


Passion Project

The Leora M. Sies Theater Fund's gift advances a Douglass alumna's mission to preserve classical theater



We're headed across the river
three times this semester,
as our students perform and
exhibit their work in Manhattan.
Grab a ticket, and watch our
artists shine up the Big Apple.

Bright Lights

BIG

TRINITY CHURCH

APRIL 23, 5 P.M.

Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir and the Rutgers Percussion Ensemble perform a free concert at the soaring 19th-century Episcopal church in Lower Manhattan, 75 Broadway. The program features work by Lou Harrison, including the East-meets-West sounds of "La Koro Sutro" and Suite for Violin and American Gamelan.



FOLEY GALLERY

MAY 3 TO 14

Second-year MFA artists display their work at this Lower East Side gallery, 59 Orchard Street. Catch the opening reception from 6 to 9 p.m. May 6. Admission is free.

CITY

WEILL RECITAL HALL

MAY 8, 7:30 P.M.

Our pianists present music from around the globe at this intimate venue in the legendary Carnegie Hall. Tickets: CarnegieCharge 212-247-7800 or carnegiehall.org. Box office at 57th and Seventh.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Nothing ensures the financial stability of the school more effectively than endowments, and to that end we have been able to increase these funds to nearly \$25 million—a modest amount for a top-tier arts conservatory, but solid progress for a public university program just 41 years old.

In December, the Mason Gross endowment took a great leap forward with the gift of \$4 million by Roger Sies and Andrea Wargo of Scottsdale, Arizona. Given in memory of the Sies's sister-in-law, 1955 Douglass College graduate Leora M. Sies, the new endowment will support the production of classical plays in the Theater Department, one of the top drama programs in the country. It is through such investments that Mason Gross will be able to continue the work of training young artists.

Meanwhile, Mason Gross has emerged as an increasingly important player in Big Ten activities. At a recent conference of the Big Ten Leadership Program on the Rutgers campus, the school provided a mini-festival of the arts, presented over two days. And in March, Mason Gross convened the first meeting of the Big Ten arts deans, at the headquarters of the Big Ten Academic Alliance in Chicago, where the various schools began to consider arts collaborations. I attended the meeting with Ruqayya Maudoodi, the head of our Rutgers Arts Online program, which now has more than 7,000 enrollees. Our Big Ten colleagues are interested in how such programs can broaden the audience and mission of an arts school and become a critical outreach component in the 21st century. With the school's advantageous location close to New York City and its highly ranked programs, Mason Gross is positioned to emerge as a leader of the arts in the Big Ten. It is our intention to make it so.

— George B. Stauffer, Dean



Cinematography class, September 2015.

MASON GROSS

"My favorite time for practice is at night, definitely. I don't know why, but I can better concentrate on it, and somehow my ears work much better in the calm and relaxed atmosphere of the night."

— Student pianist Mi Jung Cho, who performed the solo part in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 during October's Rutgers Symphony Orchestra concert.

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T CHARLES ERICKSON

PASSION PROJECT

The Leora M. Sies Theater Fund's \$4 million gift to the Mason Gross School advances the late Leora M. Sies's mission to preserve classical theater.

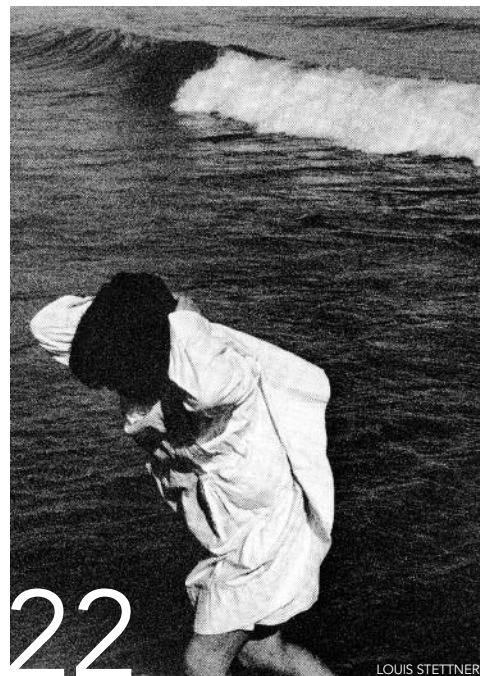


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JEREMY BERKOWITZ

'UNIQUE EARS'

Student Anna Gichan was born moderately-severe to profoundly deaf, but that's never kept her from dancing.



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LOUIS STETTNER

SPARKED

Film professor Patrick Stettner relies on long-distance swims in the sea to stoke his creativity. "Pushing through the fear, the mind wanders with a vigorous vitality," he says.

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ON THE COVER

Photo of student Elijah Coleman in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by T Charles Erickson

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Passion Project

The Leora M. Sies Theater Fund advances a Douglass alumna's mission to preserve classical theater

BY LAURIE GRANIERI

Leora Motta Sies was a bonafide Jersey girl—she grew up in the Passaic County borough of Hawthorne and graduated in 1955 with a BA in art history from Douglass College. But like many Jersey girls before and after her, Sies found herself dazzled by the bright lights of Manhattan.

"That was where she wanted to be," says Roger Sies, Leora's brother-in-law. Leora (1934–2001) went on to study art at Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts. She enjoyed a vibrant career as a graphic designer and was married to Roger's older brother, Luther (1927–2013), a college professor of speech and hearing.

Roger says the couple, who lived in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, regularly embarked on long walks together, strolling all around their beloved city.

"They were interested in everything," he says, adding that they were especially devoted to the theater, attending Broadway, off-Broadway, and community-theater productions as often as three times a week.

To that end, before her death, Leora planned to establish a foundation to support the production of plays and operettas, with an emphasis on classical Greek works, as well as plays steeped in the British, Russian, and American theatrical canons, among others. Upon her death in 2001, Luther established the Leora M. Sies Theater Fund Foundation through his estate; eventually, Roger, the Sies Foundation trustee, opted to devote the funds—\$4 million—to the Mason Gross Theater Department.

The gift is the third-largest in the school's 41-year history.

The mission, according to Roger: "Giving the young actor a chance to get experience and learn the craft. Leora was the driving force behind this."

ALIVE AND WELL

Andrea Wargo, Roger's wife, says Leora hoped to establish the foundation because "she felt that classical theater was dying out."

But talk to any Mason Gross School theater artist, and you'll learn that, at Rutgers, at least, classical theater is flourishing. Since 2015, the Sies Theater Fund has supported nearly a dozen Rutgers Theater Company productions, including Anne Carson's translation of *An Oresteia*, Luigi Pirandello's *Absolutely! (Perhaps)*, and this semester's productions of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar*.



Clockwise from top: August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*; Leora and Luther Sies; William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both productions were supported by the Leora M. Sies Theater Fund.

“YOU CAN STUDY
ALL YOU WANT, BUT THEN
YOU HAVE TO USE IT
ONSTAGE. THE SIES GRANT
GIVES US THAT.”

— Christopher Cartmill, director

Several Mason Gross actors say they regard the plays as classics, not merely because they've been instructed to, but because, centuries after they were written, the works feel vital to their own lives.

“There's a reason that classical texts have survived—they speak to our fundamental shared experience,” says student actor Sydney Mitchell, who appeared in a Sies-supported production of Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* earlier this semester. “By examining or commenting on large aspects of how societies function, break, heal, and grow, these classical texts become universal and timeless. History is always repeating itself, right?”

