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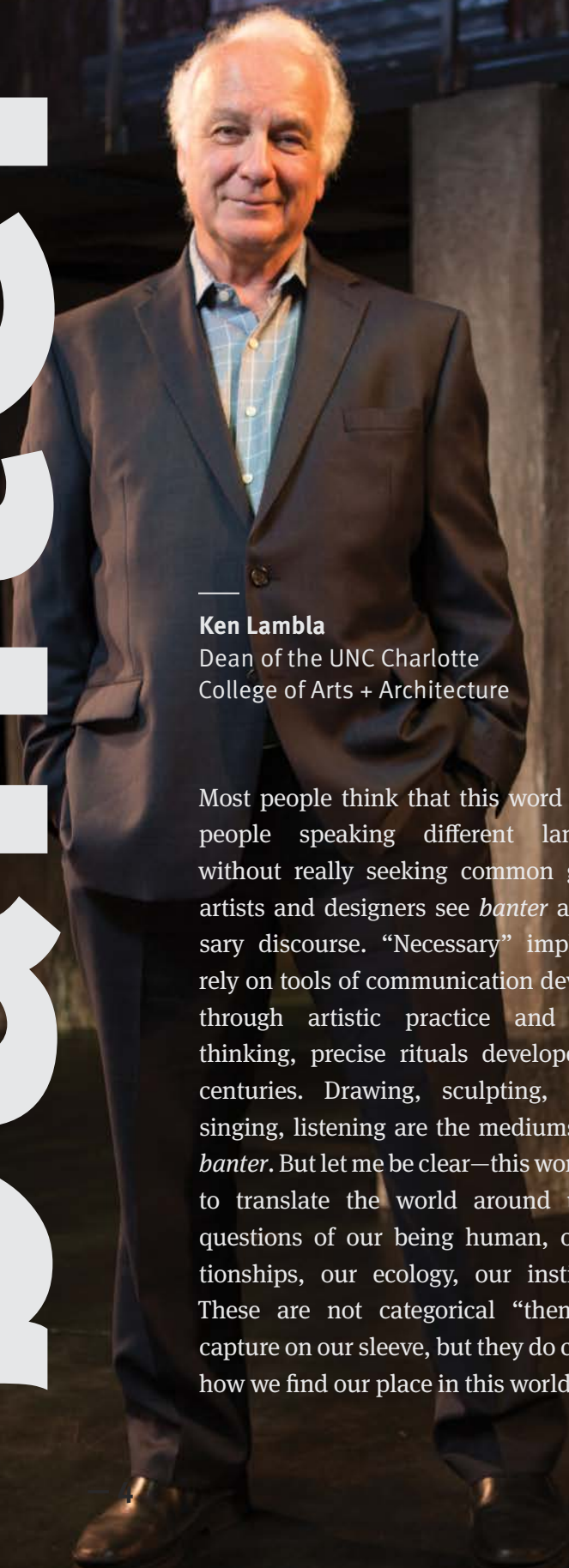
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banter



Ken Lambla

Dean of the UNC Charlotte
College of Arts + Architecture

Most people think that this word implies people speaking different languages without really seeking common ground; artists and designers see *banter* as necessary discourse. “Necessary” implies we rely on tools of communication developed through artistic practice and design thinking, precise rituals developed over centuries. Drawing, sculpting, moving, singing, listening are the mediums of our *banter*. But let me be clear—this work seeks to translate the world around us into questions of our being human, our relationships, our ecology, our institutions. These are not categorical “themes” to capture on our sleeve, but they do confront how we find our place in this world.

In the first of *Six Drawing Lessons*, entitled “In Praise of Shadows,” presented by the South African artist William Kentridge for the 2012 Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University, Kentridge reflects on a miniature circus he attended comprised of an acrobat, his wife, and one untrained goose:

“We the audience became the performers, our act that of believing and disbelieving in the same moment. There is something emerging here, a separation from Plato. [Kentridge previously references *The Republic*.] The movement of ourselves as more or less enlightened observers toward an awareness of ourselves as agents of understanding. The pleasure in the moment of us believing and not believing at the same time is a jolt of self-assertion. This split, believer and disbeliever, becomes a crack in Plato’s edifice.”

Our alumni—those previous “observers”—continue to challenge the questions we ask through our educational processes. “Lifelong learning” is not a pedantic goal; we invite these voices into our current discourse about how ideas cross disciplines. There will be resistance; we do not presume that these voices of alumni are consonant with what we taught them. As John Berger writes in *The Shape of a Pocket*, resistance is essential to the making of art and the design of our

environments. It is both internal (of oneself) and external (of one’s culture) simultaneously. The dynamic—believing and disbelieving at the same moment—leads to hybridity and creativity. It is thus our goal to present these voices as they raise new questions about their work, methods, intent, and practices and reflections about their past, present, and future.

Approximately 150,000 students graduate each year from art and design programs in the United States. They do not all become symphony musicians or studio artists or licensed architects. They do, however, apply the skills learned in a variety of fields in which their creative habits of mind flourish. They ask questions about education, cities, farm workers, rivers and air, isolated people, inequity, craft, machines, neighbors, their hands, cold and hot, an old stone, spirits, and beauty. You will read here how they have translated what they have learned into their work.

In 2010 the Knight Foundation partnered with Gallup to deliver the results of a survey across 26 communities, including Charlotte: *What drives community attachment?* “Soul of the Community” (2010) reported that—unanimously—the three factors driving people to connect were: social opportunities, openness, and aesthetics. (These were selected over jobs/economy, infrastructure, safety, education, leadership, and social capital.) Commitment to the arts and design of a city were considered

critical to its success, and lack thereof is considered a factor in loss of such commitment. It was a good question.

Our own questions continue to shape the work of the College of Arts + Architecture. These questions do not always conveniently come out of our strategic plan or administrative duties, or even curricular maps and course syllabi. They mostly arise as we reflect on how we are preparing our students to enter the next phase of their lives—the *after college* life.

How do artists and designers respond with reflection rather than reflex?

Curiosity is never sufficient to develop a raw appetite into new cultural narratives. It is just a beginning. Artists and designers require immersion, a blending of current challenges and life experiences, along with the immediate material—writing, gestures, paint, a musical verse, a brick—to develop an approach to their work that relieves them of the everyday life and demands something new. We don't go to museums or performances *knowing* what we will see, or how we will respond. Nor do we walk the sidewalks of Pilsen (Chicago), Willowbrook (Los Angeles), or Newark (New Jersey) fully understanding how they sound, smell, or will look one week to the next. What infuriates many people is that there is often no “beginning-middle-end” to the work. Why should there be? There is also no “blank piece of paper” in our work, since we toil with the sense that we are betraying our elders,

heroes, and foremothers. The demand to reflect is borne with some horror—but also *honor*.

Why have the arts become so separated from science and technology, when the history of the art/science exchange so vividly depicts interactions and shared experiences?

Too often, representations of arts and design have devolved into acts of illustration and problem-solving. Our work is valued as a service, a trade/commodity, and a method to extract simplicity and fulfillment from obvious chaos. But there is a demand to attend to social justice, inequity, community and interdependence, place-making, and simple shelter through multiple strategies shared by artists and scientists alike. There has long been a “trading zone” (exchange) between artists and scientists. It has often been said that no good scientist works far from art. The examples are legion, but we continue to disavow the shared ground, accepting that designers and artists often live in a bubble, rarely casting their gaze over the wall.

How are creativity (practice), communication (narrative/text), and collaboration (interactions) foundational skills and how do we teach them?

Our work is largely about learning the ability to lift up other narratives through translation to other languages. We differentiate between creativity as an individual domain and creativity residing

in networks and collective domains. We learn how to suspend our disbelief (Samuel Coleridge) through productive dialogue and critical thinking. Action, technique, material, gesture, synthesis, and continuous challenge make for foundational skills to exchange concepts and methods.

How do we stop talking about “engagement” (presumptively neutral), and begin to talk about community exchange? What is the “continuum of the arts” where we look at everyone in the chain and not just end user/recipient?

For too long we have assumed that artists and designers have a unique capability to “engage” through the making of art, objects, and spaces of occupancy. In the modern classic book, *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde, art is differentiated from commodity through a focus on the creative spirit being shared by culture as a whole. True sharing is an act of respect; making art, designing, singing, exchanging “gifts” is what connects us in our community. Our challenge is clear: to measure the progress of a community's culture on its well-being. The “continuum of the arts” includes all civic assets and artistic expressions, in all forms and between all people, as contributing to health.

How does self-perception lead to personal decisions?

Each voice in this book tells a story of awakening, transformation, struggle, and accomplishment. As with many human endeavors, it begins with an

individual. “Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.” (Margaret Mead) We present these essays as voices from the College of Arts + Architecture. Each has made an impact in the world and on us. We stand in appreciation.

The journey?

I once wrote an essay called “Exit Velocity.” In a sense, it was an ode to our graduating students in which I claimed that their time in college was a ramping up—*acceleration, amplification, or warping* aimed at leaving that protected zone called “education.” It ended with a challenge:

Do not lose speed!

What you are going to read about or, better yet, come into contact with, are people who have maintained speed. They continue to amaze us; we admire what they do. And they are not alone, as their peers are equally amazing in so many ways. As our College Culture Statement ends: “Be amazing!”

“Ingres [1780-1867] is said to have created an artistic order out of rest; I should like to create an order from feeling, and going further, from motion.”

(Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, 1958)

Banter. It all starts with some banter. ■

bulls don't wait for the dust to settle

Leah Amber McBride
Art & Art History

I watched the bulls milling around the corral through squinted eyes, a paltry defense against the sun as it edged down over the Wasatch Plateau on the far edge of Sanpete County, Utah. I remember thinking at the time that it might ease my nerves to size them up before my number was called. A young man, no more than a year older than me, leaned against the rail next to me. “You’ve never done this before.” It wasn’t a question. He wore Wrangler jeans under fringed oily-black leather chaps, cowboy boots, and a leather vest over a green plaid-checked shirt. Next to his dinner-plate belt buckle hung a coil of rope. The green peacock feather ends in his cowboy hat struck me as odd—they alluded to a certain devotion to the decidedly fashionable that seemed at odds with his lifestyle. I guessed that even cowboys appreciate color-coordination.

Clad in black jeans, black classic vans, and a Nine Inch Nails shirt, I must have seemed alien to him and his friends. I told him my aunt had signed me up for this as a joke and that I didn’t think I should go through with it. I had no idea what I was doing. He asked me what my dominant

hand was, and then offered a left-handed glove. “The rope will slice your hand open if you don’t use a glove. Reach under the rope with your palm up and hold on like your life depends on it. Use your right arm to twist your body against the turns and hold your balance. And when you fall, even if the wind is knocked out of you, get up and run away as fast as possible.”

I thanked him, and we watched as the largest of the “adolescent” bulls in the pen—all nearly full-sized but whose horns had not yet developed—leaned heavily against one of the smaller ones until it fell over. The young man grimaced and turned to go back to his friends. “And hope you don’t get that one,” he added over his shoulder.

I remember this conversation so vividly because it was a moment of acceptance that I hadn’t expected. I was used to being the outsider, and by this point in my life I had started to take ownership of that status. But this time, I was not just the outsider by default. I had intruded into the territory of this young man and his friends, perhaps not defiantly, but certainly willingly and openly. I was not strange to them because of my taste in music or association with an unfamiliar subculture, as was the case with my classmates. I was strange to them because I was an average 14-year-old girl who had signed up to ride a bull in a youth rodeo with no training or experience. I had chosen, for reasons unclear to me at the

time, to take my aunt’s joke as a challenge. When my number was called, I realized with a flash of horror that froze the pit of my stomach and radiated to the tips of my fingers that random allotment had paired me with the bully among bulls. As I mounted his back, my feet digging in

“I was strange to them because I was an average 14-year-old girl who had signed up to ride a bull in a youth rodeo with no training or experience.”

barely halfway down his ribs, he leaned his weight against the gate-side of the narrow passage along the edge of the arena; I dimly remember wondering why people participated in a sport where the opposing team was unable to understand the rules. The next three seconds are burned into my memory like a film segment. The gate opened, the bull shot sideways and bucked his back legs several feet off the ground, and I sailed what felt

like 15 feet into the air. I landed hard on my left hip, took one quick dust-filled breath, and bolted back to the gate. I lasted barely one second on the back of the bull, but felt some consolation at the fact that it took four professional wranglers nearly 10 minutes to get him back to the corral.

It took several years for me to realize why I was so intent on taking my aunt's facetious suggestion to participate in a youth rodeo as a direct challenge. That summer, I had just turned 14. My paternal grandparents had flown me across the country to get to know them better, and I was just beginning to understand the dynamics of this half of the family that had for so long been known to me only through my father's stories.

In a fit of late-teen suburban angst, my father had disavowed the upper middle-class path laid out for him and spent a decade travelling and experimenting with drugs and working-class life. By the time he realized that he was operating below his considerable intellectual potential, it was too late; he had used up too many second chances with his parents, developed a serious dependence on alcohol, and had built up a criminal record that prevented him from getting any kind of job outside the realm of under-the-table manual labor. His marriage to my mother solidified his role as the black sheep in the dim view of his extended family. By their standards, her lack of education and four children from previous marriages marked her as "less than." Throughout my early

childhood, I had become aware of the fact that my family was perhaps "abnormal." Because I was the youngest of my siblings, by the time I would enter a new school year my teachers were already well-aware of my father's alcoholism and cyclical incarceration for DUIs. As such, I learned at a very young age that the only way to combat the ready-made "white trash" identity that I was expected to embody was to excel in my academic life. I had to be the best, whatever the cost to my mental health.

