

MASON GROSS

SCHOOL OF
THE ARTS

Key Players

GRADSLAND POSITIONS
IN ORCHESTRAS AROUND THE GLOBE

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I am delighted to write this greeting as the Mason Gross School celebrates its 40th anniversary year. It was in 1976 that Rutgers President Edward J. Bloustein and Theater Department Chair John I. Bettenbender joined forces to form a "School of the Creative and Performing Arts," renamed the "Mason Gross School of the Arts" three years later, in honor of Mason Welch Gross, beloved professor of philosophy, 16th president of Rutgers, and a staunch advocate for the arts.

The school began with departments in music, theater, and visual arts, which were soon joined by dance. Led by 210 full- and part-time faculty and 50 staff, the four departments now offer undergraduate as well as graduate degrees to approximately 1,200 students. And in recent times, the school has expanded to include four divisions: the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, the Extension Division, providing arts education for more than 1,700 high school students and adults,

Rutgers Arts Online, extending online courses to more than 6,000 students, and the Rutgers Center For Digital Filmmaking, which launched a BFA degree in the fall. What began as a small, local arts school has grown into a large, vibrant arts conservatory with national standing, including a top billing in the Big Ten.



#MGSA40



We have celebrated the 40th anniversary with a number of special events, including the stunning production of Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* that took place on February 20. Drawing on faculty and students from dance, digital film, music, theater, and visual arts, the multimedia performance was a smashing success, both on campus in Nicholas Music Center and at Le Poisson Rouge in New York City, where it was repeated the next day. The New York run-out symbolizes Mason Gross's close ties with the Big Apple and the school's high aspirations and professional goals.

One suspects that President Bloustein and Dean Bettenbender would be proud of the way the bold venture they launched four decades ago has flourished. And there is good reason to think that the next 40 years of Mason Gross will be better still.

— George B. Stauffer, Dean



Film editing class, September 29, 2015.

KEITH MUCCILLI

MASON GROSS

“We had a teacher who made us do tai chi barefoot in the snow, very helpful in terms of understanding that a career as an actor is not all fun and games.”

— Alumna Kristin Davis, speaking about her undergraduate years as an acting student, in the October 13, 2015, issue of *The Daily Targum*.

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CHEUNG CHI-WAI/HONG KONG PHILHARMONIC

KEY PLAYERS

Music grads are making their mark in elite orchestras around the world.



PAUL O'REILLY

SPARKED

Mike Tyson, cooking, deep-sea creatures—for visual arts professor Aki Sasamoto, they're all inspiration.



JODY SOMERS

'TALE' TO TELL

The Mason Gross School celebrates 40 years with Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*.

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Jody Somers

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR: Laurie Granieri

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Risa Barisch, Sabrina Del Piano, Lisa Intrabartola, Alexandra Klaassen, Gabriella Meiterman-Rodriguez



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MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

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TODD ROSENBERG

Key Players

Alums land elite positions in orchestras around the globe

BY RISA BARISCH

Making the leap from graduate student to professional musician is no easy task, but Mason Gross alumni are increasingly earning top-level positions with established orchestras.

Just in the past year, violists Sunghee Choi and Youming Chen joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Amy Krueger was welcomed as a horn player with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and Stephen Miahky was named first violin of the Blair String Quartet at Nashville's Vanderbilt University.

The list also includes Qiang Tu, who has been the principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic since 1995, and is especially impressive given the state of U.S. orchestras, which in recent years have battled bankruptcies, strikes, and hiring freezes.

Nabbing such coveted positions takes talent and a little bit of luck, of course. But, says Krueger, who graduated in 2010 with a master's degree in music, the training she

received while studying at Mason Gross helped her to be successful in the "whirlwind progression" of her career.

"THE LEVEL OF PROFESSIONALISM IN THE ORCHESTRA WAS VERY HIGH AT RUTGERS. IT WASN'T A BIG TRANSITION TO GO TO A PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRA."

— Daniel Mumm,
Symphony Orchestra Augusta

"While I was at Rutgers, I got to work with some of the best brass players in the world," says Krueger, who had a two-year appointment with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago



TODD ROSENBERG

Top: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which boasts two alumni, Sunghee Choi and Youming Chen. Above: Amy Krueger of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra.

before landing in Louisiana. "I learned so much from coachings and lessons. I discovered so much about who I am as a musician, and how to be one, through Rutgers."

Musicians looking for a career with a professional orchestra must be prepared for the intense world of orchestral auditions—a rigorous and competitive process that requires a "degree of stick-to-it-iveness," says Daniel Mumm, a 2014 doctoral graduate who is principal cellist with Georgia's Symphony Orchestra Augusta.

"The first couple of auditions were really rough, and I didn't feel that confident,"



LYDIA BITTNER BAIRD

Daniel Mumm of Symphony Orchestra Augusta.



CHEUNG CHI-WAI / HONG KONG PHILHARMONIC

The Hong Kong Philharmonic, of which alum Chan Ngat Chau is a member.

Mumm says. “But the more I did it, the more secure I felt, and then I started advancing in auditions and getting offered work. It helps to get as much experience as possible.”

At Rutgers, Mumm studied with professor Jonathan Spitz—the principal cellist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra—and says that Spitz’s “inside knowledge and advice” about the audition process, as well as the opportunity to rehearse and perform the “challenging and rewarding” selections of the Rutgers Symphony Orchestra, readied Mumm for the rigors of a career in music.

“I DISCOVERED SO MUCH ABOUT WHO I AM AS A MUSICIAN, AND HOW TO BE ONE, THROUGH RUTGERS.”

— Amy Krueger,
Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra

“The level of professionalism in the orchestra was very high at Rutgers,” says Mumm. “It wasn’t a big transition to go to a professional orchestra.”

Led by Kynan Johns since 2003, Rutgers Symphony Orchestra—the flagship ensemble of the Mason Gross instrumental program—presents a concert series of three symphonic programs and a main-stage opera each semester, among other performances on and off campus. The orchestra has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

Johns, who is also *director assistente* at the Palau de les Arts in Spain, chooses the orchestra’s repertoire each season using his own

experiences sitting in on auditions throughout Europe. He says he strives to provide a balance of styles (last fall included selections from Brahms, Bernstein, Liszt, and Wagner, among others) and rotates composers so that students are exposed to a variety of work throughout their time at Rutgers.

“My focus is to center the repertoire on the majority of pieces that musicians are going to need to win auditions,” Johns says. “It’s not necessarily about doing left-of-center repertoire or trying to record premieres.”

