Calendar of events

In the Red and Brown Water
by Tarell Alvin McCraney
Directed by Henry Godinez
and Jerrell L. Henderson
October 12–29
Josephine Louis Theater

Company
by Stephen Sondheim and George Furth
Directed by Bill Brown
November 3–19
Ethel M. Barber Theater

Stellaluna
Adapted by Saskia Janse
from the book by Janell Cannon
Directed by Caitlin Lowans
November 3–19
Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theater

Vinegar Tom
by Caryl Churchill
Directed by Lee Conrads
February 2–11
Josephine Louis Theater

Twelfth Night, or What You Will
by William Shakespeare
Directed by Jeffrey Mosser
February 18–25
Ethel M. Barber Theater

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale
by Mo Willems
Directed by Kathryn Walsh
March 2–18
Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theater

Danceworks 2018: @ Hi-Speed
Artistic direction by Joel Valentin-Martinez
March 2–11
Josephine Louis Theater

Stage on Screen
Ethel M. Barber Theater

National Theatre Live
Yerma
November 8
Follies
November 30
Young Marx
March 7

Stage Russia HD
The Suicide
November 11
Uncle Vanya
January 13
Macbeth.Kino
March 10

Information and tickets at communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
COMM FEST 2018
REDISCOVER. REENGAGE. REUNITE.

Join us in Evanston on April 20 and 21
for two full days of

Workshops  Parties  Master Classes
Reunions  Lectures  and …

A gala performance featuring celebrated alumni in the entertainment industry

For tickets and more information, go to commfest.northwestern.edu and read on!

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The “Alumni achievements,” “Faculty focus,” and “In memory” sections will resume in the next issue of Dialogue.
The last four issues of Dialogue showed how the School of Communication has significantly advanced Northwestern's strategic plan, We Will. In this issue we consider how the current campaign, in combination with previous fundraising initiatives, is transforming the school. We hope you will come and see these exciting changes for yourself, so we are extending an invitation to return to Evanston, rediscover your school, and reconnect with the School of Communication community.

The most visible evidence of the school's transformation is the expansion and renovation of our facilities. In the past 15 years virtually every square foot has been rebuilt to provide a state-of-the-art environment for our work. In addition, we have wonderful, newly built facilities—the fifth floor of the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts; the Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning; the new addition to the Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts; and the 15th floor of Abbott Hall on Northwestern's Chicago campus. This Dialogue issue provides a photo tour of our upgraded and expanded facilities, but you need to take a real tour to appreciate their impact.

New degree programs and modules have brought additional faculty to the school, providing both undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities to study playwriting and screenwriting, acting on screen, choreography, theatre and screen directing, theatre design, documentary media, interactive art and game design, sound arts and industries, communication technology, digital media, the creative economy and digital production, the business of entertainment, social networks, communication and health, and strategic communication. These new faculty are having a tremendous impact through their teaching, scholarship, and creative activities. I believe you would find an encounter with them as inspiring as I do. So we want our alumni to have a chance to meet our new faculty and see them in action!

When the We Will campaign started, I promised to attend every campaign event so that I could talk with School of Communication friends and alumni and thank them for their participation. I have connected with thousands of you since the beginning of the campaign, but my reports can't substitute for direct experience. Unless you have returned to Evanston in the past 15 years (or perhaps even if you have), you probably have not had an opportunity to experience our new faculty, curriculum, or facilities for yourself.

We believe this is a perfect time to rediscover the School of Communication—so we have been working for 18 months to organize an opportunity for our alumni and friends to return to Evanston and reunite around our shared history and mission. On April 20 and 21 we will host a weekend festival that will provide opportunities for alumni and their families and friends to reconnect with one another, see what's new at the school, and interact with faculty and students. This issue provides details on the festival, which includes a gala performance by many of our most visible and exciting theatre artists. I hope to see you there!

Barbara J. O'Keefe
Dean, School of Communication
Start a dialogue: dialogue@northwestern.edu
A TALE OF TWO DEANS

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS AT NORTHWESTERN

by Dean Barbara O’Keefe

From its founding in 1878 to the unequaled reputation and global presence it enjoys today, the School of Communication has responded to new opportunities with innovation, adaptation, and growth. With this great expansion—notably in the dramatic arts—came unique leadership challenges. Overcoming them successfully has established the school’s preeminent position in the communication arts and sciences.
It was 1972, and School of Speech Dean Roy Wood had a problem. Northwestern’s theatre program had grown in size and prominence to the point where it strained the school’s available facilities, and by the early 1970s one important campus theatre space, the auditorium in Annie May Swift Hall, clearly needed to be abandoned until substantial renovations could be made.

**Building the Wirtz Center and uniting our community**

In the face of this challenge, Wood decided to raise the necessary funds to build a real performing arts center, and he was able to convince then president Robert Strotz to approve his plan. In 1974 ground was broken for the new Theatre and Interpretation Center (now the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts). By October 1980 the building was complete, finally giving Northwestern’s theatre and performance studies students safe and well-equipped spaces in which to do their work.

The fundraising campaign culminated that month in “The Way They Were,” a gala performance celebrating the opening of the new center. Wood asked faculty member Bob Banner, active as a producer of television variety shows, to help organize the gala. Wood and Banner prevailed on many successful alumni performers then working in Hollywood and on Broadway to return to Evanston and appear onstage with students. A glittering cast was assembled, with Charlton Heston and Ann-Margret serving as cohosts. Candice Bergen made a special appearance in tribute to her father, Edgar Bergen. The cast—a who’s who in entertainment—also included Claude Akins, Richard Benjamin, Paula Prentiss, Robert Conrad, Cloris Leachman, Garry Marshall, Sherrill Milnes, Patricia Neal, Charlotte Rae, Robert Reed, McLean Stevenson, and Peter Strauss. One notable number featured six Northwestern alumni then prominent on Broadway: Jerry Orbach, Tony Roberts, Penny Fuller, Carol Lawrence, Nancy Dussault, and Ron Husmann. Each had been the first person to perform a particular key role—and its signature song—in an award-winning musical. The medley included songs from such musicals as *West Side Story* and *Cabaret*.

