

Mason Gross SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

SPRING 2015 MAGAZINE

*Happy Birthday
Rutgers Bands*

100

Strike up the bands

The Rutgers band program
celebrates 100 years

RUTGERS
Mason Gross School
of the Arts



ANDREA KANE

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

On March 12 the collected bands of Mason Gross—the Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights, the Rutgers Wind Ensemble, the Rutgers Symphony Band, and the Rutgers Concert Band—joined forces to present the *Rutgers Bands Extravaganza* at the State Theatre in downtown New Brunswick. Bringing together six faculty conductors and more than 450 student players, the event served as the grand kickoff for the 100th anniversary of the Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights. Known to football fans as “The Pride of New Jersey,” the Marching Band has grown steadily over the years under the leadership of Professor Timothy Smith, from 135 players in 2000 to its present Big Ten size of more than 250 members.

In addition to performing at Rutgers University home football games, the band has appeared in recent years in Super Bowl XLVIII at MetLife Stadium here in New Jersey, in the debut of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* with Irish rockers U2 on the top of Rockefeller Center, in a Victoria’s Secret fashion show, and in other nationally televised engagements. On these occasions the band becomes the public face of the university. We salute the proud history of this ensemble in the present issue (pages 4 and 5), and I urge you to join us for the formal marking of the band’s 100th anniversary during the Rutgers/Kansas football game at High Point Solutions Stadium on September 26.

On April 17 Mason Gross will celebrate a milestone of a different sort: the first public screening of the documentary film *Antarctic Edge: 70° South* at the Quad Cinema in New York City. This will represent the first commercial showing of a work produced by the Rutgers Center For Digital Film-making under the center’s new contract with First Run, a national distributor of narrative and documentary films. Congratulations to director Dena Seidel, who has positioned Mason Gross and Rutgers to take the lead in producing films that feature the cutting-edge work of modern scientists.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to a very special event that will take place as part of the 2015 Mason Gross Summer Series, namely the concert performance of Joseph Rumshinsky’s classic Yiddish opera *Di Goldene Kale (The Golden Bride)*, which will be presented by the National Yiddish Theater – Folksbiene on August 5 at Nicholas Music Center. A smash hit in its day, *Di Goldene Kale* played to packed houses in Boston, Philadelphia, and other large cities following its debut at the famous Kessler’s Second Avenue Theatre in New York City on February 9, 1923. We are proud to bring it back to life in New Brunswick, in its modern-day stage-band premiere. Read more about the entire 2015 Mason Gross Summer Series on page 19 of the magazine.

— George B. Stauffer, Dean

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"I love the live animal of the theater, of performance."

— Kathleen Tolan, head of MFA playwriting. Read more about Tolan and other new faculty members on page 7 of the magazine.



JODY SOMERS

STRIKE UP THE BANDS

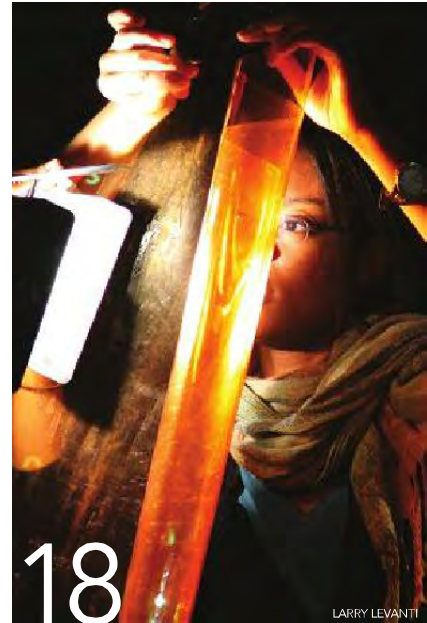
The band program toasts its first 100 years. We have outtakes from the big bash, plus a look back at the last century.



JAY SELDIN

MOTHER OF REINVENTION

At an age when her peers were headed for retirement, historian Nell Irvin Painter launched an art career.



LARRY LEVANTI

FILM FORUM

Mason Gross establishes the university's first filmmaking degree. The first BFA students are set to arrive in the fall.

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ON THE COVER

The *Rutgers Bands Extravaganza* concert, March 12, 2015, at New Brunswick's State Theatre. Photo by Jody Somers

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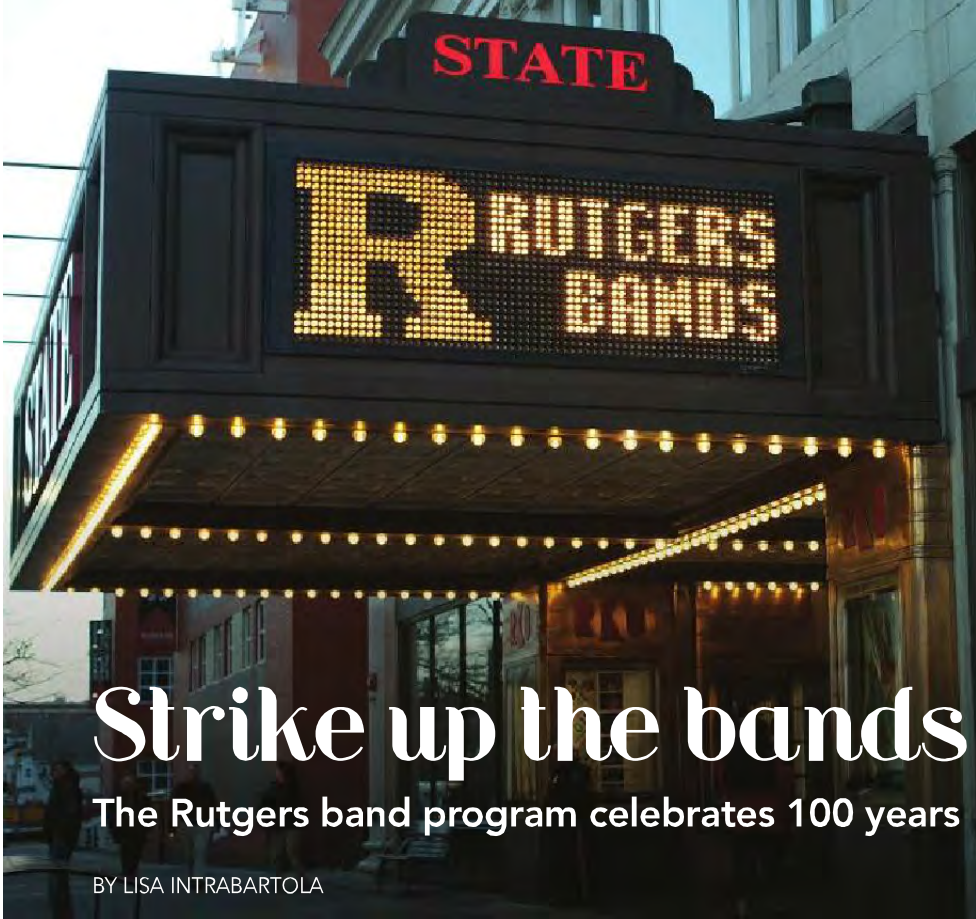
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New Brunswick's State Theatre featured the celebration on its Livingston Avenue marquee; faculty member Maureen Hurd was one of several soloists at the March 12 concert; more than 450 musicians took the stage.