The level of training at Mason Gross has also helped alumni to attain positions internationally—cellist Chan Ngat Chau plays with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Felipe Rodríguez won the position of principal trumpet with the Puerto Rico Symphony, and Raúl García was appointed the principal violist of the Colombian National Symphony Orchestra.

García came to Rutgers as a doctoral student seeking a mentor with orchestral experience, and found a “tough, strong, generous, kind, and supportive” guide in professor CJ Chang, the principal violist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for the last decade.

“He trained me intensively technically and musically,” says García, who graduated in 2014 with a doctoral degree. “He brought out the best of me so I could achieve a successful viola career.”

Back at Rutgers, Spitz views his task with graduate students as “a polishing” of the skills and training they bring to the music program, culminating in their participation in Rutgers Symphony Orchestra (a requirement for doctor of musical arts candidates).

“It brings a professional type of experience to our students,” Spitz says of the orchestral experience at Rutgers. “The standard is incredibly high as far as ensemble and musical

cohesiveness, and I’m amazed at the difficulty of the projects that Kynan takes on and the successful performances that result.”

Johns points out that orchestras are the main employers for instrumentalists, outside of teaching, in the United States, providing stability and benefits with full-time work. It’s why his “aim and obligation,” he says, is for students to be successful at auditions.

Judging by the growing list of Mason Gross alumni who have done just that, Johns feels he’s on the right track.

“Given our age, we’ve done very well,” he says. “That makes me feel gratified.”



DANIEL JANG

Raúl García is principal violist of the Colombian National Symphony Orchestra.



Mason Gross School scene shop.

MATT RAINEY



DANIEL FRIDAY

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Student technical director uses the art and craft of theater to achieve that 'goal moment'

BY LAURIE GRANIERI

Donnie Kelly believes in magic. Kelly, who grew up in Bordentown and Medford, New Jersey, is a third-year technical direction student in the Theater Department's BFA program. TD's, as they're called, translate set designs into reality. TD's oversee set construction and labor budgets, and create models and drawings to ensure sets meet design and safety standards. But he says realizing sets for a production isn't merely about the nuts and bolts; it's about making the ordinary appear extraordinary, even for a few hours.

If you ask Kelly, the best part of his job "is not in the tools, but that you have the power to change something in your hand into something new. It's not just a \$20 stick of lumber. If someone had an emotional moment watching a play, it means I took something seemingly ordinary and made it meaningful. I took something every-day and reached out to people."

Don't get him wrong—thefirst time Kelly entered the Mason Gross School scene shop, he says, "it was like a candy store. They had the toys that I wanted"—wood lathes and band saws, grinders and welders, and yes, plenty of nuts and bolts. For a kid who'd grown up dismantling motorcycles alongside his dad in the backyard shed, realizing he could make technical direction his life's work "was super cool to me. I can learn about plywood and help people not get

hurt onstage?" he recalls saying to himself. "That sounds like a great gig."

Which is why, after a year as a SEBS (Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences) student with a side gig doing tech for student-center events, Kelly made the shift from the chemistry lab to the theater.

"I came to terms with the fact that chemistry wasn't enough for me," says Kelly, who spent part of his childhood as a reluctant performer in theater productions around South Jersey. "I needed to communicate through my work. Theater, as we're trying to create it, there's communication beyond the plot. *Twelve Angry Men* is not just 12 people on a jury—it's about people trying to make decisions."

That magic moment

Kelly is intense about his work; he and his thick eyebrows seem to be in a constant state of analysis. So it makes sense that in Kelly's world, a chair is never just a chair. In fact, he insists that in the theater, "there's nothing arbitrary about a chair. Each aspect is picked to serve a greater purpose"—the writer's intent, the director's take.

Sure, with the skills Kelly's amassing at Mason Gross, he could hole up in his own backyard woodshop and craft a serviceable chair, maybe even a beautiful chair.

"But who would see it?" he asks. "It wouldn't have the scale I'd want. If you're involved

in something you believe is meaningful, you're obligated to share it with people."

Besides, he says: "There's magic in the fact that when all the pieces work together in a play, that's the goal moment. This work is going to talk to somebody. I take pride in that."

"IT'S NOT JUST A \$20 STICK OF LUMBER. IF SOMEONE HAD AN EMOTIONAL MOMENT WATCHING A PLAY, IT MEANS I TOOK SOMETHING AND REACHED OUT TO PEOPLE."

Kelly says he witnessed this "goal moment" in the spring 2015 Rutgers Theater Company production of *Gabriel*, for which he painted sets. He recalls that as the set evolved, so did the actors' performances.

"The actors had more life and more power in their characters" once the sets were completed, he says, "because they were communicating with the space." He believes that in some way, those nuts, those bolts, those \$20 sticks of lumber, were feeding the performances.

Art and craft

And Kelly has seen what happens when actors don't communicate successfully with the space. He recalls attending a performance of *Mary Poppins* in which a door became

accidentally locked during the course of the show, forcing the flummoxed actors to exit the stage in an awkward fashion.

"It's important that people don't get pulled out of the moment of the play," Kelly says. "If the audience spends five seconds on the mistake, they lose the moment. A mistake does the play a disservice, because then the theatricality of the play becomes more apparent."

Theater faculty member Christopher Cartmill says Kelly has an instinct for the creative as well as the technical aspect of his duties.

"He moves from craft to artisanship," Cartmill says. "That means everything, and it is just as

important for a draper or a guy on a skill saw as it is with an actor. You must have the same sense of artistic commitment. He has that sensibility. He himself is an artist."

For Kelly, the basic question on any job is always the same: "What do we need the world to know, and how are we going to do that today?" a question that he'll admit can get lost when he's drowning in drafting papers at midnight or spending several hours cutting lumber.

But when duty numbs his mind or leaves his body sore, Kelly returns to that magical place, the place that, when it all comes together, seems almost covered in fairy dust.