This dazzling event was recorded and edited as a television special for broadcast; syndicated to a national network, it aired three times in prime time to a national audience. More information about the show is available at IMDb and the School of Communication’s CommFest 2018 website.

The gala not only helped raise funds for the new building, it also raised Northwestern’s profile as an important center for theatre studies. But in some ways the evening’s most important result was its impact on our School of Communication community. Producing this event required complex collaborations among faculty, students, and alumni who worked together to organize, design, perform,
Someone once said, “Our future must be the fulfilled promise of our past.”

Those words were our vision when we dreamed of a new theater back in the 1970s. In 1972 Annie May Swift Hall’s theater had been condemned, and we had raised only $30,000 since fundraising began in 1913. But we had deep traditions traceable to incredible faculty, brilliant alumni, and great goodwill from the University. And so began a campaign to not only bring a theatre and performance center to the Evanston campus but also to gather students, faculty, and alumni in ways that went far beyond fundraising. In the end we all felt the need to celebrate ourselves and our University.

On October 11, 1980, former and current faculty, committed alumni, and willing trustees and senior administrators came together for a televised gala performance to celebrate not just a state-of-the-art theatre and performance center but also our past that had made it possible to realize the dream.

Yes, our dream did come true, but its future demanded much more. Reaching new levels of excellence requires new kinds of support, and “state of the art” has a very short half-life.

I am thrilled to know that what was to us the future will now be celebrated in April 2018. Under the strong leadership of Dean Barbara O’Keefe, students, faculty, members of the administration, and alumni will gather to celebrate the fulfilled promise of 140 years of excellence.

As before, the 2018 gala will be a celebration of how our past gives birth to a future. But the joyful secret will be that the gala will carry the seeds that demand celebrations for years to come.

—Roy Wood, Dean, School of Communication (School of Speech), 1972–88

“The Way They Were” was a landmark event in the history of our school. It helped support not only our facilities but also our community.

film, and produce the show. I regularly encounter such alumni as David Lefkowitz, chair of the school’s National Advisory Council, who served as a student member of the organizing committee; Steve Stark, president of television production at MGM, who appeared as a featured performer in the gala’s opening number; and Don Weiner, a successful Hollywood producer who got his start in the business as Banner’s production assistant for the gala. Rocky Wirtz, who later made the naming gift for the Theatre and Interpretation Center, escorted his grandmother, Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz, to the show.

In short, “The Way They Were” was a landmark event in the history of our school. As I have learned more about how it helped support not only our facilities but also our community, I have become increasingly grateful to Dean Wood, Bob Banner, the illustrious alumni who performed that night, and all the students and faculty who helped make the event a success.
Uniting our community to build a new center in Chicago

When I was being recruited by Northwestern to serve as the sixth dean of its School of Speech, I had many inspiring conversations with the search committee, but one difficult subject its members raised was the school’s poor facilities. And my tours of the facilities were indeed dispiriting: the faculty and programs were shoehorned into far too little space, and the buildings were in various states of disrepair. But I was already an experienced renovator (and, predictably, a fan of HGTV), so with the assurance of then provost Larry Dumas that he would be a good partner in developing better facilities for the school, I agreed to take the job.

Since my arrival at Northwestern in July 2000, we have had no respite from construction. Just about every square inch of our dilapidated spaces has been renovated. A story later in this issue (see page 18) provides details on the many projects we have completed and photos of the results. Recently we were also given significant new space on Northwestern’s Chicago campus in Abbott Hall and on the Evanston campus in a new building adjacent to the Frances Searle Building and on the fifth floor of the beautiful new Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts.

The Wirtz Center now has the right amount and type of space to serve our undergraduates well. In the past five years, however, it has become clear that our graduate arts programs need more space than we can provide in Evanston—and, in fact, different kinds of spaces.

And this past summer we finished a significant set of renovations to the house that Dean Wood built, the Wirtz Center. We rebuilt the interior of the Josephine Louis Theater, with a new circulation plan and seating, and have just completed remodeling its lobby. The Marjorie Ward Marshall Dance Center has been updated with new carpet, paint, and furniture. We added a stack of two beautiful new black box theaters to the complex’s northwest corner. A gut renovation of the second floor on the north side allowed us to create two new seminar rooms, vocal coaching rooms, rehearsal spaces, new design studios, lockers for students, and three additional black box studios. One of the new studio spaces is equipped for teaching screen acting. On the second floor, wide hallways with comfortable benches and walls with whiteboards provide spaces for students to meet informally and work on their projects.

The Wirtz Center now has the right amount and type of space to serve our undergraduates well. In the past five years,
However, it has become clear that our graduate arts programs need more space than we can provide in Evanston—and, in fact, different kinds of spaces.

One of the biggest changes in our school over the past 15 years has been the growth of graduate programs. More and more, a school’s potential impact in academia and the creative economy is dependent on the size and quality of its graduate programs. In fact, in fields where our programs are ranked against those of competing institutions, such rankings are heavily dependent on the quality and reputation of doctoral and professional degree programs. In communication sciences and disorders, program rankings are based on the quality of professional programs in speech-language pathology and audiology. In radio/television/film, rankings are very dependent on the quality of MFA programs in film, producing, and screenwriting. In theatre, perceptions of program quality are heavily influenced by the success of MFA programs in playwriting, theatre design, and especially acting.

