Calendar of events

Agamemnon
by Aeschylus
Adapted by Simon Scardifield
DIRECTED BY SONNY DAS
January 27–February 5
Josephine Louis Theater

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane
by Kate DiCamillo
Adapted by Dwwayne Hartford
Presented by Imagine U
DIRECTED BY RIVES COLLINS
February 3–12
Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theater

Urinetown: The Musical
Music and lyrics by Mark Hollmann
Book and lyrics by Greg Kotis
DIRECTED BY SCOTT WEINSTEIN
February 10–26
Ethel M. Barber Theater

Danceworks 2017: Current Rhythms
ARTISTIC DIRECTION by
JOEL VALENTIN-MARTINEZ
February 24–March 5
Josephine Louis Theater

Fuente Ovejuna
by Lope de Vega
DIRECTED BY SUSAN E. BOWEN
April 21–30
Ethel M. Barber Theater

Waa-Mu 2017: Beyond Belief
DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL
April 28–May 7
Cahn Auditorium

Stick Fly
by Lydia Diamond
DIRECTED BY ILESA DUNCAN
May 12–21
Josephine Louis Theater

Stage on Screen:
National Theatre Live’s
Encore Series
Josephine Louis Theater

No Man’s Land
February 28

Saint Joan
March 29

Hedda Gabler
March 30

Amadeus
May 16

Visit www.communication
.northwestern.edu/wirtz for
more information and tickets.

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In September some 100 alumni from one of the most esteemed, winningest teams in University history returned to campus for an auspicious celebration. Former and current members of the Northwestern Debate Society gathered for a weekend of events surrounding the inaugural Debate Hall of Achievement induction ceremony—and to fete the NDS’s unprecedented 15 National Debate Tournament wins, the most recent of which was in 2015. At times both raucous and reverent, the weekend included a cocktail reception, the Hall of Achievement dinner, and a tailgate party and football game at Ryan Field with University president Morton Schapiro, where the morning’s persistent rain gave way to a brilliant fall day. But the ceremony at the James L. Allen Center honoring 20 of NDS’s most accomplished debaters was the big draw. “This is something I’ve wanted to see happen for a long time,” said School of Communication dean Barbara O’Keefe at the dinner. “Debate has long been a jewel in the crown of Northwestern.”

On the cover: Communication studies faculty NSF CAREER Award winners (from left on back cover)
Brent Hecht, Michelle Shumate, Leslie DeChurch, Madhu Reddy, Darren Gergle, and Anne Marie Piper
In the past decade Northwestern has emerged as a national leader in education for design and entrepreneurship. The Segal Design Institute, Design for America, and the Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and its NUvention curriculum have helped students take innovative designs the next step toward practical realization. The Garage, the University’s new maker space, is providing students with the tools and collaborators they need to pursue their dreams.

The School of Communication has been centrally involved in all these initiatives with faculty such as Elizabeth Gerber and Darren Gergle, who lead two key programs. The six NSF CAREER Award–winning faculty we profile on page 2 are contributing to Northwestern’s growing visibility in human-centered design. The NUvention curriculum benefits our undergraduates and students in our new master of science program in leadership for creative enterprises.

To these the School of Communication has added new opportunities for engagement with its disciplines and industries. For example,

- Faculty in communication studies and communication sciences and disorders are creating innovative curricula that apply communication science to improve healthcare outcomes. New initiatives include a master of science program in health communication, a related undergraduate module, and a doctorate in speech-language pathology. These programs emphasize—and develop—leadership and entrepreneurship.
- Faculty in communication studies and radio/television/film have partnered to build the first-of-its-kind cross-platform master of science program in leadership for creative enterprises, which helps students master the challenges of building projects and managing teams in creative work. This program and our theatre management module are helping launch a new generation of creative leaders, with career development support provided by our Office of External Programs, Internships, and Career Services (EPICS).
- Faculty from every department in the school have partnered with faculty in music, engineering, and liberal arts to build a new master of arts program in sound arts and industries that helps students create new art and media. Their maker space, the SoundTank, is already supporting many exciting new projects.
- We now have undergraduate modules in specializations ranging from playwriting to interactive entertainment, MFA programs in writing for screen and stage and documentary media, and two new-musical incubator programs, the American Music Theatre Project and the Waa-Mu Show. These have made Northwestern an international center for dramatic writing.