Strike up the bands

The Rutgers band program celebrates 100 years

BY LISA INTRABARTOLA

Long before bands roused stadium crowds to their feet at football games, they rallied their brothers-in-arms on battlefields and blared messages from castle tops.

"Horns blew across the kingdom to send signals. In the [American] Civil War, all the buglers blew their form of communication on the battlefield," says Darryl Bott, associate director of both the Music Department and the wind studies program and conductor of the Rutgers Symphony Band. "Bands were considered service or entertainment, not art."

In 1915, Rutgers University's first band was born out of that same military tradition when Professor L.W. Kimball led 11 musicians around the Old Queens Campus to accompany the Rutgers College Cadet Corps' weekly exercises. The marching band played its first football game in 1921.

To mark the band program's centennial, the Music Department presented the *Rutgers Bands Extravaganza* on March 12 at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. The performance featured the four bands that now comprise the program—Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights, Rutgers Wind Ensemble, Rutgers Symphony Band, and Rutgers Concert Band—along with numerous faculty soloists and guest conductors from the program's history.

"I think this was the first time in our 100-year history that we got each of the bands together on one stage," said director of bands

and Rutgers Wind Ensemble conductor Kraig Alan Williams.

Those concert bands began forming in 1960 with the creation of the Rutgers Wind Ensemble. Led by Williams, it boasts a number of Grammy-listed recordings. Underclassmen and graduate student musicians who are studying performance, composing, or music education comprise the ensemble, which performs centuries-old masterworks of the wind repertoire and contemporary works at professional conferences, conventions, and at the university's annual commencement ceremony.

"WE'RE THE SOUNDTRACK FOR THE UNIVERSITY."

—Timothy Smith,
director of athletic bands

"While a marching band provides outdoor entertainment, a wind ensemble is the musical accompaniment that balances out an art school," Williams says.

The band program's most recent addition, Rutgers Symphony Band, was founded in 2000 to cater to the increased enrollment of music students. The band performs both standard and contemporary literature from the wind-band repertoire. The group grew out of the former Concert Band, which is now made up of members of the larger university community.

PLAYING THE FIELD

But the band most synonymous with the program is the one that started it all a century ago with 11 players on a drill field.

"We make college football college football," says athletic bands director Timothy Smith, who has grown Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights from 134 to more than 250 members since taking over in 2000. "We're the parade around the stadium. We're the soundtrack for the university. We're out in front of 50,000 people every single week."

Following the university's announcement of its entrance into the Big Ten, the oldest Division I collegiate athletic conference in the nation, the marching band enjoyed increased visibility with a string of high-profile performances that include the 2013 televised Victoria's Secret fashion show, Super Bowl XLVIII in 2014 at MetLife Stadium here in New Jersey, and the 2014 premiere of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* playing on the roof of Rockefeller Center.

"I don't think you can really buy that kind of publicity," says Smith of the exposure. "Putting the block 'R' on top of the Rock with U2 to kick off *The Tonight Show* is just fantastic."

All the extra eyes and ears on the marching band is a definite boon to the band program and the university in general, says Mason Gross graduate Carlos Vazquez, a former member of the marching band's drumline and Rutgers Symphony Orchestra

who now instructs the drum line while studying for his master's in percussion performance.

"It's a huge recruitment tool. High school students see the level these bands are at and they say, 'Oh, I want to be a part of that!'" Vazquez says. "That's the biggest thing a band program does for the university."

FORWARD, MARCH!

A strong marching band playing on a national stage is the hallmark of a quality music department, Bott says. But the pressure is on: For the Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights to remain competitive with Big Ten powerhouses such as Ohio State and the University of Michigan, Bott says, the Mason Gross band program must continue to step up its game.

"Every time that marching band goes out and plays at a football game, there is no question people sitting at that stadium garner an opinion about what's going on at the Music Department at Rutgers," Bott says. "If the Music Department can help to build the quality of that marching band by teaching it at the highest levels and providing a staff around it, then that marching band becomes a real crown jewel of the university and demonstrates the excellence of where we want to be."

"BEING PART OF BAND MEANS BEING PART OF A FAMILY."

—Marching Scarlet Knight
Katarzyna Dobrzycka

Smith has spent 15 years grooming his group to play in the "big league," solidifying the band's marching style to reflect a mix of the rigid British and American Drum Corp while allowing for the flexibility to slow down or speed up the tempo and incorporate some fancy footwork.

For their first Big Ten season, instead of performing one half-time show, the marching band learned five. Next year, Smith says, expect more-stylized choreography, tighter precision, and, he hopes, new uniforms and instrument upgrades.

"Being in the Big Ten is a game-changer for us," says Smith, who created a committee to court alumni and raise funds in celebration of their centennial year.

No doubt: A well-oiled marching band has the power to attract not only top-notch musicians to the band program, but top-notch students to the university, such as Hightstown High School 2014 valedictorian and piccolo player Katarzyna Dobrzycka.

"The first thing I did after I enrolled at Rutgers was sign up for the marching band, because I couldn't begin to see my life as a student without it," said Dobrzycka, a first-year student at the School of Arts and Sciences who is double majoring in biomathematics and statistics. "When I did hear about

our entrance into the Big Ten it just added to the magnitude of the program I was joining, and made me that much more excited to be a part of the program and to help it grow throughout the transition."

