College of Fine Arts Year in Review

2017

College of Fine Arts 2016-17 Year in Review

College of Fine Arts

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College of Fine Arts community,

When rising senior Amy Russell dove into her thesis project, a comprehensive history of Western Michigan University’s Department of Dance, she wisely asserted that “in order to effectively progress forward in time, you must fully understand the path you have traveled thus far.” As we head into another fall semester, it is with this same belief that we are revisiting the 2016-17 academic year.

In this year-in-review newsletter, you will see celebrated successes and significant stories from the last 12 months, from grand prix trophies and best-in-show awards to unprecedented world premieres and Cotton Bowl appearances. You will also find milestone moments, including the retirements of revered fine arts family members and 10, 20 and 50-year anniversaries of beloved events, establishments and ensembles. We hope that these memories and highlights will not only take you on a trip down memory lane, but also that they will excite you for what is sure to be another colorful year in the College of Fine Arts.

We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event, and in the meantime, we encourage you to follow along with us on social media and our blog, The Fine Print.

Daniel G. Guyette,
Dean, WMU College of Fine Arts
THE 2016-17 ACADEMIC YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

237 new students enrolled in the College of Fine Arts in the Fall of 2016. Coming in with an average GPA of 3.53 and an average ACT score of 24, these Broncos are some of the best and brightest students on campus.

more than 11,000 miles traveled by CFA manager of recruitment and outreach, Natalie Faculak, as she searches for more talented young artists to join our community.

4 retirements After a combined 117 years of dedication to the College of Fine Arts, four CFA faculty and staff members hung up their hats. We wish them all the best in this next phase of life!
Yat-Lam Hong, Piano Technician | Dr. Silvia Roederer, Professor, Piano
Darshana Shah, Budget Manager, College of Fine Arts | Dr. Matt Steel, Professor, Music History

60 blog posts published on the Fine Print, ranging from bucket lists for WMU students to interviews with esteemed alumni. Subscribe at finearts.wmich.edu/blog

over 1,220 events including student and faculty performances, recitals, concerts, shows and exhibitions.
The 2016-17 academic year brought a wide array of activities and events. While we said goodbye to President Dunn, we said hello to a brand new program in product design. While we traveled to the Baltic states and beyond to share our talents with the global community, we welcomed in guest artists from all over the world to bring their perspectives to us. While we celebrated double-digit anniversaries of fine arts traditions, we performed for patrons not even 10-years-old. In an effort to showcase the breadth of our creative endeavors and accomplishments from the past year, we have compiled 17 of our favorite milestone moments in the pages that follow.
In September, the Richmond Center for Visual Arts opened a major traveling exhibition, “After the Thrill is Gone: Fashion, Politics, and Culture in Contemporary South African Art.” Curated by Frostic School of Art assistant professor Andrew Hennlich, “After the Thrill is Gone” was one of the first major exhibitions in the United States to explore artistic practice in post-apartheid South Africa. The exhibition featured 13 artists who used fashion, textile and clothing to comment on social and political landscapes since 1994, both by considering the lack of substantial change and by imagining new alternatives for South Africa’s future. Artists in the exhibition included Haroon Gunn-Salie, Kudzani Chiurai, Gabrielle Goliath and Mary Sibande.
The 2016 Distinguished Alumni Awards

Each fall, in the spirit and tradition of homecoming, the College of Fine Arts welcomes four accomplished graduates back to campus to celebrate their achievements. Nominated and selected by faculty and administrators in their unit of study for demonstrating outstanding success in their field, these individuals are honored with the annual College of Fine Arts Distinguished Alumni Award.

At this year’s Distinguished Alumni Award presentation and reception, we were delighted to recognize David Alpert of the Department of Theatre, September Buys of the Gwen Frostic School of Art, Dennis DeSantis of the School of Music and Jacquelyn Nowicki of the Department of Dance. We are certain these impressive arts professionals will continue to make us proud.