Of course, this rapid progress has only been possible because of the engagement of our alumni, who have helped to build our modules, our new professional programs, and the EPICS office. They have provided advice, internships, and other resources to help students bridge the gap from classroom to practice. This issue of Dialogue celebrates the productive collaborations we are seeing among faculty, students, and alumni as new work and solutions are advanced. As you will see, we are a powerful community: together we are creating innovation everywhere.

Barbara J. O’Keefe
Dean, School of Communication
Start a dialogue: dialogue@northwestern.edu
In an unprecedented demonstration of faculty achievement and school innovation, the Department of Communication Studies now boasts six recipients of the National Science Foundation’s Faculty Early Career Development (or CAREER) Award.

For Jane Rankin, the School of Communication’s associate dean of research, the awards exemplify the department’s depth of excellence. “The six NSF CAREER Award winners on the communication studies faculty bring a remarkable level of achievement to communication research,” says Rankin. “There are no other communication studies departments that have even close to our number of CAREER winners, another attribute that elevates communication studies here at Northwestern over departments elsewhere that might be considered peers.”

The NSF’s most prestigious award recognizes junior faculty for outstanding research and classroom teaching, supporting those most likely to build a lifetime of leadership in integrating the two areas. The department’s six winners cover a broad range of studies, from how we use computers to communicate to how multigroup teams collaborate.

Shumate studies how networks that include nonprofit organizations can be rewired to maximize their social impact. She received the award six years ago.

“At the time I received my award, only two other people in the field of communication had ever received the NSF CAREER...
Award,” says Shumate, who completed her grant-based research last year. “To have this many faculty in one place, all having a CAREER grant, it’s like a unicorn. It never happens. Some, like me, were recruited here after we won the award, but others won it while they were at Northwestern. We are the only place in the country with this many communication CAREER winners.”

The award is one of the few available to nontenured faculty, notes Shumate, which can make a major difference in terms of planning research that can lead to tenure. “This is a very important award for junior faculty, and in most cases it’s the first major grant we get,” she says. “The award gives you a real chance to set out a research agenda longer term. You can begin to see what a five-year plan looks like, and have the backing to do it.”

Reddy agrees. “For me, this is one of the most meaningful awards I could get, because it’s a recognition of not just my research potential but also the teaching side,” says Reddy, who studies how computerized medical records and other technologies affect collaboration among healthcare professionals. “It’s about the scholar and the teacher, and my abilities in both areas.”

Gergle, too, won his CAREER Award at Northwestern; he studies technology and how it can help us communicate more effectively.

“The CAREER Award was a great source of support and really helped to shape my research program early on,” he says. “The fact that the award spans five years allows you to plan a more ambitious set of research activities. For example, knowing that we had longer-term support allowed us to spend the first two years of the project developing the nuts and bolts of the technical infrastructure for a new real-time, two-person eye-tracking methodology. We could then use the latter years of support to develop new metrics and apply the technique to the study of human coordination and collaboration in naturalistic settings. This would not have been possible without the award.”

Hecht, who joined the school’s faculty this past fall, adds this award to those he’s won for research at top-tier publication venues in human-computer interaction and geography. His CAREER proposal focused on the issue of algorithmic bias, particularly algorithms with better performance for people of some demographics than for others. His research will improve understanding of how to design algorithms that are both effective and equitable, rather than just the former.

DeChurch also started at Northwestern this fall. Her CAREER Award helped her continue groundbreaking research—including four large-scale projects with NASA—on how multicultural “teams of teams” work together to collaborate seamlessly. The NSF has steadily funded her research on teamwork and leadership for the past eight years.