Though the immense pressure I put myself under during this time had exacerbated an inherited anxiety disorder, it all felt worth it when I ran to the mailbox one day in the spring of my senior year of high school to find an acceptance letter from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In subsequent weeks, it became apparent through discussions with my school counselor that the cost of attending an out-of-state school would far exceed my financial aid awards. It was a devastating blow. I had done everything right, taken on the challenge set before me as a poor but academically gifted student, and here I was again, bucked into the air and slammed hard into the ground.

I gave up on the prospect of higher education for a while after that. I moved out on my own and began waiting tables full time. Outwardly, I insisted that I needed this time to save money so that I could afford to eventually enroll in a

state school. But inwardly, I had, by all accounts, given in to the cycle of poverty.

A year or so later, I told my roommate the story of the time I rode a bull in a youth rodeo. I had told the story dozens of times at this point, but was unprepared for her remark on an oddly specific detail. "So, you just kept that guy's glove?" I realized then that I had always punctuated the end of the story with my flight back to the gate. But that was not really the end. After I made it safely out of the path of the raging beast, I milled around the corral waiting for the young cowboy to finish his ride so I could return his spare glove to him. He had managed a full ten seconds and a first-place trophy. After we chatted for a few minutes about my spectacular failure, he asked if I would ever do it again, given the chance. I thought about it for a moment before saying that I would, that the prospect was a lot less frightening now that I knew what to expect. "That's the spirit," he said, before recommending alternating heat and cold for the inevitable muscle bruise that would blossom on my hip and thigh.

I realized then that I had been telling the story wrong all those years. It was the getting back up and being willing to move on from the failure that was important. Within a few months, I had applied and been accepted to UNC Charlotte and enrolled for a January start. Over the next five-and-a-half years—I switched majors halfway through—there were a lot more

moments in my personal and academic life that sent me sailing through the air to a hard landing. I still felt like an outsider much of the time, only now I had a term for it: Imposter Syndrome. When I was accepted into a master's program at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, I was convinced that I was the beneficiary of a cosmic mistake. A year later, when I was offered a fully-funded PhD studentship, I was sure I did not deserve it, had not done enough to earn it.

The current trend in academia is to offer people like me advice on how to overcome Imposter Syndrome, to help internalize and accept accomplishments so that the fear of being exposed as a fraud disappears. But I think this misses the point. I prefer to use it, to allow it to push me to excel, to let it prevent me from becoming satisfied with merely accomplishing. This way, when I become bruised by failure, I remember to alternate heat and cold, and move forward. ■ ■



Leah McBride received a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from UNC Charlotte in 2012 and a master's degree in 2014 from the University of Glasgow in Scotland. She is

currently a PhD candidate in art history at the University of Glasgow, where her dissertation addresses trauma representation in contemporary art practice. She will complete her doctorate in September 2018.

Sharon Dowell

Since receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts from UNC Charlotte in 2002, painter and public artist Sharon Dowell has established a strong presence in the Charlotte arts community, receiving numerous grants, commissions, and “Best Artist” awards. Her paintings, which have been shown widely throughout North Carolina and in galleries in New York, Seattle, and Los Angeles, “capture the energy of place,” she says. Residencies in Spain, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, and Costa Rica have expanded the vistas and inspired new perspectives.

See a photo essay of Sharon’s work at www.coaa.community.

“I love public art, because it has the ability to remove the intimidation factor of art that so many people in our society experience. Art in public spaces becomes embedded in one’s subconscious, a part of daily life that one embraces without even contemplating it.”

dignity in architecture

—
Melissa Farling
Architecture

I wanted to change the world.

Well, I didn’t actually know it at the time, but I did want to make a difference in people’s lives. And I was extremely lucky to have found my path in the world, by discovering the link from architecture to humanity.

To give you an idea of what I am referring to, the following is an excerpt by John P. Eberhard (Founding President of the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture) from his article, “You Need to Know What You Don’t Know”:

“If you enter the Cathedral in Amiens at twilight while an organ is playing and find that your ‘heart skips a beat,’ it’s because your brain—not your heart—has filled you with awe. Cells in your brain are gorging themselves with a sudden flush of blood, raising your temperature, quickening your pulse, and flooding you with memories. Light flooding through stained glass windows is stimulating the V4 area of your visual



01

cortex. Bach’s music is vibrating within the cochlea of your inner ear and sending signals to the auditory cortex. The musty smells of centuries past register unconsciously on the olfactory neurons at the bridge of your nose. You are experiencing architecture.” (AIArchitect, January 2006)

Compare the experience at Amiens to walking into one of our nation’s older prisons. The first time I entered an adult male prison, I was a fourth-year architecture student at UNC Charlotte researching my final project. I was very interested in the symbolism of such a facility, but I was more interested in rehabilitation and human dignity. I remember the visit to the prison very clearly:

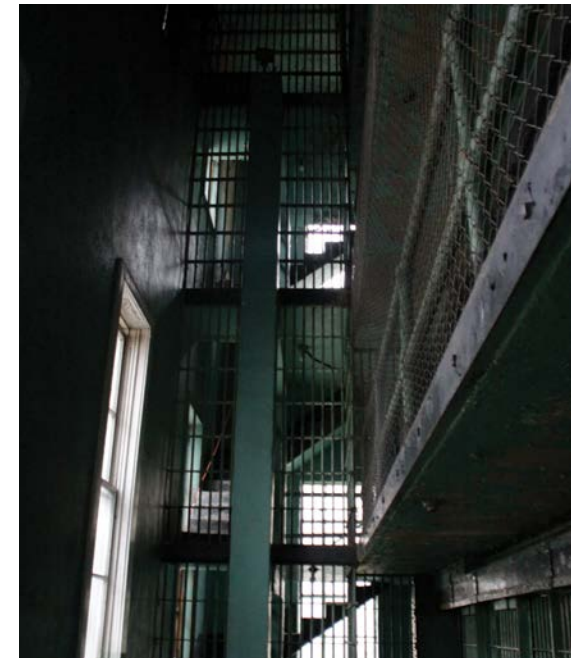
I was given a tour by the warden. It was a multi-story building adjacent to a university campus; everything including the cell bars was painted a dirty yellow-white, and the floors were concrete. With all the hard surfaces, it was very loud inside.

01

Opposite page: Amiens Cathedral.
Photo by Charles C. Hight

02

Prison cell block in Idaho,
2012, Creative Commons



02

There was little natural light, mostly fluorescent lighting, which was on 24/7. The air smelled of chlorine and cornbread. When the men on death row moved from place to place, they were chained wrist to wrist and ankle to ankle and then to each other, walking slowly in groups. The other men were walking freely throughout the facility with their movement monitored very closely by the correctional officers. There were cameras everywhere, because at that time a lot of the monitoring was also done “indirectly,” by video cameras. One of the men in custody continually set fire to his cell just so he would be moved to the infirmary—to go, he said, to a “different environment.”

Now imagine being in the most restricted condition of a prison—solitary



03

confinement. This is known by many names—isolation, protective custody, and administrative segregation, to list just a few. Unless you have been in isolation, it is very difficult to project yourself into this environment, a very small room for 23 or more hours per day. Add to that: little activity, no social contact, and probably no exposure to natural light or views to the outside. When you do get out, it is for one hour of exercise—typically in another concrete room which may have a view to the sky. Isolation is used for a variety of reasons, including control of violent

persons, separation of gang members, or criminal acts within the facility. However, it is also used for protection of vulnerable inmates for safety.

In 2010 I had the unique opportunity to be interviewed for *Herman's House*, a 2012 documentary about Herman Wallace, who was in solitary confinement for more than 40 years. The film was conveyed through the perspective of Herman's relationship with artist Jackie Sumell. In addition to their relationship, the film is a critique of the justice system and solitary confinement, but it is also very much the story of a man who continued fighting for his freedom. It had a profound effect on me and how I think about design. Our jails and prisons have become default mental health institutions, and many of those diagnosed with mental health conditions end up housed

03

Prison cell in Montana,
2008, Creative Commons

in isolation. Research points to such confinement causing symptoms such as anxiety, rage, panic, self-mutilation, hallucinations, and random violence—especially for individuals with existing mental health diagnoses.

What do the very different descriptions of the Cathedral at Amiens and the prison have in common? Both experiences trigger physiological, neurological, and emotional reactions to the built and conditional environment. And although there are many institutions and architects today designing prisons to support therapeutic environments, the above examples do still exist. From my third-year architecture studio at UNC Charlotte, when I first became interested in the impacts of architecture on the individual, until about 12 years ago, I was more or less continuing to explore this connection through my professional work. Then, in 2005, I learned of an organization, the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture (ANFA), whose mission is “to promote and advance knowledge that links neuroscience research to a growing understanding of human responses to the built environment.” This was my epiphany. Perhaps we can quantify “good” and “bad” architecture. After all, as Fred Gage, a neuroscientist at the Salk Institute, has said, “. . . architecture can change our brain and behavior.” At the same time, I became re-engaged with the American Institute of Architecture's Academy of Architecture for Justice (the professional organization that focuses on

correctional, court, and law enforcement facilities) as co-chair of its research arm.

Since 2005, I have been learning more about neuroscience, justice, conducting research, and applying that research to my work. Often, jails and prisons are overlooked by architects and architectural students, because they are not “sexy,” like museums or courthouses or university buildings. However, jails and prisons are an important part of our society and represent our democracy.

In 2016, I was part of a team that responded to a request for qualifications to explore opportunities to decentralize Rikers Island and learn how jails can be part of healthy communities. Also that year, I organized and moderated a session, *Solitary Confinement: Mental Health, Neuroscience and the Physical Environment*, at the ANFA conference at the Salk Institute. The panel consisted of architects, environmental psychologists, neuroscientists, and psychiatrists. The goal was to introduce the important subject and discuss a research agenda that could uncover the perceived negative effects of isolation. I said earlier the evidence is there, and it is; however, we need to isolate the neurobiological mechanisms triggered by the physical environment. We are still working toward a better understanding, one that is applicable to all types of environments.

What I know is that architecture is not passive. Architecture is about listening,

seeing, tasting, smelling, and feeling. It impacts us deeply. It changes our brain, and therefore our behavior and well-being. It has the capacity to uplift and to degrade; it can bring people together and it can divide. And it is our collective and individual responsibility to know how our buildings affect people working in, living in, passing by, or visiting them.

How lucky I am to be an architect! I could not have dreamed any of this when I first went to UNC Charlotte to study architecture. I have learned many things from my experiences. Most importantly, architecture demands empathy and respect. Many projects require multi-disciplinary expertise (environmental psychologists, anthropologists, scientists, artists, economists, attorneys...) for a more informed solution. I feel it is my ethical responsibility to promote individual well-being and dignity in all my work.

Of course architecture shapes us—we spend most of our lives in the built environment. Which of these images (right) do you think points to the right direction for the future of humanity? ■ ■



A registered architect in Arizona, Melissa Farling is the principal at Gould Evans, Phoenix Studio. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from UNC Charlotte in 1988 and her Master of Architecture degree from the University of Arizona in 1992.

Much of the work of Melissa's 28-year career has been focused on large-scale public projects, applying research to designs for correctional facilities (including low to maximum-security adult and juvenile facilities), courthouses, K-12 and higher education facilities, and behavioral health hospitals. She served as co-chair of the AIA Academy of Architecture for Justice (AAJ) Research Committee from 2006 to 2016 and co-chaired the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Women's Leadership Summit in 2013. In 2014 she was named to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) College of Fellows.

04

Typical prison cell.
Photo © iStock.com/wsmahar

05

Level 2 Minimum Security Housing
Interior. Rendering by KMD Architects
and HMC Architects



04



05

making it in the big apple

a conversation with four alums

Architecture
Art & Art History
Dance
Music



DIMARA COULOURAS
*Dance Instructor at American
Dance and Drama Studio
and Freelance Dancer
/ Bachelor of Arts in
Dance, 2017 / Moved to
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YOGI NARAINÉ

*Designer, Entrepreneur
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a concentration in Graphic
Design, 2001 / Moved
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RYAN RAMIREZ
*Sound Engineer at the
Blue Note and the Jazz
Standard and Freelance
Drummer / Bachelor of Arts
in Music, 2009 / Moved
to New York City in 2009*

CHERISH ROSAS

*Workplace Experience
Design Lead at LinkedIn /
Bachelor of Architecture,
2012 / Moved to New
York City in 2016*



// **What brought you to New York City?**

Dimara: I moved to New York City two months after my graduation from UNC Charlotte. I had planned to move to NYC in mid-September, to pursue a career in dance performance in one of the most culturally and artistically diverse cities in the world. However without audition, I was invited to perform in the “Table of Silence 9/11” project with Buglisi Dance Theater, so I moved early in order to begin the rehearsal process with them.

Yogi: After graduating, I was living in Dallas, Texas. I was unable to find work for almost two years. Pushing my way into the industry, I did eventually get a job at a design firm only because I offered to work for free. I used this opportunity to gain real-world experience while I continued to look for full-time work. When (international advertising company) R/GA called, with the promise of a decent salary, I was on a plane to New York within the week.