Like many of her band mates, Dobrzycka considers marching band a culture, not a club.

"Being part of band means being part of a family," she says. "The work is hard, but the satisfaction that comes from putting your heart on the field and meeting people completely different from you that are as equally passionate about band is something that has always been worth the effort for me."

Want to support the Rutgers Band Program? Call 848-932-5197 or email scocuzza@masongross.rutgers.edu



100 years of the Rutgers University Band Program

COMPILED BY TIMOTHY SMITH

- 1915** Faculty member Leigh Kimball's correspondence with President William Henry Steele Demarest in December 1915 leads to the creation of the Rutgers University Band program. The earliest known performances take place at baseball games and military drills in the spring of 1916. Kimball has experience as composer, clarinetist, and U.S. Army Band veteran. In addition, he serves as French professor at Rutgers College.
- 1927** Charles W. Cook begins a dual 12-year career as Rutgers Band director and Army private. Rutgers Band performances include marching as well as concert programs. The group performs live on the radio (1930) on New York radio station WOR.
- 1941** Band activities are greatly diminished and perhaps halted entirely at points during World War II. In 1941, the band is led by Wilbert Hitchner (Rutgers College '22) until his deployment in the war effort.
- 1948** After graduation from The Juilliard School as a concert pianist and experience as a trombonist in the 76th Air Force Band, Martin Sherman arrives as a music faculty member at Rutgers. The Rutgers Marching Band assumes an Ivy League approach to drill and style, donning straw hats and red blazers.
- 1955** Richard Gerstenberger continues the marching-band tradition with the Ivy League approach until 1962.
- 1960** An attempt at establishing a university-wide wind ensemble on the Douglass campus is made by Gerstenberger and Douglass clarinet professor George Jones.
- 1961** The Rutgers University Wind Ensemble forms under the direction of Martin Sherman.
- 1962** Casimir (Casey) Bork (music supervisor of Roselle Schools) leads the Marching Band from 1962 to 1966. The Rutgers Wind Ensemble performs at the 1964 World's Fair under Bork.
- 1965** Initially student-led, the Rutgers Pep Band begins appearing at basketball events.
- 1966** Scott Whitener arrives as director of bands. The Rutgers Marching Band develops a Big Ten high-step approach and becomes known as the Rutgers Marching 100.
- 1967** The Rutgers Wind Ensemble performs at New York City's Town Hall to favorable review in *The New York Times*. Mason Gross (president of Rutgers University) provides the narrative to Aaron Copland's *Lincoln*

Portrait for the occasion. In 1968, the group makes a return appearance at Town Hall under Whitener. The Rutgers Concert Band (second indoor band) is formed to accommodate additional students joining the program.

- 1969** Rutgers Marching 100 performs at the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California. In 1970, the Marching Band appears in a segment with Nancy Sinatra, which is performed live on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.
- 1973** Women are permitted to join the Rutgers Marching Band.
- 1980** William Berz is hired as Marching Band director. The Rutgers Marching Band shifts from high-step marching to glide step. Signaling the end of an era, Rutgers plays Princeton in football for the final time.
- 1982** Rutgers Marching Band reaches 200 members.
- 1989** The Rutgers Marching Band performs in Ireland as the football team plays University of Pittsburgh in the Emerald Isle Classic.
- 1993** William Berz assumes leadership of the Wind Ensemble. Their first CD, titled *Windfall*, is recorded in 1995. In all, 24 recordings are released by the wind ensemble from this point until 2009. The group receives a total of 44 entries into the Grammy Nomination Entry list.
- 2000** Timothy Smith is named director of the Rutgers Marching Band and the Concert Band. A third band ensemble, the Symphony Band, is created.
- 2005** The Rutgers Wind Ensemble performs at Carnegie Hall.
- 2008** Darryl Bott joins the Rutgers band staff and Mason Gross School of the Arts faculty. Bott eventually assumes leadership of the Symphony Band.
- 2011** Kraig Alan Williams is named director of bands and conductor of the Rutgers Wind Ensemble.
- 2014** Rutgers Marching Scarlet Knights perform at Super Bowl XLVIII at MetLife Stadium. In addition, the Rutgers drum line performs with Irish rockers U2 on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. The Marching Scarlet Knights enter the field with more than 250 members in their first year performing in the Big Ten Conference.
- 2015** The Rutgers band program celebrates its centennial with *Rutgers Bands Extravaganza* at the State Theatre in New Brunswick.

PHOTOS BY JODY SOMERS

The play's the thing

Two student writers bring their work to the stage

BY RISA BARISCH

Bryna Turner was a poet with a problem. The writer thought her heart belonged to stanza and verse, which she used “to express stanzas that were going on while keeping them mysterious,” she says. But Turner increasingly felt herself drawn to the theater—and thought she would never have a place there.

“People would suggest playwriting, but it seemed so hard,” says Turner. “Poetry was so personal, and playwriting seemed to have so many layers; there was so much going on and so many moving pieces.”

She circled around the subject, studying acting and sound design at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and trying her hand at theater criticism. But even as a director, Turner felt that her point of view was getting lost.

“The directing process was really about figuring out what I was trying to say,” says Turner, who is a second-year MFA playwriting student at Mason Gross. “I thought, maybe I have to write the words myself.”



Her fellow classmate in the playwriting program, Will Goldberg, came to the craft in a roundabout way as well, starting off in poetry and short fiction.

“I figured I’d become a novelist because that was the only career that was creative but intellectual enough for my parents,” says Goldberg, who had acted when he was younger and “thought about theater all the time.”

At the encouragement of an English teacher, Goldberg began writing plays as a freshman at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, becoming fascinated by the “pure, physiological reality” of seeing actors perform and audiences react.

In their search for graduate programs, both students found their way to Kathleen Tolan, the new head of the playwriting program at Rutgers. She quickly won them over.



Clockwise from above, a scene from Will Goldberg's *Macduff*, which ran in December on campus; Goldberg; Bryna Turner, whose play *The Stand-In* was based on Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*.

“She was clearly so smart, and so immediately insightful about my work in a very personal way,” Goldberg says of Tolan. “I just thought, ‘This is a match here.’”

