and masking traditions from Africa, Mississippi River ecology, flooding, Hurricane Katrina, monument removal, and much more,” during the trip, Walker explained.

Chung’s response for the Brooklyn show was the sculpture *What rises must fall*, referencing both the role of water in New Orleans and the city’s removal of four Confederate monuments in 2017.

“Since our trips to Atlanta and New Orleans, I’ve continued to think further about how that physical space shapes the bodies that move through it, and how we chronicle disaster and recovery,” Chung says. “How does water act as life-giver and -taker in a city that has long had to contend with the question of whose bodies and whose suffering matter?”

## SHOW OF SUPPORT

The Tepper Chair was established in 2011 by Rutgers College alumna Marlene A. Brandt and David A. Tepper; painter Catherine Murphy was the inaugural artist to assume the role in 2012.



Mahsa Biglow, *The Blue Memory of Home*, 2019 Projection.

The residency provides art and design students the opportunity to collaborate with established artists and includes studio visits, group critiques, and guest lectures.

Walker’s research groups also published several art books and held public installations across the Rutgers–New Brunswick campus, including an installation at the Zimmerli Art Museum in 2017 and a day-long event of site-specific installations, performances, readings, and screenings at Kirkpatrick Chapel in 2018.

“The Tepper Chair allows us to bring groundbreaking artists to Rutgers to open up new possibilities and innovative ways of working for our students,” says Gerry Beegan, interim dean of the Mason Gross School. “Kara Walker activated imperative discussions within the department around race, art, and artistic scale—

the *Colossus* show was the ambitious climax of this artistic engagement.”

For Thurmond, Walker’s generosity with her time spent with students and in putting together the Brooklyn exhibition made her seem like a “fairy godmother,” he says with a laugh.

“She is arguably one of the most important and talked-about artists in the world right now—I don’t think that’s an overstatement,” says Thurmond. “She provided lots of support and help, and also valuable challenges and questions.”

“Also, it’s really hard to show in New York,” Thurmond continues. “The opportunity to bring people together in a show in the city—Kara did that. She knew that this was a big gift, and I couldn’t be more grateful for her offering that to us as grad students.”



Walker at the opening reception for *Kara Walker Presents: The Colossus of Rutgers*, an exhibit of Rutgers grad student and alumni work at Brooklyn Army Terminal.

PHOTOS BY KEITH MUCCILLI

## Introducing Park McArthur

Artist Park McArthur joins the Department of Art & Design this fall as the next Tepper Chair in Visual Arts. McArthur, whose work in various materials is often engaged in questioning frameworks of dependency, has had solo exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and Essex Street in New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Chisenhale Gallery in London; Yale Union in Portland, Oregon; Galerie Lars Friedrich in Berlin; and Pyramid Studios in Miami.

McArthur looks forward to working with students to “think through conceptual questions and their lived implications as they affect our making and study of art,” she says.

“What a privilege to be joining the amazing students and faculty of the Mason Gross Art & Design Department for the next few years,” McArthur continues. “I am honored to follow the first two Tepper Chairs, Catherine Murphy and Kara Walker, and hope to carry forward the spirit of experimental group learning set by their examples.”



# COMMENCEMENT 2019

**O**n May 16 at the State Theatre in downtown New Brunswick, we graduated approximately 322 of our theater and dance artists, musicians, educators, visual artists, and designers, along with our first class of BFA filmmakers. As always, commencement was a festive affair, both at the convocation ceremony, and, later on, at the reception, complete with cake, wine, cheese, and live jazz music, at the Civic Square Building.

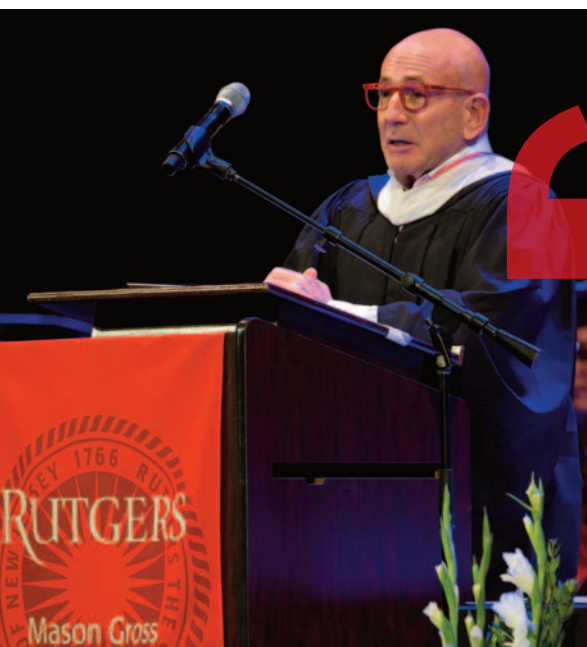


**Movement is my most natural form of communicating, and no matter how many times I may have felt lost or that I should give up, dance was always there to remind me of what I was capable of doing.**