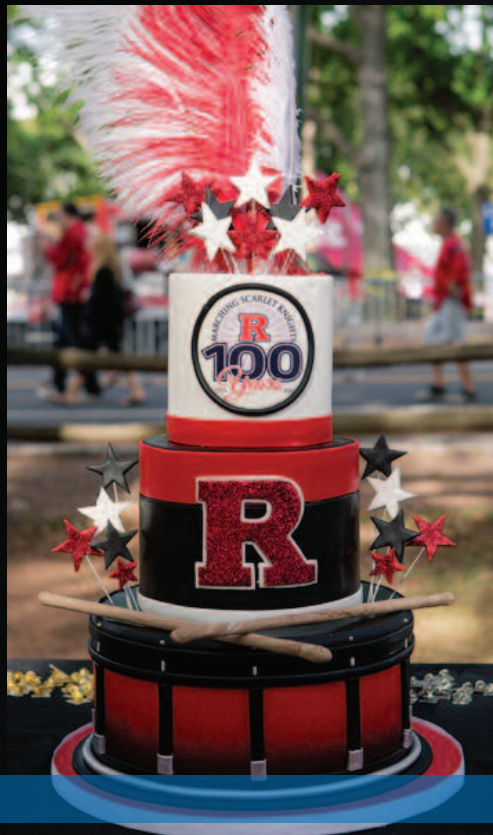
"I get back into the theater, I see the set," Kelly says, "And I say, 'There's life in this.' "



DANIEL FRIDAY

100 THE BIG

The Rutgers homecoming game on September 26 marked the 100th anniversary of the Rutgers University Marching Band. Members of the Rutgers band family—past and present—took part in festivities including a tailgate at Athletes Glen, as well as performances and a special half-time show. Here's a glimpse of the celebration.



PHOTOS BY ANDREA KANE

Faculty & Staff NEWS



Participants in a movement class serving those with Parkinson's disease.

Jeff Friedman, director of the Dance Department's Dance and Parkinson's Program, coordinated the second annual *Moving On: Dance and Parkinson's Symposium* on October 29. The symposium included a master class in coping strategies, a film screening, and a panel of experts. Attendees included those with Parkinson's, their caregivers, dance and Parkinson's specialists, elder-care providers, and neurologists with an interest in dance.

On December 4, **Kynan Johns** conducted an opera gala at the Teatro Real in Madrid, Spain, with singers Olga Peretyatko (recently at the Metropolitan Opera singing *Rigoletto*) and Dmitry Korchak. This follows Johns's tour through Spain with violinist Vadim Repin.

Tom Nozkowski was a part of the group exhibition *Drawings and Prints, Selections from the Permanent Collection* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art from September 29 through January 7. He is also participating in the group exhibition *Method Order Metric* at the National Academy of Design through May 8. At New York City's Pace Gallery a survey of Nozkowski's works on paper was on view from February 24 through March 26.

A new lens

New head of Rutgers Center For Digital Filmmaking pushes cinematic boundaries

BY SABRINA DEL PIANO
Courtesy of Rutgers Today

Young filmmakers often dream of their movies featuring a cast of celebrities amid a backdrop of dollar signs and flashy Hollywood lights.

Nicolás Pereda, the new director for the Rutgers Center For Digital Filmmaking, understands fame's allure. But Pereda, an award-winning filmmaker, hopes his students also recognize film as a realm of endless possibility.

"I'm interested in creating students who are free, independent thinkers, but at the same time are the most appealing people for the industry," says Pereda. This year Pereda is serving as the Henry Rutgers Professor, a prestigious professorship President Robert Barchi initiated last year as part of the University Strategic Plan.

After teaching at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and premiering his films at the Toronto, Cannes, and New York film festivals as well as the MoMA, Pereda has a unique set of skills and experiences he brings to the classroom.

Born in Mexico City, Pereda, 33, has been obsessed with cinema since he was 17. As a teenager, Pereda frequently visited the local university checking out films that were more obscure and innovative than the Hollywood fare Blockbuster offered.

"I was consumed. I would watch three films a day," Pereda says. But it wasn't until an uncle gave him a video camera that Pereda found his craft in making movies.



On February 19, Thirteen WNET New York's *Theater Close-Up* series presented *Repairing a Nation*, filmed live onstage at Crossroads Theatre Company in New Brunswick. The play was directed by Theater faculty member **Marshall Jones III** and included alumni actors Chantal Jean-Pierre, Angel Moore, Landon Woodson, and Phil McGlaston.

Photography faculty member **Miranda Lichtenstein's** exhibition *more Me than mine* was on view November 21 through December 19 at the Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York City. Her work is on view in *Artists' Choice: An Expanded Field of Photography* at MASS MoCA through April.

Rhonda Hackworth of the Music Department traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan, to conduct the honor choir for the Almaty Regional Music Festival from November 19 to 21. This festival was in its inaugural year and was attended by middle and high school students from several international schools in the region. Hackworth made a presentation while

there and gave high school students an idea of what attending Rutgers could offer them.

Kara Walker's solo show *Go to Hell or Atlanta, Whichever Comes First* was on view at the Victoria Miro Gallery in London from October 1 to November 7. She also was featured on the January 5 episode of the PBS TV series *Finding Your Roots*, hosted by Henry Louis Gates. Gates presented Walker with an ancestry search, along with political strategist Donna Brazile and *Modern Family* actor Ty Burrell.

On December 4, Visual Arts Department chair **Gerry Beegan** published a piece of criticism in *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* focusing on a trio of graphic design books.

Visual Arts Department faculty member **Natalie Bookchin's** film *Long Story Short* made its world premiere February 22 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The piece features interviews with people in homeless and job-training centers in California.



Music's Fred Hersch made the cover of *DownBeat* Magazine's October issue.

Pereda began recording everything. After graduating high school, he even convinced his physics and English teachers to star in a film, along with his friends, about lost British tourists ending up on the beach.

"It was kind of a romance, and it was pretty bad," Pereda admits, but he kept at it.

Enrolling in film school at York University in Toronto, he discovered his subject matter: class dynamics and social issues in Mexico.

Pereda, who was raised in a household with domestic workers, has always been sensitive to the large divide that exists among social classes, an awareness that inspired him to tell stories of hard work and survival.

"I grew up more privileged than the majority Mexicans," Pereda says. "In a way, growing up with a maid has marked me. I escape to that subject matter. There's always someone in my films representing the realities of the working class."

Pereda also uses a form of staging in his documentary-like films that includes sometimes telling his subjects what to say. Although some filmmakers perceive documentaries as unvarnished reality, Pereda doesn't see it that way.

To Pereda, a documentary is like any other story—a construction from beginning to end. "It's a personal medium, not an objective point of view," he says.

Ambiguity in filmmaking is essential for fostering active participation, Pereda says. He is not trying to lecture, telling people how to think or what reality is. Pereda wants viewers to think for themselves.

"Films should not end when the lights come on," he says. "They should continue in the minds of the spectator, and each viewer should be able to build a personal film for themselves."

Pereda's approach to filmmaking is closely linked to his artistic

upbringing. His father, a philosophy teacher, and his mother, a music composer, exposed Pereda to art at an early age.