—Cara Lockwood

“There are no other communication studies departments that have even close to our number of CAREER winners.”

—Jane Rankin
THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

HOW NORTHWESTERN INNOVATORS HAVE SHAPED A THEATRICAL MOVEMENT

BY ANNA KELLER
No force has been more influential in the emergence of Chicago as a theatrical powerhouse than Northwestern University. Alumni, faculty, and students have imagined, collaborated, and reinvented their way into helping create the most vibrant performance scene in the world. Northwestern’s innovative minds have put the Second City on top—and are inspiring the stage’s next generation of leaders.

It’s a kinship built on both proximity and a shared vision. Northwestern’s theatrical programs and Chicago’s cutting-edge theatre community champion risk taking, rule breaking, and leading the charge with new artists and performance styles.

“Chicago theatre bears the imprint, perhaps the paw prints, of Wildcat alumni and faculty. All five of Chicago’s Tony Award–winning regional theatres—more than any other American city—were either founded or significantly shaped by Northwestern students and faculty,” says theatre department chair Harvey Young, author of *Black Theater Is Black Life: An Oral History of Chicago Theater*. “Among them, Lookingglass Theatre Company and Chicago Shakespeare Theater were founded by alumni. Wildcats, first an alumna and now a faculty member, have led Steppenwolf Theatre for the past 22 years. And current Northwestern faculty members serve in the artistic leadership of Goodman Theatre.”

Of the dozens of Chicago-area theaters with Northwestern ties, these four are among the city’s most prominent cultural institutions.

### Lookingglass Theatre Company

The mission behind Lookingglass was dreamed up right on Northwestern’s Evanston campus, and the ties between the University and the company remain strong.

As a Northwestern student in the mid-1980s, David Schwimmer decided to apply a leftover $500 from his bar mitzvah toward an experimental physical theatre production of Andre Gregory’s version of *Alice in Wonderland*. At Schwimmer’s urging, he and six other School of Communication students came together for more than four months to produce the show on campus. The production was such a hit that the group was invited to Scotland to perform it at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in the summer of 1987.

It was while in Edinburgh, recalls founding member David Catlin (now also a lecturer in the school’s theatre department), that “we decided we wanted to continue working in this kind of process- and story-centered, collaborative, physical, and transformative style of theatre making.” And at the time, as it turned out, not many Chicago-area theaters were doing this kind of physical work—an approach that brought jaw-dropping, cinematic qualities to the stage.
The Alice in Wonderland production led directly to the founding of Lookingglass Theatre Company when a collection of Northwestern undergraduates and recent graduates held the troupe’s first official meeting in February 1988, right on campus. Catlin says the company’s Northwestern heritage continues to be heavily influential. “Our aesthetic was very much informed by our experiences at Northwestern,” he says. “The acting program acknowledges the importance of collaboration and story, all in a liberal arts context.”

Many of Lookingglass’s productions continue to include Northwestern alumni and students in various roles, from onstage to backstage to administrative staff and community and education programs. The theatre’s key principles sprang directly from the Northwestern curriculum its founders experienced as students: collaboration, the centrality of story, and the importance of a liberal arts lens.

Goodman Theatre

The Goodman has long boasted strong ties to Northwestern, and its celebrated roster of artists currently includes Manilow Resident Director Mary Zimmerman of the performance studies faculty as well as four theatre faculty members: artistic associate Rebecca Gilman, resident artistic associate Henry Godinez (left), and creative partners Ana Kuzmanic and Todd Rosenthal.

Godinez says he strives to connect the two environments whenever possible. “I like to engage my students any time I can in my work at Goodman,” says Godinez. “One of the plays I directed on campus we then produced at Goodman the following year, and the two students who played the leads at Northwestern—and were just graduating—then understudied the leads downtown.”

Godinez also cofounded Teatro Vista (with Edward Torres) in 1990 as a way of creating opportunities for Latino artists as well as to explore the emerging work of Latino writers. Teatro Vista has grown to become Chicago’s preeminent Equity Latino theatre company.