– From 2019 BFA student Rachel Roman’s convocation speech



PHOTOS BY JODY SOMERS



**As part of the next generation, it will be your responsibility to not just create, but to elevate, innovate, reinvent, and revolutionize the arts, taking it to the next level. Art expresses what we don’t know how to say or don’t dare to say. Art of all kinds inspires, entertains, and enlightens. Art is how we communicate, how we grow, how we share ideas and tell our stories, and how we make the world interesting and beautiful.**

—Producer and Emmy-winner Jack Grossbart, 2019 Mason Gross convocation speaker

Rutgers students, shown holding up their tickets for *Creation (Pictures for Dorian)*, traveled to Berlin in May to study the influence of German theater on global drama.

BY RISA BARISCH

# World Class

CHRISTOPHER CARTMILL

## STUDENTS TRAVEL WIDELY AND DIVE DEEP DURING A SERIES OF SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD

BY RISA BARISCH

**J**ust as final exams were ending in May, filmmaking student Charles de Agustin was boarding a plane for France to attend the Cannes Film Festival.

Though the 12-day, star-studded event on the French Riviera has a well-deserved glitz-and-glam reputation—de Agustin read online that all he needed to pack was a tux and a bathing suit—he was there to immerse himself in the world of international film.

De Agustin and fellow students Finley King, Kirsten Pasewaldt, and Robert Rackmil attended the festival as guests of faculty member Danielle Lessovitz, whose film *Port Authority*, on which they had worked, premiered at the festival.

"It was absolutely a mind-expanding experience," says de Agustin, who served as a pre-production intern on Lessovitz's film last summer, conducting research and outreach for the producers and art department.

"Getting to see so many films in such a perfect exhibition context was almost like a religious experience," de Agustin says. "I really love the physical space of the cinema, all the love and attention that goes into making a cinema experience perfect, so being surrounded by similar people from around the world made for exciting conversation."

While there was some cinematic-celebrity spotting—including a possible sighting of director Jim Jarmusch—de Agustin says that there were reality checks, as well.

"There were a handful of those kinds of la-la land moments, but attending did pull back the mystique of the festival's grand status for me," says de Agustin. "As a filmmaker and artist increasingly interested in experimental/expanded cinema, I'm not entirely sure if Cannes is a goal



From left, Charles de Agustin, Kirsten Pasewaldt, and Finley King on the steps of the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès, the venue for the Cannes Film Festival.

for my own work, but I'm eternally grateful to Danielle and the Rutgers Filmmaking Center for the sequence of opportunities leading up to this trip."

Providing opportunities like these align with Lessovitz's commitment to opening the door to young filmmakers like de Agustin.

"Part of my job here at Rutgers is demystifying filmmaking," Lessovitz says. "The further you go into the process of making a film, the more you realize that it's actually not that complicated. Having students understand that, for the most part, they possess most of the talent and skills to do something like this—it's just a matter of working hard, really."



## INSPIRATION OVERSEAS

For theater student Erin Bogert, traveling to Berlin for three weeks in late May and early June to study the influence of German theater on global drama was, as Bogert tells it, “an amazing opportunity to see vast amounts of—and vastly different—works” in a condensed period of time.

Coordinated by Rutgers Global and led by theater faculty member Christopher Cartmill, the trip allowed Bogert to see a whopping 19 plays in 21 days along with other Mason Gross undergraduate and graduate actors, stage managers, and playwrights, as well as students from other disciplines at Rutgers, including electrical engineering and biology. It was an experience, Bogert says, that left her feeling “changed and inspired.”

“My whole life I have been told that I need to approach my theater career in a very specific way, that there is no room for having many passions,” says Bogert. “I was taught by my peers on this trip and by the performers and companies we saw and met that...multifaceted artists exist, survive, and do well.”