"Growing up, we had dinner parties a couple times a week. I became close to poets, philosophers, musicians, and actors," he says. "My parents' world pretty much determined my decision to become an artist."

And so, Pereda has never been drawn to a world where a certain shot was decided by traditional industry standards.

"The industry that generates a lot of money has decided how films should be made in order to be as profitable as possible," Pereda says. He believes this discourages many filmmakers from taking risks, inevitably producing the same mundane plotline.

"That's why we get the same superhero movies over and over," Pereda says. "They are all the same—even the eighth one because they know people are going to go watch it, and it will make money."

This doesn't mean he discourages his students from aiming for Hollywood. On the contrary, Pereda tries to encourage them to pursue whichever film industry avenue they choose.

He just wants his students to know what cinema is capable of. "Those that want to work within a commercial film setting will hopefully be the most innovative ones within that setting after going through this program," he says.

Pereda insists that being a part of Mason Gross offers a unique opportunity for students to talk about film in a way that wouldn't always fit the standard at other educational outlets and universities.

"I feel incredibly fortunate that I'm teaching and I'm running the film program within an art institution that gives me the freedom to talk about these things," Pereda says. "Being in a film program within an art school is quite liberating."

**"FILMS SHOULD NOT
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Mason Gross revelers gathered on December 14 for the Alumni Holiday Reception in New York City. Faculty, staff, and alums reconnected at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Midtown, toasting the school's 40th anniversary and even mugging for the camera in a glittering photo booth. Here are some outtakes from the very merry occasion.



PHOTOS BY KEITH MUCCILLI



Ashley Seong, MFA artist

Q: Why are your paintings all done from inside your house?

A: I had PTSD coming out of working for the Peace Corps. When I came back, I started painting. I couldn't go outside, but I could paint what I saw. This world is really crappy, so why not revel in what's really beautiful?

ASK THE ARTISTS

KEITH MUCCILLI

Neal Gupta, BFA actor

Q: How did you get into acting?

A: I was a crazy child. I loved to dress up. I started singing first, and then my teacher got me to go to acting classes. My first play was *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and I loved it. I was Rudolph.

Q: What were your favorite movies as a kid?

A: *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*—because in the '90s there weren't people who looked like that in the movies.



CHRISTOPHER CARTMILL

MUSIC AT THE MUSEUM

The Mason Gross Extension Division continues its collaboration with the university's Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum via the monthly *Music at the Museum* series. The free program also usually includes a lecture, master class, workshop, and/or tour of the galleries. More information is available on the museum's website, zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu.



JODY SOMERS

Student & Alumni NEWS

A mini Mason Gross School Theater Department reunion is taking place on The Great White Way, involving three alums: Tony-winner **Roger Bart** and three-time Tony-nominee **Kevin Chamberlin** star in the musical *Disaster!*, which *The New York Times* describes as a "delirious goof of a musical." **Rick Sordelet** serves as fight director. The show is running at the Nederlander Theatre.

Visual Arts student **Brian Edgerton's** program *Endless Spiral* launched High Line Channel 30 in New York City, a rotating program of silent videos projected daily on the High Line at West 30th Street and 10th Avenue. Edgerton's program ran from December 3 through March 9.

Dance alum **Heather Favretto** performed in Pilobolus's *Shadowland* in New York City from November 20 to December 3. The North American premiere took place at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.

Opera at Rutgers won first place in its division of the National Opera Association Competition for the program's 2015 production of *Lakmé*. This is the fourth straight year that Opera at Rutgers has been honored.

Visual Arts alum **Alicia Wargo** is the principal at DreamYard Preparatory School, an arts-focused public high school in the South Bronx. The school was featured in a December issue of *The New Yorker*.

Music alum **Brendan McConville** was named a Fulbright Scholar for 2015–2016.

He began lecturing and researching in Pescara, Italy, beginning in February at the Luisa D'Annunzio Conservatory. His lectures focus on recent American compositional and analytical trends.

Visual Arts alumna **Melissa H. Potter** was in Bosnia as a Fulbright Scholar at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo last fall. She is working on a project featuring a woman whom she sponsored in a refugee camp during the Bosnian wars in the '90s; the woman is now 80 years old. Potter's film, *Like Other Girls Do*, is showing at the Merlinka Festival in Belgrade, as well as the BeFem Festival there.

On December 12, the **Rutgers University Marching Band's Marching Scarlet Knights** spent the day in Manhattan to perform during the Heisman Trophy Tailgate Party at B.B. King Blues Club & Grill. The event was the lead-up to the announcement of the year's Heisman trophy winner. Musicians hung out with past Heisman winners as well as current candidates and members of the Heisman Trust, and were treated to a concert by LL Cool J. They topped it off with a few songs out on 42nd Street.

That much-talked-about Amy Schumer photo for the 2016 Pirelli calendar? Before photographer Annie Leibovitz shot it, Visual Arts MFA alum **Mary (Meyers) Howard** set the scene. The set and production designer (who professes a special love for the FLUXUS movement, which was born here at Rutgers) has spent three decades working with some of the biggest names in photography, including Richard Avedon, Steven Meisel, Leibovitz, and Patrick Demarchelier. In December, Howard was featured in an interview in *Vogue*.

Music alum **Jason Michael Webb** is musical director and conductor of the Broadway revival of *The Color Purple*.



Carlo Antonio Villanueva is one of several alums touring with reputable dance companies.

Kudos to Theater Department alumnus **Mike Colter**, tearing up the small screen in Marvel's *Jessica Jones* on Netflix. *The New York Times* deems his performance "sneakily good." He is set to star in Netflix's *Luke Cage*, expected to premiere in November.

Dance alum **Stephanie Klemons** is the dance captain and performs as a cast member in Lin-Manuel Miranda's phenomenally successful *Hamilton* on Broadway. She also worked with Miranda on *In the Heights*.

Visual Arts alum **Raque Ford** has been awarded the prestigious International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) residency in Brooklyn for 2016.

Dance alum **Maria Volpe** is on her first national tour with Shen Wei Dance.

Conceptual artist and MFA alum **Jennie C. Jones** has won the Foundation for Contemporary Arts 2016 Robert Rauschenberg Award. According to FCA's website, the gift is given to an artist who reflects founding FCA artist Rauschenberg's "legacy of innovation, risk-taking, and experimentation." In addition, the exhibition *Compilation* at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston chronicled 11 years of her works on paper, sculpture, and sound works. Her work draws parallels between the visual arts and jazz during the social and cultural upheavals in the late 1950s. The show ran from December 12 through March 27.