Unlocking doors

Tolan, who took over the playwriting program in 2013, sees herself not only as a teacher but as a mentor who will push students to “follow what turns them on, because that’s where you’re going to thrive and where your work is going to really flourish,” she says.

“I’m interested in people who are adventurous and are interested in experimenting—whatever that means to them,” Tolan continues. “That’s something we want from our playwrights—an interest in getting under the surface of things, exploring life, and telling stories that they feel need to be told.”

In December, Turner and Goldberg told two of their stories in the Theater Department’s Playwrights Festival, which each semester presents staged readings as well as fully produced plays by MFA students. Under Tolan’s leadership, professional directors have been added to the crew of each production.

“The playwrights are collaborating with directors who are very active in the field, so they’re getting that engagement and mentorship,” Tolan explains. “Coupled with the work of Mason Gross design and acting students, they’re able to have a play go from a thought on a page to a full production.”

Turner says her play, *The Stand-In*, based on Anton Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya*, was “what an ideal production should be—it was both what I imagined and what I never could have imagined,” thanks in part to an innovative set design that sat audience members on the stage and used the theater’s existing seating as the set.

Goldberg saw his play, *Macduff*, an adaptation of *Macbeth*, realized by a cast and crew who “delightedly jumped into the entire world” of Boston, his beloved hometown.

“Everyone involved in the play was really invested in my work and was excited to do it, and explore it, and tear it apart,” says Goldberg.



“That makes me, and what I do, a lot better and more interesting.”

In addition to writing workshops and classes in literature analysis, writing for television, and directing, playwriting students see as many productions as possible, which, Tolan says, “enriches our experience of what a play is.”

“EVERYONE INVOLVED IN [MY] PLAY WAS REALLY INVESTED IN MY WORK AND WAS EXCITED TO DO IT, AND EXPLORE IT, AND TEAR IT APART. THAT MAKES ME, AND WHAT I DO, A LOT BETTER AND MORE INTERESTING.”

—Will Goldberg

Thanks to Tolan’s professional connections and relentless networking, students also have access to meetings with established playwrights and literary managers, which allows them to pose questions about the writing process and learn about play submissions and life as a working artist.

“Kathleen wants to make sure that we get a good grounding in New York theater, which is big and complicated and full of locked doors,” Goldberg says. “Putting things together myself would have been a huge struggle for years.”

For Turner, the trips to nearby New York City continually inspire her own work as a playwright, reminding her of her purpose in the theater.

“It’s revitalizing—I felt like I had just come back to life,” Turner says of recently seen plays by Sarah Ruhl and others. “Theater can do that—that’s why I’m here, that’s why I’m doing this.”

NEW FACULTY AT MASON GROSS

Natalie Bookchin

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN MEDIA,
VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT

Bookchin began working with online media at the dawn of the internet in the early 1990s. Since then, she has explored the cultural and political effects of the digital world through video installations, online games, participatory documentaries, and more.

As an artist who uses a variety of media (including security camera footage and repurposed YouTube clips), Bookchin is interested in exchanging ideas across disciplines at Mason Gross, which she says “produces more informed, layered, and exciting work.”

She returns to the East Coast from Los Angeles, where she was on the faculty of California Institute of the Arts, and finds the Mason Gross School’s location ideal for student-artists.

“I love that Rutgers is uniquely situated near New York City—but not in it,” says Bookchin. “Students here get time and space and a community that’s both tight-knit and affordable, but they’re still able to take advantage of the cultural resources and the vitality of the city.”

Aki Sasamoto

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN SCULPTURE,
VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT

Performer, sculptor, dancer, and videographer Sasamoto creates works that explore identity, family, and everyday life. As someone who often collaborates with other artists and scholars in her installations and gallery performances, she is enthusiastic about “interactions with other mediums, fields, and schools” at Rutgers, she says.

“The educational environment here allows thinking about art in a broader perspective while having access to techniques specific to the medium,” says Sasamoto, whose work *Strange Attractors* was shown at the 2010 Whitney Biennial.

One of the many things that drew Sasamoto to Rutgers was its history as a center of the Fluxus experimental multimedia art movement of the early 1960s and ’70s.



ROBERT BULLOCK

“I would like to experience and continue the legacy of conceptual art that has thrived in the landscape of New Jersey,” says Sasamoto, a native of Japan.

She also is eager to work with the community of artists at Mason Gross.

“I look forward to interacting with self-motivated students,” Sasamoto says. “They will be examples of self-made original thinkers.”

Kathleen Tolan

HEAD OF THE MFA PLAYWRITING PROGRAM,
THEATER DEPARTMENT



MATT RAJEN

Tolan took over the playwriting program at Mason Gross in 2013 with a mission of making clear to students the importance of experiencing live theater.

“It was critical to me that we went to the theater, that we experienced the dimension and time of performance, the beating heart of the theater,” Tolan says.

Tolan is founder of the Playwrights Festival at Rutgers, which features original student work, and she co-teaches the Writers’ Workshop and the Actor-Playwright Workshop, a lab for play readings and development. These collaborative projects are one more way to get student playwrights to think beyond words on the page, says Tolan, an actor and playwright of several works who says she “loves the live animal of the theater, of performance.”

She also appreciates the intimacy of teaching and the direct contact she has with her students.

“It’s fantastic to work so closely with just a few playwrights, to mentor them, challenge them, support them, be inspired by them, and witness their exploration and growth,” Tolan says.

Watch A Minute with Kathleen Tolan at [YouTube.com/masongrossschool](https://www.youtube.com/masongrossschool).



PAUL O'REILLY

Why I Give: DONALD REDLICH

These days, retired Mason Gross School dance professor Donald Redlich spends most of his time in New Mexico. Still, the choreographer says he makes a point of returning to New York City and to Rutgers each year to catch dance performances.

This close connection to Rutgers, and to the Dance Department, has informed his giving habits.

“In thinking about my estate plans, I made the decision to give to the places that mean the most to me,” says Redlich, who retired in 1994. “I cherish my memories of working with the dance students at Rutgers.”

Redlich, a great admirer of modern dance pioneer Hanya Holm, made his first gift at Rutgers to the Hanya Holm Scholarship Endowment Fund.