I interviewed well, but I didn’t get the job at R/GA. They were hiring ahead of the curve and didn’t win the new business. This meant there wasn’t a position for me. But the city felt like home, and I was able to stay with my aunt in Queens a bit longer. I continued to contact R/GA every few months and a year later I finally got the job.

// **What were you most afraid of when you first arrived?**

Ryan: Falling asleep on the subway late at night and waking up in The Bronx! This was a common story I heard from other friends about their first few months in the city.

Dimara: My biggest fear when moving to NYC was my finances, since living in New York City is expensive and I moved without a set job. I let this fear run a large portion of my first couple months in NYC and lost sight of my goals; however, I have gotten back on track and figured out a way to balance my fears with my goals.

// **Describe the moment when you knew you had made the right choice, to move to the city:**

Cherish: In February of 2016 I visited LinkedIn’s office in the Empire State Building. Admittedly, the appeal of working in a National Landmark baited my enthusiasm for potentially transferring (from the Silicon Valley headquarters). My first day in the office, a colleague, originally from California, gave me a tour and told me about his personal experience moving and living in NYC. That same day I came back to my hotel, called my mom and said, “I’m moving to New York.” After that I did everything I could to make it happen. It wasn’t easy; the move itself was

incredibly stressful, but it was worth it. I've never felt more at home.

Yogi: It was my first day in NYC and I found myself in midtown Manhattan. With my portfolio case and 100 printed resumes, I stood on the street corner waiting to cross. It was nearing the end of summer, and the city was buzzing at 9 a.m. on a beautiful sunny day. I remember how oddly wide the streets appeared at Bryant Park and the recklessness of the cars in it whizzing by. Pedestrians on the sidewalk moved at a quick pace, were smartly dressed, and spoke in multiple languages; a melody of horns, high heels, and chatter. I had arrived the night before and while I felt like an outsider, I also felt that I too played a part in this moment. I was there, breathing the same air, trying to win the coveted title of being called a New Yorker.

// What steps have you taken to establish a career in NYC?

Cherish: Hustle is real. Luckily, ambition is palpable here and you quickly realize there are no handouts, no excuses, and no time for regrets. You either make it here or you don't; it's a city of professional Darwinism. People here initiate, and people who initiate are successful. Every day is a chance to meet someone with words of wisdom, and you find that everyone is climbing ladders while you climb your own. You can find a way to

relate to just about anyone here, so I'm constantly making new connections (not just because I work for LinkedIn) and I've become incredibly outspoken and more personable. Because of this, the confidence behind my ideas has quadrupled since I left Charlotte.

Ryan: Establishing myself here involved a lot of paying my dues. While I have some great gigs now, when I moved here I worked at a taqueria for nearly a year to make rent while taking all sorts of auditions and gigs (many I didn't want to do). Networking is also incredibly valuable. While you need to have the skills to do the job, you've also got to meet people and put in your time. Everyone in the city wants things to happen fast, but you can't really skip paying your dues.

// What about your education at UNC Charlotte prepared you/inspired you to go to NYC?

Dimara: My initial inspiration and introduction to living in New York City was through a scholarship I received for the summer after my freshman year to the Martha Graham School Summer Intensive. This was my first time training in dance in NYC and opened my eyes to the type of work ethic and self-discipline I wanted to bring back to my courses at UNC Charlotte. After my first summer at the Graham School, I returned on

scholarship three more times during both winter and summer intensives, had an independent study and internship with Graham Company Rehearsal Director Denise Vale, as well as performed a Martha Graham work, "Steps in the Street," at the Joyce Theater in NYC with other UNC Charlotte students.

Ryan: I came to UNC Charlotte as part of my journey to NYC, really. Rick Dior, the percussion professor, grew up and studied in New York, and I knew that he would have great insight into what the place was about and what it would take to live and work here. While he taught me a lot about how to play and how music works, one of the most important things I learned from him was how to be a professional, what that really meant and how to prepare for things and how to handle myself.

// What advice do you have for others who may be considering that move?


Cherish: Leap. The only way to know if you're meant to be here, is if you leap over that first hurdle. No one is ever "ready" for New York City. But the great thing about New York is it's full to the brim of others who have taken the same leap. You won't be the only person who left everything behind for a chance to survive the concrete jungle.

Dimara: Reach out to people you know who have already made the move,

because they know exactly what you are going through and will most likely want to help. Make connections everywhere you go and do not be afraid to talk to someone more established than you, because some day you will be that person. Also, avoid Times Square at all costs, and NEVER take a picture with the characters walking around. They are ruthless!

Ryan: Save some money! And prepare to pay some dues. After being here a while I can admit that I'm always a little skeptical of people who are fresh on the scene. People take you more seriously, and trust you more, once you've been around for a while.

Yogi: If you are serious and are thinking about the move, don't think too hard about it—do it. You can convince yourself in so many ways why it won't work, but the stars won't ever align just right for you to feel comfortable. I view New York as an aggressively fast flowing river. I had to jump in to feel its current and only then did I learn how to swim in it. ■ ■



Upon graduating from UNC Charlotte in 2001, Banks Wilson went to work as a junior designer at a local advertising agency. Within a few months, he knew he wanted to strike out on his own. He developed a business plan, found an office building that allowed him to trade design work for office space, and in 2002 founded his own company, StudioBanks. He was the only employee. Sixteen years later, StudioBanks has become UNION, an award-winning digital marketing agency in Charlotte with 60 employees—from designers and programmers to account strategists and data analysts.

“At UNC Charlotte, learning graphic design, it was all about thinking through visual problem solving. That translated well when I graduated and was acting as a designer and doing real-life client projects, thinking through that problem-solving technique. It really was a one-to-one relationship. As my career has grown and my day-to-day roles have shifted, it’s still relevant. While I’m not designing and creating layouts every day, the skill of being able to think through a problem and come up with creative solutions is all about growing a business and being an entrepreneur.”

Watch a video of Banks at www.coaa.community.

Banks Wilson

on dreaming:

Coming where I came from, I had absolutely no clue I’d be where I am now. I grew up pretty poor. I was a bookish, sickly little kid. I barely graduated high school, and much to my brother’s dismay, I didn’t even apply to college. In short, while I was smart as a whip, I lived the first part of my life utterly directionless.

Then came direction in the form of a volunteer opportunity at what was then the Afro-American Cultural Center, now the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. In 2001 I was asked by Sidney Horton, then a staff member at the Center, to head up a weekly poetry roundtable. I’d never done anything like it before but felt inspired to take it on. It would ultimately change my life.

Through my work with the Center I was exposed to arts and culture in a way I never had been before. I was part of it, creating, critiquing, and programming. It all felt very right, but since I was not raised to believe that a life in the arts was feasible, I made up in my mind that it was merely a hobby.

Stacey Rose
Theatre

Then a terrible divorce turned that hobby into a life saver. Processing the loss of my relationship, I dove deeper into creating, and even chose to pursue higher education in the arts. Becoming a student in UNC Charlotte’s Department of Theatre was the first serious step I took toward following a dream I didn’t even know I had.

Not everyone is struck blind by the desire to be what it is they want to be in life. In fact, it’s often the opposite. The dream lies dormant in the hobby we view as an escape. It may be blatantly obvious to other people, but you can’t see any real use or benefit for a particular gift you’ve been given. Sometimes, it lives in a quiet space inside that nags you to action in moments of stillness. Sometimes, hearing it is terrifying, because the idea of yearning for something you don’t feel is attainable can be quite painful. All of this is valid. However, what my experience has taught me is, if you take two steps towards that thing that brings you and others joy, it’ll take four towards you. Take that class. Read that book. Take that volunteer opportunity. These small steps will take you places you never imagined.

on parenting and being a creative:

One of the hardest decisions I ever had to make was moving to New York to attend grad school for dramatic writing and leaving my son, Zion, in the care of my mother. I belabored the decision with friends, family, and even strangers. The overwhelming majority of people felt that my son should go with me or I shouldn't go at all. I was, after all, his mother. I was a single mother at that. I finally talked to my son, who was then 14 years old. Like a sagely old man, he sat me down and walked me through why NYU was such a great opportunity for me, but not such a great move for him. It was one of the most beautiful conversations I'd had in my adult life. At the end of it, I decided to allow him to stay in Charlotte.

There were some who disagreed with my decision, but still supported me, even offering to help out in any way they could with Zion while I was away. Some folks were so arduously against the decision that it ended our friendship. They felt I was being selfish, self-centered, and opportunistic. To an extent, they were right. Part of being an artist is being selfish, self-centered, and opportunistic

enough to feel that what you have to say with your art is important enough to share, and having the willingness to go where the work takes you to share it. An artist's life is a life in flux. It is a life that is infinitely more complicated when the artist is a woman with children.

What my experience taught me is this: It was my experience, specifically. I had enough family support, a child who was stable enough, and an opportunity that was large enough to be worth taking the leap. These factors vary for each artist. In hindsight, my regrets are few. The opportunity launched a promising writing career and in many ways drew my son and me closer together. I watched as he became an emotionally mature and independent young man. He got to watch me dream big, work hard, and push through to build on the legacy of the generation before me in a way that I hope inspires him to do the same. I think that is the best example we can set for our children, no matter what career path we choose.

on writing the political:

Political work that fascinates me does not simply take aim and fire at the hot-button issue of the moment. Instead, it fires broader and deeper into the connective tissue and organs that generated the issue

in the first place. It makes me rethink what it means to be human.

Writing *The Waiting Place: Reasoning*, I never once thought:

I'm going to write this political thing so people know exactly how I feel about gentrification!

It was more like:

Fuck these people who feel they have a right to take away my home!

Hence, the process of creating political work, at least for me, is deeply personal. It's less about calculation more than it's about tapping in and grounding down into the things that set me on fire.

When I wrote *Reasoning*, I was living in West Charlotte. We'd gotten a Starbucks around the corner, and signs declaring our neighborhood "historic" had suddenly popped up, letting us know we were set

to be bought and sold. At that point I had already seen Cherry community, an area where I spent so much of my childhood, undergo a sea change. Anticipation of the same sort of shift in a neighborhood where I'd spent 12 years saddened and infuriated me. Shante was the result. She was the young girl in me who resented seeing her world change, and sense of home challenged so drastically, and felt she had no control over that change. ■ ■



When Stacey Rose came to UNC Charlotte as a 30-year-old theatre major, she had never written a play and in fact had never studied theatre before. Her first

play, *The Waiting Place*, was produced independently by a group of fellow students in 2008, the year she graduated. Stacey went on to complete an MFA in Dramatic Writing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. In 2015, she received a prestigious Dramatists Guild Fellowship and in 2017, a Many Voices Fellowship from The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, MN.

Watch staged excerpts of Stacey's play, *The Waiting Place*, at www.coaa.community.

earthen walls open windows to the world

Samantha McPadden and Eddie Winn
Architecture

Samantha McPadden graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2015 with a Bachelor of Architecture and a Minor in Art History. She works at Fleetwood Fernandez Architects in Los Angeles.

Eddie Winn graduated from UNC Charlotte with his Bachelor of Architecture in 2014 and works at Montalba Architects in Los Angeles.

In the summer of 2017 they led a 17-member team, including four additional UNC Charlotte alumni and three current students, in a design-build project in Ghana. The results were a cast earth medical clinic for a small African village, and a new world view for Sam and Eddie.

THE BEGINNING

In September 2015, between working and looking for jobs, we entered a competition with the goal of developing our design skills and working as a team on something. A small NGO named the Nka Foundation was hosting a competition for an earth construction artist-in-residence unit in Ghana. The Nka Foundation's primary goal is to enhance and develop underserved rural communities through the arts. We got news in November that we had placed and had the opportunity to build our design. For recent college graduates, fairly new to the professional setting of an architecture office, this opportunity was huge.

The location was a village named Abetenim, located in the Ashanti region in Ghana. Construction workshops had been taking place in the village for years. Project goals included developing the local economy and benefiting the children who lived in the village.

As a very small NGO, the Nka Foundation was only able to provide a site, a connection to the village, and a network of resources, including current and past project teams. We were solely responsible for assembling our team of volunteers, raising the entire budget, and designing and building the project.

We started preparing for the unknown. Neither of us had ever managed a project like this before and only had a small amount of construction experience. We

contacted people around the world who had completed projects in the village before. Past professors provided us insight on managing study abroad programs, as we would eventually share the project with international universities, in hopes of getting student volunteers.

We were put in touch with a local resident of the village who acted as our community coordinator: Frank Appiah Kubi, headmaster of Abetenim's elementary school. Frank helps volunteers arrive safely, coordinates accommodations, and helps with anything else he can. Although we were worlds apart and had not even met in person yet, Frank gave us his full attention and efforts.

A few months before the trip, we had a solid group of volunteers and enough money to build the building. We bought a suitcase full of sunscreen, bug spray, and baby wipes and started learning a little bit of Twi, the local language. Both of us were lucky enough to be working for architecture practices that encouraged us on our journey and ensured us they would have us back after the project.