More and more, a school’s potential impact in academia and the creative economy is dependent on the size and quality of its graduate programs.

Accordingly, our departments have been strengthening and expanding—and in some cases adding—professional and graduate programs. We added faculty in theatre design and directing and expanded the number of students admitted to those MFA programs. We also created two new radio/television/film MFA programs: writing for the screen and stage and documentary media. A new MA program in sound arts and industries helps complete the department’s portfolio. And we expanded graduate student support across the school.

But we are still missing a key piece: an MFA program in acting. Graduate programs in the arts form an ecology where artists of different types collaborate in their education. Lacking graduate actors to work with, our writers, designers, directors, sound artists, and other specialists cannot learn from peers or do their best work. Without graduate actors working in its community, Northwestern offers an incomplete experience for its students and suffers in rankings of theatre programs.

After due consideration of the challenges this will represent, we are now resolved to develop a graduate program in acting. However, we need to find space for this ongoing expansion
of graduate education so that it will not take opportunities away from our undergraduate students.

Fortunately, the University has offered us additional space on the Chicago campus—on the second floor of Abbott Hall, just across from Navy Pier and a few blocks south of Water Tower Place. The second floor (a former cafeteria space) has high ceilings and enough room to create two black boxes and several teaching and work spaces. Located in the middle of Chicago’s vibrant cultural community, it is the ideal location for a center that will foster collaboration among our graduate programs and between those programs and the great arts institutions of Chicago.

Like Dean Wood, I will need to spearhead significant fundraising to cover the costs of renovating this space and meeting the needs of our programs and students. And inspired by Dean Wood, I am inviting our entire community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni to work together to mount an event that can energize us and help us find the resources we need to move the school forward.

On Saturday, April 21, 2018, another gala performance featuring School of Communication alumni will draw our community together in celebration of what we have already achieved and of our new plans to advance the school. The 1980 gala drew its audience primarily from the Chicago area, but we are hoping that alumni from across the country will return for an exciting reunion weekend, CommFest 2018, that will begin on Friday, April 20, and lead up to the gala. The festival will provide attendees with a chance to rediscover the school, which has changed considerably in the past 20 years. It will also feature minireunion events for all our subcommunities, including Waa-Mu, WNUR, Studio 22, STUCO, and debate.
Preceding the festival, a conference on new developments in communication sciences and disorders will be held on Thursday, April 19.

The gala on Saturday evening will feature some of the stars of the 1980 gala along with many of the successful Northwestern alumni we see in films and on television every day. Details on plans for the festival and gala are provided later in this issue (see page 16).

Like the 1980 gala, CommFest 2018 has the potential to gather all our alumni to reconnect; to help them explore how they might work toward common aims, with each other and with our programs in Evanston, Chicago, and Doha; and to create new spirit and unity within the School of Communication community. I hope you will save April 20–21 on your calendar and begin planning your participation in CommFest 2018. We believe it will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.
SAVE THE DATE!

COMM FEST 2018

REDISCOVER. REENGAGE. REUNITE.
The School of Communication community—including alumni, students, parents, friends, and fans—is invited to Evanston on April 20 and 21 to take part in the celebration of the century. Participate in a two-day program of interaction, education, and entertainment—capped by a star-studded gala featuring some of the biggest names in entertainment. Rediscover the School of Communication, reengage with one another, and reunite within a shared vision of our future.
In the nearly 140 years since the School of Communication’s founding, its leadership and innovative pedagogy have transformed how our culture hears, speaks, shares, creates, emotes, engages, includes, and inspires. This spring the school will celebrate its unequaled contribution to the communication arts and sciences—and that means the party of the century.

The Backstory
These are exciting times for the communication arts and sciences. Our industries are being transformed, not simply by technology developments but also by restructurings of global culture and economics. For people who work in communication professions and the creative economy, the world is full of challenges and opportunities, all arriving at what seems to be an accelerating pace.

Since its founding, the School of Communication has continued to evolve along with the ecology of media and communication. And now, in response to the transformative impact of digital technology and globalization, the school has rapidly expanded programs in some areas and contracted in others. Some entire fields, notably communication sciences and disorders and performance studies, have shifted dramatically to reflect emerging developments across the sciences and humanities. The goal is to keep the school where it has always been, in the forefront of knowledge and practice.

In fact, the members of the School of Communication community are working hard to keep pace with change in the environment for their work, whether as alumni in creative enterprises or communication professions, faculty, staff, or students. This community is succeeding, achieving new heights of productivity, impact, and visibility. The school and its graduates are changing the world, and in the process the world is changing the school, often in ways that are difficult to appreciate.

Dean Barbara O’Keefe is very aware of this frenetic pace of activity and the risk of being driven by events. She observes that “the age in which we live provides fewer opportunities for deep connection and reflection than we would like. It seems as though there is no longer a time and place, in this world of rapid, ubiquitous communication, to step back from the flow of information and response. We need to find spaces where we can connect with others and examine, reflect, discuss, debate, appreciate, and enjoy the work we do.”

When alumni began organizing an extraordinary gala performance to help raise funds for new programming and facilities for the performing and media arts, Dean O’Keefe suggested that the gala weekend could become a space where friends and alumni could come together with current faculty and students to rediscover the school, reengage with one another, and reunite as a community.

Faculty and student leaders were excited by Dean O’Keefe’s
suggestion of organizing a program around the gala, a festival that would celebrate the achievements of the entire School of Communication community and highlight the new territories that the school and its alumni are exploring and developing in this new century.