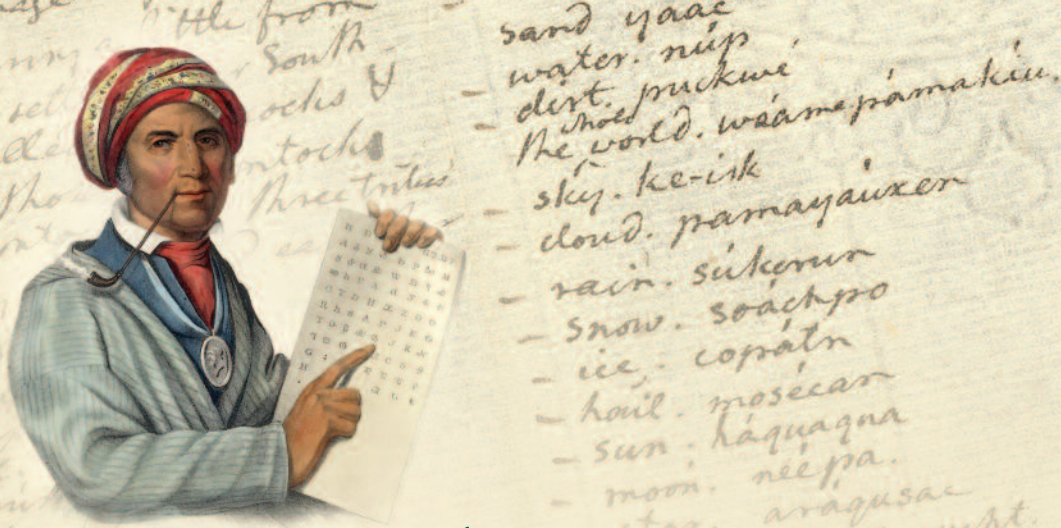
MFA sculpture student **Bryan Volta**, winner of the ARTslant Prize 2015 (student category), showed his work at the Aqua Art Miami art fair in the fall. According to ArtSlant.com's James Pepper Kelly, his plastic model of a hydraulic breaker, covered in chicken feet, "obtains an indeterminate status between industrial and art objects, between power and slapstick."

Dance alum **Carlo Antonio Villanueva** has joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company as a full-time company member and began touring earlier this year.

MFA sculpture student Bryan Volta was the winner of the ARTslant Prize 2015 (student category). This installation is called *Body Bag*.

COURTESY OF BRIAN VOLTA





Picturing the past

VISUAL ARTS ALUMNA CURATES AND STUDIES MUSEUM EXHIBITS

BY LISA INTRABARTOLA

While studying photography at Mason Gross, Diana Marsh adored wandering with her camera, and she relished experimenting in the darkroom.

But Marsh also realized that the arrangement and display of those images could provoke emotional responses in her viewers.

Seven years after graduating with her BFA in Visual Arts, Marsh's passion permeates her work curating the American Philosophical Society Museum exhibit *Gathering Voices: Jefferson and Native America*.

The Founding Father was a president of the American Philosophical Society (APS), based in Philadelphia. APS awarded Marsh the prestigious Mellon Post-Doctoral Curatorial Fellowship in March 2015.

Marsh's exhibit, running through December 30, 2016, showcases the third U.S. president's archival papers. But she knows the photographs—portraits of native leaders and their tribes during early attempts at Native American and U.S. diplomacy—will pack the biggest punch.

"There are two images next to each other in the exhibit: one is of kids in native clothing, and then in the other they're in a mission in Western clothing. You can immediately see the sort of assimilation policy they were being forced into," she said. "Photographs are so good at conveying those kinds of stories."

Making her mark

Marsh credits former Mason Gross gallery manager and photographer LaToya Ruby Frazier and photography professor Jason Francisco with sparking her curiosity about installations and how they come together. Even after he accepted a position as an associate professor of photography at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, Francisco continued to work with Marsh as her thesis advisor. He remembers her as a central figure at Mason Gross—the

first-ever student liaison to the faculty—and said he has followed her trajectory.

Francisco said even as an undergrad Marsh was adept at crafting provocative installations in unexpected locations to ask hard questions and prompt conversation. Take her 2006 photo-text installation, which she curated in the Douglass Student Center in response to the university's announcement that the women's college would merge with the general under-

"DOING STUFF WITH YOUR HANDS, PLAYING IN A PHOTO LAB, OR INSTALLING PIECES AROUND THE MASON GROSS BUILDINGS; IT'S NOT THAT UNLIKE WHAT WE DO NOW WHEN WE'RE PLANNING AN EXHIBITION."

grad population at Rutgers: The installation showcased historic photos and Marsh's own contemporary photos to question the decision. Francisco praised the show and its relevance, calling the exhibit a perfect example of "critical intervention into a community space for the sake of community dialogue."

Marsh said the wide-ranging experiences and independence she enjoyed at Mason Gross set her on the path toward curatorship.

"Doing stuff with your hands, playing in a photo lab, or installing pieces around the Mason Gross buildings; it's not that unlike what we do now when we're planning an exhibition," said Marsh.

Then, when she took a class titled "The Anthropology of Art," she discovered the field of museum anthropology—and her calling.

Marsh graduated from Mason Gross in 2009 and the next year earned a master's of philosophy in social anthropology with a focus on

DIANA MARSH

DEGREE: BFA, Visual Arts

OCCUPATION: Andrew W. Mellon Post-Doctoral Curatorial Fellow

LOCATION: Philadelphia

Above left and in background: Two items from the American Philosophical Society Museum exhibit *Gathering Voices: Jefferson and Native America*, curated by Marsh.

COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

museums and heritage from the University of Cambridge. Now enrolled in the University of British Columbia's Museum Anthropology PhD program, Marsh is studying museums as cultural spaces.

"There are so many kinds of expertise that go into producing an exhibition," said Marsh, whose research centers on observing scientists, educators, and artists as they determine what will become the public face of a museum's research and collection. Marsh said it's useful "to think about how those groups come together, and all the stakes and backgrounds at the table" that affect what the public sees.

The APS's two-year fellowship allows Marsh time and money to edge closer to her goals: completing her PhD, researching at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., to determine how much the public actually engages with museum documents accessible in digitized form; and a book she's been contracted to write about her findings.

"As far as careers go, this is an amazing period," she said. "I get to figure out whether I really want to go into curatorial work or a hybrid of academic research and curatorial work."

Marsh said she's proof that a BFA in Visual Arts can open up myriad opportunities.