ARRIVING IN GHANA AND ABETENIM

The first six of us landed in Accra, Ghana, on June 1, 2017. Accra was like no place we had ever been. We walked through a nearby market where, initially, everything seemed chaotic. It was loud, fast, with new smells and new colors. Streams of people walked at an accelerated pace, some with

boxes, pans, or maybe a table balanced on their heads. They were squeezing by each other, dodging cars and motorcycles. The flow of people and vehicles never stuttered. There was an innate choreography to it all.

We arrived in Abetenim with white knuckles and nervous smiles; what we thought was crazy driving would eventually become normal. The car dropped us off right at our house. With little information given to us about what living conditions would be, our expectations were surpassed. We were lucky to have all of the amenities we were used to! Outside there were children and volunteers playing soccer. A Ghanaian woman named Okosea would cook our meals for the project's duration. Frank gave us a tour of the village with the help of a couple of little kids.

There was one main road splitting Abetenim into two sides. There were a few tiny shops with people relaxing outside. Houses were scattered through the landscape with no apparent boundaries, all around 200 square feet. We loved seeing everyone's days spent outside. Small fires outside for cooking, palm fruit harvesting, kids running around playing with palm sticks with wheels at the end, "driving" through the village. The schools were all in the same area, all built around the village soccer field. Located among the houses was a bar called Akapo's spot, which would play music for the village to hear on Sundays and random nights, depending on whose birthday it was.

CHIEF PROBLEMS

The first step was locating a site and testing cast earth ratios. Our cast earth mix used local earth along with other components such as gravel and sand and a minimal amount of cement. We hand mixed using shovels and used head pans to carry the mixture. After deciding on our project site, it was cleared by our team using machetes. We plotted the building outline with sticks, string, and a pick-axe.

Two weeks into the project, however, we were stopped by the District Chief of Juaben. We heard many rumors as to why, but never a real explanation or reason explaining it. After more than a week of precious lost time, Frank told us about a new plan. A nearby village named Yeboahkrom was interested in meeting our group and potentially having us move our project there.

The first step was to visit the village and meet the Chief. The Chief and the village elders were excited to learn about the earth construction workshop. After discussion, the elders requested a clinic, as opposed to our original artist-in-residence building.

There was much to consider before redesigning and relocating our project. For one, we would need to redesign completely, due to the change in its purpose. And Yeboahkrom had no running water or electricity and was an hour away from Abetenim. We were worried that the guys we hired from Abetenim would not want to come to the

new village to work. But if we stayed with our current project, we may not be able to start the project again. So our group put behind our fears and decided the best option would be to move our project to the new village, Yeboahkrom.

THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

The construction process needed to be accelerated and efficient. In the field, the project and timeline would rely on flexibility, agility, foresight, long hours, brute strength, and endurance (the latter two mostly exhibited by our Ghanaian friends). We spent approximately three to four weeks working on the foundations. We plotted the building just as we had before, tracing the string lines with our pick-axes and trenching the building's foundation. One person would swing the pick-axe a few times then step aside. Another person would shovel out the freshly-picked earth... repeat. The next step was to lay our stones. Abu, the mason, was very meticulous with his stone arrangement. Off to the side of the site, we had a large pile of stones. Stones would be carried to Abu to be placed in the trench. We would follow behind Abu, applying hand-mixed mortar to his precisely placed stones, layer by layer.

Once the foundation was done, the next big step was casting the earth walls. This earth mix was carried in pans, overhead, to Abu out in the field. Abu would pour the mixture into the formwork. Pan by pan, we filled the formwork. This phase of the project took the longest, at approximately



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Construction photo. L-R: UNC Charlotte student Fritz Ababio, Samantha McPadden, and Eddie Winn with local workers. Photo by Fritz Ababio

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Team leader Samantha McPadden (center), with volunteers Ashley Bonawitz (UNC Charlotte alum) and Fritz Ababio, setting column lines at the foundation. Photo by Tiffany Ortega

six weeks. The last couple weeks we put up the roof trusses and roof panels and installed windows, doors, and screens.

DOWN TIME

On Sundays, we would travel to nearby towns for the markets and shops. There were beautiful fabric shops where many of us would buy amazing, patterned fabrics. Emanuel, the local tailor, was kept busy by many of us having clothing made. We explored the market, and culture, by trying nearly every new snack we noticed. Our market trips wouldn't be complete without a trip to the tool store for a refill on nails and tape, or the tiny grocery store for wine and crackers. We would bring home a pile of fruit from vendors throughout the market, which always felt like a treat. We would travel home by tro-tro (mini-bus) or taxi. Various kids from around the village would normally be hanging around our house wanting to play. We played lots of card games, some taught by other volunteers and one by the Ghanaians, which was known nationally.

CONCLUSION

We learned early on in the workshop that it is important to see challenges as opportunities. Many unique opportunities came as a result of our having to relocate and redesign the project. The short time frame

eliminated the luxury of second-guessing. Our lifestyle in Ghana additionally encouraged us to balance firm decisions with flexibility.

Each day was different in Ghana. We met four Chiefs and visited one palace. We spent the majority of our days outside and a lot of time without shoes. We learned a (very, very) little bit about Ghana politics and we gave a clinic to a village that needed one.

Yeboahkrom residents were very interested in what we were doing and very eager to help. The Chief himself came out and swung the pick axe on a few occasions. Despite the cultural differences, living there was easy; the way of life is enviable.

We left Ghana with mixed emotions. We were happy for what we had accomplished and looking forward to a rest. But we were sad to leave the people we had met and anxious to see how the building would work out for the clinic. We are still in touch with many of the people who are living in Ghana and chat with them often over texting. We were excited to hear that midwives were hired for the clinic, because it means that our building is benefiting the women in the community, giving them a safe space for their families. ■ ■



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Side view of the medical clinic.
Photo by Kohei Takegawa

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Team photo at Lake Bosumtwi for a vacation weekend. Photo by Tiffany Ortega

Christina Hudgins
Dance

My ideas, my body, my artistry are valid and valuable. Your ideas, your body, your artistry are valid and valuable. This is the message I have been telling my students, my co-workers, and myself every day since my graduation from UNC Charlotte, as I began my growth as a dancing and teaching artist.

After receiving my degrees in dance and psychology from UNC Charlotte, I was contracted to dance with Virginia Ballet Theatre in my hometown of Norfolk, Virginia. I was thrilled for this opportunity to perform professionally and was also excited to work with the studio's Adaptive Dance Program for children with Down syndrome. Upon my arrival, I presented to the studio owner that I would like to launch a class for children on the autism spectrum. I had worked with children who had this diagnosis while in college and was determined to bring a class for this population to the studio I now called home. But, as with most things, I was told it was going to take time. The dance center was planning to write a grant to establish their very own special needs program. They asked me to coordinate

this program, which surprised me tremendously, but I said yes and patiently waited for this grant to materialize.

Finally, the grant was given, and I began teaching an array of classes for children of all abilities, including those with Down syndrome and autism. I became certified to teach Ballet for All Kids, a method of teaching that uses visual learning, auditory learning, vestibular learning, and emotional intelligence to teach classical ballet technique to children of all abilities. I was realizing one of my primary career goals—and loved what I did—but I felt that something was not quite right. Amazing things were happening, but careless words and actions were contradicting what I was trying to tell my students as their teacher and myself as a dancer: that my/their ideas, my/their bodies, my/their artistry are valid and valuable.

A case in point: For two years, I taught a dance and movement class to eight very special students at St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children. Most of these children were in wheelchairs, unable to freely move their limbs or, really, their bodies. At first, I was not sure what to do with our class time, but I started teaching just like I taught my typical kids at other studios. I was amazed at how much my group advanced! We were able to emulate grand jeté (leaps), chassé, chaîné turns, and other fairly challenging movements. I was so pleased when some of my students wanted to stand out of



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their chairs for parts of class and were able to have therapists support them in leaps and turns.

However, not every moment was full of happiness. There were instances where children were not able to participate due to their conditions, were not able to attend class due to illnesses (and in one case, death), and many, many moments of self-doubt. One day in class, one of my students who could speak fluently and always had beautiful things to say, expressed to her attendant that she knew she was “retarded” and that’s why she could not do a certain step I was teaching. I had been in many situations where people would

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Christina with student at St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children, Norfolk, VA. Photo by Sonja Barisic

say things about others off-handedly or in spite of themselves, but I had never felt so much wrongness as in the words and the tone of this young girl. We talked with her about what she said and how it was not an appropriate thing to say about anyone, and of course she executed the step she was learning beautifully by the end of class. I promised to myself as I left class that day that I would be vigilant against thoughtlessness in my own life through my personal work, the work I do for others, or any aspect of my living.

I decided to grow up that day. To grow out of approving what others say because of their position and to say a definite “no” to shaming individuals because they do not fit a particular standard of the world. Even though I am five feet tall and shorter than most of my students, I realized that the words I give them, and the words the world gives them every day, are giant tools for how they will shape their perspectives of life.

I realized, too, that I had gaps in my own knowledge base of how I could help others understand their validity in the fullest sense (and how I could articulate my own validity as well). I knew, also, I had to go to a place that would help cultivate this understanding. I decided to enter Columbia College Chicago’s dance/movement therapy graduate program.

I have left behind countless students of different ages and abilities, a program that

I worked hard to build up and coordinate, a position as a company dancer in a professional ballet company, and all my close friends and family in the Norfolk area. This was one of the hardest decisions for me to make, but a decision I have never felt more confident about in my life. I know in my heart what I need to gain, and I am ready to step forward to build more sustainable strength in what I believe is my life’s work.

With another new chapter of my life beginning, I am grounded in my goal to give others and myself what we all seek: joy in life and understanding through expression. I may leave things unfinished, not be able to answer every question or fix every problem, but I find hope in my courage to grow further in this belief that clings to my being: My ideas and your ideas, my body and your body, and my artistry and your artistry are valid and valuable. ■ ■

Watch a video of Christina’s dance at www.coaa.community.

Christina Hudgins graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2015 with Bachelor of Arts degrees in dance and psychology and the Professional Dance Training Certificate from Charlotte Ballet. She is pursuing a Master of Arts in Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling at Columbia College Chicago.

When Dareion Malone’s corporate job was eliminated in the economic downturn, he decided to return to school to pursue his first love, music. “That was always my initial choice. I was discouraged from studying music for my first degree because of low teacher pay.” He had instead studied business administration.

Dareion, a baritone, enrolled at UNC Charlotte and received a Bachelor of Music in Music Education in 2013. He serves now as the choral music and piano instructor at Marvin Ridge High School in Waxhaw, NC, and is also chorus master and Men’s Chorus accompanist at UNC Charlotte. In both settings, he encourages students to “take the risk, accept the challenge, and go forth and make music.”

“Once I started teaching, I missed my time being able to sing with my friends.” So Dareion, along with UNC Charlotte voice professor Alissa Deeter and Mark Johanson, minister of music at a local church, formed Sine Nomine Vocal Ensemble, a performing group that furthers Dareion’s mission of “bridging the gaps between academia and the community.”

Watch Dareion’s video at www.coaa.community.



Dareion Malone

new music network

a conversation with Elizabeth Kowalski

Elizabeth Kowalski
Music

In 2012, Elizabeth Kowalski (Bachelor of Music, 2009) started the Charlotte New Music Festival, a contemporary classical music workshop and concert series. From 12 composers and three concerts the first year, the program grew to 34 composers—ranging from undergraduates to PhD candidates to professionals—and 12 concerts in 2017.



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What prompted you to launch the Charlotte New Music Festival?

I was looking for something like this to go to and attend so that I could work with really great musicians. I had awesome student musicians at my graduate school (UNC Greensboro), but I really wanted to work with professionals. And I wanted to work with dancers and learn more about writing for dance. I asked people in different parts of the country and in other countries, and nobody had a program like that, that combined the two.

But most important was the quality of the musicians that I wanted to work with. Other programs with professional musicians were either super competitive or super expensive. So I thought if I could just organize a group of people like myself, we could pool our resources and have our own thing.

What is your mission?

The Charlotte New Music Festival serves a few purposes: First of all, it helps younger composers who don't have a ton of experience, who are just emerging in the field, and it also gives composers who are more established the opportunity to work with amazing musicians, which I think is rare with both those groups. I also try to have the concerts out in the community to raise

awareness of the art form and raise an appreciation for what we do.

What has been the biggest challenge?

Funding. Nobody would touch us the first two years we existed, so that was all my money. And I had no job, really. It was super stressful. I mean I literally cried, bled, and sweated over the festival.

I've written several grant requests. We usually get support from a regional foundation based in Atlanta. The past two years we've received some funding from the Knight Foundation. If we had more funding, we could do more. I would like to pay my musicians more, my guest composers more.

Venues have always been a huge challenge. It takes a lot of work. Some people are not really open to what we do, so they are skeptical and reluctant to have us there. Some cancel at the last minute. And the venues cost money, too.

Describe the composers' workshop:

Composers who apply will select whether they want to go the straight composer route or the electronic music route or the

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Beo Quartet performing at Lenny Boy Brewery. Photo by Yasha Hoffman

dance composer route. The festival is two weeks. Everybody has a piece professionally performed and makes professional recordings for audio and video, as well—things they can walk away with and have for their portfolios.

Having super-stellar musicians is key. Some of these concerts are like the best chamber music concerts I've ever been to in my life. I'm extremely proud of that. The violinist of the Beo Quartet says that the festival is like a boot camp for their quartet. I've never seen a string quartet that's this amazing. They are a mean machine. And they've gotten a ton of jobs through our festival and through the guest artists we bring and the relationships that develop.