The Plan
The faculty and students envisioned a festival of communication ideas, arts, and industry. Two days of reunions, lectures, salons, master classes, and parties will culminate in a celebratory gala featuring entertainment’s brightest minds and talents—an occasion befitting what Dean O’Keefe has called “the most exciting creative community in higher education.”

“This process has been an almost unfathomable confluence of vision, tenacity, and talent,” says Adam Joyce, the school’s assistant dean for planning and engagement and one of the festival’s primary organizers. “The moment we articulated this idea, our alumni, students, and friends jumped at the challenge.”

That challenge was not insignificant. Northwestern’s busy Evanston campus will welcome up to 3,000 guests over the course of the weekend, in classrooms, auditoriums, and outdoor spaces. And that has required the collaboration of University leadership as well as the school’s own resources and vast alumni community.

“There are hundreds of people working together to make this happen,” adds Joyce. “It’s remarkable yet unsurprising, given our devoted community.”
The Alumni

Simply put, without alumni, this weekend would not happen. Elizabeth Clark Zoia (C89) and Amanda Silverman (C93) lead the steering committee, which oversees launch parties, recruits the gala’s featured performers, and manages the dozens of alumni volunteers. Silverman recalls recommitting to her alma mater after speaking with Dean O’Keefe at an alumni event several years ago.

“I sat with the dean and was instantly blown away by her vision for the School of Communication. After that night I was all in and happy to be involved in any way,” says Silverman, who has produced for television. “The gala and festival are a way to toast the brilliant history of this school while moving it forward. I love a creative, celebratory way to help with fundraising.”

Coordinated by Clark Zoia and Silverman, launch parties have taken place throughout 2017 to generate interest and engagement among alumni based in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, DC. “We want to offer an opportunity for our community to reconnect,” says Clark Zoia, an entrepreneur and former publicist for celebrities and high-profile film and television projects.

The festival weekend will provide many such opportunities, including affinity reunions—gatherings designated by association rather than class year. These will include Waa-Mu, Studio 22, Mee-Ow, and debate and forensics.

“Northwestern has a fantastic reunion infrastructure in place,” says Joyce. “Yet we hear that alumni are eager to see those who were in their cocurricular circles but not necessarily in their graduating class. This event will allow an intergenerational reunion experience for all in attendance, and what better way is there to collaborate and network than that?”

But it’s what lies at the end of the weekend that will be the biggest draw: the talent-packed gala performance at the brand-new lakefront Ryan Fieldhouse. Some of the most prominent School of Communication alumni in the entertainment industry will gather to star in a spectacular show that will fete the school’s wildly successful performing arts curriculum, innovative student-artists, visionary faculty assisting in the event’s design and production, and supportive friends in the industry.

An effort of this magnitude requires a seasoned professional at the helm, which is where Don Weiner (C79) has stepped in. A recent graduate when he volunteered for the school’s 1980 gala “The Way They Were,” Weiner is now a director and producer of such high-profile television events as So You Think You Can Dance and Showtime at the Apollo. He and gala coproducer Dave Harding (C78) clearly understand the intricacies of large-scale live programming.

“I got my start producing and directing for television while working on the first gala,” says Weiner. “I was just a year out of school at the time, and I owe everything to that experience. Now, so many years later, I’m delighted to be working with an incredible group of professional alumni on a show that will offer the same sort of opportunity to current students.

“I have no doubt that they’re going to look back at this event as a watershed moment in their careers,” he adds, “not to mention a really fun and memorable highlight of their college years.”
The Students and Faculty

Engaging the student population in the weekend’s planning serves multiple goals: meeting logistical needs, exemplifying the school’s professionally driven curriculum in a real-world way, and facilitating networking opportunities with alumni. Senior theatre major Kaja Burke-Williams is active on the Dean’s Advisory Council, a group of undergraduate students who meet regularly with Dean O’Keefe to discuss the school and its initiatives. “The DAC has been instrumental in getting students involved in the gala,” says Burke-Williams, who also plays a leadership role with the Waa-Mu Show. “We have two wonderful DAC members as student cochairs, Keebler Straz and Madeline Kelly, who have reached out to all of the theatre, dance, comedy, and a cappella groups on campus to help foster total student involvement. Through this I hope to create a stronger bond between School of Communication alumni and students.”

Of course, there is no leading-edge School of Communication curriculum without the innovative faculty. Resident experts have been tapped to fill the weekend with engaging talks and master classes, such as a digital-media boot camp led by assistant professor of communication studies Jeremy Birnholtz; a puppetry event featuring associate professor of theatre and Slavic languages and literatures Dassia Posner; and lectures by communication studies professor and leading collective-impact researcher Michelle Shumate and by MS in health communication program director Bruce Lambert. Festivalgoers will also be treated to music theatre workshops, an Oxford-style debate, theatrical design and lighting demonstrations, art installation partnerships with the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, and more.

Additionally, CSD Connect—an annual conference for alumni and industry that is facilitated by the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders—will take place the day before the weekend festivities.

“We are committed to building an ecosystem of lifetime learning and networking for our students and alumni,” says department chair Sumitrajit Dhar. “This year our conference will be special because we will be hosting it the day before CommFest begins. We hope our alumni will come and participate not only in the conference but in the entire festival to see how our department and school are continuing to touch and change people’s lives.”

And this is exactly what CommFest intends to achieve.
April 20 and 21 will be packed with events and learning opportunities designed to showcase every facet of the School of Communication. The following is just the beginning of what you will experience.

**Friday, April 20**

**Morning**  All-day reception and hospitality; departmental open houses and campus tours, continuing for the remainder of the day. The Block Museum opens a curated festival of student films and a joint exhibit with the sound arts and industries program. The Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning will offer tours featuring communicative health activities, including free hearing screenings, a ViSoR sound experience, and classes on dysphagia, child speech-language, and learning disabilities.