It’s this passion for Latino arts—along with his Northwestern and Goodman ties—that has inspired Godinez to search for opportunities to link all three elements. “I’m looking to connect the city of Chicago and Goodman Theatre to extraordinary theatre makers from Latin America to create new work, with Northwestern University at the center of it all as a potential incubator and crossroads,” says Godinez. “The new horizon of opportunity for me lies in international collaborations and the development of new work.”

The Goodman’s other notable Northwestern connections include alumnus Michael Greif, who recently directed the company’s premiere of the musical War Paint—which starred two Tony Award–winning actresses and opens on Broadway this spring. The Goodman has produced plays by Rebecca Gilman and Northwestern colleague Thomas Bradshaw, and for several years lecturer Barbara Butts has served as the Goodman’s production stage manager.

“The wonderful thing about a great research university like Northwestern in a great theatre city like Chicago,” says Godinez, “is the possibility of a connection to the professional world that benefits students, faculty, and the field alike.”

Chicago Shakespeare Theater

Chicago Shakespeare’s roots are tied solidly to the University, as founder Barbara Gaines is a Northwestern graduate. The company was born when Gaines suffered a knee injury and was looking for ways to both occupy her time and help pay some bills.

“I gathered my theatre friends and colleagues together to teach classes in Shakespeare,” she recalls. “We decided to stage
our first production and soon found the perfect spot: the rooftop deck of the Red Lion Pub in Lincoln Park. John Cordwell, the pub’s owner, said, ‘You can’t do the Battle of Agincourt on my rooftop,’ but I persisted and he allowed it.” The group opened Shakespeare’s Henry V on August 3, 1986, and with that performance, Chicago Shakespeare was born.

Since its inception CST has grown exponentially, helping spread Shakespeare throughout the city. The company’s education programs now extend to more than 40,000 students and teachers each year, introducing them to the joy of Shakespeare. CST also presents free Shakespeare performances in neighborhood parks across the city.

“I’m proud of the range of work we have taken on—musicals, fairy tales, international productions, new works—and the audiences who have joined us along this journey,” says Gaines. “And now, in our 30th season, we look to the future with the building of our third theater—the Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, an innovative new space that will open the imagination.”

Gaines acknowledges her years at Northwestern—and especially her study with Professor Wallace Bacon—as the source of both her love for Shakespeare and a self-confidence that has helped her get where she is today. She is grateful to the school for instilling in her a love of community, the city, and art’s power to transform lives. Gaines wants CST to be a valuable resource for Northwestern students, whether as performance opportunities or sheer inspiration.

“We have welcomed many Northwestern students through our doors for internships across all departments, onto our staff as artists, and on our stages,” says Gaines, “and hope to continue to do so for years to come.”

**Steppenwolf Theatre**

Steppenwolf artistic director Anna Shapiro is also a Northwestern professor—and her predecessor, Martha Lavey, is an alumna—so both her communities are always at the top of Shapiro’s mind. Grateful for the invaluable artistic exposure that Northwestern students can receive at Steppenwolf and other high-caliber companies, she hopes it helps inspire them to set strong goals for what their future in theatre could look like.

“There is so much rejection, and so many constraints, it’s the hope that students leave school with a strong sense of who they are as artists and a willingness to fully pursue their vision,” says Shapiro. “If we’ve done our job, our emerging students’ artistic vision will be full, and when they are afforded an opportunity to work on a larger scale, they will know how to navigate the room and work collaboratively within that structure.”

By being a part of the Steppenwolf community, Northwestern students are able to participate in a vibrant, ever-evolving theatre scene. This season Steppenwolf is premiering five new plays; a major focus of the company (and a personal passion of Shapiro’s) is developing new work and fostering relationships with playwrights. Additionally, Steppenwolf is launching its LookOut series, which brings both emerging and well-known multigenre artists into Steppenwolf’s 1700 Theatre.