"Don't downplay your art degree. There are a lot of skills you gain from completing a creative but also rigorous program," she said. "The fact that Mason Gross has a BFA embedded within this big research university allowed me to take a range of interesting and creative studio courses and get all the academic training that prepared me for my master's and PhD work later."

Sparked

AKI SASAMOTO OF THE VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT
DISCUSSES THE ELEMENTS THAT FUEL HER WORK



PAUL O'REILLY

Aki Sasamoto, a professor of sculpture, creates works that explore identity, family, and everyday life. Her installations and gallery performances are often the result of collaborations with scholars and other artists.

MIKE TYSON

I am fascinated with his life story. The documentary *Tyson* (2008) proves his high EQ (emotional intelligence). Tyson is over the top. Balancing between loud actions and emotional insights is hard. My bumper sticker is "I heart Tyson."

COOKING

Both art and cooking require improvisation of me, and I get to practice every day.

DEEP OCEAN CREATURES

I love the greediness of their eating style, and the mystery that is kept deep beneath the surface of the ocean. The ocean seems to be a romantic mixture of beauty and terror. Maybe someday I will make a piece about the deep ocean.



CORDYCEPS (a parasitic fungus)

An insect that hosts this parasitic fungus goes insane and travels far from its family to die, only to spread the cordyceps. The mushroom then grows upward and bursts out of the dead shell of the insect skin. The visual of life piercing through death is a good metaphor. Often I am affected by an incident and then seek a metaphor that describes it.

HOLES

I fit myself in holes whenever possible. I dig holes in the ground, the wall, and sometimes upwards into the ceiling. Holes are magical because I can disappear in them yet still be present in the space. Inside I feel comforted.

“OFTEN I AM AFFECTED BY AN INCIDENT AND THEN SEEK A METAPHOR THAT DESCRIBES IT.”

STRANGERS

I like to test out my performance materials on strangers. People in the street are a brutally honest audience. I also like to take on a slightly different character when I travel, since that opens up parallel lives I am missing out on. For example, going out in business attire to a Tokyo bar would yield a different conversation from hanging out with concrete workers at an Austrian soccer game.

'Tale' to tell

The Mason Gross School celebrates 40 years with Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*

The Mason Gross School was in a celebratory spirit as we marked our 40th anniversary year with an evening performance of *The Soldier's Tale* (*L'histoire du soldat*) on February 20 at Nicholas Music Center. The fully staged production, a school-wide collaboration of the Dance, Digital Filmmaking, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts programs, was set to Igor Stravinsky's 1918 score and featured an ensemble of seven musicians as well as dancers and video projections. The event attracted hundreds of friends as well as fans of a good "deal with the devil" story. Afterward, we toasted 40 years with a festive reception in the Mortensen Hall atrium.



PHOTOS BY JODY SOMERS

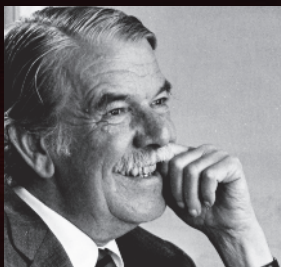
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

1976 — The School of Creative and Performing Arts is founded at Rutgers University at the request of Rutgers' 17th president, Edward J. Bloustein. Theater actor, director, and playwright Jack Bettenbender serves as first dean of the school.

1979 — The school is renamed the Mason Gross School of the Arts in honor of Mason Welch Gross (1911–1977), beloved professor of philosophy, 16th president of Rutgers University, and staunch advocate of the arts in New Brunswick. The school initially consists of master's degree programs in music, theater, and visual arts, with a total of 90 graduate students. Undergraduate programs in dance, music, theater, and visual arts are soon added and enrollment grows rapidly.

1981 — Nicholas Music Center, designed by the renowned Italian architect Pietro Belluschi, the architect of Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City, is completed.

1990 — Musicologist Marilyn Somville assumes leadership of the school, serving as dean after the death of Bettenbender in 1988. Over the next decade,



Somville oversees the relocation of the Visual Arts Department into the Civic Square Building in downtown New Brunswick and establishes a summer series of concerts, plays, and dance productions presented by school ensembles and guest artists.

1991 — New Theater (now Victoria J. Mastrobuono Theater) is completed.

1995 — Civic Square Building is completed.

2000 — George B. Stauffer is appointed dean. Stauffer establishes the *Rutgers in New York* and *Mason Gross Presents* performing- and fine-art series as well as three divisions: the Extension Division (2008) for the education of children and adults in the surrounding communities; Rutgers Arts Online (2010) for the creation of web-based instruction in the arts; and the Rutgers Center for Digital Filmmaking (2011), which produces narrative and documentary films in collaboration with other units of the university.

2013 — Robert E. Mortensen Hall is completed. The school presently encompasses 23 buildings on four campuses.

2015 — The Rutgers Center For Digital Filmmaking launches a BFA degree in digital filmmaking.

The Mason Gross School is home to students from 33 states and 22 countries, and for the past five years has been the most selective undergraduate school at Rutgers.

THE GOOD COUNSELORS

Master classes and workshops with professional working artists inspire students

JAZZ GREATS EDDIE PALMIERI AND FRED HERSCH LEAD MASTER CLASSES

BY LAURIE GRANIERI

Jazz pianists Eddie Palmieri and Fred Hersch took their turn behind the keyboard on several occasions throughout the fall semester, helming master classes and sharing advice with our student musicians.

In November, Grammy-winning Latin jazz pianist Palmieri, sporting a Rutgers baseball cap, took a turn behind the piano and critiqued student performances. He reminded the students to learn by listening; he even did a little impromptu dance as they listened to a recording together.

Conrad Herwig, area coordinator of jazz studies, performed on trombone alongside Palmieri.

"If you can learn to make people sound great—that's the secret Eddie Palmieri has," Herwig explained to the students gathered in Shindell Choral Hall.



Herwig offered his own advice: slow down.

"With music on this level, you have to learn how to linger," Herwig said. "There's a tendency for things to be moving too fast. There's a tendency to not lie in the moment and let things happen.

"When you linger, it sounds relaxed," Herwig said. "It sounds like it's floating."

In December, the Grammy-nominated Hersch stopped by to perform pieces by Joni Mitchell, Thelonius Monk, and Robert Schumann, among others. He paid tribute to Frank Sinatra's centenary with *In the Wee Small Hours*.

Hersch, himself a composer, shared a few of his writing techniques, saying that sometimes he challenges himself to write a tune in 45 minutes, using a timer.

"I revise, but I get the guts of it out. The important thing is just to write," he said, adding that composers must commit themselves to consistently exercising that writing "muscle."