And the program has tripled in size in five years ...

I didn't realize how much of a need there was for this kind of thing. We've had composers from every continent except Antarctica attend our festival, and it's a pretty exciting concept that we have had that big of an effect. We have to go through at least 100 applications.

We really try to make things that will open other opportunities, and it's amazing because it has. We've had a couple of hundred composers who have done this program now, and pieces that they've written for the festival have won awards and have opened up so many other opportunities. It's so rewarding to hear

about. And people have maintained these networks in this community we've built. People help each other; they're still collaborating. I was not expecting that side effect. It's one of the greatest things about this project.

We've expanded now to offer a competition for writing a string quartet or a saxophone quartet, for composers ages 35 and up. Opportunities for that age group are extremely rare. We've had an overwhelming appreciative response for that, as well. The winners come and contribute a lot to the festival. And it helps elevate the status of the festival and raise awareness of the ensembles that are doing the recordings.

What has been the response from the Charlotte community?

For the most part, people seem really enthusiastic about what we present. Sometimes it can be a little experimental or avant-garde—and we are stretching some people, but most of the music does not really stretch what they're comfortable with. A lot of people say that they're glad that something like this exists—maybe they used to live in New York or Boston and they never thought something like this would happen here, and they're really excited.

I live here and work here, and my family is here. So, I really wanted to create something that would eventually grow in

20 years. I've seen it change already, and collaboration—among all kinds of musicians and even different genres—is the key to making this the most accessible to as many different kinds of audiences as possible.

So what are your 20-year hopes for the Charlotte New Music Festival?

This last festival was the first one that I didn't say I was never going to do it again (laughs).

The 20-year plan was that there would be a decent scene for new music here, that people wouldn't think that all composers are dead. Because half the people that I tell that I write music say, "Oh—there are still people who do that?" So it is my goal that people would know what it is, and that there would be concerts year-round that are fun, and that people are challenged and rewarded by coming. So that is the idea, that it would be a scene year-round.

And maybe even—who knows?—a Center for New Music, where composers can have a work space and share hardware and software—a collective composer workspace. We could get some really big-name people in and put Charlotte on the map for contemporary music. And I think it could also include jazz—anything that's artistic and demonstrates good craftsmanship.

Lessons learned?

I had no idea what I was doing at all. I had no idea what it would take. I had never even been to a workshop like this. The funny part is, everybody told me it wasn't going to happen. My parents were the only people who didn't—they were supportive, whatever happened. Even my professors said, "you know it's a big project, don't worry if it doesn't happen." But it never occurred to me that it wouldn't happen, that I wouldn't make it work. It proved to me personally that you really can do anything you want, as long as you take every single stupid little step to get there. As long as you're willing to sacrifice, you can pretty much do anything you set your mind to doing. I had never had anything that taught me that quite to that extent before.

It really takes five years to make nothing into a thing, five years to get it out of the grave. That was a big learning experience for me, too.

I don't know if I would have done it if I'd known everything I was going to go through and have to deal with and have to sacrifice. Most of the time I'm glad I did it (laughs)—actually all the time. But sometimes, I'm a little tired! ■ ■

Life as a leader

Je’Nen Chastain
Architecture

In her commencement address at Mills College in Oakland, California, where she recently received a Master of Business Administration, Je’Nen Chastain reminded her classmates and colleagues that several buildings on the campus had been designed by Julia Morgan, the first woman to become a licensed architect in California and the first to win an American Institute of Architects (AIA) Gold Medal (awarded posthumously in 2014). It was fitting that Je’Nen recognized Morgan; while a student at UNC Charlotte, she served as the national president of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), the first female to serve in that role in a decade.

When Je’Nen graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2009, the recession had all but obliterated job opportunities for emerging professionals. But that hardship ultimately inspired her to move to California and pursue a graduate degree. While at Mills College, Je’Nen focused her research on social entrepreneurship and the intersections of business and architecture. In recognition of her academic leadership, she received a Career Development

Grant with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and a Forté Fellowship with the Forté Foundation.

It was at this same time that she began to notice that there was a widespread need for leadership training in the architecture field. “During the recession I saw firms really struggling with how to lead their practices through the complications of not having incoming clients and losing employees—how to lay them off as well as how to build back up after the economy came back.”

As a past Chair of the AIA Center for Civic Leadership, Je’Nen developed the re-imagined AIA Leadership Institute, an annual one-day summit that teaches leadership skills to architects and designers all over the country. In recognition for her work, she was awarded a Presidential Citation from the AIA California Council for her efforts.

Je’Nen believes that leadership training is a crucial area of professional development necessary for the practice of architecture. She served as a key contributor and editor to the *Living Your Life as a Leader* workbook for the AIA, now in its third edition, which reflects 10 years of research collected in partnership with her mentor Georgia Cameron, AIA. In addition to the workbook, Je’Nen presents that research publicly, most recently at the 2017 AIA Women’s Leadership Summit.



01

Je’Nen is in her third year as a designer with Heller Manus Architects in San Francisco. In 2016, AIA San Francisco honored her with the Emerging Professionals Award as part of the Community Alliance Awards program, and AIA National awarded her a 2017 Associates Award, “given to individual Associate AIA members to recognize outstanding leaders and creative thinkers for significant contributions to their communities and the architecture profession.”

—by Meg Whalen

Watch Je’Nen talk about leadership at www.coaa.community.

01

Architecture alumna Je’Nen Chastain

dressing stars

Amy Andrews Harrell
Theatre

01



02

In spring of 2017, Amy Andrews Harrell spent two months in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on a movie set with John Travolta, where, as costume designer, she helped transform him into the multi-millionaire speedboat racer and designer Don Aronow. Travolta is just one in a long list of superstar actors and directors with whom the Emmy Award-winning theatre alumna (class of 1985) has worked.

Amy has served as costume designer, costume supervisor, wardrobe supervisor, or key costumer for some 50 film

01

Alumna Amy Andrews Harrell has served as costume designer, costume supervisor, wardrobe supervisor, or key costumer for some 50 film and television productions. Photo courtesy of Amy Andrews Harrell

02

Amy Harrell was nominated for an Emmy Award for her costume designs for the 2013 National Geographic Channel docudrama *Killing Lincoln*. Photo by Kent Eanes

and television productions. Steven Spielberg, Meryl Streep, Meg Ryan, Tom Hanks, Jane Fonda, Mel Gibson, Sam Shepard, Nicole Kidman, John Turturro, and Daniel Radcliffe are among the many famous people she has dressed.

Amy grew up in Charlotte. The summer after her junior year in high school, she participated in a theatre camp at UNC Charlotte, which ignited her interest in theatre and led her to enroll in UNC Charlotte's Bachelor of Creative Arts program after high school. Her design

professor, Bob Croghan (now emeritus), inspired her to pursue costuming as her life's work.

"Bob taught us perseverance. To think big. And he instilled in us a thrill and love of costumes. I loved my time (at UNC Charlotte) and I still cherish and use what Bob taught me."

“Bob taught us perseverance. To think big. And he instilled in us a thrill and love of costumes.”

After completing a Master of Fine Arts at Southern Methodist University in 1988, Amy moved to Los Angeles. Her first jobs were as a seamstress, sewing for movies like David Lynch's *Wild at Heart*. ("I sewed the Glinda the Good Witch costume in my living room. I got glitter everywhere!")

But her big break came with a movie that filmed in her hometown: *Days of Thunder*. She served as wardrobe assistant and was then able to join the costumer union.

Amy left Los Angeles for New York City in 1996 and began working as a wardrobe supervisor. In 2008 she won an Emmy Award, with costume designer Donna Zakowska, as costume supervisor for the HBO miniseries *John Adams*.

She began costume designing about six years ago and has created work that reflects many styles, places, and time periods. The John Travolta movie takes place in Miami between 1960 and 1987, for example, while the Tom Hanks film, *Ithaca* (directed by Meg Ryan), is set in upstate New York in the summer of 1942.

She excels, however, in the 19th century. In 2013 she was nominated for an Emmy for her costume designs for the National Geographic Channel docudrama, *Killing Lincoln*. More recently, her designs for the PBS Civil War series, *Mercy Street*, were included in the 10th Annual Outstanding Art of Television Costume Design exhibition at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum and Library.

Amy's most recent project takes her to the 1980s, dressing Alec Baldwin as the famous automaker John DeLorean for a film that releases in 2018. ■ ■

—by Meg Whalen

See a photo essay of Amy's work at www.coaa.community.

possibilities,
not limitations

Mojdeh Henderson
Dance

My career journey began as a dance educator, with a passion for choreography, unique movements, and the understanding that the body is a canvas. Now I am the principal of an elementary school. While life as an artist and life as a school administrator may seem miles apart, I have learned that being an artist is about the way you approach the world, and even when you move away from your original art form, that philosophy carries into all aspects of what you do.

While at UNC Charlotte, I decided to pursue an education career because I felt very strongly that all students should have access to the arts, and that finances should not be a factor that holds them away from that experience. When I was a child, my family struggled financially; I wanted to dance, but we couldn't afford it. I wanted to make sure that no child was denied the privilege of an art form just because their family could not afford it. Therefore, I wanted to be a dance teacher in a public school. Upon graduation, I became the first dance teacher at Crestdale Middle School in Charlotte, where I stayed for six years and developed

an incredible passion for educating all students, regardless of demographic and socioeconomic status, to learn to use their bodies to communicate and create.

“I wanted to make sure that no child was denied the privilege of an art form just because their family could not afford it.”

About three years into teaching, I became concerned that the state was going to cut funding for dance teachers, so I decided to pursue an administrative degree as an alternative, if it became necessary. But once I started administrative classes, I felt compelled to pursue leadership as a means to make a difference for children in a larger context. Some of the skills and attitudes I had developed as both a dance student and a dance teacher supported this path: an intense drive to make the world better, a desire for all students to

be successful regardless of their background, and an incredible work ethic. I completed my Masters of School Administration in 2006 and took a position as an assistant principal.

In my first few years as an administrator, I missed dancing and wondered where I could find a channel for my artistic expression, for that ability to be creative. For me it has been embracing every moment with a belief that it can be more, that you can be more, and that the outcome can be greater than what is imagined, whether I am developing a master schedule that meets the needs of everybody in the school building or a strategic vision to guide our school to the next level of learning for the staff, the scholars, and the community.

Creativity is the ability to see things in a new and unique light. Being a dancer has taught me that there's not always one right answer, but that it is our perspective and our knowledge of the world that impacts how we perceive and how we do things. The key is that the artist sees all the possibilities rather than the limitations.



Mojdeh Henderson was born in Nigeria and grew up in Hawaii. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Dance Education from UNC Charlotte in 2000 and has been the principal of Berewick Elementary School in Charlotte since 2012.

a new vision for new towns

Rachel Keeton
Architecture

I attended the College of Arts + Architecture (then the College of Architecture) from 2002-2006. One of my most vivid memories is from the first day of a studio in second year, when Carrie Gault asked each of us why we wanted to study architecture. I remember eventually settling on the answer that “everyone has a right to adequate housing,” and that is the same answer I would give today, 15 years later.

Studio culture was like a family; we worked, ate, played, and often slept on the studio floor. I enjoyed it immensely, but also wanted to see more of the world. After discussions with the dean, I secured the opportunity to spend my final year at Kingston University in London as part of a year-long study exchange program. During this time I was deciding whether to complete a fifth architecture year at UNC Charlotte or pursue another path. During the year in London, I realized that research and possibly academia interested me more than traditional design and architectural practice. I applied for the international master's program at TU Delft, in the Netherlands, and was accepted.

During the second year of the two-year program, I was part of a graduation studio called “ExploreLab,” which gave students the freedom to design their own research project based on personal fascinations. I chose to focus on an informal settlement in the center of Kampala, Uganda, and transformation mechanisms to help this area become more effectively self-sustaining in terms of food production, water collection, and material recycling.

That project was really a turning point for me, as I stumbled my way through the unique challenges of fieldwork in the African context. I enjoyed the thrill of landing somewhere completely new and acknowledging the blatant mismatch between my expectations and reality on the ground. In official maps of Kampala, informal settlements were left blank—visualized as empty space within the built environment. Once there, I realized that this was part of a larger political strategy to marginalize the informal communities; in fact, walls had been placed around my case study site in an effort to “hide” the community from the road. Residents were further penalized through a lack of access to public services, which forced this community to pay much more for (private) water and sanitation services than their neighbors in adjacent formal areas.

I gained a new scepticism for official stories during that fieldwork, and that



01

01

A villa in Sheikh Zayed City, a New Town outside of Cairo, Egypt. The area is characterized by gated compounds and functions largely as a bedroom community. Public space is nearly non-existent and limited to guarded “plazas”—semiprivate open air malls. Photo by Rachel Keeton, 2016

02

Towers in Kilamba, Angola, offer 100,000 New Town residents only three apartment typologies. A lack of housing diversity is a common challenge for many New Towns. Photo by Rachel Keeton, 2016



02

served me well after I graduated and started work at the International New Town Institute (INTI) as an urban researcher. INTI is a “think and do tank for young cities” and functions as a platform for research, education, and knowledge exchange for New Towns. New Towns are master-planned, mixed program developments with housing for more than 30,000 residents. New Towns remain a very small part of the global urban development story, but their impact can be quite disproportional to their size.