**Midday**  Impact presentations and faculty-driven programming. Expect such topic-driven presentations as a preview of the 2018 Waa-Mu Show, a demonstration of puppetry and performance, an introduction to virtual reality technologies, and panel discussions on computational literacy and the next frontier of digital media. Also occurring midday are a keynote address, VIP and donor lunches, and informal gatherings.

**Evening**  All guests are invited to a major reunion party. Grab some food and drink before heading off to one of the on-campus reunion parties organized by student group affiliation—Waa-Mu, debate, Studio 22, etc.
Saturday, April 21

**Morning**  All-day reception and hospitality; theatrical productions and workshops geared toward children and families; ongoing film festival, Block Museum exhibit, and clinic open house; faculty and student showcases.

**Midday**  Donor lunches and a recognition event; impact presentations and faculty-driven programming. Guests are invited to such events as an Oxford-style debate moderated by and featuring prominent alumni in the legal profession; a panel discussion on “fake news” with alumni, faculty, and industry experts in law, journalism, and academia; presentations on media exposure in childhood and on the changing landscape of distribution in Hollywood; an interactive presentation on improving healthcare outcomes through better communication; and a demonstration and discussion of human-computer interaction. Later in the afternoon one of the school’s alumni celebrities hosts an a cappella group event.

**Evening**  Gala performance featuring celebrated alumni in the entertainment industry in the brand-new Ryan Fieldhouse, along with VIP pre- and postshow receptions and parties and a postshow reception for all guests. Tickets for the gala can be purchased at commfest.northwestern.edu.

Also expect acting workshops, interactive art installations, dance pieces, storytelling demonstrations, dynamic lectures on sound and music’s impact on the brain, a panel discussion on Donald Trump and the media, curated exhibits spotlighting entertainment arts alumni and costume and set design, and much more.

Event details and times subject to change. For up-to-date registration information, visit commfest.northwestern.edu.
The School of Communication has grown significantly since its founding in 1878, and nowhere is that more apparent than in its facilities. Today the school commands a large campus footprint, boasting extraordinary new buildings, dramatically renovated interiors, and leading-edge technologies that foster innovative work by our student community. Take a look at how far we’ve come.

**Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts**

A striking, shimmering jewel on the Evanston lakefront, the two-year-old Ryan Center enabled the Bienen School of Music and the School of Communication to dramatically expand and improve their capabilities for teaching, research, and growth in their respective fields. The School of Communication occupies the five-story building’s top floor, which houses the Office of the Dean, the Departments of Theatre and Performance Studies, and the Dance Program. The move to south campus from Frances Searle not only gave faculty and staff stunning new lake views; it also opened up the second floor of the Wirtz Center so that faculty offices there could be converted to expanded class, rehearsal, and performance spaces.
Northwestern’s Chicago campus has become the School of Communication’s next frontier. Abbott Hall, on the city’s famous Lake Shore Drive, is home to the Center for Communication and Health and its graduate program in health communication. On the building’s 15th floor, professors and graduate students pursue research, interdisciplinary collaborations with the nearby Feinberg School of Medicine and Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and networking opportunities to enhance their professional success.

The mission of the center and its program is to improve health outcomes through innovations in safety, transparency, and communication. The space is configured to foster classroom learning as well as inter- and intra-program partnerships, with bright, sleekly designed collaboration stations, common areas, seminar and conference rooms, and offices.

Annie May Swift Hall

This regal, rust-colored Venetian-style structure enjoyed an auspicious beginning. Funded by a founding gift from Chicago meatpacker Gustavus Swift and dedicated in 1895, it was the then School of Oratory’s first building, housing all of Dean Robert Cumnock’s speech activities in an enviable lakefront setting. But subsequent years were unkind to Annie May, and the terra-cotta exterior and wood-paneled interior fell into disrepair. Two fires damaged the mortar, bringing in moisture, vermin, and other unwelcome guests. A 2006 gut remodeling restored long-lost details rediscovered in the original plans, preserving the building’s historic charm—ornate wooden balustrades, lantern-style light fixtures, stone fireplaces—while adding such modern amenities as updated audiovisual equipment, new electrical wiring, larger bathroom facilities, a black box space, and the Peggy Dow Helmerich Auditorium. No longer on the water’s edge thanks to the quarter-mile of lakefill to its east, Annie May Swift Hall now houses the Department of Radio/Television/Film.

Abbott Hall, 15th Floor
The vast Wirtz Center, dedicated in 1980 as the Theatre and Interpretation Center, is the beating heart of the school’s dramatic arts curricula. Throughout its seasons—bustling with mainstage shows, family programming, student-run productions, MFA lab series, American Music Theatre Project collaborations, and National Theatre Live screenings—undergraduate and graduate students advance their work in facilities superior to those of most professional theaters. Its venues include the 439-seat Ethel M. Barber Theater, the 288-seat Josephine Louis Theater, the 100-seat Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theater, and the 100-seat Mussetter-Struble Theater. Connecting to the Wirtz Center is the Marjorie Ward Marshall Dance Center, with its Cellar and Ballroom dance spaces. Additionally, the Wirtz Center includes a 7,800-square-foot scene and paint shop, a 3,600-square-foot prop shop, a 2,500-square-foot costume shop, and a lighting shop. An addition and renovation completed in June have provided computer labs, wet and dry design rooms, dedicated music theatre rehearsal spaces, and a seminar space as well as two 100-seat black box spaces, including one with 24-foot ceilings and a structural grid for aerial performance work, plus three smaller black box spaces for classes and rehearsals. The Louis Theater was made more accessible in 2015 through a reduced rake and reconfigured seating, and its new lobby opened for the 2017–18 season.
Upon its completion in 1991, Louis Hall served the broadcast and production functions of both the School of Communication and the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications. Now considered a headquarters for student filmmakers, it serves as the hub for hands-on, production-driven learning in the radio/television/film major. In addition to classrooms, computer labs for post-production work, “The Cage” for storage and distribution of student filmmaking equipment, and radio station WNUR (previously housed in Annie May Swift Hall), the building today includes a pristine, professionally appointed 1,700-square-foot soundstage and studio. Completed in 2016, the facility allows school media makers to score films, produce sound effects, record voice-overs, and innovate audio storytelling. Features include a state-of-the-art hybrid digital console and 5.1 audio mixing system in the control room, a 6,500-lumen HD laser projector for film screenings, the Pro Tools HDX audio editing system, a custom-built Foley pit, and an isolation recording booth. More recent updates include new LED lights in the cyclorama studio, an expanded “Cage” space, a renovated auditorium, and a modernized facade.