Theater faculty member Christopher Cartmill has directed numerous Sies-funded productions, including *A Dream Play* and *The Emperor of the Moon*. He says the Sies funding functions as a gift to the entire university, because the money grants Mason Gross the freedom to mount provocative plays that challenge the cast, the crew, and, it is hoped, the audience.

“Production is where the rubber meets the road,” Cartmill says. “All the work you've done is now onstage for an audience—this includes designers, stage managers, and actors. They get to practice what they've been doing in the classroom.

“You can study all you want,” Cartmill adds. “But then you have to use it onstage. The Sies grant gives us that.”

Mitchell agrees.

“One of the most helpful learning opportunities comes when we get to test all of this on stage,” she says. “It is all about the audience. I certainly am not interested in getting up on stage and being praised; I want to be communicating.”

A FIRM FOUNDATION

Actor Elijah Coleman, who appeared as Puck in last year's Sies-funded *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, points to a pragmatic aspect of the Sies gift: landing a job.

“I can look at any text and nail it, because Shakespeare is so specific,” he says. “With that classical training, we know what we're doing. It's pushed my mind. I'm not scared. I can serve it—because I know it.”

Not only has this grounding in classical texts stretched students onstage—the opportunity to delve into what are often centuries-old stories has, in some instances, transformed their worldview.

“The most satisfying thing after a performance is feeling so humble,” says actor Jazmine Stewart, who admits to initially finding some of the language in the plays “intimidating.” “Because, I interpreted this text from someone

who lived hundreds of years ago—and I lived that character.”

Stewart says she believes the endurance of work like *The Emperor of the Moon*, written three-and-a-half centuries ago, “says this play is bigger than all of it. It has a universal message that all people can connect to.”

In some ways, our theater artists seem immersed in conversations with playwrights and characters, across the boundaries of time, national borders, race, and gender.

“Classical theater reminds me that plays are living, breathing things that we get to experience together,” Mitchell says. “We get to explore and question together.”

And we suspect that Leora M. Sies, prolific artist, avid theater-goer, Jersey girl-turned-Manhattan sophisticate, would revel in their exploration. Certainly, her in-laws remain determined to see that her vision plays out on the stages of Rutgers.

The Leora M. Sies Theater Fund, is, indeed, a dream fulfilled.

“Leora was the passion behind the project,” Roger Sies says, then adds: “I'm grateful for the partnership the Mason Gross School has offered. It has allowed us to keep our promise to Leora and Luther. Without our partnership, this would not have succeeded.”

A Rutgers Theater Company production of Bertolt Brecht's *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich*, supported by the Sies Theater Fund.

PHOTOS BY T
CHARLES ERICKSON

Thinking outside ‘the cube’

GALLERY COORDINATOR BELIEVES
‘ART SHOULD BE EVERYWHERE’

BY RISA BARISCH

On the streets of New Brunswick, where passersby may see blank concrete walls, Daonne Huff sees canvases waiting to be painted. Those skateboard shop store windows? That’s prime display space.

“Art should be everywhere, and everyone deserves access to it as much as possible,” says Huff. At the start of the fall 2016 semester, Huff joined the Mason Gross Visual Arts Department as both the graduate program administrative assistant and gallery coordinator.

Huff practices what she preaches: within just a few months of her arrival at Rutgers, she helped to organize the *co-creare shows*, a cross-campus exhibition of student performances and artwork at the Rutgers Art Library, Mason Gross Galleries, and Douglass Student Center; implemented a display of undergraduate students’ sculptures in the street-facing windows of Rite Aid in Highland Park; and created First Fridays events to host performances and lectures during extended hours in the galleries at Civic Square in downtown New Brunswick.

It’s all part of a work in progress, in which Huff is figuring out as many ways as possible to publicize the work of Mason Gross student artists.

“I’m just testing things—I’m going to throw as many things as I can at the wall and see what sticks,” says Huff.

This experimental, can-do attitude permeates Huff’s career, which has taken her around New York City as a curator and administrator working with

several public art organizations including Groundswell (a community mural project), The Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

REACHING OUT

Huff describes her role at Mason Gross as a “dream job” that marries her professional experience and her dedication to community building.

“The graduate administrator side was an attractive component because I believe in artists and I believe in art making, and I’ve made it a point throughout my career to understand what it means when you take on this mantle, this weight to some degree, of identifying as an artist,” says Huff, herself a creator of site-specific performance pieces centered around themes including gentrification, Afro-futurism, and the work of African-American workers at the Brooklyn Navy Yard during World War II.

As the coordinator of Mason Gross Galleries, Huff oversees 4,200 square feet of display space, which she refers to as “the cube.” For each exhibition presented there, visual arts students take ownership of the concept, while Huff oversees the logistics, including scheduling installations and public receptions.

As invested as she is in the galleries, however, Huff encourages student artists to move their work outside of the controlled environment of the building.

“One thing that’s really important for our students—both undergrad and grad—is to be prepared to go into the world, and to live as an artist,” Huff says. “That’s about taking advantage of opportunities, however big or small. It’s not always going to be a gallery space that you’ll have access to.”

Huff says she has plans to reach out to student centers and Rutgers University Libraries, among other facilities, for more off-site installations, and acknowledges the challenges artists face when showing their work in public.

“There’s risk involved with taking your work outside of a space that’s familiar and comfortable,” says Huff. “You have to accept that once you take your art out of your studio, you are at the mercy of the elements—of people and their feelings and their responses. But that shouldn’t deter you from continuing to make the work and wanting to expose people to it, because they deserve to see it.”

To that end, Huff remains focused on connecting art to audiences who aren’t necessarily going to museums or aren’t in close proximity to galleries, and says she is always mulling ways to encourage students to share their work wherever it can be displayed.

“We’re here,” Huff says. “We have work that we want to share. And if people aren’t going to come to us, then we should find ways and means of going to them.”

“My dream is murals,” she continues. “I want our student work everywhere in New Brunswick. There’s so much being made, and I don’t think it’s fair that only Mason Gross people get to see it.”

“
WE HAVE WORK THAT
WE WANT TO SHARE.
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GOING TO COME TO US,
THEN WE SHOULD FIND
WAYS AND MEANS OF
GOING TO THEM.”

Daonne Huff in the Mason Gross Galleries, which she oversees and is shaking up with a slate of initiatives, including First Fridays performance events, open to the public.

A round of applause to Dance Department chair and artistic director **Julia Ritter**, who presented the 2016 Selma Jeanne Cohen Fund Lecture, based on her research on dance and immersive performance, at the 39th annual Fulbright Association conference in November in Washington, D.C. Ritter successfully defended her dissertation in October and graduated with her PhD in dance from Texas Woman's University in December.

Congrats to Visual Arts Department faculty member **Aki Sasamoto**, recipient of a 2017 Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant of \$40,000 for visual art. The nonprofit organization, founded in 1963 by the artists John Cage and Jasper Johns to benefit other artists, exists to "encourage, sponsor, and promote innovative work in the arts."

Music faculty member **Fred Hersch**, pianist and composer, received two Grammy nominations for his work in 2016: one for Best Improvised Jazz Solo, and one for Best Jazz Instrumental Album.

The film *Future 38*, with cinematography by professor **Alan McIntyre Smith**, premiered in January at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Smith completed *Future 38* with the assistance of students Larry Fried, Matt Hazel, and Kyle Jacobson.

Jazz drummer and composer **Victor Lewis** received an honorary doctorate from his college alma mater, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, on December 8. Lewis received the degree at a concert where he gave a performance.