Upon Redlich’s retirement, he established his own endowed scholarship for MFA dance students via a planned gift annuity. For Redlich, Mason Gross wasn’t merely a place of employment; it was a place where he forged meaningful relationships, including one with Jack Bettenbender, the school’s first dean.

“I remember the night Jack passed away [in 1988],” Redlich says. “It was during a dance performance, and my colleagues knew not to tell me until the performance was over.”



VICTOR CHALUPSKI

Donald Redlich and students at work in Nicholas Dance Studios.

Julia Ritter, an alumna as well as chair and artistic director of the Dance Department, says Redlich’s imprint remains visible within the department.

“I was fortunate to study choreography with Don as well as perform in one of his works,” Ritter says. “The ways in which he understands dance and theater as performance influence my creative and scholarly research to this day.”

To learn more about giving opportunities at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, contact the Office of Development at 848-932-5197.

Faculty members, from left, Timothy Cobb, Yoon Kwon, Min Kwon, CJ Chang, and Jonathan Spitz in concert at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall.

COURTESY OF MIN KWON



Faculty & Staff NEWS

Dance's **Doug Elkins** presented *Hapless Bizarre* at The Joyce Theater on January 7 in New York City. "Mr. Elkins tells this story with the ease of a magician," *New York Times* critic Gia Kourlas wrote. In addition, Kourlas praised alum Kyle Marshall for his "silky, agonized Othello." In March, esteemed choreographer Paul Taylor named Elkins among the first dance artists to make new work for his reinvented company, Paul Taylor's American Modern Dance.

Organist **Renée Anne Louprette** of the Music Department joined the Voices of Ascension as organist in their annual Christmas concerts on December 9 and 11 at The Church of the Ascension in New York City. She also released a recording of J.S. Bach's *The Great 18 Chorales*, named one of *The New York Times*' Classical Critics' Top Music Recordings of 2014. Critic James R. Oestreich described Louprette as "one of New York's finest organists."

Barbara Madsen, print faculty member and interim associate chair of the Visual Arts Department, has work on view through May 21 at the Mid-Manhattan Library branch of the New York Public Library. *Plastic Age: IN/OUT* is a site-specific exhibit of photographs and a sculptural installation. Some works are visible from the window at Fifth Avenue and 40th Street.

Music faculty members **Min Kwon, Yoon Kwon, CJ Chang, Jonathan Spitz, Timothy**

Cobb, Fred Hersch, and Conrad Herwig presented a concert on October 6 at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in New York City. Min Kwon served as artistic director of the program, which included work by Grammy-winning composer and Music Department director **Bob Aldridge**. "How very lucky are the students of such a fine music department to have these (and I'm sure many other) artists to inspire them," critic Frank Daykin wrote online at New York Concert Review Inc.

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. in New York City presented *Aggregates*, a solo exhibition of work by painting professor **Marc Handelman**, from March 12 through April 11.

Dance's **Keith A. Thompson** collaborated with MacArthur Fellow Liz Lerman on the dance-theater piece *Healing Wars* at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. *Healing Wars* was nominated for six 2015 Helen Hayes Awards.

Theater's **Pat McCorkle** was the casting director for the world premiere of the musical *Marley*, based on the life of the late musician Bob Marley. The production is set to open in May at Center Stage in Baltimore, Maryland.



Mark Gindick and alum Kyle Marshall in Doug Elkins's *Hapless Bizarre*.

Opera News named Music Department director **Bob Aldridge's** composition *Parables: An Interfaith Oratorio* a Critics' Choice, due in part, they say, to a score that is "sophisticated but easily comprehensible, featuring broad dramatic flourishes in vivid primary colors." The Grammy-winning composer worked with his longtime collaborator, Herschel Garfein, on the piece.

Looking for trouble

Theater's Kevin Kittle likes plays that "shake up your values"

BY ALEXANDRA KLAASSEN

Kevin Kittle's never taken the easy way out. The longtime theater director, also the head of BA acting, admits "there tends to be a kind of terror" in the plays he chooses to direct.

"As artists we're supposed to shake up your values," he says.

Kittle attributes his attraction to "earthy, gritty" plays to his mom, Helen. When Kittle was just a boy, she introduced him to Broadway—*Godspell* and the original production of *Grease*. She even bought him a TV.

That little TV is "not a big deal now, but back then it was," Kittle says.

In fact, a nudge from Kittle's mom made him believe a career in the theater might be possible. When she showed him a newspaper ad for an improv class, "That was the first time where I thought I could do this myself," he recalls.

"I got from my mom a sense of humanity, arts, and culture," Kittle adds. "It's because of her that before I was 10 I knew who [Bobby] Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were."

To that end, Kittle says, he doesn't exactly go for "drawing-room comedies."

Instead, Kittle looks for something more raw. Sometimes, he says, that means taking on "lyrical plays that explore the human condition"; other times it's "nail-biters" that don't "shy away from transgressive issues such as race and the American penal system."

Ultimately, Kittle says, he hopes the audience will leave the theater feeling conflicted.

In January, he directed *Immolation Twins*, a play written by alumna Koryna Gesait that starred

**KITTLE SAYS THERE IS
"A KIND OF TERROR"
IN THE PLAYS HE
CHOOSES TO DIRECT.**

Alumnae Caitlin Rigney, from left, and Koryna Gesait in Gesait's play, *Immolation Twins*. Kittle directed the show in New York City.



MATT RAINEY

Kevin Kittle at work in the classroom.

Gesait and fellow alum Caitlin Rigney. The show follows the divergent paths of two sisters: a shut-in painter whose alcoholism produces great art at great price, and a dancer whose inspiration dwindles when she discovers a life beyond her art.

Gesait says that Kittle, as always, challenged them to push the tension, to focus on the sensation of "teetering, not knowing the edge [but] stepping toward it" that the play inspires.

"Kevin is drawn to that boldness, [that] bravery," Gesait says.

And Kittle's not ready to quit pushing. After all, he is his mother's son.

"The point of an artistic investigation is not to come to a conclusion like a scientific one," he says. "It's to ask the question."



ALLEGRA HEART

Latiana Gourzong, Technical Director

Mason Gross School of the Arts
Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theater, '13

I was the recipient of two scholarships at Mason Gross, which is a large part of why I chose the school. These scholarships played a pivotal role in allowing me to study in a world-class theater program.