Read more about these four exceptional alumni at goo.gl/uMNDND
3. LEARNING THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF DANCE

The Department of Dance hosted its first ever international residency with artists from the Dominican Republic last fall. Marianela Boán’s dance company, La Cía Nacional de Danza Contemporánea, held master classes with the students and capped off the week with a performance of their own work. 2017 Dance B.F.A. graduate Sinclair Davis reflects on her experience working alongside the Department of Dance’s Dominican guests:

Though I thought the classes would be challenging because of the language barrier, it became apparent that dance doesn’t always require the same vernacular. The classes, taught by three of the dancers, were full of energy. The Modern Technique classes began with a simple warm up of walking and running to get our bodies ready for class. Once our bodies were warm, we began learning different combinations of movement that took us in and out of the floor and pushed the boundaries of our kinesphere. The instructors wanted us to take up as much space as we could, directing us to reach as far as we could while moving in the space.

The instructors led the improvisation class with a prompt for us to follow, such as walking around the space and touching another dancer’s shoulder. The prompt would build throughout the class as they added more tasks for us to explore. By the end of the class, we were moving through space with a different intention than when we started. We were able to dance with one another and feel the energy shift as the task changed. I discovered in the improvisation class that we were building a community as we created new shapes and points of contact with one another. It was an exciting feeling to have created that connection with very little verbal communication.

Though I know very little Spanish, I felt like I understood them perfectly while they were teaching. By using physical and non-verbal cues with some translation, we were able to comprehend the combinations and corrections. Without oral communication to rely on, I was able to learn dance through a different lens. I didn’t have to understand the words they were saying to understand the movement they wanted us to do. This new learning environment reinforced the idea and feeling of dance being a universal language. Without using the English language, I was able to understand and evolve as an artist from this wonderful experience.

Sinclair Davis
B.F.A., Dance, 2017

Photo courtesy of La Cía Nacional de Danza Contemporánea.
A thriving local design and manufacturing industry with demand for creative and forward-thinking talent, continued support from passionate community members, and a campus with existing world-class programs in art, design, engineering and entrepreneurship. It was this ideal formula that led to the creation of the Gwen Frostic School of Art’s new undergraduate program in product design, which was approved last fall. 

Through collaboration with international corporations and a hands-on, multifaceted curriculum, the new Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in product design aims to prepare the next generation of innovators; observers, strategists and designers who will change the world with the solutions they develop.

“To create the perfectly modern three-legged stool that balances artistic aesthetics, elegant engineering and a business-minded entrepreneurial spirit is challenging, but bringing these disciplines together into harmony to improve the interaction between humans and technology is the ultimate goal,” Guyette says.

Some notable southwest Michigan companies working in support of the effort include FabriKal, Landscape Forms and Eaton. Collaboration with industry partners will allow students to gain practical experience delivering design solutions to real-world problems, and they will be presented with opportunities for mentorship and networking with experts in the field.

This interdisciplinary program and its integration with local industry caught the attention of longtime local arts supporters Jim and Lois Richmond. The couple, both WMU graduates and retirees with long leadership careers in the Kalamazoo area, contributed a lead gift of $3 million in support of the creation of a home for product design at WMU. Their gift will make possible the new Richmond Product Design and Innovation Institute.

“We’re so pleased to see the way the University, community and local corporations are coming together to build a program that fully leverages Kalamazoo’s strengths in the arts and innovation,” says Jim Richmond. “This program will be a leader in the growing fields of design and innovation nationally, and will prepare WMU students for these important careers for generations to come.”
The Richmond gift, along with gifts from other donors, will be used for renovations to 28,000 square feet on the first and third floors of middle Kohrman Hall. The renovations will include studios, presentation spaces and laboratories dedicated to innovation, fabrication, rapid prototyping, 3D printing, woodworking and metalworking. Construction is slated to begin this fall. Bob Brown and the Monroe-Brown Foundation provided key initial funding, and CSM Group and TowerPinkster executed the pre-design for the building renovations.

Michael Elwell, a former industrial design faculty member at the University of Notre Dame, will serve as the director of the Richmond Institute of Product Design and Innovation. Elwell holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts in industrial design from the University of Notre Dame and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign respectively. Additionally, prior to joining the faculty at Notre Dame, Elwell worked as an industrial design professional for companies including Coachmen Recreational Vehicles, Radio Flyer and Process4, a design firm near Cleveland, Ohio.