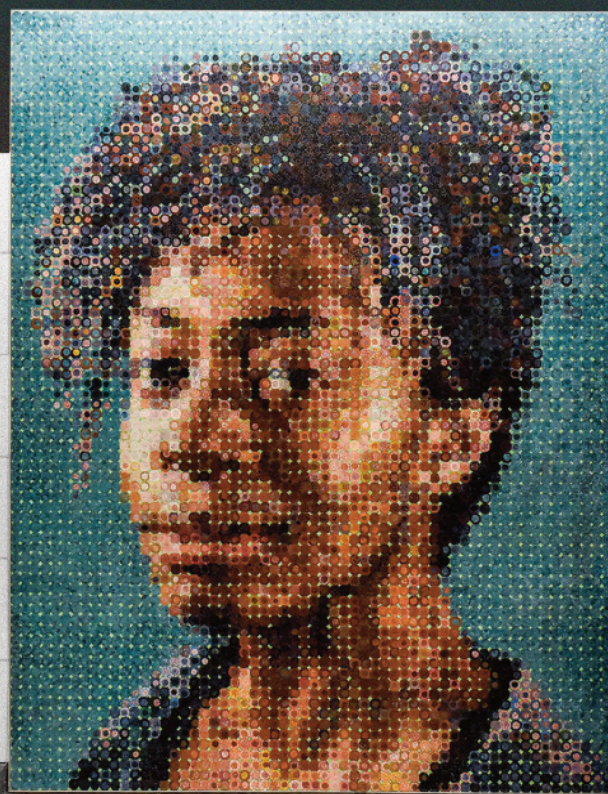
In January, University of Illinois Press published **Nancy Rao's** *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America*, documenting the early-20th-century migration of Chinese music to the United States and its role in American culture.

Visual Arts Department faculty member **Raphael Montañez Ortiz** has been invited to receive the UCLA Medal, the university's highest honor, awarded for Montañez Ortiz's contributions to contemporary art. His works are in several permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, and he is the founder of El Museo del Barrio in East Harlem, the country's first museum dedicated to Latino art. Past recipients of the UCLA Medal include presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

"Florentine Opera Company scored a success . . . with the world premiere of *Sister Carrie*," according to the *Opera News* review of Music Department director **Bob Aldridge's** newest opera. *Sister Carrie* debuted in October in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Aldridge composed the music, and Herschel Garfein wrote the libretto.

Brava to **Barbara Bashaw**, now president of the service organization Dance New Jersey.

It's not just a new subway line—it's the largest permanent public art installation in New York State history. The Second Avenue subway stations, which opened late last year, feature installations by four artists, including Chuck Close. His portrait of Kara Walker, our Tepper Chair in Visual Arts, one of 12 large-scale mosaics at 86th Street, is close to nine feet high and shares wall space with other cultural figures including Philip Glass, Cindy Sherman, and Lou Reed.





ovement seems elastic

under Kayla Collymore's spell," gushes *Dance Magazine*, which recently named the dance alumna one of "25 to Watch." "Nothing appears forced or pushed; she makes dancing look like something that just rolls off the tongue." Brava to this talented dancer, now a member of Houston's METdance.

Rolling Stone magazine says visual arts alumnus **Ryan Soper** and his partner in Fox/Soper Duo end up “occasionally dueling like beasts”—and that’s a massive compliment, because the music mag ranked their release, *Magenta Line*, No. 4 among the “20 Best Avant Albums of 2016.” A big congrats to Soper, also a sculptor and video artist.



Alumnus Ryan Soper's digital self-portrait, part of the concept sketches he made for one of his music videos, which premiered last year on NPR.

On February 18, a group of BFA dancers performed an excerpt of Martha Graham's *Dark Meadow* as part of the Martha Graham University Partners Showcase at The Joyce Theater in New York City. Participating students were: **Brianna Figueroa, Mallory Galarza, Spencer Grossman, Nicholas Hall, Samantha Lore, Charles Milliken, Eunseo Park, Aanyse Pettiford-Chandler, Elias Rosa, Charlotte Stout,** and **Isabella Vergara**. Alumna **Nya Bowman** served as rehearsal assistant on the project.

Film student **Kyle Jacobson** worked for ESPN as a camera operator during the U.S. Open tennis championships.

Yo-Yo Ma and his Silk Road Ensemble, of which music alumna **Cristina Pato** is a member, received a Grammy Award for Best World Music Album for *Sing Me Home*, while alumnus **Peter Martin's** percussion quartet Third Coast Percussion took home a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for the album *Steve Reich*. The ceremony was broadcast February 12 on CBS.

Theater alumna **Annapurna Sriram** starred alongside Matthew Broderick and Jill Eikenberry in The New Group's production of Wallace Shawn's *Evening at the Talk House*, which ran January 31 through March 12 in New York City. The run was a U.S. premiere.

Percussion student **Jake Schlaerth** was chosen to contribute glass armonica music to the soundtrack of *Logan*, the most recent Wolverine film, starring Hugh Jackman and released in theaters on March 3. Schlaerth recorded his part at the Rutgers recording studio, here on campus at Mortensen Hall.

Dance alumni **Dare Ayorinde** and **Kyle Marshall** were appointed apprentices with the Trisha Brown Dance Company in October.

Music alumnus **Brian Katona** won Best Melodic Theme at the Garden State Film Festival's 2017 Movie Music Competition with his score for the new documentary *A Hope for Hartly*.

In January, vocal alumna **Rachel Zatcoff** understudied the role of Paquette in the New York City Opera revival of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*. The production ran at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater, and was directed by Broadway luminary Hal Prince.

Jazz piano alumnus **Eathan Janney** is working as a scientist specializing in birdsong. “My musical background was an asset as opposed to a liability in the world of science,” Janney told Rutgers Today, the university's online news source. Janney served as the lead author on a paper examining the song of Australia's pied butcherbirds and how much their songs have in common with music created by humans.



Why Your Support Matters

When Alyssa Lopez's dad allowed her to hold his video camera for the first time, it was as if he'd handed his daughter the keys to her own future.

"I instantly fell in love with the feeling of being able to create and tell my own stories from my point of view," says Lopez (above, with camera), a film student and Mason Gross School of the Arts Scholarship Fund recipient. Lopez says she requested her own video camera when she was just 8 years old, "and since then I have always adored the feeling of capturing a moment on camera. I love that film allows me to express myself in a way that words can't."

Lopez has experienced the galvanizing effect of film first hand. Growing up, she says, Penny Marshall's *A League of Their Own*, about a World War II-era professional all-female baseball league, acted as a guiding light, as she competed on the softball diamond and the soccer field.

"I loved the idea that it centered on women," Lopez says of the 1992 film. "I don't feel as if there are many stories out there that show women being able to do the same jobs that men are traditionally known for. I felt as if this movie empowered me to feel that I could achieve anything, regardless of my gender."