Being able to learn from the Mason Gross faculty was a life-changing opportunity for me: The faculty who taught me were invested in my success and helped me to become the best technical director I could be. Freshman year, my teacher David Gordon invited our class to sit in on tech for a production he was the set designer for. He brought me down on stage to meet the technical director, and we exchanged information. That particular technical director helped me out for a few years with different shows I was involved in. That connection all began because of a teacher inviting his class to a tech. Currently I am the technical director at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey in Madison, and I am serving as the technical director at Washington and Lee University in Virginia this spring.

I believe it's important to give back to my alma mater.

I spent a lot of time at Mason Gross, and it's the foundation of everything I've learned about my craft. That's why I contribute to the scholarship fund. I want to ensure that in the future students benefit from the same support that I had.

My giving method works for me. By giving smaller amounts more frequently I am able to eliminate my own concern about making sure I have enough money each month.

Let's be real: I'm a recent BFA grad working in the theater. I'm not rolling in money, but I still think it's important for me to give. Anything I can do to help future students have the opportunity I had is something that is worth supporting. I hope you will join me.

**LET'S BE REAL: I'M A RECENT BFA
GRAD WORKING IN THE THEATER.
I'M NOT ROLLING IN MONEY,
BUT I STILL THINK IT'S IMPORTANT
FOR ME TO GIVE.**



JODY SOMERS

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 848-932-5197, or use the enclosed envelope to 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**.

ASK THE ARTIST

Jaewon Choi, MFA student



Q: How did your parents handle your choice to go to art school?

A: They were supportive, but it was difficult for them to realize I wasn't going to live the same kind of life as my friends. It was: "Why can't you do this as a hobby?" That was a big question for them and for me too. [In undergraduate] I majored in physics and minored in art. I realized after graduating that I loved to study the beauty of physics, not the thing itself.



Q: What did you do after college?

A: Well, I worked in a lab a year after college. My first job was dissecting pig brains.

KEITH MUCCILLI

Extension Division launches concert series, ongoing collaboration with Zimmerli Art Museum

In October, the Mason Gross School's Extension Division, which offers arts programming to the community, launched a free Sunday-afternoon concert series at the university's Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick.

The series, *Music at the Museum*, is open to the public and features hour-long concerts performed by members of the Extension Division's music faculty in the museum's Lower Dodge Gallery.

"This is a way to introduce Zimmerli patrons to what our faculty members do and to bring our community of parents, students, and faculty into the museum," says Christopher Kenniff, director of the Extension Division.

He and Zimmerli interim director Marti Mayo organized five concerts throughout the fall and spring semesters. Plans for the collaboration include co-sponsoring visual arts classes geared toward both children and adults.

"We're two thriving arts entities within the same university," Kenniff says. "Why not connect?"

Concerts have highlighted opera and art songs, guitar music, and works for piano, mostly in the classical realm. Performances showcase diverse repertoire that is often selected with the museum's collection

in mind. Fall concerts drew special attention to the Zimmerli's extensive collection of Soviet Nonconformist art by featuring selections by composers Sergei Prokofiev and Dimitri Shostakovich.

Kenniff says he hopes that the collaboration will encourage audience members to experience the vital connection between the worlds of music and visual arts. In fact, after each concert audience members are invited to join guided tours of the Zimmerli's galleries.

"Across all eras, the arts developed and flourished side-by-side," Kenniff says. "Offering today's audience the opportunity to enjoy great music and great art together makes sense."

The *Music at the Museum* series has been presenting free concerts at the university's art museum since October. Events feature Mason Gross School musicians.



ROBERT MCKAY

The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum is at 71 Hamilton Street near George Street in New Brunswick. Music at the Museum Sunday concerts are free and open to the public. More information on upcoming Music at the Museum concerts is available by calling 848-932-8618 or emailing extdiv.office@masongross.rutgers.edu.

news

Student & Alumni

Theater alum **Matthew DiCarlo** is the production stage manager for the Broadway musical *Honeymoon in Vegas*. The acclaimed comedy, starring Tony Danza, began previews at the Nederlander Theatre on November 18 and opened on January 15.

Visual Arts alum **Amy Feldman's** solo show, *High Sign*, was at Blackston Gallery in New York City from September 12 to November 2.

BFA dance senior **Maria Volpe** has been offered a paid apprenticeship with Shen Wei Dance Arts and will begin working with the company in May. Volpe was cast in the solo role in Shen Wei's repertory work *Behind Resonance* during the 2014 winter intensive at Mason Gross and performed the role during the spring 2014 DancePlus concerts.

Theater alum **Mike Colter**, who just wrapped up a recurring role on the CBS hit *The Good*

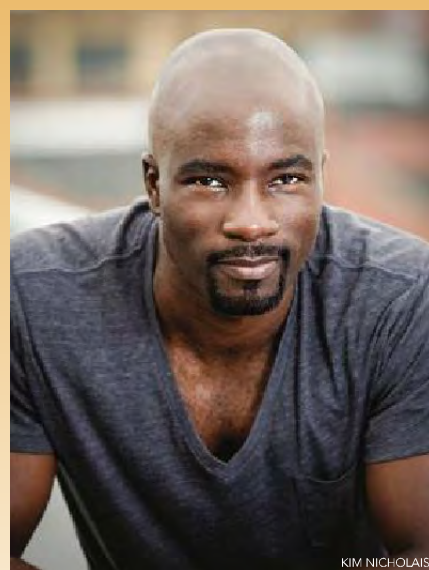
Wife, is set to co-star as the mysterious Luke Cage in this year's comic-book adaptation of *Jessica Jones* coming from Marvel and Netflix. Colter also will headline the eventual *Luke Cage* spinoff and appear on *The Defenders*.

Music alum **George Curran**, bass trombone, has been awarded tenure with the New York Philharmonic.

Recent Visual Arts alum **Raque Ford** is cited among "24 artists to watch" in Blouin ArtInfo's feature on modern painters.

Theater alum **James P. Connelly** is the production designer for *Top Chef*, which had its 12th season premiere October 15 on Bravo.