“I love that there’s something new happening in that space each week and that the work over the course of our expanded season better reflects a diversity of voices that is more reflective of the community we’re in,” says Shapiro. She is also quick to note that student participation in the Steppenwolf environment is just as beneficial for the company and for Northwestern’s theatre faculty as it is for students.

“If my dual position at the two institutions affords me anything, I hope that it’s an ability to expose young minds to exciting, of-the-moment work while at the same time allowing both my work and the theatre’s to be inspired by young and burgeoning artists,” she says. “The future of the theatre is in the hands of these emerging artists, and I hope that their influence on Steppenwolf is as great as or greater than our influence on them.”
INNOVATION’S NEXT GENERATION

BY CARA LOCKWOOD
School of Communication students and recent alumni are at the forefront of groundbreaking work, demonstrating their entrepreneurial training and using what they learn at Northwestern to tackle old problems in new ways. Whether that means using theatre to help autistic audience members, changing the way we view public education, or connecting people with chronic illness through new media, graduates and students are transforming the world we live in by putting into practice the innovative problem-solving skills they learn at the University.

Innovating on stage

Zachary Baer (C10) and Tom Casserly (C11) knew they wanted to make their mark on the theatre world, but it happened sooner than they expected. Within a year of graduating from Northwestern, the two helped finance and coproduce Peter and the Starcatcher, a play that won five Tony Awards in 2012.

“It was an amazing experience and incredible opportunity for us as early professionals, and it certainly required an entrepreneurial spirit,” says Baer. “Tom and I coproduced the Dolphin Show at Northwestern University, America’s largest student-produced musical. What we’re doing now is not that different at the end of the day. There are bigger budgets and more celebrated creative team members, but it’s really those skills we learned at Northwestern that allow us to continue to do today what we love professionally.”

Casserly now works for producer and School of Communication friend Barbara Whitman and recently helped produce the Tony-winning Fun Home. He considers innovation almost essential for theatrical success. “Theatre has to be collaborative and innovative because it’s such a tough business,” he says. “Most shows do not succeed financially. The pressure to innovate is real, because it’s not like other industries where if you do a good job you can be reasonably certain to be successful.”

Innovating with new audiences

Madeline Napel is a theatre major who knows what it means to be different. Her 26-year-old brother Walt has cerebral palsy. While he loves music and theatre, as a child he didn’t often get to attend live performances.

“Unfortunately, it’s been nearly impossible for my family to find performance venues where he will be accepted for who he is,” says Napel. “He rarely gets to go see concerts or theatre of any kind. To me that was always a huge injustice.”

“We were so incredibly lucky and blessed to have the student theatre community at Northwestern to bolster our learning experience and to have extracurricular activities that let us flex our muscles in learning how to produce,” says Baer. “Tom and I coproduced the Dolphin Show at Northwestern University, America’s largest student-produced musical. What we’re doing now is not that different at the end of the day. There are bigger budgets and more celebrated creative team members, but it’s really those skills we learned at Northwestern that allow us to continue to do today what we love professionally.”

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Innovating on stage

From left: Tom Casserly, Zachary Baer, and producing partner Nathan Vernon

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“It was an amazing experience and incredible opportunity for us as early professionals, and it certainly required an entrepreneurial spirit,” says Baer. “It also gave us great exposure to the industry and what it really takes to get a Broadway show up on its feet.”

Baer, who now works for Disney Theatrical Group, said he directly credits his professional success to working on student theatre productions at Northwestern.
Napel is now the executive director of Seesaw Theatre, a student group producing original multisensory presentations for children on the autism spectrum or with other developmental differences. In that role she is always looking for new ways to connect with her audience as well as how to ensure that Seesaw continues to thrive. “We’d love to see a Seesaw Theatre on every college campus one day,” she says.

This year, Seesaw expanded its season to offer its first-ever Inclusive Theatre Festival in November, introducing Northwestern students to disability theatre. This winter the company is presenting its first “Lunchbox,” an event designed to bring together families who otherwise might not have met so that they can bond over a shared experience.