The “winningest” team in intercollegiate debate history now has a home befitting its storied legacy. In previous years the Northwestern Debate Society’s many latenight research and practice sessions had left the Georgian brick home on Chicago Avenue looking more like a frat house than a debate sanctuary. Summer 2017 updates included new carpeting throughout the building, a fresh coat of paint, and an additional trophy case to house a collection that was bursting at the seams—and will continue to grow.
In NUCASLL’s leading-edge facility, dedicated in early 2015, clinicians work with patients across the lifespan to diagnose and treat autism spectrum disorder, aphasia, dysphagia, tinnitus, and other disorders. Formerly housed in the Frances Searle Building, the clinicians, researchers, and teachers of the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders now enjoy double their previous workspace. Additionally, the facility features the technologically advanced Virtual Sound Room (ViSoR) to test and calibrate hearing devices; the Lambert Simulation Lab, outfitted with lifelike computer-ized mannequins for students practicing diagnosis and treatment; and a healthy-aging initiative offering classes on hearing to older adults.
Frances Searle Building

This brutalist building on the north side of campus is a classic example of form following function. Dedicated in 1972 as the new home of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, it was designed with geometric modules to accommodate the various clinics and research laboratories, as well as anechoic and reverberation chambers in the basement for audiology work. The Department of Communication Studies, which was divided across multiple campus buildings, eventually made Frances Searle its home base. From 2001 to 2015, the building housed the Office of the Dean. A 2001 renovation created a large focal-point staircase; further renovations in 2017 added faculty offices, research labs, spaces for professional programs, collaboration areas, and updated hallways. The building continues to house some clinical research facilities.

1815 Chicago Avenue

Next to Hardy House, this building until recently housed a handful of communication studies faculty in the fields of rhetoric, media, and public culture. Soon, though, the space will be repurposed as the headquarters for the school’s PhD programs.
Jeremy Birnholtz
An associate professor of communication studies, Birnholtz (C96) focuses his research on human-computer interaction, including such issues as attention, information sharing, and collaboration through technology. He leads the innovative undergraduate digital media module, which explores the design, use, and implications of digital technologies and communication through classroom and practical learning. After multiple stints at Silicon Valley’s Facebook campus as a visiting professor, he returns to Northwestern armed with industry insights for his students. For CommFest, Birnholtz will coordinate students and faculty colleagues to create interactive programming related to human-computer interaction.

Aymar Jean Christian
This has been a big year for Christian, an assistant professor of communication studies. He completed a book manuscript, was published in prestigious academic journals, became a faculty fellow of the Peabody Media Center, was tapped repeatedly as a media expert by news outlets, and coordinated programming in collaboration with the Chicago Cultural Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art. What’s more, the web-TV platform he created as a research project developed Brown Girls, nominated for an Emmy Award in the outstanding short-form comedy or drama category, and HBO purchased the show’s development rights. Christian’s tireless efforts using nontraditional channels to give voice to those underrepresented in mainstream television and film have proven wildly successful—and have been widely embraced. At CommFest he will share insights from his groundbreaking research in television distribution models and audiences.

Rives Collins
To hear Collins spin a yarn is to traverse time and place in childlike wonder. It’s this talent that has positioned the professor of theatre as one of the country’s foremost experts on the art of storytelling; last summer he received the National Storytelling Conference’s Oracle Award for Distinguished National Service and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education's Johnny Saldaña Outstanding Professor of Theatre Education Award. With guitar in hand and enthusiasm in abundance, he coaxes genuine, empathetic performances from his students, who largely specialize in theatre for young audiences. Collins will share his stories and techniques with CommFest audiences, in addition to coordinating family theatre programming for children in attendance.

Cindy Gold
From her work on network television to her award-nominated onstage turns, Gold has proven herself a dexterous, multifaceted actor. Here at Northwestern she is a beloved professor of theatre. Gold is a favorite coach and mentor to many of the school’s undergraduates—and, as of fall 2016, to US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to whom she ceded her Kennedy Center role in Washington National Opera’s The Daughter of the Regiment for opening night. “I have been teaching acting at Northwestern for more than 20 years, but my new module in acting for the screen and my interest in the business side of artistic endeavors are what I’d like to share with our alumni and friends,” Gold says of her CommFest presentation. “I want them to be able to see what we are now teaching our students and how we are using these fantastic new spaces to support our pedagogical mission.”
recent film, Sundance and Cannes; his most recent at such illustrious festivals as Kyle Henry
in their chosen fields.”

students become future leaders which
will definitely help our current
disciplines to strengthen our

He adds, “It’s so important to

involvement with both student

and faculty are creating
today,” says Henry. “In particular,
as the documentary media MFA’s
interim director, I’m really proud
today.”

as Lincoln Center’s New
Directors/New Films, Locarno,
Doclisboa, and San Sebastián.”