Dance alum **Sarah Lifson** received kudos in a *New Yorker* review of Netta Yerushalmy's new work, *Helga and the Three Sailors*, presented in November at Danspace Project



Theater alum Mike Colter is Marvel superhero Luke Cage.

at St. Mark's Church. Critic Andrew Boynton wrote that Lifson is "eminently watchable, supple and exact and skilled in the art of performing."

Mother of reinvention

Alum Nell Irvin Painter reflects on her late-in-life transition from academia to the art studio



BY LISA INTRABARTOLA

Plenty of retirees fly south for the winter, enjoy a few leisurely classes at the library, and indulge in the art of puttering.

That's just not Nell Irvin Painter's style.

Instead of slowing down after her 2005 retirement from Princeton University, the renowned historian, celebrated author, and professor reinvented herself, racking up two more degrees and embarking on a second career as an artist.

"I THOUGHT THERE WAS ANOTHER SYSTEM FOR ART WHEN I WAS YOUNG. I THOUGHT IF YOU HAD TALENT AS AN ARTIST, THEN YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANY WORK."

Painter's late-career change didn't exactly come out of nowhere.

"I was an art major at Berkeley for a little while, but I got a 'C' in sculpture, which I deserved because I

didn't do the work," says Painter, 72, who laughed about her first experience as an art student in the early 1960s.

"I was always one of those people who was a good student, who showed up on time and did the work. But I thought there was another system for art when I was young. I thought if you had talent as an artist, then you didn't have to do any work."

When she enrolled in Mason Gross half a century later, the nontraditional BFA's view of art-making had shifted.

"At Mason Gross I showed up, did the work, and went the distance," says Painter, who after earning her undergraduate degree in 2009 went on to receive an MFA degree from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2011.

Painter's decision to revisit her early passion was cemented by her mother's own late-in-life re-creation.

"Back in the '80s when my mother retired, she said she wanted to write books. So she started writing books," Painter says of her mother, Dona Irvin, a former public school administrator. Irvin published two books before her death in 2009.

"What she showed me is you can do something new in maturity," Painter says.

Once Painter set her mind to finishing what she'd started all those years ago, the choice of where to accomplish it was an obvious one.

"Mason Gross is part of Rutgers, and I love Rutgers," she says, citing Barbara Madsen, Stephen Westfall, and Hanneline Røgeberg among the Mason Gross faculty whose instruction she most



New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and First Lady Mary Pat Christie on stage with Mason Gross School students at Shakespeare's Globe in London.

Visual Arts alum **Chris Johanesen** is vice president of product at BuzzFeed, the social news and entertainment company that provides a mix of breaking news, entertainment, and shareable content. He is featured in the recent book *Designing the Editorial Experience*, edited by Sue Apfelbaum and Juliette Cezzar (Rockport, 2014). Johanesen appeared on a panel discussion about the book's subject at Parsons/The New School in September.

Theater alum **Andrea Anders** has a recurring role in ABC's sixth season of *Modern Family*. Anders, who previously co-starred in the ABC comedies *Better Off Ted* and *Mr. Sunshine*, plays Kim, the wife of the family that moves in next door to the Dunphy clan.

Dance alum **Madeline Warriner** was named the Lilyan B. Wright Outstanding Future Professional for 2015 by the New Jersey

Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

While in London in February, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie stopped by to watch our **Rutgers Conservatory at Shakespeare's Globe students** perform an excerpt from *Henry V*. Christie and New Jersey's first lady, Mary Pat Christie, greeted the students afterward.

Visual Arts alum **Geraldson Chua** is now senior designer at *O, the Oprah Magazine*.

In February, music alum and tenor saxophonist **John Petrucelli's** debut jazz album, *The Way*, was featured on WBGO Jazz 88.3 out of Newark, New Jersey. Plenty of Rutgers musicians joined the jam, including faculty member and drummer Victor Lewis, student drummer **Gusten Rudolph**, and fellow alumnus **Peter Park** on guitar.

Dance alum **Shakira Barrera** appears on the ABC Family series *Freak Out*, which aired on October 21 and 22. Look for 10 new episodes this year.

Theater alum **Chelsea Spack** had her guest spot on the FOX TV series *Gotham* turned into the recurring role of Kristen Kringle (love interest to character Edward Nygma).

valued. "Rutgers has a lot of female power—experienced women in the know who really protected me and were generous with me. I couldn't have done it without them."

The second act

Instructing an accomplished professor of American history was a bit intimidating, says Røgeberg, who had Painter as a student in drawing, painting, and independent study. However, Røgeberg says Painter did not expect preferential treatment.

"She was utterly under the radar. There were no favors called in at all," says Røgeberg of Painter, who was "anonymous" among her peers.

Painter often put forth four times the effort of her classmates, says Røgeberg. But being entrenched in a systematic approach to education for decades made finding her voice as an artist challenging.

"It should be an equation: hard work equals inspired idea," explains Røgeberg of Painter's evolution as an artist. "There is something about learning how to accept that arriving at something truthful can be nonlinear. There was no question she had latent gifts as an artist. It was a matter of catching up to that creative side," and Painter did it, Røgeberg says.

In her second act as an artist, Painter has cultivated a respected body of work, including two ongoing series: *NO Self-Portraits*, which actually features dozens of abstract paintings

of herself, and *Odalisque Atlas*, which explores sex, beauty, and slavery through a mix of digital and manual pieces. Her solo and group shows have been exhibited at a variety of galleries, and she serves as Montclair State University Creative Research Center's Virtual Artist-in-Residence.

Still, Painter's natural inclination to infuse her bold, collage-like pieces with subject matter and an historical perspective earned her criticism early in her art career—so much so that she initially considered her academic background more hindrance than help.

"One of the fundamentals of painting is the distinction between fine art and illustration, or design. [I was taught that] illustration is very, very bad. What you see is at the service of something else. Fine art comes out of 'the culture of art' and is purely visual," she says. "So whenever I would use subject matter, my wrist would be slapped for veering off into illustration."

But "after few years of groping," Painter managed to successfully infuse her visual art with narrative in her latest tome, *Art History Volume XXVII*.

The book reexamines the Harlem Renaissance (1912–1943) through Painter's words and original pieces—collages featuring the work of the Harlem Renaissance artists.