He has worked on products in industries ranging from automotive to housewares, and he possesses a patent for his award-winning prescription pill container opener and label magnifier, the “Magnifying Medi-Grip,” which is now licensed to Jokari, Inc. With his extensive education and experience in the industrial design field, Elwell will provide insight and direction as the institute takes shape.

“My goal is to create a contemporary program that is responsive to today’s design landscape, one that encourages students to deeply consider the interactions between people and products,” Elwell says.

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This fall, just over 20 aspiring innovators will step on campus as the University’s first cohort of product design students. In addition to sharing guidance and ideas for the development of this relevant, new program, Elwell also brings a great deal of passion and excitement.

“With new curriculum, new students and new, world-class facilities, this is an exciting opportunity to say the least.”

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5. University Chorale tours the Baltic states

One of the many high notes of Western Michigan University Chorale's time in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was winning the Grand Prix trophy at the Kaunas Cantat International Choral Festival. The ensemble also took home three gold medals (Main, Contemporary and Spirituals), and WMU’s Dr. Kimberly Dunn Adams earned the Director’s Award for “exceptionally good conducting.” More on their experience here: goo.gl/Z9Z0kU

6. Theatre and music students stage “Show Boat”

Audiences are still talking about the extraordinary co-production between the Department of Theatre and the School of Music that became a centerpiece of the fall season. “Show Boat,” based on the novel by Pulitzer Prize winner and Kalamazoo native Edna Ferber, featured a 40-piece orchestra and dozens of theatre and music students sharing the stage in exquisite costumes.

7. Gwen Frostic School of Art recognizes outstanding students

In addition to receiving the Angie Gayman Carmer Scholarship and the Walter F. Enz Memorial Award, senior photography B.F.A student Hayden Simpson took home the best-in-show honor for his image, “Chevon,” which will be on view at WMU-Grand Rapids during ArtPrize, September 20 - October 8. Congratulations to Hayden and all of the 2017 arts awards recipients!

8. WMU jazz takes multiple DownBeat awards...again

After completing two decades of winning multiple DownBeat Music Awards, WMU students again earned four awards in 2017, placing fourth in the international music competition. WMU’s Gold Company (pictured) was awarded in the Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Graduate College Outstanding Performances category. Member James Richardson was awarded in the Outstanding Soloist category.

9. The College of Fine Arts launches a blog: The Fine Print

Serving as a lens into the lives of our students, faculty, staff and alumni, while also providing tips and resources to prospective students, The Fine Print is the official blog of WMU’s College of Fine Arts. Recent stories include student reflections on their summer experiences and spotlights of staff members who work behind the scenes to keep the college thriving (pictured: Laura Cornish, supervisor of dance production). Subscribe for weekly updates on what’s new in the college: finearts.wmich.edu/blog
The 2016 football season was the most exciting in recent years at WMU, and the Bronco Marching Band was proud to participate and have a significant role. Highlights in the historic season included a 13-0 regular season, a MAC Championship, ESPN's College GameDay coming to campus and the 81st Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic. With 320 members, the BMB took advantage of the opportunity to perform before millions of people in these nationally-televised broadcasts. A trip to the Cotton Bowl was the pinnacle of the season.

10. Bronco Marching Band performs at the Cotton Bowl

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“The Cotton Bowl was a special experience for our students and I’m glad they got the opportunity to be a part of this level of bowl trip,” said Dr. David Montgomery, director of the BMB. “WMU and the Cotton Bowl went above and beyond to provide our students with the best experience possible. The performances were outstanding and the students represented WMU with class and professionalism.”
Celebrating 20 years of the Great Works Dance Project

For two decades, the Great Works Dance Project has enriched and enhanced the programs of the Department of Dance, bringing renowned choreographers and dance professionals to campus to stage the finest historic and contemporary works for performance by WMU students. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of this hallmark project, the Department of Dance presented a gala concert comprised entirely of professional “Great Works.”
At the Great Works Dance Project 20th Anniversary Gala, choreography spanning genres and generations, including three dances never before staged by a university program, were performed by Western Michigan University dance students.