Napel’s fellow senior Delaney Burlingame is Seesaw’s artistic director and directs its mainstage show in the spring. She says that the most successful theatre finds a way to be relevant, relatable, and innovative.

“As long the lines of innovation, theatre today is all about surprise,” she says. “With TV and the Internet, we’ve pretty much seen it all. Audiences today come to the theatre to see something’s that’s inventive and unexpected, and I think current work is really trying to rise to that occasion. Moreover, theatre has had to adapt to a more diverse audience than ever.”

As a student Burlingame has learned to innovate by taking advantage of the campus community and knowing when to ask for help. “I think what I’ve learned most during my time at Northwestern is that you’re never alone and there’s never only one way to move forward,” she says. “Problem solving when you feel like you’re at a dead end is all about shifting your perspective. Taking a moment to breathe and ask for a second opinion is often all you need to get the gears moving again.”

Innovating with music and performance

Performance studies senior Maxwell Abner often found himself daydreaming as an audience member. While watching a favorite musician or theatrical performance, he would wonder what it would be like if a play were more like a concert, or a concert more like a play.

“I was always interested in the idea of breaking down forms and genres,” says Abner. “And that’s what we do in performance studies, we smash together different art forms and make new work.”

Abner wrote and performed Old Fashioned Love, which was half-play and half-concert, melding two of his favorite forms of artistic expression. The show followed the story of his own great-grandfather, a folk singer who worked the club circuit during the 1920s and even performed in one of Al Capone’s speakeasies. The performance also featured Abner’s own band, Max Abner and the Old Fashioned Lovers. Half the music was new; the other half was drawn from songs his great-grandfather had sung.

Abner says he’s always been encouraged to explore new ways of storytelling in performance studies and that the department’s professors have forever changed how he sees both the stage and the world. He has also learned how stories can have larger impacts on the world.

“The department taught me that art is not just a mirror of life, that art and life are mirrors of each other,” he says. “When we see a play or a movie, our own lives might then mimic some of the things we saw. This is why so many plays and movies have political ramifications in the real world. All art is political, whether it’s intended that way or not, so I’ve learned when I put something in the world, I have to be very careful that I’m comfortable with the moral messages I’m sending.”
Innovating the future

Senior Matt Fulle, a communication studies major, felt lucky to attend a stellar private high school in Seattle—but learned quickly that others didn’t have the same opportunities.

“I had very good opportunities in high school, discovering my passions and exploring a lot of different things, and I believe that every student should have the opportunities I had,” says Fulle. “On a broader level, when you dig deeply into a lot of society’s problems, whether in public discourse or policy, the reality of why some solutions might not succeed is rooted in education. So if you’re talking about drug policy or crime or voter turnout, a lot of those things have to do with education.”

While still in high school, Fulle served on the City of Seattle’s Youth Commission, which advocates for educational equity. One of his first projects was to implement teacher evaluations by students, because he believed that student feedback was important for improving education. He helped develop a student survey pilot program for Seattle’s public schools and worked closely with Education Post, a nonprofit that seeks to broaden the debate about public education. Fulle also interned for US Senator Patty Murray, then the Democratic chair of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee.

“Two weeks after I got there, they were debating a bill to replace No Child Left Behind,” he says. “I was there spending 12 to 14 hours a day in the office with this incredible exposure to policy making and to witness the biggest education policy shift at the national level in years.”

Fulle also used his time on Capitol Hill to study communication. “I worked with communication studies professor Angela Ray, who explores the rhetoric around floor debate,” he recalls. “So I studied these floor speeches. The interesting thing about floor speeches is that not many are heard by the general public, yet they play a pivotal role in advancing legislation. I read 160 speeches and tracked the development of lexicon in those two weeks and found that how different leaders talk reflects their different responsibilities in the Senate. It was fascinating work.”