He adds, “It’s so important for

students to be able to

connect with alumni across
disciplines to strengthen our

sense of community, which

will definitely help our current
students become future leaders
in their chosen fields.”

E. Patrick Johnson

The Carlos Montezuma Pro-
fessor of Performance Studies
and African American Studies
and founder and director of
Northwestern’s Black Arts
Initiative, Johnson is a prolific
author, speaker, scholar, and
artist with expertise in the
areas of race, gender, sexuality,
and performance. Johnson’s
most recent book is No Tea, No
Shade: New Writings in Black
Queer Studies (2016). This fall
he is a visiting scholar with the
Scholars Program for Culture
and Communication at the
University of Pennsylvania’s
Annenberg School of Commu-
nication. In October the Black
Arts Initiative merged its bien-
nial gathering with the School
of Communication’s annual
Lambert Conference. The event
ran October 9–14 and included
a conversation with playwright
and Moonlight coscreenwriter
Tarell McCraney, a viewing of
the Wirtz Center production of
McCraney’s 2010 play In the Red
and Brown Water, panel discus-
sions, readings, conversations,
performances by PhD students,
and an undergraduate poetry
slam. Johnson’s CommFest con-
tribution will include activities
relating to his multiple aca-
demic and research disciplines.

Nina Kraus

A preeminent expert on the
effects of sound and music on
the brain, Kraus is the Hugh
Knowles Chair in Audiology and
professor of neurobiology and
otolaryngology. A sought-after
speaker the world over, she is fre-
quently quoted in major media
outlets, and her recent collabora-
tion with the National Institutes
of Health and the Kennedy
Center saw her delivering a lec-
ture onstage alongside soprano
Renée Fleming. Kraus’s notable
recent research focuses on con-
cussions, and she has partnered
with Northwestern Athletics to
study the injury’s effects on the
brain in all levels of severity. Her
work with patients across the
lifespan renders her uniquely
equipped to speak on a number
of fascinating topics.

Dassia Posner

To learn from Posner is to
understand humanity via the
material world. Through the
medium of puppetry, her stu-
dents learn how to breathe life
into an inanimate object, give
it purpose, and then watch it
expire. This beautiful cycle of an
animated theatrical life is exquis-
itably rendered through her dra-
maturgy, passion, and extensive
research. Posner is an associate
professor of theatre and of Slavic
languages and literatures and a
leading historian specializing in
Russian avant-garde theatre and
puppetry history and perfor-
mance. She will host a puppetry
event where festivalgoers can
participate in her transformative
pedagogical style.
Todd Rosenthal, Marcus Doshi, and Andrew Boyce

Among the accomplishments of this faculty trio are Tony Awards, international acclaim, and some of the most striking onstage visuals in the theatrical world. The three innovative teachers of theatre undergraduates and MFA stage design students will lend their expertise to CommFest’s gala performance. Working closely with the alumni production team, Rosenthal, Doshi, and Boyce will design, light, and outfit the stage for the event. The gala’s location, the Ryan Fieldhouse, will offer the designers a great deal of creative freedom. Students will work alongside these faculty in designing the show, both as an extension of their classroom work and as a high-profile “gig” to help kick-start their careers.

Ozge Samanci
Prolific and gifted in both the digital arts and the more traditional pen-and-paint variety, assistant professor of radio/television/film Samanci commands broad appeal across the visual spectrum. Her interactive art installations explore humanity’s impact on the natural world and—with her latest creation—how our brain waves can control simulated ocean and atmospheric conditions. Samanci is working on her second graphic novel, which, like the first, touches on finding a sense of place and purpose in a chaotic world. In addition to bringing her brain-waves installation to CommFest, she will facilitate a demonstration of virtual reality technologies, an integral part of the media arts and game design module curriculum that she coordinates.

Michelle Shumate
How can a single organization, such as a nonprofit, company, or government agency, make an effective impact on society? Often, it’s by forming a network with 25, 50, or 300 other organizations to move the needle in a community. One of the most popular of these network types is described as collective impact—the foremost research area of Michelle Shumate, professor of communication studies. Shumate herself has made a big impact in this field, having received a prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER Award and a Beckman Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois. Also the faculty director of the MS in communication program, Shumate will share what makes collective impact so effective.

JP Sniadecki
The School of Communication’s most recent Guggenheim fellow, Sniadecki is an assistant professor of radio/television/film and a prolific documentary filmmaker. His most recent work, *El Mar La Mar*, examines border crossings and migration across the American Southwest’s sparse, unforgiving Sonoran Desert. The film’s original style and surprising narrative voice have helped it secure screenings in top film festivals and high-profile wins. Humanity, movement, and sense of place are at the heart of his films, many of which were shot outside the United States. He has worked, studied, and traveled extensively in China, where he pursued research last summer. For CommFest, Sniadecki will offer an original take on filmmaking and anthropology.

Ellen Wartella
The Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor of Communication and the chair of the Department of Communication Studies, Wartella is a world-renowned expert on media exposure in children and adolescents. She directs the Center on Media and Human Development, which researches such topics as food marketing to youth, media use by teachers in the classroom, teaching reproductive health effectively through educational video shorts, and engaging African American youth through digital music programs. Wartella’s CommFest presentation will use research-backed analysis to address the value of television, tablets, and advertising targeted to children and how society is debating these issues.
Northwestern Athletics
The CommFest 2018 gala celebration has presented the school with a unique challenge: finding a venue large enough to support a complex performance event and the thousands of people who will come to see it. While the University's existing performance facilities are among the nation's best, this gala demanded something different—and much larger.