Like Herwig, Hersch had plenty to say about slowing down.

"I can play fast and loud, but I choose not to," he said matter-of-factly. "It makes the big places more effective if I have intimate places too."

And according to Hersch, one can't become a good musician without spending a fair amount of time being a bad musician—really bad.

"One way you'll improve is to, frankly, screw up, a lot," he said. "It's just about sitting and just messing around. It takes a lot of stumbling around."



PHOTOS BY KEITH MUCCILLI



COURTESY OF THE THEATER DEPARTMENT

ACTING ALUM DISCUSSES LIFE ONSTAGE

On October 20, Tony-nominated actor and alum Kevin Chamberlin (*Seussical*, *The Addams Family*, *Dirty Blonde*; Disney Channel's *Jessie*) stopped by to share his experiences with our actors.

"The BFA program gave me the tools, the vocabulary, the experience, the confidence to go out there and say, 'I know what I'm doing. If you hire me, you'll get a trained, skilled professional,'" Chamberlin said later. "The art form of acting is filled with 'pretty faces' that were told they should be in show biz. If you're trained, you automatically become the cream that rises to the top.

"It's the only art form where people think, 'Even a child can do it,'" he continued. "So you have to work that much harder to prove that you're at the top of your game."

Sage advice from a pro.

Kevin Chamberlin, back row, fourth from left, with Associate Chair of the Theater Department and Head of Acting Barbara Marchant (back row, right), and current acting students.

VOICE PROGRAM ALUMS SHARE ADVICE ABOUT SUCCEEDING ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY

BY ALEXANDRA KLAASSEN

Rachel Zatcoff and Chris Newcomer know all too well the difficulty of carving out a Broadway career. So in October, the voice program alums returned to Mason Gross to share with current students the secret to their success—and about never, ever taking a sick day.

Zatcoff, a soprano, stars as Christine twice a week in Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera*; Newcomer, a countertenor, made his Broadway debut in 2012 as Mary Sunshine in *Chicago*. Last year, he originated the role of Jacob Chicken in the Tony-nominated musical *The Visit*, alongside Chita Rivera.

The alums say they got to Broadway by seizing opportunities and, of course, networking like crazy. They both maintain an active presence on social media.



MATTHEW MURPHY

Zatcoff as Christine in *The Phantom of the Opera*.

"I was at an opera audition, and the *West Side Story* casting director just happened to be in the room," says Zatcoff, who performed the role of Maria in an international tour of *West Side Story* in 2013 and 2014. "He called me to audition after. It was a matter of right place, right time."

"Work begets work," Newcomer adds. "I booked *The Visit* because I played Mary Sunshine. The guy who normally plays Mary Sunshine couldn't do *The Visit*, and so he gave them my phone number. My whole career has been about being prepared when the opportunity presents itself."

Student Bernadette Burke says she found the visit encouraging.

"They just proved that people like us who are going to school at Rutgers, and who work

very hard, can accomplish that too," Burke says. "It gave me a bit more faith in myself."

Newcomer says nabbing a part can provide years of work on Broadway as well as on tour. He says he played Mary Sunshine "off-and-on" for three years.

Unfortunately, a musical-theater career is not all 11-o'-clock numbers and thunderous applause.

"I was on Broadway a few months ago, and there's a part in my song where I sort of play with the audience," Newcomer says. "I pointed at someone, and I looked down, and both people were asleep on each other; third row, just asleep."

Becoming Chita

Of course musical theater has never been for the faint of heart.

"I'm the Christine alternate in *Phantom*, so I'm scheduled twice a week to perform, but I'm also on standby for the other six shows," Zatcoff says. "I have to be within 10 to 15 minutes of the theater."

And sick days? Forget about it.

"IF YOU WANT TO BE THE LEAD, USING SOCIAL MEDIA IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY."

— Rachel Zatcoff

"This girl called out on *The Visit* because she wasn't feeling very well," Newcomer says, "and Chita Rivera thought it was the most ridiculous thing. Chita was like: 'That's not how I became Chita Rivera.' For the last three performances of *The Visit* Rivera had no voice, so she just spoke-sang."

Newcomer's not-so-tongue-in-cheek advice to would-be professional performers: Purge your social-media accounts.

"I had to go back and delete a lot of photos



ALEXANDRA KLAASSEN

Zatcoff and Newcomer at Schare Recital Hall in October discussing their careers with current students.

I took at this college," Newcomer says with a laugh.

"If you want to be the lead, using social media is absolutely necessary," Zatcoff adds. "I booked a job through someone seeing a YouTube video of me."

Accentuate the positive

Newcomer and Zatcoff agree that remaining upbeat is essential.

"You have to hit the ball a lot of times before certain things happen. It's a lot of rejection," Zatcoff says. "You learn to deal with that."

Be original, Newcomer says.

"You have to find something that sets you apart and makes you memorable," he says. "People will call you back because they will remember that special thing you have."

Student Brittany Stetson says she was comforted knowing that "finding my 'it' factor could be helpful.

"Work after graduation is what I've been thinking about for months," she adds. "Hearing their experiences really opened my eyes to the possibility of what I could do."



CHARLES ERICKSON

Newcomer, second from right, in *The Visit* with Chita Rivera.

Smells like school spirit

Proud alums name son Mason

BY ALEXANDRA KLAASSEN

Sure, Mason Markowski's college application deadline may not be looming, but with his first name and a pair of devoted Mason Gross alums for parents, we're betting Mason will consider channeling his Scarlet Pride and become a member of the class of 2037.

As Kristen (Conrad) Markowski and Stephen Markowski tell it, when Mason was born in September, friends and family weren't even surprised when the music education alumni announced their first-born's name.

The real conundrum: deciding between naming their son after Henry Rutgers, a Revolutionary War hero and philanthropist for which the university is named, or Mason Welch Gross, the beloved 16th president of the university.

Ultimately, Kristen says, Mason "had a little bit more connection to both of us. Although Rutgers is where we met, Mason Gross was such an important part of our lives."

The couple met at orientation and became fast friends.