Innovating in other countries

Rachel Otto (GC15), who earned her doctorate in audiology at Northwestern, traveled to Guatemala last March as part of the Entheos Audiology Cooperative to give badly needed audiology care to people who might not normally have access to healthcare.

“I got involved because I have always been service oriented, and this opportunity was a great way to use the skills I developed at Northwestern,” says Otto.

On her trip Otto joined a team of 30 audiologists and volunteers from across the United States to help children and adults in rural Guatemala. They held hearing screenings, offered earwax removal, and facilitated hearing-aid fittings for several hundred people.

“There is a significant need for audiology care in Guatemala, as they have few practitioners and very limited resources in this specialty throughout the country,” she says. Otto plans to return to Guatemala this winter; she traveled to Jordan in 2015.

For Otto, innovation is also about broadening perspectives. “At Northwestern we learned the importance of being independent and thinking critically. These skills are essential to being successful in audiology, whether I am seeing patients at the private practice where I work or seeing patients in a makeshift audiology lab in a schoolroom in another country,” she says. “Stepping outside our comfort zone and putting new ideas into action are necessary elements in making good things happen in the world.”
Junior theatre major Noah LaPook was an existential kid, always fascinated by his own mortality. But it wasn't until he arrived at Northwestern from his home in New York City that his existence took shape—triggered by the stage and the stars. “There are a lot of intersections between theatre and astronomy,” says LaPook. “To start, they are both based in wonder.”

A participant in the Devising and Adaptation modular curriculum, LaPook is a certified telescope operator at Northwestern’s Dearborn Observatory. As part of a team of hosts that opens up the awe-inspiring night skies to the public, he can explain moon phases, diagram the life cycle of a star, and identify faraway constellations. “Theatre majors make the best hosts because they can milk it, even on cloudy nights,” he jokes.

But LaPook draws a legitimate connection between the two passions, and it comes down to the energy component. The sun is continuously fusing hydrogen atoms into helium, a process generating heat and light. “It is the thing that warms humanity and can bring life and hope and comfort.”

Theatre operates similarly, he says. The performers must never stop radiating energy. Without it, the performance dies and the audience’s attention is lost. “This helps me when I’m on stage,” he says. “You can’t stop fusing.”

It has also helped him formulate a mission to break the rules of the theatre, paralleling new discoveries about our infinite universe. At Northwestern he is striving to create theatre where the audience is invited into the performance, performers have the license to experiment, and everyone involved walks away with the sense of awe LaPook feels when he looks up into the star-studded darkness.

“Anything’s possible in theatre,” he says. “And there’s no better bonding experience than collective wonder.”
Innovating health and connectedness

Chronic illness can come on suddenly and change a person’s life forever—and it’s not limited to the elderly.

Kristen Domonell (left) and Sanaz Amirpour (right), who were both in the first graduating class of Northwestern’s MS degree in health communication, founded Chronicality (www.chronicality.com) to help people, especially younger patients, suffering from chronic illnesses ranging from autoimmune diseases to chronic pain disorders. The website calls chronic illness a technicality or “chronicality” that “sets the terms in someone’s life, but it doesn’t have all the control.”

“The master’s program and our subsequent work opened our eyes to a whole community of people in our age demographic who are living with chronic illnesses and engaged online through social media and blogs, actively seeking ways to live well in spite of chronic illness,” says Domonell. “The general public attitude is that people with chronic illnesses are older and approaching their senior years, but we also see the millennial community of chronic illnesses as a growing population that faces unique challenges. Many people think that this group is too young to be sick, and in the event of invisible illnesses, many young people find they are not even believed.”

Domonell and Amirpour say their mission is to give readers the tools they need to manage their own chronic illness and live life on their own terms. “We have big plans for expanding our readership and online community and hope to extend to other platforms down the line,” says Amirpour. “We are also in talks about providing consulting to health and pharmaceutical companies looking to produce well-written content and graphics for their communities but unsure where to start or why their current content is not getting the attention they would like.”