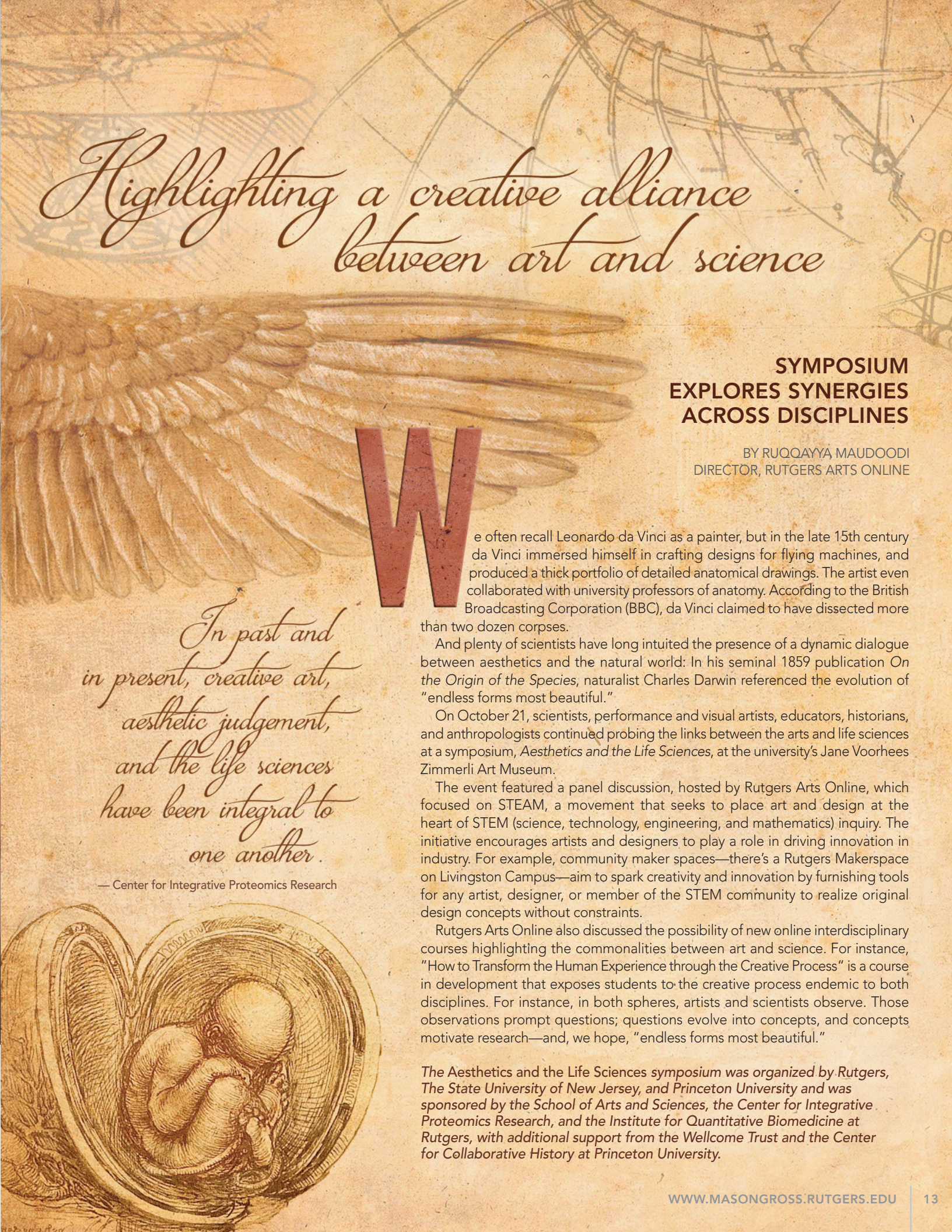
Fortunately, Lopez says, the funding she's received at Mason Gross allows her to direct her own future. With this help, she plans to invest in equipment after graduation and focus on what she loves most: "making short films."

RUTGERS

Mason Gross School
of the Arts

Give to the Mason Gross Annual Fund

To make a gift to the Mason Gross School of the Arts, please contact the Office of Development at 848-932-9360, or mail your donation to the Office of Development, Mason Gross School of the Arts, 33 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. Please make checks payable to the Rutgers University Foundation.



Highlighting a creative alliance between art and science

SYMPOSIUM EXPLORES SYNERGIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

BY RUQQAYYA MAUOODI
DIRECTOR, RUTGERS ARTS ONLINE

W

e often recall Leonardo da Vinci as a painter, but in the late 15th century da Vinci immersed himself in crafting designs for flying machines, and produced a thick portfolio of detailed anatomical drawings. The artist even collaborated with university professors of anatomy. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), da Vinci claimed to have dissected more than two dozen corpses.

And plenty of scientists have long intuited the presence of a dynamic dialogue between aesthetics and the natural world: In his seminal 1859 publication *On the Origin of the Species*, naturalist Charles Darwin referenced the evolution of "endless forms most beautiful."

On October 21, scientists, performance and visual artists, educators, historians, and anthropologists continued probing the links between the arts and life sciences at a symposium, *Aesthetics and the Life Sciences*, at the university's Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum.

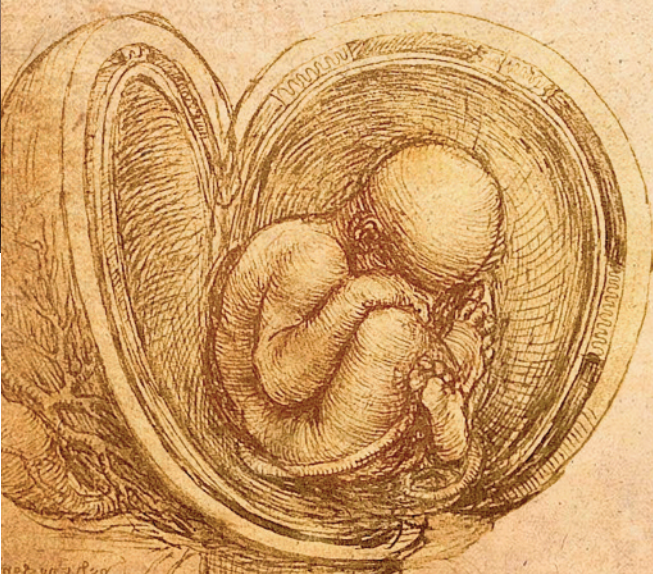
The event featured a panel discussion, hosted by Rutgers Arts Online, which focused on STEAM, a movement that seeks to place art and design at the heart of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) inquiry. The initiative encourages artists and designers to play a role in driving innovation in industry. For example, community maker spaces—there's a Rutgers Makerspace on Livingston Campus—aim to spark creativity and innovation by furnishing tools for any artist, designer, or member of the STEM community to realize original design concepts without constraints.

Rutgers Arts Online also discussed the possibility of new online interdisciplinary courses highlighting the commonalities between art and science. For instance, "How to Transform the Human Experience through the Creative Process" is a course in development that exposes students to the creative process endemic to both disciplines. For instance, in both spheres, artists and scientists observe. Those observations prompt questions; questions evolve into concepts, and concepts motivate research—and, we hope, "endless forms most beautiful."

The Aesthetics and the Life Sciences symposium was organized by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and Princeton University and was sponsored by the School of Arts and Sciences, the Center for Integrative Proteomics Research, and the Institute for Quantitative Biomedicine at Rutgers, with additional support from the Wellcome Trust and the Center for Collaborative History at Princeton University.

*In past and
in present, creative art,
aesthetic judgement,
and the life sciences
have been integral to
one another.*

— Center for Integrative Proteomics Research



A Life-Saving Friendship

Living organ donation connects music alumni after transplant

BY ROBIN LALLY
COURTESY OF RUTGERS TODAY

It took Mike Sayre a month before he told his wife, Tracy, what he was thinking about doing. He knew she would be a little scared. He felt the same way. But it was something that deep in his gut he knew was the right thing to do.

"How often do you get an opportunity to literally save someone's life?" was what the 33-year-old Music Department alumnus remembers thinking when he made the final decision to get tested to see if he would be able to donate part of his liver to Deryck Clarke, a fellow horn player whom he befriended back in 2008 at Mason Gross.