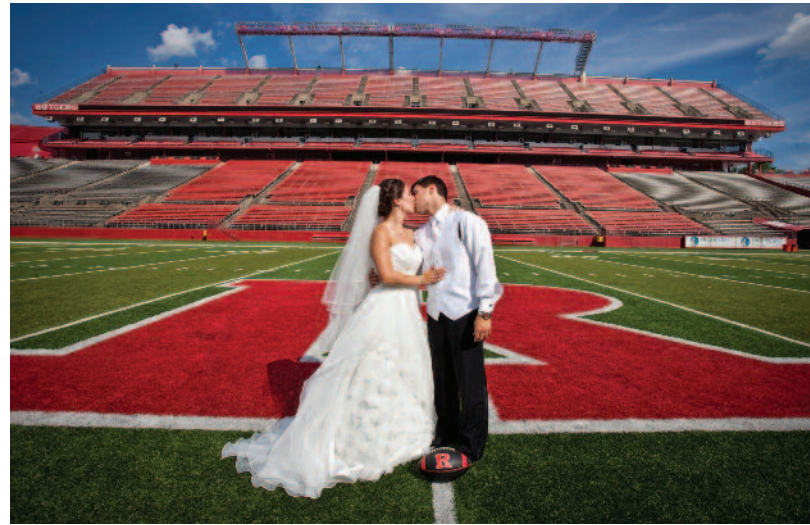
"From the second we met, as corny as it sounds, we were like: 'This is the person who's going to be trouble,'" Kristen recalls. "I knew he was someone who was going to be very important in my life."

In 2013, the couple made it official: They got hitched at Voorhees Chapel and had their wedding photos taken at High Point Solutions Stadium.

When Kristen became pregnant, Stephen began delving into the histories of Henry Rutgers and Mason Gross.

"What Gross did for education, for us as teachers, the things he stood for, and the changes he made within the university at a really trying time, these are things Mason can look up to when he's older," Stephen says.

Gross, a committed educator, taught philosophy courses every semester of his tenure as president, from 1959 to 1971, and was



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRISTEN MARKOWSKI

known as a staunch defender of academic freedom, so much so that in 1966 the American Association of University Professors presented the university with the Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Academic Freedom. Gross was also broadly recognized as a calming presence on campus during a period of upheaval.

As for little Mason, who knows? Eighteen years from now, he just might just be strolling into Marryott Music Building for a music education class. After all, the 7-month-old has already begun noodling on his toy xylophone.

"He loves it," Kristen says. "I don't know if he realizes what he's doing, but he loves the sound."



KEITH MUCCILLI

VISUAL ARTS MFA SCHOLARSHIPS

In December, the Visual Arts Department announced that beginning fall 2016, all incoming visual arts graduate students will receive scholarships equivalent to full out-of-state tuition in the first year and full in-state tuition for the second year of the MFA program.

The move supports the department's belief that graduate study in art—particularly at a public university—should be available to students from a wide range of backgrounds.

"That access should be as democratic as possible," says Gerry Beegan, department chair.

Multiple media outlets picked up on the announcement. In January, the Art F City website mentioned our program's decision in the "pro" column of its "Should I Get an MFA?" story. Artsy.net featured the Mason Gross School in Hilarie Sheets's article "For Artists Who Can't Afford the \$100k to Get an MFA, Alternatives Now Abound."

"We all know that some artists make a lot of money and many artists don't," Beegan says in the Artsy article. "But artists are making art for other reasons than commercial reasons. As an art school, we're trying to create a space outside of the pressures of the market."

"WE'RE TRYING TO CREATE A SPACE OUTSIDE OF THE PRESSURES OF THE MARKET."

— Visual Arts Department Chair
Gerry Beegan

Top 5 My favorite books

BY GABRIELLA MEITERMAN-RODRIGUEZ

As a child, EdM dance student Gabriella Meiterman-Rodriguez was anything but a bookworm.

"I would buy books recommended by friends and quickly let them collect dust; I have the largest book collection and have read very little of it," she admits.

All that changed when Meiterman-Rodriguez started graduate school here at Rutgers and began digging into her assigned reading list. Once she found her subject, she loved reading. Meiterman-Rodriguez learned about integrating other subjects into dance education, and she adored the idea of merging disciplines so much that, during a teaching internship, she wrote her own children's book.

Here, Meiterman-Rodriguez shares a list of her favorite page-turners:

Lolita

Vladimir Nabokov

At first, I was enraged at Professor Humbert Humbert and the nymphet Dolores "Lolita" Haze's romantic story. But I appreciated Nabokov's realistic view of some love stories—meaning not every book is a happily-ever-after. Some love stories are dark; others are blinding and romantic, while some are physical and sensual. This story was physical and sensual, a love-story twist I had never read before.

The BFG (The Big Friendly Giant)

Roald Dahl

The tale of a 24-foot Big Friendly Giant whose special powers allow him to collect and share children's good dreams inspired me when I was a child. I feared the monsters under my bed, like most children, but Roald Dahl captured the essence of that childlike belief via the gentle BFG. Dahl brought to light to my fear and replaced all monsters with the BFG.

Downward-Facing Death

Neal Pollack

This book is about a homicide detective (Matt Bolster—yes, his last name is a yoga prop) who needs to crack a murder mystery. Because many of his suspects are yogis, he begins taking yoga classes to get to know them. This book turns yoga into humor and satire with many inside yoga jokes. These jokes reminded me to not take my job as a yoga instructor too seriously, and to appreciate the various students who take my class. After all, one of my students could be a detective uncomfortable in downward-facing dog trying to solve a murder mystery while hitting on other yogis in the room.

How To Train a Wild Elephant

Jan Chozen Bays

This book offers 52 mindfulness techniques to train our "elephant" minds week by week. I read one chapter every week to gain a new perspective and to challenge myself to embody that week's lesson. I use this book as a tool for self-reflection and to improve my habits through new experiences.



COURTESY OF GABRIELLA MEITERMAN-RODRIGUEZ

Felix's Adventures: The Congo Rainforest

Gabriella Meiterman

I wrote a children's book during my teaching internship in graduate school. The book is about a dog who travels the Congo Rainforest and meets three animals; with each encounter he learns new dance moves from them and lessons about himself. This book has been used as a narrative to guide children's dancing through improvisation. I illustrated this book with my mother and wrote the story using dance vocabulary and Laban Movement Analysis terminology. I am sharing copies with fellow educators with the hope that they will integrate the text into their curriculum.



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 2015 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, name as a student, death date, class year, and major. Thank you.

Paul A. Andrade, Art, 1996, MFA, September 23, 2015

Jon Cavaluzzo, Theater, BFA, February 2, 2016

Carla Allen Ceasar, Theater, 1986, BFA, March 26, 2014

Elohim Raman, Art, 1966, MFA, July 8, 2007

Mary Bartolone Robinson, Art Education, 1983, BFA, September 19, 2015

Thomas Uzar, Art, 1982, MFA, November 4, 2015

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

Behind the Scenes

Senior Dance Concert, November 2013.