I worked at INTI for six years and had the opportunity to write a book on contemporary Asian New Towns, *Rising in the East* (SUN, 2011), which required extensive fieldwork in the case studies

presented in the publication. After completing the book, my research on Asian New Towns led me to explore Asian investment in African development, and from that topic, my interest moved towards current New Towns across Africa. At INTI, we began a collaboration with The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), analyzing the development of New Towns in Africa. UN-Habitat is the United Nations agency focused on improving human settlements and supporting sustainable urban development.

Africa is currently the fastest urbanizing continent in the world, and although the vast majority of this urbanization is informal, New Towns are becoming a much more common approach for

developers with “upper middle-class” targets. These New Towns often exhibit predictable spatial challenges. Sheikh Zayed City, outside of Cairo, Egypt, for example, is a New Town struggling with spatial segregation. Sheikh Zayed City employs the American suburban model to organize gated compounds for 53% of the residents, while low-income housing accounts for just 15%. Residents of these insular enclaves have access to internal shops, clinics, and other amenities, as well as the upscale “plazas” (outdoor shopping malls), accessible only by car. By contrast, low-income housing residents must rely on limited public transportation to reach more affordable options in nearby 6th of October or downtown Cairo, 38 kilometers away.

The gaping divide between these two groups of residents was most recently illustrated by demonstrations outside of the New Urban Communities Authority in Sheikh Zayed City in October 2016. Abdel Fattah, a protesting resident, was quoted in the *Daily News Egypt* as saying: “Our demands are quite normal; we wish to live in an integrated city with full services. Most of us are waiting for services such as shops, pharmacies, and schools to serve the population who’ve just moved to this rather remote area.”

My research with INTI and UN-Habitat became the seed for a PhD proposal, which was accepted in 2016. Since then, I have been working at TU Delft (again), still in

collaboration with INTI and UN-Habitat, on a research project that uses lessons from case-study African New Towns from the past 60 years to develop guidelines that promote social inclusivity and environmental sustainability in future New Town development. This research will also result in a book: *Urban Africa: A Handbook for Africa’s New Planned Cities* (Naio10, forthcoming 2018).

I believe this work is important because it contributes to the current body of literature on African New Towns, which are not yet well understood, and because I still believe that the ultimate goal of both architecture and urbanism is to provide adequate spaces for everyone. This research will offer an alternative to New Towns that are exclusionary and environmentally destructive, and hopefully have a positive effect, however small, on future urbanization in Africa. ■ ■



Rachel Keeton received a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from UNC Charlotte in 2006 and is completing her PhD at TU Delft in the Netherlands. Her dissertation research proposes an approach to planning and designing African New Towns that acknowledges both social and environmental concerns, providing an alternative to New Towns that are exclusionary and environmentally destructive.

from practice room to trauma bay

As a UNC Charlotte graduate with a degree in music, I can whole heartedly say that my unique pathway towards becoming an emergency medicine physician would not have come to fruition without the solid foundation I obtained within the walls of Robinson Hall.

I know, I know ... at what point do medicine and music actually intersect? How does anyone make the transition from the practice room to the trauma bay?

In the practice room, the notes on the pages on my music stand were meticulously planned and placed to form a well-thought-out musical idea. My goal was to conquer whatever piece was in front of me—if not for an upcoming concert, then at least to avoid disappointing my trumpet teacher during our weekly private lessons. The ability to spend hours on end in rehearsals,

“Soon after my discharge from the hospital, I was consumed with learning as much as I could about what it would take to become a physician.”

lessons, lectures, and all the other requirements to obtain a degree in music is an essential skill that one must have to make it through the program. I would later learn that this is also a skill shared by the successful medical student to make it through the grueling hours spent memorizing an astounding number of facts or working with patients in the hospital.

The summer after finishing my freshman year, I had the misfortune of being involved in a car accident while heading to the North Carolina coast with friends. My injuries were severe, and I found myself being flown to Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte for evaluation by trauma surgeons and emergency physicians. I was terrified but also amazed at how a team of medical professionals could pull together to make decisions that ultimately save someone's life.

Soon after my discharge from the hospital, I was consumed with learning as much as I could about what it would take to become a physician. Later that summer I met with Dr. Elizabeth Hanie, the pre-medicine advisor on campus, who would ultimately guide me through the process of getting into medical school.

I still held a love for music and continued to work toward my goal of obtaining a degree in music. I had the opportunity to participate in Jazz Ensemble, Brass Quintet, Wind Ensemble, and Orchestra while learning the ins and outs of organic chemistry and

physics. The next three years, I not only continued to grow as a musician, but as a person, through my experiences at UNC Charlotte. The rigorous course work offered in the arts and the sciences taught me the time management skills that would make me a successful student and physician.

From an outsider's perspective, a typical day for me as a doctor may sound entirely different from a typical day for me as an undergraduate music student, but from my perspective, I see many shared qualities. When a very sick patient arrives in the emergency department, I am tasked as a senior resident with playing a major part in the management of this patient. I depend on the team of doctors, nurses, and technicians to come together as an ensemble, to play their part in a large medical symphony. To be successful we must all be in tune with one another, always listening to everyone else in the room. In doing this, just like any other ensemble, we make music ... music that may ultimately save a life. ■ ■



Vijay Nagpal graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in Music and a Minor in Biology. He attended The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, where he received his Doctor of Medicine in 2015. He will complete his residency in emergency medicine at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in July 2018.

collaboration at work

I started dancing at age eight and almost immediately directed my focus at ballet. The clarity of the form appealed to me, and the discipline it required made sense to my driven personality. Taking class became a steadying ritual in my progress through childhood and adolescence that gave me a sense of purpose.

Although my undergraduate degrees are in History and French, I continued to study dance in college and, to make a little money, started teaching ballet. Through teaching, I became more aware of the perspectives on the world that ballet communicates, and how those beliefs are wrapped up in its traditions, movement vocabulary, and aesthetics. As I articulated to students why we do what we do in ballet, I grappled with the implications of ballet's beauty standards for my students' bodies, and for my own. Over time, I have developed ways to use ballet to speak back to those standards.

My life in dance now involves more than ballet. I'm most interested in non-hierarchical approaches to teaching

Gretchen Alterowitz
Associate Professor of Dance, UNC Charlotte

and making, and am a member of a collaborative dance trio.

AGA Collaborative investigates and creates ways to choreograph and perform that put aside a traditional valuing of sole authorship. In our collaboration, we find ways of working that honor all contributions, and we make dances that work against hierarchy by layering meaning and perspective.

The collaborative process has been eye-opening because of the ways our working methods in the studio affect my life and practices outside of our trio. I hold up the respect the three of us have for each other, and the ways that respect is demonstrated, as a model for how I'd like my other relationships (in dance and work) to be. This collaboration has a great impact on my work with students as I strive to teach in a way that engages honestly and respectfully with the other lives and experiences in the room.

Watch Gretchen's video at www.coaa.community.



Kimberly Watts

a chat with current students

Q What is it like to work for one of the most popular American architects? (Jon)



A Frank [Gehry's] reputation attracts a lot of interesting jobs and clients, as well as a talented group of architects. The office has an energy that reminds me of studio in the days leading up to a presentation. Frank is in the office as much as anyone, frequently also on weekends to work with teams when the clients and consultants are away and things are somewhat quieter and more focused. Generally, the design team meets with Frank about a project; he gives his input, works over ideas, and tries out different variations with the team. The design team will then continue to explore and build upon those ideas until meeting again.

Q In your experience working for Gehry, do you feel like your work is pressured or formed into the "brand" of Gehry? Are you encouraged to have differing ideas and to challenge what the Gehry work looks like? (Carlos)



A In the office, I'm working as part of a team and every project is a collaboration. Each architect comes with their own background and sensibilities, and all of that informs the project and how it evolves. Because the design process in the office is so iterative, there are lots of opportunities to give input and contribute to the discussion. As an office, we are always searching for new approaches with each project. That said, there are lineages that exist between different projects and a

recognition that there are bodies of ideas that recur; there could be the first hint of an idea in one project that finds full expression in another. That's a result of the design process, as ideas are explored in different applications and contexts.

Q How did you transition from undergrad, to UCLA, to working for Frank Gehry? Specifically, how did you go from grad school to working for such an influential firm? (Cassidy)



A It was a bit of jumping from one office to the next, and I can't say that it was planned in advance. While at UCLA, I worked as a teaching assistant for a technology seminar taught by David Erdman, a founding partner of servo. I also interned at servo during, and right out of, graduate school. After the internship, I took a short break, intending to focus on narrowing down offices and sending out resumes, contemplating a move. During that time, based on the recommendation of a friend, I received a call from Greg Lynn Form because the office was staffing up for a project. One of the projects in the office at the time was a competition that Greg was working on in collaboration

with Frank Gehry. The competition necessitated a lot of interaction between the two offices and gave me a glimpse into the Gehry office. It was incredibly interesting to see how the two different ways of working in each office came together. When the competition was finished (we unfortunately did not win), joining the Gehry office happened naturally.

Q Did your design work throughout school have specific aesthetic relationships to the people you work with now? Did you tailor your school projects in order to work with these architects? (Jon)

A I would not say that the work I did in school had a specific aesthetic relationship to what I work on now. I would say that the work I did in school was about exploring different approaches and ways of thinking about a project rather than chasing a particular aesthetic. Sometimes studio projects can be heavily influenced by the professor and the premise they set forth, but you try to tackle it in your own way.

Q Why have you stayed at Gehry for the length of time you have? (Cassidy)

A I've stayed with the office because I am still learning. There's variety and

excitement in what I get to do and see each day. And I value the great group of architects I get to work with.

Q How did moving to Los Angeles inspire you? How did the transition affect you and your design work? (Carlos, Cassidy, Jon)

A Your location absolutely influences the way you think about architecture wherever it is. I was drawn to Los Angeles because of its variety, its scale, and the diversity of urban/rural landscapes in the region. Whatever place you choose to live in will provide many of your references for good and bad architecture as you see the impacts directly. I've been in Los Angeles long enough to see a lot of new buildings and master plans go up, and the questions of the city are my questions too. How can we make better use and provide better access to our public spaces? How do we create more housing at higher densities without taking a heavy hand to what already exists?

Q How have your ideas of the architect's role changed from school to practice? (Carlos)

A If anything, the roles have multiplied. In school, the architect's role is primarily as designer, and constraints are set up to lay the ground for a particular approach to design or to facilitate particular

conversation. In practice, the majority of constraints are out of your control, and collaboration is on a whole other level. That requires a new skill set, to interpret constraints, identify real opportunities, address technical challenges, and communicate with the client, community, and team, while pursuing a design that transcends those challenges.

Q What have you observed or experienced in your workplace related to gender inequality? (Cassidy)

A The biggest observation to me is one of numbers. In architecture, as with many technical/creative fields, it would benefit the profession to have a better balance of male and female leaders and more diversity in general. It is changing, but as with any cultural change, it won't happen overnight. Architecture has been a male-dominated profession for thousands of years, and it will take many generations to overcome that history.

While acknowledging that, I think it can sometimes be counterproductive to overemphasize gender, and it is more productive to keep the focus on the work. Ultimately, the architect's work should be recognized, not the architect's gender. That is the goal of equality. It's up to each individual to treat each other with respect. And it's up to the leadership of firms to hire and pay women equally. I believe old tendencies and old modes of

thinking will die out as more and more women continue in the profession and younger generations have a different worldview than the older generation. I can do my part to keep things moving in the right direction by being an example and providing continuity for the next group of women.

Q What was your motivation for choosing architecture? Why did you choose a creative field? (Carlos)

A Architecture seemed to be the best fit for my own natural interests and tendencies. I knew that I wanted to go into a creative field but I was also very technically minded. Before I chose to study architecture, the classes I enjoyed the most were physics, geometry, literature, and art classes, or a mix of science, mathematics, and humanities. I didn't really want to give up any one of those interests wholly, and I think I had an idea that I could still explore some of them through architecture which, thankfully, is possible to different degrees.

When I was very young, I also loved drawing imaginary hideouts, trying to fit all that I would need into a tiny tree house, so maybe I was already headed in that direction before I ever had to create an argument for why. ■ ■

Kimberly Watts is an associate architect practicing with Gehry Partners, LLP in Los Angeles. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from UNC Charlotte in 2004 and her Master of Architecture from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2006. She joined Frank Gehry's firm in 2007.

Carlos Martinez's architecture education has motivated him to pursue a path "where I can be working with my hands. My drawing and graphic skills continue to grow, and I am becoming more familiar with tools and fabrication techniques."

Cassidy Kearney was part of the team that recently built a clinic in Ghana (see p. 28). "After that experience I want to explore more ways I can help local communities in need."

"Architecture is a powerful way to create beautiful things that impact people's lives," says **Jonathan Warner**. He plans to become a licensed architect to design spaces "that affect emotions, opinions, or even change someone's life."

Dedrick Perkins

in conversation with Julia Foster

Dedrick Perkins was 21 years old and still a student at UNC Charlotte when he founded his own dance studio in 2014. He had begun teaching in dance studios in Monroe and Charlotte soon after coming to college and decided early on that he “valued the teaching aspect a lot more than performing.”