Sayre's selflessness is something Clarke, 54, believes is the reason he is alive, recuperating last fall at home in Jersey City, New Jersey, after a 12-hour surgery, and looking forward to continuing his career as a music advocate in public education.

"I felt so lost and sad, I didn't know what to do," said Clarke, describing his emotional state after learning in 2015 that he would need a liver transplant. "I put it out on Facebook, said I needed some thoughts and prayers and hoped to at least get some emotional support."

Sayre made the offer along with another friend from the Mason Gross graduate program who stepped up first. Even though she was a medical match and could be a living donor, the team at Mount Sinai Hospital, where the procedure was performed, decided it might be too much of an economic hardship because the woman lived alone.

So Clarke, who was diagnosed in 2007 with PSC (Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis), a rare, incurable, liver disease and was told last fall that he needed a transplant, reached back to Sayre: "Hey, dude, remember when you offered your liver? Are we still good?" he asked.

The two French horn players kept in touch after they received their graduate degrees. Clarke graduated in 2014 after taking a break for a family emergency. Sayre earned his degree in 2010.

Sayre, who grew up in Indiana, was newly married, working as a film and television music composer and living in Astoria, Queens. A Boy Scout as a kid, Sayre is the type of guy who believes in helping others. After earning his graduate degree, he spent time as the volunteer coordinator at Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, a non-profit organization dedicated to ending hunger.

Clarke taught music in the Newark school system. He was the outreach coordinator for the Harlem Chamber Players, formed a charity to provide instruments and after-school music instruction for underserved kids, and served on arts education leadership councils to connect children to the arts. He also performed professionally with symphony, opera, and ballet orchestras and collaborated with artists on Broadway shows, chamber ensembles, jazz, R&B, and gospel groups.

After graduating from Mason Gross, Clarke tried to return to the classroom last fall. But he was forced to quit after less than

two months because fatigue, short-term memory loss and joint pain due to his failing liver made it impossible to continue.

"It was really hard because I always wanted to save the world," said Clarke, an Army veteran who served in Somalia. "I didn't think the world had to save me."

Sayre didn't look at it this way. Clarke had always been a good friend. He had met his wife and daughter and knew about Clarke's chronic medical condition. When Sayre first moved to the Northeast and met Clarke at Mason Gross, it was Clarke who would give him rides to see Tracy in New York before they got married.

"It's a big decision, and I think everyone was surprised when I first told them what I was going to do," said Sayre. "But I knew this was right and I have no regrets."

While more than 6,300 people receive new livers each year, more than 15,000 patients wait for a liver transplant, usually from a deceased donor. Last year, only 359 Americans like Sayre became living donors by offering a portion of their livers to help someone else survive. Still, 1,400 people will die waiting because there are not enough organs available, according to the American Transplant Foundation.

The two men underwent their surgeries on September 13. Clarke says although the next day his body felt like it had been hit by a truck, the hung-over feeling, his inability to complete sentences, and an overall general fatigue that had been part of his everyday existence was gone. Even more miraculous to Clarke: When doctors removed his gall bladder to perform the surgery, they discovered a small cancerous polyp that doctors said could have metastasized.

"The timing for the transplant was perfect," he said. "I feel like Mike saved my life twice."

It will take six months to a year for Clarke to be considered fully recovered. Sayre expects to be back to normal in three months. The 60 percent of the right lobe of Sayre's liver that is now keeping Clarke alive should be regenerated within a year, doctors who performed the surgery told him.

"They tell me the only physical connection that I'll have to the surgery is the incision scar," said Sayre, who is feeling better every day.

The two Mason Gross graduates—initially connected through their love of music and a deep appreciation of humanity—say they can't imagine not sharing and supporting each other in whatever life has to offer.

"We are forever connected," said Clarke, "What Mike did for me, I will never forget."



Horn-playing alumni Mike Sayre, left, and Deryck Clarke, getting back to normal after a living donor liver transplant.

“

**WE ARE FOREVER
CONNECTED.
WHAT MIKE DID
FOR ME, I WILL
NEVER FORGET.**

— *Deryck Clarke*

”

Inspired

CELEBRATED VISITING ARTISTS
SHARE EXPERIENCES WITH STUDENTS

“Artists must practice their work. Go ahead and be an artist truthful to the art. Prepare to take risks. And above all, do not be politically correct.”

— Wole Soyinka on how artists can spread peace amid chaos. The Nobel Prize-winning playwright, poet, and activist joined student panelists for a Q+A on September 25 at Nicholas Music Center as a guest of the Mason Gross Presents series, the Theater Department, the Department of English, and the Center for African Studies at Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences.