“Lilac Garden” by Antony Tudor was one of the pieces featured in the 20th anniversary program. In its 80-year history, this ballet had only been performed by professional companies. The lineup also included “The Gettin’” by Kyle Abraham and “Charanga” by Frank Chaves, neither of which had ever been performed by students.

According to WMU Dance Chair Megan Slayter, being granted the honor of performing these works for the first time at the university level is a tribute to the caliber of the WMU dance program, its students and its faculty.

“The performance of Great Works dances by our students places Western Michigan University among an elite few dance programs engaging in this type of performance-based research,” Slayter says. “Our students are capable of performing professional works with not only strong dance technique, but true passion and integrity.”

Other featured works include “Foreground” by Lauren Edson, “Fire Dance” by Loïe Fuller (pictured on cover), “Diphthong” by Brian Enos and “One: A Chorus Line” by Lindsey Thomas.

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12. WMU Dance bids farewell to President Dunn

More than 50 gold sequin-clad WMU dance students performed the finale from “A Chorus Line” at the farewell celebration for President Dunn. Original choreography by Lindsey Thomas, restaged by Jeremy Blair.

13. WMU Theatre produces world premiere for family audiences

The development of “Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher” over the past year provided a wealth of unique opportunities for the Western Michigan University Department of Theatre. Originally a children’s book by Bruce Coville, “Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher” was adapted for the stage by the WMU Department of Theatre and Kalamazoo playwright and Education for the Arts teaching artist Tucker Rafferty. This collaborative production allowed students the opportunity to design and build innovative puppets and learn the craft of puppetry with guest artist Jason Potgeiter of the award-winning Handspring Puppet Company in South Africa. The show was performed for thousands of students and families from across Kalamazoo County, and for the first time, the Department of Theatre offered a sensory-friendly performance exclusively for families with special needs.

14. Megan Slayter wins 2017 WMU Assessment Excellence Award

Through her work as the chair of the departmental assessment committee, as a faculty member, and now Department of Dance chair, Megan Slayter has been a catalyst for rethinking the assessment planning process in the department and using the data to improve student learning.

15. A 50th anniversary concert and a new harpsichord

With a generous donation from Jim and Pat Dolan, the WMU School of Music was able to purchase a new harpsichord in celebration of the 50th anniversary of WMU Collegium Musicum. The harpsichord made its debut with the 30-member ensemble at a celebratory concert in March.

16. The Richmond Center for Visual Arts turns 10

The Richmond Center for Visual Arts celebrated its 10th anniversary year this spring during a two-person exhibition featuring Frostic School of Art Professors Emeriti Curtis Rhodes and John M. “Jack” Carney.
From professors who leave a lasting impact on their students to administrative employees who exceed the expectations of their role, there is no shortage of talented, passionate and hardworking people in the College of Fine Arts. Each year in April, to celebrate the service and contributions of some of our finest faculty and staff members, the college hosts its annual College of Fine Arts Recognition Awards reception. Congratulations to this year’s deserving recipients!

Above: Mindi Bagnall, coordinator of exhibitions for the Richmond Center for Visual Arts and University Art Collection curator, poses with her family after being presented with the Outstanding Staff Award.

Left: Kate Thomsen’s biggest (yet smallest) fans were there to congratulate her on her award.
The 2017 Excellence in Part Time Teaching Award recipients were metals/jewelry area coordinator Autumn Brown (top) and Kate Thomsen of the Department of Theatre (above).

Left: Carolyn Pavlik of the Department of Dance took home this year’s Excellence in Creative Research Award.

Dr. Silvia Roederer (top) and Dr. Matt Steel (above) were recognized for their years of service to the College of Fine Arts as they both retire from their roles in the School of Music. Additionally, Dr. Roederer received this year’s Excellence in Teaching Award for her exemplary work as professor of piano.

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A TIME FOR THE ARTS
The College of Fine Arts is beginning the 2017-18 academic year with a simple message: **Now is a time for the arts.**

The arts have long been a vital part of the human experience. Whether watching the Kabuki of Japan or classic ballet of France, taking in works showcased at MoMA or absorbing the distinctive sounds of jazz, the act of engaging with the arts provides us an opportunity to examine our lived experiences and encourages us to be more creative, more observant and more aware.