Now in its fifth year, Dedrick’s Dance District is thriving. The studio, located in the University area, has 50 students, two staff, and three instructors.

Dance/English major Julia Foster was a freshman when Dedrick was a senior. In their conversation, they talk about the challenges Dedrick faced as he started his business, how his dance education prepared him, and what Julia sees on her horizon.

Listen to Dedrick and Julia’s conversation at www.coaa.community.

a pioneering spirit

—
Ali Duffy
Dance

The biggest risks I’ve taken in my career have yielded the greatest rewards.

In 2001, I was fresh out of college and working as an operations analyst at a large corporate headquarters in uptown Charlotte. I decided that I was not making bold enough choices to reach my long-term goal of building a dance career for myself. I immediately searched for national auditions, saved up some money for travel, and spent a few weeks *going for it*. About a month after my audition tour, a producer called me from Los Angeles asking if I’d accept a performer contract in an entertainment company for work on cruise ships, and it was official—I was in!

I packed up most everything I owned and traveled to LA to begin rehearsing the shows I would be performing on the ships. I remember this time in my life feeling very surreal, as if I were living someone else’s life. “Surely, they don’t want me in this company,” I thought. But they did, so I made it my mission to work as hard as I possibly could, hoping to prove to them—and really, myself—that I belonged.

Rehearsals were intense and physically exhausting: Most days the cast rehearsed for eight hours and, since we had to learn choreography so quickly, we would return to our apartment each night and keep rehearsing on our own. Although I was overwhelmed with new information, experiences, and people, I felt exhilarated and alive during this time and fell in love with performing in a whole new way. I bonded with my fellow cast members immediately, and we felt elated learning choreography from truly outstanding dance makers in the field, being fit for costumes by Bob Mackie himself, and touring around LA in our free time.

After a month of rehearsals in LA, I traveled with the cast to the ship we would be living on for the next six months. I had never set foot on a cruise ship before, so I hoped I wouldn't fall victim to seasickness and wouldn't mind the tight living quarters. During the first week on a ship (a week, the producers so lovingly refer to as "hell week") the cast must restage the shows on the ship's stage during evening hours, when nothing else is scheduled in that space. This meant we would begin rehearsing at around midnight and work through the wee hours of the morning to put our shows up. I remember so clearly my first morning on a ship, because as the sun came up, and we finished rehearsing for the night, the window coverings in the ship's theatre lifted to reveal the most beautiful scenery I had ever seen: We were sailing through

Glacier Bay National Park that day, and the sheer vastness and extraordinary beauty of this place made me feel doubly lucky. I suddenly realized I was being paid to dance *and* to see the world!

Over the course of six years, I worked on four different ships, performed with fantastic cast members whom I still count as friends and colleagues today, and traveled to more than 70 countries. My dance and voice techniques and performance abilities improved dramatically, and I learned a lot about technical elements of theatrical performance and, of course, about navigation and the inner workings of a ship. I also learned much about other cultures through my travels and the relationships I developed with the ships' staff, who hailed from all over the world.

Between cruise contracts, I would live for brief stints of time in New York, where I kept auditioning and took a few small gigs dancing for independent choreographers in the area. In 2006, after I'd performed for several years, I began to miss the consistency and security of my life before performing. I also missed the kind of challenge I felt from writing and fulfilling academic goals as I did at UNC Charlotte and wanted to learn more about dance making. So, I applied to join the MFA program at UNC Greensboro. At first, I was waitlisted (and honestly, devastated about it), but when the chair of the department contacted me to let me know of an opening, I swallowed my pride and jumped at the chance to join the 2006 cohort of graduate students. Incidentally, accepting that

rejection would often be a part of my life as an artist and scholar was a critical skill for me to master in my career in order to learn from those failures and move forward with the intention of being better.

The culminating project of my MFA degree was the creation and production of an evening-length dance concert. The process of building my concert, entitled *Six Degrees of Instigation*, was a priceless experience. It challenged me to create a body of work that could provide a sense of connectivity and flow throughout an entire evening; it gave me the chance to work with a company of dancers continuously over the period of a year; and it gave me invaluable experience in the technical and production sides of building a dance concert. I designed my own lighting, wrote press releases, worked with collaborators, and saw my long-term artistic goals to fruition. These were important foundational experiences in my move toward developing my own dance company later down the road. Further, since this concert was produced in an MFA program, I felt confident to take risks and make exactly the kind of work I wanted to make, without worrying about ticket sales, critics, or funding.

During my last year in UNCG's MFA program, I decided my next career move would be to attain a full-time position in a university dance program. I sensed this kind of position would allow me to indulge my diversity of interests in dance through research, teaching, and service—all requirements of faculty in academia. So

after an extensive job search, I accepted a position as an assistant professor of dance at Texas Tech University and moved to Lubbock, Texas, with only my dog and a few sad pieces of furniture.

I had never even visited Texas before, so imagine my surprise when I arrived to find a completely alien environment (dust storms, tumbleweed, and canyons!) with a very small dance community. But I soon realized that west Texas attracts people who have a pioneering spirit. Artists here have to create new organizations from the ground up, and those who flourish do so because they take advantage of the opportunities to lead, develop, and grow that do not exist in other communities.

My new hometown did not have a dance company, so in 2009 I took the ultimate risk by founding a company. I wanted to create a space in my community for new dances to be made and dancers to collaborate with each other. I started by reading anything I could get my hands on about nonprofit arts, met with people in my community who could support my idea, and worked with a few dance colleagues on developing the structure of a dance company. Within a few months, we had filed incorporation paperwork, built a board of directors, and were on our way to producing our first public concert.

Since 2009, Flatlands Dance Theatre (www.flatlandsdance.org) has produced 17 formal concerts, toured commissioned

performances to several states across the country, offered many community engagement and educational programs, and annually commissioned guest choreographers, composers, visual artists, musicians, designers, architects, and dancers to work with us in the creation of original works. Of all the goals I set for myself, founding and directing my company has felt the most successful and the most important to my own growth as an artist and a leader.

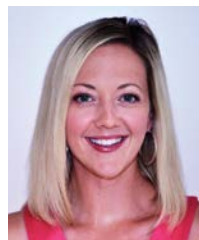
As a university faculty member, I appreciate the variety of each day: I teach courses in studio practice, choreography, improvisation, history, and critical theory, and my work with students constantly surprises, challenges, and inspires me. I have learned how to be proactive and bold in my academic life by proposing new collaborations to others, applying for grants and awards, submitting writing for presentation or publication, and consistently creating and publicly presenting new choreography.

In 2012, while continuing my work as a professor at Texas Tech and artistic director of Flatlands Dance Theatre, I joined the low-residency PhD program at Texas Woman's University. I wanted to gain deeper awareness of how dance impacts people around the world, to learn how to participate in rigorous dance scholarship, and to be prepared to teach graduate students in dance. Wow—what an incredible and humbling experience this was for me! I had no idea how much I didn't know about my own field and its intersections

with other fields. My own philosophies, questions, curiosities, and long-held beliefs were upended and reconfigured through course work and research. I read about dance and performance studies, but also about science, politics, media, language, and culture. I got so much more out of the experience than I ever anticipated and, once again (a trend throughout my career!), am grateful to have taken the risk of pursuing it.

Since childhood, I've seen a life in dance as the ultimate dream and I still pursue opportunities to connect with dance from every possible perspective. I feel there is not enough time in my life to act on all of the ideas that swirl around my mind, so I jump at the chance to say yes to every opportunity I can, even when I don't at first sense its meaning in the overall arc of my career. Certainly, that sheer joy in the moment of dancing—that feeling of being both outside of myself and, at the same time, so connected to my own body and all of humanity through movement—is what I chase constantly. ■ ■

Watch Ali's dance, *Itinerary*, at www.coaa.community.



Ali Duffy is an associate professor of dance at Texas Tech University and the artistic director of Flatlands Dance Theatre. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Dance from UNC Charlotte in 2001

and her PhD in Dance from Texas Woman's University in 2017.

eco-systems thinking

Sean Gallagher
Architecture

While most kids have a dog or a cat—or maybe the occasional goldfish, as a boy Sean Gallagher had owls, falcons, hawks, and even a Golden Eagle. His father worked for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the family often took in injured raptors and rehabilitated them.

“I come from a tree-hugger, naturalist family,” Sean says. “Our background really influences the way we think and how we do what we do.”

Sean is sitting in a huge room on the 18th floor of the Starrett-Lehigh Building, a 1930s historic New York City Landmarked industrial building in Chelsea on the Hudson River. Sunlight pours through the vast windows, which offer postcard-worthy views of the river, the Empire State Building, and the Statue of Liberty. Among the building's many tenants is Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R), the internationally famous, award-winning design firm behind such designs as New York's High Line, Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, and the Shed, a giant experimental arts space that

is under construction just blocks away from DS+R's offices.

Sean is the Director of Sustainable Design for DS+R. It is a somewhat ironic title for him, because he is skeptical of the common usage of the word, "sustainability."

"Sustainability has been commercialized and often represents an artificial value system around corporate needs, rather than social needs," he says. "I don't even use the word sustainability."

He is not, he says, interested in point systems or plaques—the general trappings of LEED certifications. Instead, he is energized by complex "eco-systems thinking" that "encourages real innovation."

Sean grew up across the Hudson River in New Jersey, where he lives now with his wife Natalie (also a UNC Charlotte alumna) and their two daughters. As a teenager, he "wanted to escape New Jersey" and chose to come to UNC Charlotte largely because of the university's successful soccer team. Although his "whole life was around soccer," his high school had an architecture program, and he loved making things—both in that program and at home with his dad. With his strong high school portfolio, he was accepted into the architecture program at UNC Charlotte.

"The culture of architecture is very similar to soccer. It's a sport of its own. So I took that energy and put it into design."

He looks back at the rigor of the program with affection: "In the days leading up to a midterm or final review, we would stay up all night pushing each other to create the most beautiful and meaningful proposals. Those nights were filled with an intense mixture of anxiety and joy, where we learned to find inspiration and support in each other."

Sean graduated in 2000 with a Bachelor of Architecture and took a position at Jenkins•Peer Architects in Charlotte. He worked there for four years, contributing to buildings such as Robinson Hall for the Performing Arts at UNC Charlotte. Architecture professor Betsy West frequently invited him back to campus for reviews of student work and even asked him to teach a "boot-camp" graduate seminar for incoming students. Soon, Dean Ken Lambla was encouraging Sean to go back to graduate school himself. He put together a portfolio and sent it to Columbia University, with no real confidence that he would be accepted, and "was shocked" when he was offered a scholarship.

Among his professors at Columbia was Laurie Hawkinson, and upon his graduation in 2005 with a Master of Science



01



02

01

Digital rendering of Eco-Island:
South China Sea Pearl, Hainan, China.
Diller Scofidio + Renfro

02

Digital rendering of Eco-Island

in Advanced Architectural Design, Hawkinson offered him a job at Smith-Miller + Hawkinson. He started two days after graduating.

While at Smith-Miller + Hawkinson, Sean's work received several significant awards, including a U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Architecture Award Citation, a U.S. GSA Design Excellence Award, and an Innovation & Delight Citation from the Emerging New York Architects Awards. He also started teaching a seminar at Columbia, which he continues to lead each year: "Man, Machine, and the Industrial Landscape." As part of a collaboration with Hong Kong University, he led a group of Columbia University students to Hong Kong in 2010 and 2011 to work with Chinese students on a project involving industrial sites.

Knowing of that work, DS+R's Charles Renfro approached Sean for help on a DS+R work/live manufacturing project in China, precipitating Sean's move to DS+R in 2011. In the past seven years he has contributed his expertise to a wide range of projects, including an artificial "Eco-Island" off the coast of China, where rooftop algae reactors generate oil, bio-fuel, and oxygen; the United States Olympic Museum, which helps purify the air with its carbon-sequestering "skin";

and a luxury hotel in Switzerland that draws energy from a "solar lake."

His newest test is to help reimagine Charlotte's popular science museum, Discovery Place. DS+R will serve as design architect, and Jenkins+Peer will act as the architect of record. Sean is the project architect, and he will approach that job with what has become his signature: a complex and holistic understanding of established and emerging systems and a sense of wonder and delight at what is yet undiscovered.

"In the last 20 years we have deployed thousands of new eyes in the sky and millions of sensors across the ground, collecting the movements of the earth," he says. "We now have an ability to see in real time the differences between all parts of the world, instantaneously, building the largest knowledge base of information to understand relationships between all the components of the planet—social and environmental. It's a new 'blue marble' moment, a dawn of a new era; and here lies the challenge: how to embrace this emerging knowledge base and bring it to the streets to improve the life and health of our local communities." ■ ■

—by Meg Whalen

See a photo essay of Sean's work at www.coaa.community.

Meredith Butterworth

Meredith Butterworth graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2009 with a Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance. While at UNC Charlotte, she studied composition with Dr. John Allemeier and subsequently enrolled in New York University (NYU), receiving a Master of Music in Theory and Composition in 2016.

Meredith was the only black female composition major at NYU. "NYU is a diverse university; a lot of people travel from different countries to study there. But there weren't a lot of black people, honestly." Each Monday a "Composers' Forum" presented a guest speaker. "We had David Lang, Phillip Glass—big names. And they're all fantastic composers. But in two semesters there was only one guest speaker that was a black woman, and no Latino composers. It made me think about how I want to contribute."