Thanks to our partners in Athletics, the school was able to secure the soon-to-be-completed Ryan Fieldhouse for the event. Though the building's primary purpose will be to support athletic activities, its 3,400-person capacity, 38-foot vaulted ceilings, sound and lighting pickups, and blank-slate layout render it the perfect spot for a live extravaganza.

“Ryan Fieldhouse and Wilson Field will offer the largest indoor space on campus and will be an unparalleled gathering place for the Northwestern community,” says Jim Phillips, vice president for athletics and recreation. “We're thrilled for the opportunity to partner with the School of Communication and host the CommFest gala in an incomparable location overlooking Lake Michigan.”

Those lakefront views and the fieldhouse's convenient location near the North Campus Parking Structure will provide additional benefits. The generous assistance and support of Northwestern Athletics will not only make this gala possible, they will ensure its success.

The fieldhouse construction is expected to be completed in December 2017.

Alumni Relations and Development
An event of this scale must include the alumni community—not just as participants but also as volunteers. Our partners in the Office of Alumni Relations and Development have been invaluable in coordinating our various alumni groups, be they the celebrity entertainers participating in the gala, the dedicated industry experts who make up the steering committee, or the recent graduates who are putting together the “affinity” reunions for the Waa-Mu Show, Studio 22, debate, and more.

Additionally, ARD's expertise in large-scale event planning has shaped the way we approach the festival. They are experts in keeping our alumni community happy, safe, and entertained, and we value their guidance.

A portion of all ticket proceeds will go toward We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern.

Global Marketing and Communications
Thanks to the talented team of writers, editors, designers, marketers, publicists, and media experts in Northwestern's Office of Global Marketing and Communications, news of CommFest 2018 will travel far and wide. They are also the reason you're reading about this now.

Our partners in Global Marketing and Communications manage the editing, design, and distribution of a broad range of University publications, including Dialogue. They have extended their assistance to include branding and marketing materials for CommFest, publicity for the event, and media relations during and after the weekend. Their help has been crucial not only to CommFest's successful rollout but also to all our strategic publications.

Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art
Each school and unit within the University has been supportive of the efforts to make this dream a reality. And the Block Museum has been a standout partner.

The Block's staff has offered the use of its innovative facility for the entire weekend for screening student films in its auditorium. In addition, the museum has extended the run of an exhibit showcasing our interdisciplinary collaborations. The installation Point the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt involves a partnership between the Block and the Department of Radio/Television/Film to offer the fall-quarter class Topics in Sound: Museum Sound Design for students in the MA program in sound arts and industries. Each student in the class, taught by lecturer Stephan Moore, will create a fully realized sound design for the exhibition; curators will then choose a winning proposal for use at the installation, which will run January 13 through April 22.

University Libraries
Its seemingly endless resources, paired with its informed, helpful staff, have made University Libraries, and University Archives in particular, an especially productive partner. Take, for instance, 1980’s “The Way They Were” gala celebration. So many of the photos, reviews, alumni biographies, and production details you are reading about in this magazine were made readily available to us from the lower level of Deering Library. When we had a question, the Archives staff knew how to answer it. Additionally, the library staff has offered to collaborate on CommFest programming, which may result in an exhibition about alumni contributions to the performing arts. “We are very eager to assist,” says dean of libraries Sarah Pritchard, “and we think it is a great collaborative opportunity, one that would nicely benefit from our unique materials.”
“My grandmother Virginia loved the School of Communication and the University. In a small way, it’s a great honor that her name will be associated with this great institution.”

—Rocky Wirtz

Seated in the front row of Northwestern's 1980 gala “The Way They Were,” next to his beloved grandmother, was a young William Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz, a recent graduate of the School of Communication.

He was in attendance to witness the school's top-billed alumni celebrate the institution that launched their careers and give back to it in a manner that would profoundly help generations to come: by supporting the Theatre and Interpretation Center, the state-of-the-art complex that is the nucleus of the school's performance curriculum.

What Wirtz may not have realized at the time was that he and his wife, Marilyn, would become a driving force in advancing the school’s dramatic arts programming and facilities. Their support has since underwritten expansive renovations to the complex that now bears the name of his grandmother, Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz; funded the Wirtz Visiting Artist program for student and faculty enrichment; and laid the groundwork for a future downtown Chicago media arts center that will house a planned MFA program in acting.

“Our theatre graduates from the School of Communication have shined a spotlight on the overall excellence of Northwestern in a way that nothing else has,” said University President Morton Schapiro during the Wirtz Center dedication ceremony in June. “Thanks to the Wirtzes, we now have a performance center that is befitting the quality of the work that takes place in this school, and I think that the sky is the limit.”

“My grandmother Virginia loved the School of Communication and the University,” says Wirtz. “In a small way, it’s a great honor that her name will be associated with this great institution.”

Rocky Wirtz is the president of Wirtz Corporation, one of the largest family-owned businesses in the United States; chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks, a team that has won three Stanley Cup championships under his direction; cochairman of Breakthru Beverage Group, a leading national distributor of the world’s top luxury and premium wine, spirits, and beer brands; and cochairman of Chicago’s United Center. He oversees commercial and residential real estate companies as well as an insurance agency and banks in Illinois and Florida. A University trustee, he is also a valued member of the School of Communication’s National Advisory Council.

Rocky and Marilyn Wirtz’s support of the school has been instrumental in its emergence as a powerhouse in the dramatic arts, guaranteeing tremendous professionally driven opportunities for generations of students to come.
We are delighted to announce that Stephen Colbert (C86, H11) will join us in Evanston on April 21 as the host of CommFest’s gala performance. Come to campus to see him—and many more alumni stars of stage and screen—in the show of a lifetime.

For tickets and more information, go to commfest.northwestern.edu