She's also at work on an autobiography. *Old in Art School* is inspired by all the questions Painter has answered about her



Nell Irvin Painter's *Self-Portrait 12*, colored ink and collage on paper, 12 inches by 12 inches.

COURTESY OF NELL IRVIN PAINTER

Mason Gross experience.

"I wanted to come to terms with it myself," she says. "I have a very visceral approach to art and writing. It's what I call my reptilian brain, and it pushes me around. When the writing machine or painting machine revs me up, it wakes me up and dictates and tells me, 'Here! Write this!' or 'Paint this!'"

"This book is like, 'You've got to write me!'"



MIKE DRUCKER

Sparked

Rutgers Center For Digital Filmmaking cinematography professor **Alan McIntyre Smith** discusses the elements that fuel his work

Cinematography professor Alan McIntyre Smith says he wants student work to reflect a complex understanding of the visual world.



"If we're going to bother people to look at our work, we'd better make sure that it's informed by both the present and the past and not dull or derivative," he says. "Modern cinematography requires a limber skill set, [because] a shooter will jump from

narrative film to commercial to music video to TV show and have to adapt to each format's style and aesthetic. The wider your visual vocabulary, the easier it is to imagine the shots that will relay the proper information."

Smith shares the diverse roots of his own aesthetic:

WPA PHOTOGRAPHS

Some of my favorite photographers worked for the WPA [Works Progress Administration, which featured a federal government-instituted cultural program that employed photographers to document the lives of the underclass, among others] during the Great Depression, like **Dorothea Lange's** humanist portrayals of refugee camps and **Walker Evans's** weathered landscapes. **Edward Steichen** was a towering figure in the turn-of-the-20th-century's Pictorialist photo movement who helped change the public's perception of photography as an art form rather than a mechanical process.

OLD-MASTER PAINTINGS

I also like to study Old Master paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art or more modern artists at the Museum of Modern Art. For many years I've had my cinematography students recreate classic paintings as a way of studying composition, lighting, and color, and when I bump into former students those exercises are inevitably the ones that they recall and treasure as a breakthrough moment in understanding the image-making process.



Johannes Vermeer is the best painter to study for soft, naturalistic daylight in interior settings. He repeatedly poses subjects in everyday actions illuminated by a window on the left and directs the viewer's eye to the

appropriate part of the frame. **The amount of narrative that he is able to convey in a single moment should be studied by all storytellers, regardless of medium.**

Caravaggio inspired an appreciation of shadow by insisting on a realistic depiction of figures molded with pockets of light in dark spaces, known as the *chiaroscuro* technique.



Movie lighting draws on his techniques of stylized lighting in our current obsession with contemporary noir and high drama. He composed bold scenes of complex, interweaving subjects that make visual sense because **the lighting guides our eye to the right place.**

TRAVEL

Shooting a movie involves getting inside people's heads as well as placing the viewers in a new and unfamiliar place. **Experiencing different cultures and evaluating your own assumptions against theirs** is an essential ingredient to analyzing your own country and people.

READING

Reading both fiction and nonfiction is important to me. The process of translating a script to screen involves your **ability to visualize ideas and realize them as physical manifestations.**



Raising his voice

Student singer convinces sports-radio jocks that opera and sports can mix

BY LAURIE GRANIERI

Stephen Saharic had something to prove. The Mason Gross vocal performance major was steamed: Not only was he stuck in epic morning traffic on Route 78, inching his way to a day of classes in New Brunswick, but he was listening to his favorite drive-time sports-radio personalities do one of his first loves: opera.

Saharic, a junior at the school, is an avid listener of Boomer & Carton on WFAN radio in New York City (the hugely popular morning sports-talk show runs concurrently as a TV show on the CBS Sports Network). But on October 30, Saharic knew he had to say—or, in his case, sing—something when he heard commentator Craig Carton critique operatic mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato's performance of *The Star-Spangled Banner* at Game 7 of the 2014 World Series. (The San Francisco Giants beat the Kansas City Royals, 3-2.)

"Craig said, 'Grown men don't want to hear an opera woman sing; they want to watch a sporting event,'" says Saharic, a baritone who also happened to play defensive end and offensive tackle when he was a student at North Hunterdon High School in Clinton Township, New Jersey. "That aggravated me a little because I believe opera singers can sing the anthem well. It's nice to bring a classical idea to the song, that we'll sing it in the way it was when they first finished it."

So Saharic, who had performed *The Star-Spangled Banner* to an enthusiastic crowd at a New Jersey Devils hockey game in early 2014, phoned the station, made it on the air, and belted out *The Star-Spangled Banner* for the hosts—all while commuting to school.

"I had my headphones in," he assures an anxious reporter. "But people were passing me and making faces on Route 78 as I sang."

Saharic's segment was so successful that the producer invited him to be a guest on the show. On November 6, Saharic visited the studio and



Student singer Stephen Saharic with, from left, sports-radio personalities "Boomer" Esiason and Craig Carton. Saharic impressed the hosts by performing operatic versions of rap songs on their WFAN morning show.

bantered with Boomer & Carton, but this time he sang operatic versions of rap songs and poked fun (in song) at New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez's history of steroid abuse.

Although the appearance was all in good fun, Saharic admits that he was also on a mission to convince Boomer & Carton and their listeners that opera and athletics actually *can* mix; in fact, Saharic, who was forced to quit the football team when a hip injury sidelined him, embodies that mix.

Saharic says the injury "was the nail in the coffin for sports" in his case, but that it was also "how I got into music. I'd always loved singing. I figured [after the injury] I'd take it more seriously. I haven't looked back. It's amazing: One door closes, another opens."

Saharic says he's mystified as to why some people view sports and opera "as two extremes. . . . I don't understand why people in the sports world would find classical music negative and vice versa. I find it strange."

He says he hopes his appearance on the show, however jovial, proved his point, reminding the commentators and their listeners that jocks can take the stage and hit all the right notes, and classical-music singers can talk trash about A-Rod and more.

"I wanted to say [to Boomer & Carton], 'I came from both worlds,'" Saharic says, "and I've done it."

“ For years, the Mason Gross School of the Arts has [had] one of the best reputations for churning out incredibly talented and prepared theater professionals. ”

—OnStage.com, which named the Mason Gross Theater Department's design program among the **top five** in the nation.

MATT RAINEY