Cultures and societies continue to look to the arts for ways to express both individual desires and collective hopes. The arts remain a way both to process private fears and to work through public vulnerabilities. The arts provide a platform not only to respond to what has happened, but also to engage with what is going on in real time. The arts are a means to evaluate a past, navigate a present and propose a future. Above all, however, the arts bring individuals together, literally, into a common space for a shared moment. At a time when division and volatility remain an overshadowing presence in too many places, we pause to remind our communities, our leaders, our children and ourselves that now is a time for the arts.

**Now is a time for theatre.** It is a time to share stories, building understanding and encouraging empathy.

**Now is a time for music.** It is a time to celebrate emotions and connect with each other through song.

**Now is a time for dance.** It is a time to look to the human form as a medium for discourse.

**Now is a time for art.** It is a time to pursue curiosity in ways not easily captured by words, melodies or movements.

So, let us dedicate ourselves to coming together at a favorite arts venue in the coming months. Let us have conversations about what was just experienced there. Let us find elements that engaged us, and talk about what did not. Agree. Disagree. At a minimum, let us put down the technology that often keeps us isolated from one another and connect with someone nearby. Let us remember that now, and always, it is a time for the arts.

We hope that you will join us in ushering in another vibrant year within Western Michigan University’s College of Fine Arts, reveling in the many relationships the arts afford us not just on campus, but locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
Join us in celebrating a time for the arts at an upcoming College of Fine Arts performance or event:

A TIME FOR THEATRE

Waiting to be Invited
By S.M. Shephard-Massat
September 22 - October 8

The Witches of Eastwick
By John Dempsey and Dana P. Rowe
October 6 - 15

The Crucible
By Arthur Miller
October 27 - November 5

Next Stop, Broadway!
Featuring Stage and Screen Star Stephen Wallem
November 30 - December 2

wmich.edu/theatre

A TIME FOR MUSIC

Jazz Masters Series: MOSS
(vocal ensemble)
October 5
Dalton Center Recital Hall

University Symphonic Band,
University Concert Band
November 19
Miller Auditorium

University Symphony Orchestra
featuring Stulberg Silver Medalist Qing Yu Chen, violin soloist
Bruce Uchimura, conductor
October 8
Miller Auditorium

Trial by Jury,
An Embarrassing Position (opera)
November 10 - 11
Dalton Center Recital Hall

Choral Christmas
University Chorale, Cantus Femina, Collegiate Singers
December 2
First Presbyterian Church, Kalamazoo

A Brass Celebration of Christmas
December 10
Miller Auditorium

wmich.edu/music/events
A TIME FOR DANCE

WMU Dance performances:

Dancing with the WMU/Kazoo Stars
October 6
Miller Auditorium

Taylor 2, The Best of Paul Taylor
November 10
Chenery Auditorium

Orchesis Dance Concert
November 15-19
Dalton Center, Studio B

In the Works with WMU Dance – Art Hop
December 1
Wellspring Theatre

Fall Showcase
December 9
Dalton Center, Studio B

Informal performances
and open rehearsals:

Christian Denice Open Rehearsal
September 4
Dalton Center, Studio B

Brendan Duggan Open Rehearsal
September 8
Dalton Center, Studio B

Noon Dance Showing
October 13
Dalton Center, Studio B

Taylor 2 Open Rehearsal
November 3
Dalton Center, MMR

ACDA and Winter Gala Adjudication
November 17
Dalton Center, MMR

wmich.edu/dance/events

A TIME FOR ART

Art + Soul benefit gala
Celebrating 10 years of contemporary art at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts

Benefit proceeds will support the Richmond Center for Visual Arts exhibition program. Jim and Lois Richmond have generously offered to match funds from individual ticket sales and individual donations made in lieu of or in addition to ticket sales, up to $10,000!

Space is limited! Purchase your tickets today at MyWMU.com/RCVAgala or call (269) 387-2455
ON THE COVER

Genevieve Brady, a senior in the Western Michigan University Department of Dance, performs Loïe Fuller’s “Fire Dance” at the Great Works Dance Project 20th Anniversary Gala in February.