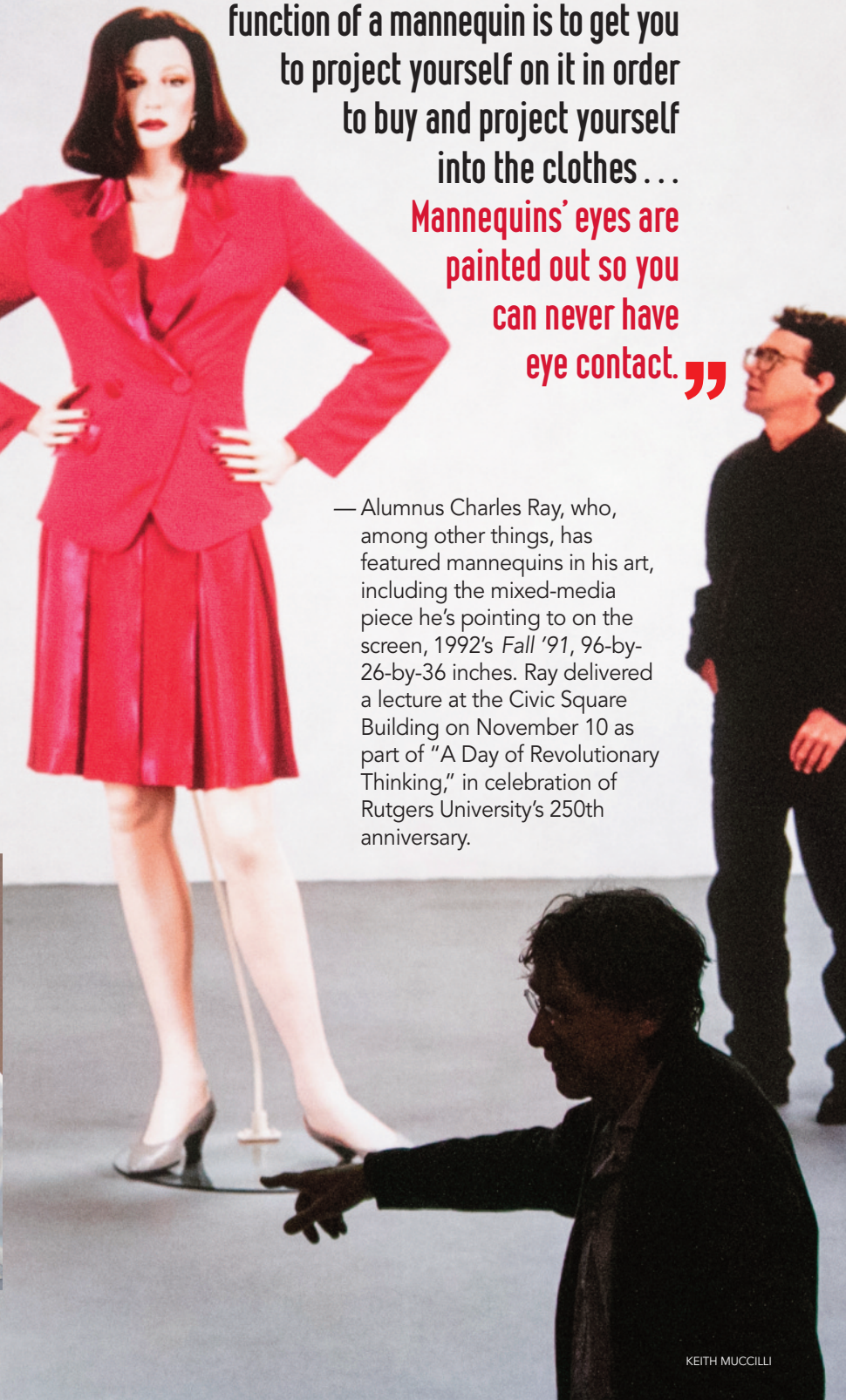


JODY SOMERS

“A mannequin can never smile, because if it smiles, it’s like the Kourois: it smiles, it has intentionality; it has a soul. A function of a mannequin is to get you to project yourself on it in order to buy and project yourself into the clothes . . .

Mannequins’ eyes are painted out so you can never have eye contact.”

— Alumnus Charles Ray, who, among other things, has featured mannequins in his art, including the mixed-media piece he’s pointing to on the screen, 1992’s *Fall '91*, 96-by-26-by-36 inches. Ray delivered a lecture at the Civic Square Building on November 10 as part of “A Day of Revolutionary Thinking,” in celebration of Rutgers University’s 250th anniversary.



KEITH MUCCILLI

WORKING ON A BUILDING

STUDENTS DEPLOY SOUND AND
LIGHT TO 'PLAY' KIRKPATRICK
CHAPEL LIKE AN INSTRUMENT

T

he staging and props are decidedly low-tech: roving flash-light beams sliding across walls and trailing over terra cotta columns, piercing the darkness of a 19th-century chapel; strands of bright fabric raining down from the choir loft, pooling on the floor; sheets of cardboard fanned like palm fronds, striking the pews.

A revving car engine in the parking lot supplies a whiff of aggression, judiciously struck notes drift from the organ, and an echoing fusion of live and prerecorded ambient sound saturates the space with what might be a cavalcade of stomping feet, slamming doors, whining horns, and a mournful bleat of train whistles.

In this atmosphere—and that is what's being whipped up here, big time—one half-expects to catch Quasimodo dragging his chains up Kirkpatrick Chapel's center aisle, plunking himself down with a sigh beside the 60 or so audience members assembled on the altar steps.

This interplay of light, dark, and sound, called *Spreading Rumors Inside the Chapel*, is a site-specific performance mimicking the ways in which rumors spark and spread. The piece was designed and executed by nine visual arts graduate students, along with faculty member Aki Sasamoto and a graduate organ student. The event took place on December 1 at Kirkpatrick Chapel and represented the fruition of a semester-long collaboration with the Department of Art History, in which student-artists examined the tradition of performance-centered art movements.

Of course, the Rutgers University Visual Arts Department enjoys a long history of chapel performances, particularly in the late 1960s and into 1970, when the controversial *Flux-Mass* took place at Voorhees Chapel, complete with "clergy" in gorilla suits.

Sasamoto says she was pleased to see her students collaborating on an event in a nontraditional space, echoing a Moscow-based conceptual art performance group they studied, known as Collective Actions.

"Rutgers is a place with many interesting sites," says Sasamoto. "As visual artists, we tend to lock ourselves inside our studios. It's important to sometimes go out and think in alternative spaces."

Visual arts grad student Ali Osborn says when he visited the chapel to begin mapping out the movement sequence, "I got excited about playing the building" like an instrument, recording the 143-year-old chapel's various utterances—groaning floorboards, the roof reacting to a windy day, the clack of door latches, the roar of the boiler.

The artists worked with student organist Roshan Chakane to facilitate what Osborn calls "a dialogue" between a composition of these prerecorded chapel sounds, white noise generated by the performers as they made contact with the pews and floors, and the improvised music of the live organ, scoring—and underscoring—it all.

Chakane says he relished the experiment's audacious and communal spirit.

"Since the people I was performing with were not trained musicians, I was expecting the performance to be somewhat lacking in musical insight," he admits. "I could not have been more incorrect. The visual artists were so responsive to what I was doing on the organ."

The sense of adventure as he plunged into darkness, Chakane says, was stoked "by the balance of 'not knowing what is coming next' and the comfort of knowing you are working with highly trained artists."

Spreading Rumors Inside the Chapel was conceived and performed by Colleen Billing, Roshan Chakane, Sedrick Chisom, Christian Diaz, Julian Gilbert-Davis, Ali Osborn, Aki Sasamoto, David Torres, Catalina Tuca, Jack Warner, and Stephen Williams.

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— Faculty member Aki Sasamoto

Deafness unexpectedly enriches dancer's life

ANNA GICHAN EXPLORES HER IDENTITY WITH—AND WITHOUT—HEARING AIDS

BY CARLA CANTOR
COURTESY OF RUTGERS TODAY



Anna Gichan is privy to two special worlds. In one, she wears her hearing aids and interacts with the frenetic sounds of everyday life. In the other, she exists in near silence.

This duality, she believes, is tied to her love of dancing and sense of happiness.

"I consider myself lucky to be able to tap into two very different worlds for inspiration," says Gichan, a dancer who was born moderately-severe to profoundly deaf.

"When I don't have my hearing aids in, I feel very in touch with my body and mind. It's like meditating," she says. The silence may also make her a better dancer. "I can't prove it, but I think there's a millisecond lag between the music as it plays and the moment it gets to my ears. By paying more attention to the vibration of the floor and everybody's body language, I become more in sync with the class."

This appreciation for what she calls her "unique ears" is new for Gichan. Not so much because she has struggled to fit into a hearing world, but because she has always been so good at it.

"No one even suspected I was deaf until I was 3, when my grandma realized I was not reacting to noises coming from behind or around me," says Gichan.

She credits her twin brother, Jacob, who constantly talked to her in a loud voice she could respond to when they were younger, for allowing her to develop speech early on. "What I didn't hear," she says, "I compensated for with lip reading."

For most of her life hearing aids have been Gichan's lifeline. She got her first pair when she was 3—"big, blocky ones that came in all kinds of

colors with glitter." Without them, she would not have excelled at dance, which she began studying at age 5, when her mother, a dance teacher, brought Gichan with her to class. Hearing aids allowed her to assimilate, hear her teachers' instruction, the music, her classmates' lively chatter. Throughout her schooling, she was mainstreamed.

"I was lucky. Kids never made fun of me," Gichan says. "Even when I carried around this FM box with an amplifier in grade school, the other students thought it was cool. They liked to talk into it."

Still, she felt different. "I'm from a family of six. Nobody's hard of hearing. It was just me and my ears, and I wondered: Why was no one else like me?"

A pivotal moment came during her sophomore year in high school. She was selected to attend a weeklong camping trip in the Grand Canyon for hearing-impaired teens from the United States and Canada, sponsored by the Hear the World Sound Academy. "I met incredible kids doing amazing things. One was a painter, another into computer science. It made me feel a great pride," says Gichan.

She came home from the trip with a new sense of herself as a deaf person who was part of a community. That's when she began to take her hearing aids off and dance in her room—which was "great therapy for an angsty teen," she says. "I felt light and free twirling around the room like nothing mattered. It was so liberating."