Among the array of theater productions Bogert saw was *Professor Bernhardt*, performed entirely in Viennese German, which she found nearly impossible to understand despite her minor in German.

“Experiencing the shows without the aid of language was one of the key experiences that Christopher wanted us to have during this trip,” says Bogert. “Among other reasons, good acting, directing, and design can be much more important than language.”

Another highlight for Bogert was *Remote Mitte*, a theater experience in which participants are led through the city—from a graveyard to a train station—under the guidance of a voice coming through wireless headphones.

“I felt like I was in a real-life video game, in a good way,” says Bogert. “Although the show did have some beautiful messages and raised many intriguing questions, it was also fun. It was a reminder to me that theater does not always have to be heavy and laden with reason and meaning and artsy exploration.”



**Listening to people  
with such diverse life experiences  
performing so beautifully  
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It reinforced the truth that  
there is more that connects people  
than divides people.**

— Graduate music student  
John Wilson,  
on his trip to Germany



## CONNECTING THROUGH MUSIC

Also traveling in Germany was the Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir, one of 14 choirs chosen from around the globe to perform at the International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf festival in Bavaria, in southeastern Germany, from June 7 to 12.

Led by faculty member Patrick Gardner, director of the Kirkpatrick Choir, the trip included performances at Saarland University and the Stiftskirche St. Annual cathedral, both in Saarbrücken, and a post-festival excursion to the Limburg Cathedral to perform with the Cantabile Limburg men’s chamber choir.

John Wilson, a DMA conducting student and teaching assistant who sings tenor in the choir, was struck by the “incredible celebration of the unifying power of music” at the festival’s opening celebration, at which choirs performed short selections from their home countries, including Cuba, Turkey, Ireland, Russia, Sweden, the Czech Republic, the Philippines, Germany, and Switzerland.



MICHAEL MAR

The Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir traveled to Bavaria in southeastern Germany in June to perform at the International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf. Their many performance venues included the Church of Saint Anna in Waal.

“Listening to people with such diverse life experiences performing so beautifully was affirming on the deepest level,” says Wilson. “It reinforced the truth that there is more that connects people than divides people.”

Creating a compelling repertoire at an international festival is challenging, says Wilson, the choral director at Bridgewater-Raritan High School in Bridgewater, New Jersey, and hearing carefully crafted programs was “incredibly significant.”

“I heard music at Marktoberdorf that I would very likely have never heard otherwise—those kinds of experiences are irreplaceable,” says Wilson, who plans to perform some of the pieces with his students.

The trip was a “huge coup” for Mason Gross, Gardner says.

Besides covering all housing and meal expenses for participants, the competition allowed Kirkpatrick Choir to establish an international reputation as winners of the Dolf Rabus Award for best programming at the festival.

“The invitation to perform at the world’s most prestigious choral competition is an experience that our students will take with them forever,” says Gardner. “They were able to interact closely with singers and audience members from all over the world, which was an incredibly enriching experience—and one I am sure they will never forget.”

For Bogert, traveling abroad helped her to discover a sense of optimism and confidence, she says.

“This is going to sound so cliché, but this trip convinced me that following my dreams is possible,” Bogert says. “Plus, I’ve met a whole lot of people who I want to continue to create art with.”



## IN MEMORIAM: Tom Nozkowski

Professor Emeritus Thomas Nozkowski, a member of the Department of Art & Design, died on May 9 in Rhinebeck, NY, at the age of 75. Nozkowski was known for his modestly sized abstract paintings. Roberta Smith of *The New York Times* commented in his obituary that “each of his paintings functions as a peculiarly single entity, a world unto itself; whatever you experience with one Nozkowski doesn’t necessarily translate to the next.”

In an interview with *Mason Gross Magazine* several years ago, Nozkowski said, to make a painting, “you take colored mud and push it around with a stick with hair on it. It is a finite area. But the greatest achievements are really glorious in the intensity that can be brought to those modest materials.”

Below are remembrances of Nozkowski:

While I was at Mason Gross, my favorite time was the weekly studio visits from Tom. He walked into the studio, looked around, and pointed out the very problem I was having. Then we would sit down and talk, and the conversations would run the gamut: books, movies, music, and, of course, painters. Studying with Tom felt like I was moving at sonic speeds. He helped me grow as a painter and a person. Those two years at Mason Gross with Tom, the rest of the faculty, and hanging out with the other students, are among some of my best memories.