Since graduating, Meredith has become committed to "creating a space

for people of color to be represented" in the new music field. With fellow UNC Charlotte alumnus Matthew Primm, she has started Particular Ensemble, which she hopes will become a music series that "gives a space for those voices to come out."

While at NYU, Meredith composed her first work for string quartet, *Thoughts for Four*. "Thoughts for Four represents a new life experience," she says. "It can be viewed from the perspective of the relocation of a person to a new place, meeting new people, hearing new music, or taking on a new professional challenge."

The work received its premiere on April 23, 2013, in a New York performance by the JACK quartet, a leading contemporary music group called "superheroes of the new music world" by the *Boston Globe*.

Listen to *Thoughts for Four* at www.coaa.community.

Jessica Pendry

There were no dance teachers in the public schools in Yadkin County, North Carolina, where Jessica Pendry grew up. She studied dance at a local studio and loved it. But while a life in dance was calling her, she came from a family of school teachers and was determined to follow in their steps.

It was only in her junior year of high school that Jessica learned that it was possible to be both a dance teacher and a public school teacher—at the same time. When her studio teacher suggested that she major in dance education in college, Jessica recognized the perfect confluence of her passions.

She graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2010 and was immediately hired by the

new Ridge Road Middle School in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Building the dance program there from the ground up, she soon established it as the most popular elective at the school, drawing large numbers of both girls and boys to her classes, where they learned that dance was not only a form of self-expression, but could also address contemporary issues in the world.

In 2017, Jessica moved to Mallard Creek High School to become the school's first dance teacher. She already has 200 students—most of whom would never have had a single dance lesson, if it weren't for her.

Watch a video of Jessica at www.coaa.community.

challenge accepted

—
Carl DuPont
Music

There was a time when I thought that the classical music industry was a place where race didn't matter. I trusted that the battles Marian Anderson, Leontyne Price, George Shirley, and Simon Estes had won for black representation on the stage had accomplished enough. Therefore, my thinking went, I did not need to be concerned with blackness or its significance on the concert stage—only my voice. I also believed, as instructed, that classical singing meant performing mostly European repertoire of the 17th through the 20th centuries, and that this repertoire was not about promoting whiteness, but about a tradition of beautiful singing.

But one night, an innocent remark jolted me into a new awareness of how identity intersects with the classical vocal repertoire. That moment is still in my memory. It informs my teaching, performing, and my research to this day, inspiring me to advocate for an inclusive definition of art song, its performers, and its composers.

I was a junior at the Eastman School of Music and had just given a full-length

recital for the Rochester Chapter of The Links, Inc., an organization of professional black women. They had awarded me a generous scholarship to complete my studies, and performing the recital was the only stipulation. While I was standing in the receiving line afterwards, being congratulated by the attendees, a friend of mine who happened to be blonde and blue-eyed approached, seeming particularly amused by my selections that evening. She said, "Carl, I felt like you were singing right to me all night long!" I smiled—but I was confused. I asked her what she meant. "Well, most of your songs were about blonde-haired, blue-eyed women!"

I quickly thought through the French text that I had sung "... *tant que nous nous aimons ne courbera ta tete blonde* ..." [as long as we love each other, nothing shall bother your blonde head]. Then I thought through the German "*heb auf dein blondes Haupt und schlafe nicht* ..." [lift up your blonde head and sleep not]. My mind then ran through my favorite song on the program, "*Dein blaues Auge hält so still* ..." [Your blue eye holds so still], and

I realized that she was not mistaken, or exaggerating. While I had chosen the songs for their musical qualities and their adherence to the recital requirements at Eastman, my selections affirmed, celebrated, and extolled a very narrow definition of beauty that excluded myself, the vast majority of my audience, my culture, and my heritage.

I suddenly realized that the music I sang was not colorblind at all. On the contrary, the European canon of art music was hyper-color-conscious, even down to hair and eye color. The irony of singing about the virtues of blonde hair and blue eyes to a room full of black women felt like I had betrayed every mother of every mother who had found black beautiful enough to nurture its existence, including my own.

I was determined to choose my next program very conscientiously. My school boasted “the largest and most comprehensive academic music library in North America, and the third largest among United States music collections overall...,” so I set about finding music by black composers, beyond the Negro Spiritual, that I could incorporate into my next recital. Yet, despite the vast resources of the Sibley Music Library, my search revealed only one score: *The Anthology of Art Song by Black American Composers*, compiled in 1977 by University of Michigan Professor Emeritus Willis Patterson.

With this anthology, Professor Patterson made the case that art songs written by

black composers, which often incorporated the words of black poets, were an important part of the American music landscape and had been unjustly ignored by the music publishing industry. In doing so, he included prominent exponents for all voice types and created a valuable reference of historic importance. But, as a young bass-baritone, the songs written for high or medium voice were out of my range. So when I found Margaret Bonds’s elegant setting of Langston Hughes’s *Dream Variations*, I had to hire someone to transpose it into a comfortable key—an exertion I had never had to contend with when singing Brahms. But it was worth it. For that extra effort, I was rewarded with a beautiful moment at the conclusion of my next recital, as I held out the final line, “... Night coming tenderly, black like me,” as long as I could. There was something immensely gratifying about hearing my voice sing these words, whose essence reflected my essence.

I thought to myself: *This feeling of belonging is what my white colleagues feel all the time.* This was the first time a reference to skin, hair, or eye color in the repertoire reaffirmed my existence instead of negating or ignoring it. My challenge then became to find songs that celebrated blackness and the black experience in order to make sure the next generation of students and teachers who searched for art songs by black composers found resources that were easily accessible, practical, and

appropriate. By doing so, a body of repertoire could be incorporated into the curriculum for voice students that would be just as relevant to them as Italian art songs are to the *bel canto* tradition, and German Lieder are to the German school of singing.

To answer this challenge I have integrated all of my recitals with selections from the ever-growing body of art songs by black composers, along with works by European composers, in order to demonstrate their suitability to share the stage together. I searched through the Helen Walker-Hill collection of music by black women composers, housed in the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago, to find rarely performed and unpublished works. I have recorded an album of art songs for low voice by black composers and have plans to publish a musical score that could accompany the works. Through a UNC Charlotte Chancellor’s Diversity Challenge Grant, I have commissioned composer Jacqueline Hairston to write new music in order to increase the repertoire. And though these efforts have been exhausting, there is still a vast amount of work to be done to make classical music the equitable and inclusive place I once perceived it to be. I have accepted the challenge. ■ ■

Listen to Carl sing “The Reaction” at www.coaa.community.

Bass-Baritone Carl DuPont is Assistant Professor of Voice in the Department of Music at UNC Charlotte.

on the art of the possible

Imagining

I'm going to ask you to do something

Close your eyes
Imagine the face the of someone you love
It could be someone that is with you
Or someone that you have not seen in a long time
It could be someone living or someone that has passed.

Imagine that your beloved whispers something in your ear
Something only you can hear
Perhaps it is a name
Or a prayer
Or a song
Or some words of protest

Or maybe just some words
Of hope and grace
Words to carry on

Let the breath of your beloved fill you
Let their words course through your body

Imagine this whisper-song before you
Maybe five feet away

What do these words look like now?
If they are still words.
Have they changed shape?
Are they in shadow or light?
Try to hold them

Hold this whisper-song in your hands
In your palms

Keep your eyes closed
Breathe

The breath can be audible
It's okay
No one is judging you

Keep the whisper-song in your palm
Caress it
As if it were a stone
Or something else from the earth

Breathe

And now, open your eyes

Do you still feel the whisper-song?
Do you still feel the breath of your beloved?
What are you dreaming about?

Gathering

What do we mean when we talk about art and activism?
What do we mean when we gather together in rooms to witness an event?

I'd like to tell you a little story about a users' manual I read once
It spoke of anger, love, dreams, the things of childhood and small gestures
You could say it was not a users' manual to build things,
Tangible things in the world,
Like a car or a washing machine or an iPhone
In some ways it was a rather useless users' manual
But I find myself going back to it over and over again

Because you see,
anger, love, dreams, the things of childhood and small gestures
Seem to make up a great deal of what I think about
when I think about being in rooms (of theater) with other people
who have gathered together to do something as they listen
to a story or a song or some thoughts assembled with paper and string

The act of doing the listening requires open-ness
And diligence, too

You see, we're not really used to listening
We are inundated with content every minute of the day
Mostly stuff about what to buy and where to buy it
Stuff about news and the weather
Stuff about wars and tragedies
And baseball games and heroes
And stuff about, well, stuff
Cat videos, vitriolic online tweets, memes and so on

So, when we gather
In the places of theater
And are asked to do this act of doing the listening
And I use this seemingly forced terminology intentionally
When we are asked to do the act of listening
Just for a little while
(I promise, this won't be long)
It may be that our listening puts us in mind
Of other things

Like, what we're angry about,
Who and what we love,
What we wanted to be when we were children,
The dreams we had about our lives and the world,
And yes, too, about the little things that we do
Every day
Just to wake up
And keep going

And perhaps this kind of listening
Makes us nervous
Or perhaps it just makes us angrier
Or perhaps it makes us want to shout our LOVE
Big and loud and as grand as an opera

It's okay
We could shout
We could holler a bit
Use the word LOVE

But here's the thing,
Listen for a moment,
I know you want to shout
I know hollering LOVE
Feels exactly like the thing we should be doing now

But I ask you to hang on
Just for a little while
(I promise, this won't be long)

Because I would like you to consider your anger

Now, you may ask, why I am using this word?
Especially at a time in our cultural moment
When a certain kind of performed vitriol
Has dominated what passes for political discourse

But hear me out
Just for a bit

Anger is a primary political emotion
If you're not upset or troubled by the trouble in the world
Then what rise you gonna rise up from?

To do something. To make something happen
Requires the stirring up of anger

If you can't say
In blunt terms
What stirs you/wakes you/has transgressed your soul

It means you will not take that extra step
You will not hope that your demand will be heard
That your voice will be reckoned with
And that your compassionate anger
Will effect change

Not through hate
Not through bullying
But compassionate, empathetic anger
For your fellow humans on this earth

And for your ancestors, too
The ones whose stories
You may be severed from
Because you live in a society
That dismisses its elders
Or shuts them away
Because they are inconvenient
To the seeming march of progress

Whose progress is it, anyway?
Who gets the goods?
And why should it be about the goods in the first place?

Interlude

So, I spent a fair amount of my formative adolescence in Florida
In Miami
In Hialeah, to be exact
It's where I wrote my first play before I even knew I wanted to be a playwright
It's where I read 10 plays a week checked out from my local library
On a dare to myself
Because I wanted to understand what plays were

I thought if I could read as many of them as I could in and out of translation
Written across centuries
I could figure this form out
But the more I read, the more expansive, mutable and fluid the form seemed

It contained multitudes
Not one story
Not only a hero's story (as some would like us to believe)
But multitudes
The story of many
The roaring and serene cacophony of cities and towns and villages and little hamlets
Where the many were voiced and acknowledged
Through choruses of dissent and difference
Harmony and affinity

A form for a public
A form for us
Here, now, live
Ancient and bewildering, human and flawed
tragic and awakening all of our senses

As sentient beings
Compelled by the mysteries of being humans, animals and the stuff of nature

Yes, there were these things we call characters and plots and act breaks and interludes
There were things like conflict and stakes and rising action and so forth

But none of these things, none of them, are really the play
Because the play is in the audience
It's in the space between
words and no words and actions illuminated for a moment in time
It's what you carry with you, through you,
In and out of memory
after being stirred up

Offering

So, I will leave you this

Close your eyes
Imagine you are here
Imagine this room is the world
This room is the world

Imagine all that is possible
And then imagine
Taking someone's hand
Holding it for a while
Whispering in their ear
Something like love.



While still a student at UNC Charlotte, Caridad Svich received a national playwriting prize for her play, Waterfall. Since graduating in 1985, she has written more than 40 full-length plays, a variety of short works, and 15 translations. In 2012 she received an OBIE Award for Lifetime Achievement in the theatre. She is co-organizer and curator of After Orlando theatre action, in response to the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting, and Climate Change Theatre Action (2015). Caridad lives in Los Angeles and New York.

CoA+A Community is a celebration.

As the College of Arts + Architecture completes our 10th academic year, we reaffirm the value of bringing the arts and design together in common purpose.

CoA+A Community is a blueprint.

Alumni—and in a couple of cases, faculty and students—of our programs have drawn plans, narrative structures, that demonstrate how they are building upon the foundations that we help construct here.

CoA+A Community is a mixed media collage.

The book in your hands is just one dimension of this project. At **www.coaa.community** you will find videos, photo essays, and audio files that bring sensory fullness to your experience of our stories.

CoA+A Community is an ensemble—a cast, a troupe, a chorus of voices telling stories, asking questions, confronting challenges, relishing successes. Without the generosity and creativity of all the contributors, it would not exist. *Thank you.*

CoA+A Community has been produced by the collaborative team of Mikale Kwiatkowski, designer/art director; Toby Shearer, videographer; and Meg Whalen, writer/editor. Like the College of Arts + Architecture, we are beholden to the visionary leadership of Dean Ken Lambla.

**www.coaa.
community**