Originally, she had planned to study biology or anatomy and minor in dance. But for her auditions at several colleges, including Mason Gross, she had to create a solo, for which she got positive

“ WHEN I DON'T HAVE MY HEARING AIDS IN, I FEEL VERY IN TOUCH WITH MY BODY AND MIND. IT'S LIKE MEDITATING. ”

feedback. "The whole process of moving around and watching the different dancers was exhilarating," she recalls. "I knew, then, that's what I would study."

At Mason Gross, she has learned all types of dance, focusing on modern techniques, and her teachers have been supportive as she experiments without her hearing aids. Her ultimate goal is to get involved with the deaf community. "I want to find a way to get back to the deaf culture and explore this other aspect of myself," Gichan says.

"Besides the Grand Canyon trip, I haven't been in any other closed hearing-impaired or deaf environment, and that upsets me." She knows a bit of sign language but wants to become proficient.

At some point during the next few years, Gichan would like to apply to graduate school at Gallaudet University, a renowned private institution for education of the deaf and hard of hearing in Washington, D.C.—and then maybe even teach dance to people who are hearing impaired.

"I spent most of my life assimilating, and as I get older I'm discovering that there are things I love about being hearing impaired and being part of a special community," Gichan says. "This was a part of me I couldn't explore when I was younger. I was just trying to deal with everything else."



ANNA TY BERGMAN

Mary Clohan, playwright

“The most terrifying part of the process for me is the first reading of a play,” says Clohan, an MFA student. “You can get really excited about something and think it’s the best thing you’ve ever written, and then it’s read in a room, and you think, ‘Oh, my god, none of this makes sense. What was I on when I wrote this?’ The hardest part has to be pushing aside the doubts that creep in when you feel like something didn’t come off as you planned and focusing on what work needs to be done.” *The Virgin Woods* (shown at left), Clohan’s adaptation of Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull*, was performed during last semester’s Playwrights Festival.



MATT PILSNER



ToniAnn Eisman, painter

“I like to joke that my desire to work at a large scale is an overcompensation for my short stature, which is partially true,” says the BFA painter. Eisman’s acrylic-on-wood *Copycat #1* (above) was on view in the Douglass Student Center in the fall as part of eight student-curated shows across the New Brunswick campus. Right now, she says, a lack of finances and storage force her to work on a smaller scale—this piece is 11 inches-by-14 inches—but she claims she’s ready to go big. “Why not make work larger-than-life?” Eisman says. “The larger the obstacle is, the more gratifying it feels when you eventually surpass it.”

THE MAKERS

STUDENTS DISCUSS WHAT THEY LOVE—
AND FEAR—MOST: PUTTING ART INTO THE WORLD



Vaughn Stavropoulos, saxophonist

“I’ve been playing the saxophone since fourth grade,” says the jazz studies undergrad, who started out as a pianist. “I hated having played an instrument before the saxophone, because I was conscious of how bad I sounded, and I would often cry while practicing, because I wanted to sound good. I would hear myself and think I was awful. These times, while depressing, have been vital to my growth as a player, because it’s only when I put distance between myself and my playing that I can hear what I really need to work on to improve.”

The Art of Failure

BY ALEXANDRA KLAASSEN

Bryan Volta doesn't aim to please.

"If I can spark some confusion from a viewer, I call the piece successful," says Volta, a visual arts MFA student working mainly in the realm of sculpture. "Confusion creates curiosity: If a viewer understands what they see, they move on. Confusion makes them stay with the piece. If the viewer has to put in a little work, then their payoff is so much greater."

Reveling in inquiry exemplifies Volta's scientific approach to art. When it comes to creating art, experimentation and failure are "part of [my creative] process."

"I'll half-read directions on how to make something and see what happens," he says. "There's a book called *Stupidity* by philosopher Avital Ronell, and she talks about the rhetoric of testing and how testing as something that repeats but expects a different outcome automatically denotes stupidity. I like that idea, so now when I experiment it's: 'Ah, it's cool, I'm trying to get stupid.'"

LOOSE THREADS

Volta says his focus on testing and making prototypes has allowed him to "work a bit looser."

"Lately I've been into stopping a piece before it's finished," he says. "When I'm done, my questions have all been answered; if I stop before I finish, I've left some questions unanswered for me, and maybe also the viewer."

Volta will continue to raise questions when he travels to Japan in August to exhibit outdoor sculptures at a friend's family gallery. He means to make all the art there, on site, and plans on "trying to get stupid" with the language barrier.

"I look forward to using things whose instructions I can't read," he says with a smile.

Volta has been experimenting with art and technology

since he was a kid. He spent his childhood inside industrial nightclubs in Cincinnati, "playing video games on the big screen" and eventually working the sound board with his father, who owned a music production company.

"My father had a very different view on life; he was pretty resourceful," Volta remembers. "He died when I was 26, and he was transsexual at the end of his life. That experience made me maintain my curiosity. I had to be confronted with different ideals early on: Is that what a thing or person has to be, or can it change into something else at any moment? He made me recognize the potential for change in everything."

MAKING AN IMPACT

Volta often explores that potential for change in the relationship between machines and human psychology—a theme that runs across his artistic and professional career. After high school, Volta went to work in a pharmaceutical sleep research facility where he administered medication to patients with neuromuscular diseases who were being treated for sleep abnormalities. He loved the "mechanical and analog" nature of the machines there, but at 28 years old he decided to enroll in art school at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"I realized I'd rather be poor and happy than rich and unhappy," he says.

Years later, he says his time at the research facility had a "latent effect" on his work.

"It's definitely coming into play now, in weird ways," he says. He points to two photos hanging in his studio, titled *Self-Cleaning*, which are portraits of resuscitation dummies he found in a Dumpster at Rutgers. "I now think a lot about anxiety and human-body failure, our reliance on machines, and our fear of mortality."

"All art is about mortality," he adds. "It's about living beyond your lifespan and making an impact."

Volta's *Aftertaste*, 2016. 48-by-44-by-7 inches. Medium-density fiberboard (MDF), aluminum, Plexiglas, brown packing tape, steel shackle, white Champion sweatshirt, Flaming Hot Cheetos.



In his art, Volta contemplates the human condition by sidestepping it. Though his works deal with human issues of anxiety, death, and change, he says he prefers to “keep the vernacular of [the work] really mechanical and industrial and to completely remove the human touch.”

For Volta, art requires some science: He consulted a mechanical aerospace engineer technician for the pump mechanics in his work *2 Chambers* (at left), which features an ex-girlfriend’s jeans hanging in a glass case.

2 Chambers was on view at the Mason Gross MFA thesis exhibition, *Action at a Distance: Part I*, earlier in the semester. Over time, hydraulic fluid “drowns the jeans repeatedly,” Volta says, and then drains, leaving the pants dripping and hanging.

“It really is a romantic and sad piece for me,” he says, “like a sadistic love affair with an object.”

Bryan Volta with his work *2 Chambers*, 2017. 36-by-43-by-26 inches. Steel, PVC tubing, motor, hydraulic fluid, Lexan, silicone, one-ton hoist, trolley, used black jeans.

“

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”

SPARKED

Film director Patrick Stettner, assistant director of the Rutgers Filmmaking Center, discusses the elements that fuel his work

MY FATHER'S PHOTOGRAPHS

My father was a street photographer who died recently, and so I've been reckoning with our past through his photographs. Besides trying to figure out what those images mean as a testimony of him as an artist and father, I am curious how these same images are part of my earliest memories in his darkroom. That process of the reinvestigation of time and memory is a theme I am constantly returning to, how characters view their lives as fixed points, and how that perception changes.