— Wes Sherman ('03)

Tom Nozkowski was a visionary artist. He was also my teacher, a muscle in the studio, generously sharing his perception and moving the needle forward. I am so grateful for his wisdom, support, and discerning words; but mostly for all of the paintings, talismans, gems, he brought into the world.

Behind every artist is a force, a sorcerer of sorts, that believes in the work and quietly brings others around to see its potential. Tom made this enormous impression on me. His influence can be seen in my work and among the multiple generations of artists that keep his transcendent practice very much alive.

I think of Tom now, in the studio, and often on long walks when I am searching, like he regularly did, for nothings to become somethings. I think of his perseverance and commitment and thank him for making the magical connectivity of art and life real.

— Amy Feldman ('08)

Many star scholars and faculty members brought in to rebuild programs seek to narrowly focus and limit their duties on the faculty so as to balance their teaching responsibilities with the other enormous demands on their time. Not Tom. Tom’s devotion to his students was inspiring. He mentored our students and connected them with the outside art world.

— Dennis Benson (Former Associate Dean)

Tom Nozkowski’s passing leaves a huge hole in the art world and hits the Rutgers community especially hard. Tom painted abstract paintings on a resolutely modest scale partly as a protest of paintings being too big to live with in apartments, but also because a smaller scale suited him, as it did Paul Klee and Myron Stout. Over time the scale of his production demanded to be considered as a stupendous achievement on its own: hundreds of paintings, each one perfectly realized in a seemingly endless range of color, surface variance, and witty form-giving; often derived and abstracted from something he saw in the “real” world on his frequent walks. He was one of the latest in a long line of superstar mavericks teaching at Mason Gross School of the Arts, and he loved his job and loved his students. His presence attracted applicants to the MFA program at Mason Gross from all over the country, and his students have moved on to sustained careers as artists and educators. He also recruited faculty. I’m one of them. He



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— Painter and alum  
Amy Feldman,  
2018 Guggenheim Fellow



continued to visit the school as Professor Emeritus after his retirement, and his arrival was always an event. Tom also worked behind the scenes in raising money for the Art & Design program, and his generosity will continue to benefit Mason Gross for years to come. He was one of the liveliest minds and the funniest men I’ve ever known. Through his fierce intelligence, integrity, empathy, and great humor, Tom remains a power of example for artists and teachers to follow. We were lucky to have him.

— Painting professor Stephen Westfall



Credit: © Thomas Nozkowski, courtesy Pace Gallery. *Untitled*, 2009, oil on paper, 22-1/4-x-30" (56.5-x-76.2 cm).  
Photography by Kerry Ryan McFate, courtesy of Pace Gallery.

“What led me to pursue an acting degree were the bedtime stories my grandpa used to tell me as a child: The way in which he could turn a simple story into something thrilling, which then transported me into a new, magical world, gave me an unexplainable feeling of joy. This inspired me to want to generate that same feeling in other people, sparking a return to their childlike imagination. I wanted my art to serve as a vehicle through which people would forget about their worries and life stressors and retreat to a mindset of eternal possibilities, for whatever window I have them.”

—MFA actor Marcella Cox



Cox, center, in Rutgers Theater Company's spring 2019 production of *The Rehearsal*, alongside Zoë Kim and Petey McGee.

T CHARLES ERICKSON

## 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 in the spring of 2019 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](mailto: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.*

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**Louise Grafton**, Former Faculty (Theater), July 20, 2019

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**John L. Goodyear**, Retired Faculty (Art & Design), July 2, 2019

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**Caroline Chao**, Faculty (Theater), June 23, 2019

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**Thomas E. Nozkowski**, Retired Faculty (Art & Design), May 9, 2019

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**Charles J. Kenlan**, RC '58, BA (German), Glee Club, May 3, 2019

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**Raymond E. Phipps**, UCN '54, BS, Donor, April 18, 2019

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**Linda E. Hudak**, MGSA '83, BFA (Art Education), March 20, 2019

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**Walter L. Leib**, RC '51, BA (Political Science), NLAW '53, Parent & Donor, March 1, 2019

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**Larry D. McKim**, MGSA '80, MFA (Art), February 7, 2019

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**Rebecca M. Polgar**, MGSA '92, BMUS (Music), December 27, 2018

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**Susan Fenton**, MGSA '80, MFA (Art), November 23, 2018

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## The Last Look

Student Pablo Hernandez  
rehearsing before the Rutgers Jazz  
Ensemble concert, March 2, 2018.