WATCHING FILMS

It never stops being a daily affirmation, never stops being an inspiration.

NEW YORK CITY LATE AT NIGHT

Long walks with friends, on the same streets that I grew up on, arguing about films as the city slowly empties out. These walks allow me to rethink, improvise, and expand my thoughts. My favorite moments are always toward the end of the night, when we are talked out, and we have nothing left to say, and we walk in silence.

TRUTH AND VULNERABILITY

Bearing witness to small moments in everyday life when strangers, or students, reveal themselves without artifice or filter. My interests used to be investigating stories of how characters lie to themselves and others; now I'm more interested in the bravery of personal truth.

Louis Stettner's *Promenade*,
Brooklyn, 1954.

MYTHOLOGIST JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Best known for his writing about comparative mythology, Campbell's work is a reminder that since the birth of civilization humans have told stories to make sense of their lives. I'm interested in how the narrative process results in conscious and unconscious engagement in audiences, be it through character, structure, identification, or empathy. Like most filmmakers, I'm trying to find stories that are specific and contemporary, but also manage to be universal and timeless.

AUTOMATIC WRITING

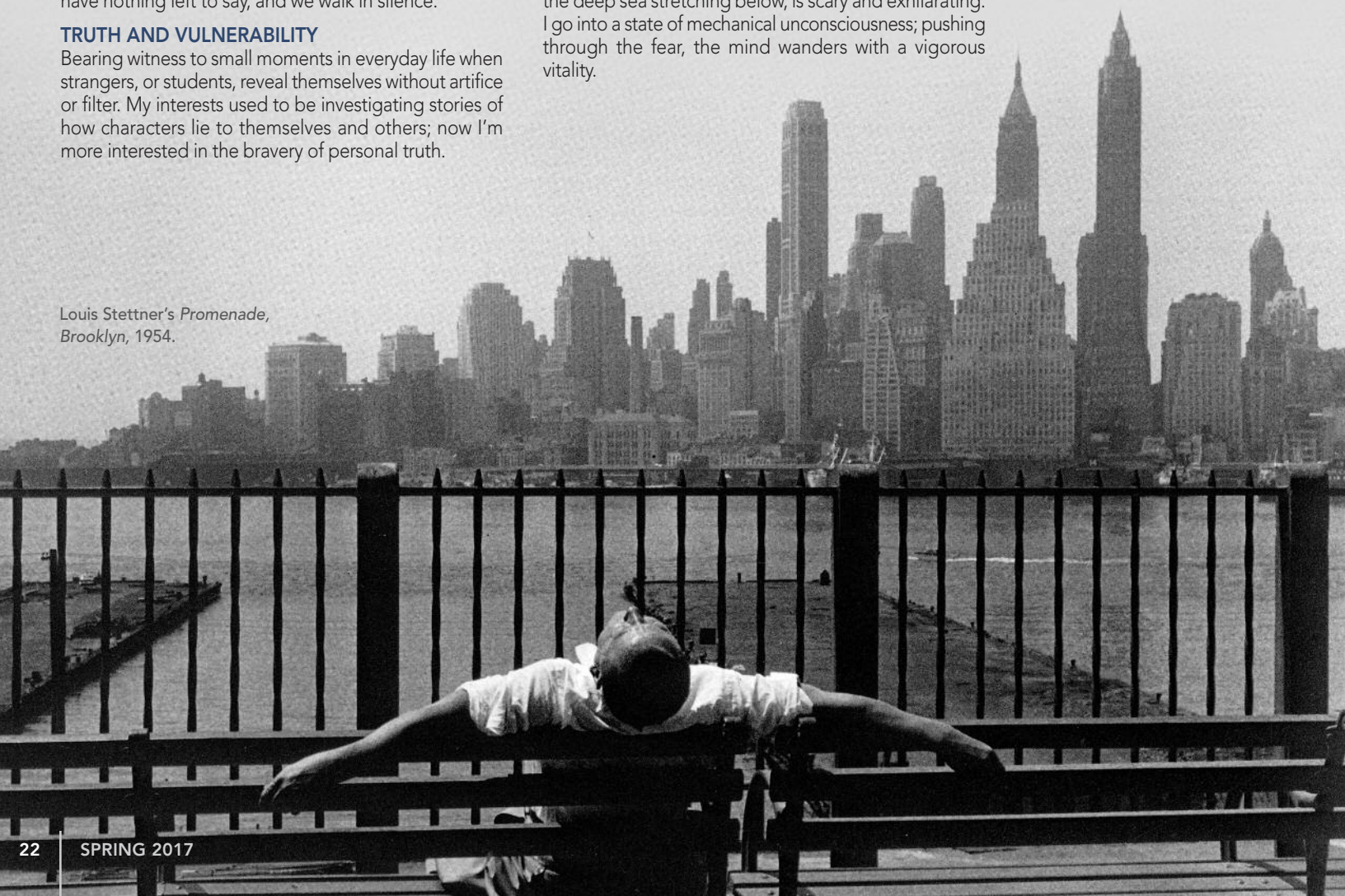
Writing without intent is hard. But I try to force myself to just write without a map, to get lost with new characters, concepts, and images; to romp and play without a determined direction, to ferment the unconscious, let it rise, and clear the fog.

SWIMMING

I like to swim long distances in the ocean. I close my eyes and go straight out. Being far from the shore, with the deep sea stretching below, is scary and exhilarating. I go into a state of mechanical unconsciousness; pushing through the fear, the mind wanders with a vigorous vitality.



JENNIFER COX



THE LAST WORD



“I got my doctorate playing in the street, which is known as ‘the jungle,’” says Grammy-winning jazz faculty member Eddie Palmieri, shown here with student pianist Luciano Minetti on December 13 at Nicholas Music Center. On that evening, the Rutgers Jazz Ensemble I celebrated the 80th birthday of the noted pianist, bandleader, arranger, and composer of salsa and Latin jazz. The students played Coltrane’s *Blue Trane* before Palmieri joined them onstage on his own compositions, *Bug* and *Noble Cruise*. Minetti has taken master classes with the Latin jazz legend for the last two years. “I don’t think I sound like Eddie,” Minetti says, “and I think he likes that. He always embraces our differences as players. He likes to see what people bring. It’s very humbling. For a student, you don’t get those opportunities many places.”

MATT RAINY

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 fall of 2016 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@winants.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.

Shamsuddin Abdul-Hamid, Theater Arts, 2014, BFA, March 3, 2017

Toni F. Alazraki, Dramatic Arts/Theater Arts, 1969, BA, July 25, 2013

Alberta Bachman, Music, 1953, BA, November 23, 2016

Lois Kuhlthau Brunner, Music, 1946, BA, February 17, 2016

Samuel Dilworth-Leslie, Professor Emeritus of Music, February 10, 2017

Valerie Farag, Music, 1963, BA, May 3, 2016

Paul Hess, Art, 1975, MA, October 12, 2016

Juliette Mittendorf Hill, Fine Arts, 1942, BA, February 29, 2016

N. Bryan Mack, Art, 1992, BFA, January 10, 2017

David L. Muniz-Harryman, Theater Arts, 1990, MFA, July 28, 2016

Elaine C. Scurtis, Music, 1959, BA, October 23, 2016

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
33 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

The Last Look

Student Rachel Ciani in
Rutgers Theater Company's
October 2016 production
of Luigi Pirandello's
Absolutely! (Perhaps).