She adds that the work of running a startup—providing daily meaningful content, managing writers, optimizing search-engine results, getting the word out on social media, and other marketing efforts—can be overwhelming. “The day-to-day work alone could bog you down, but we have to think, in a world inundated with online content, what is it that we hope to achieve?” asks Amirpour. “We know we have to be innovative and different to stand out, so we take that into consideration with every decision we make.”
Innovating on screen

DS Shin, a senior double-majoring in radio/television/film and economics with an integrated marketing communications certificate, began creating content at the age of 10.

“I created small Photoshopped banners to support my favorite wrestler, Trish Stratus, on pro wrestling fan sites,” he says. “They were horribly designed and had a ridiculous font, but I enjoyed showcasing my work to an audience online. Since then I’ve gone from working on my elementary school broadcasting team to interning at the Chicago Tribune.”

Shin also created stop-motion animation shorts for Northwestern’s “Smart Dillo” campaign and won the Graphic Design USA American Inhouse Design Award. His short documentary Mental Sport was selected for screenings at the Chicago International and Tiger Paw Sports Film Festivals.

Mental Sport introduces the audience to the world of competitive diving by following Cosima and Felicitas Lenz, sisters who share their dreams and fears about their sport.

Innovating style

Larkin Brown (C10) knows all about the entrepreneurial spirit.

“My father is a serial entrepreneur,” she says. “I grew up with that word, watching him going about starting his own ventures. I took a class on entrepreneurs at Northwestern, and that helped me unpack what it really means: to find something you really care about and work on a solution that feels unique. It’s only when you do what you feel passionate about that you can hustle it along until it gets off the ground.”

Brown’s passions lay in style and form and, beyond that, in helping others feel good about how they look. After majoring in communication studies at Northwestern, she founded Lark in Style (www.larkinstyle.com), an independent styling company that helps men and women dress their best.

“It’s really not about clothes,” she says. “It’s about what they do, and what you do in them. Clothing is a tool, and it affects how you see yourself and changes how others see you. We all get judged on our appearance anyway, so why not try to match your inner self with your outer appearance if you can?”

Brown’s philosophy on clothes is rooted in science, and recent research says that what we wear does affect how we feel and, surprisingly, how we perform. “There’s a bunch of science coming out of Northwestern,” she says. “They did this experiment where they had people do a set of problems. Some wore a doctor’s lab coat and others didn’t. The people who put on the lab coat scored much better on the problems than the ones who didn’t.”

Also a full-time staff member at Pinterest, Brown says her work in social media has taught her how to connect with her clients. She has found that the best way to innovate is to listen closely to client feedback.

“Lark in Style is a one-woman team, so all the feedback comes directly to me. That means I can see right away what’s working, and that gives me insights into innovating,” she says. “Right now I’m at an interesting period in my business where I’m also looking at the big picture. While I love one-on-one styling, the next step is to be more ambitious and to make an impact on more people, and that might mean more video content or blogging.”
AN INCUBATOR FOR INNOVATION

The Garage, Northwestern’s student product and idea incubator, opened in June 2015. Within just one year the north campus startup space welcomed a thousand visitors a month, inspired students to found 147 residency groups, and drew representation from all 12 schools of the University. This innovation and entrepreneurship community brought in alumni and industry experts to offer guidance and financing for getting viable ideas off the ground. The inclusive atmosphere has launched such ideas as industrial drones for warehouses, software to help inmates find prospective employers, and augmented reality apps.

“We built a really strong community in terms of the type of students coming in and the sort of ideas they’re bringing,” says Garage director Melissa Kaufman. “Year two is about storytelling.”

This offers a special incentive to School of Communication students. While the Garage has a surfeit of engineers and business students—or, to use Kaufman’s Silicon Valley–inspired term, “hackers and hustlers”—she would like to see more artists, performers, and creative minds add to the expansion of ideas.

“Their skill set and talents are really valued here,” she says. Because the Garage is much more than just a launching pad for new product ideas, Kaufman wants to move into nonprofit work and performance art. She hopes more communication students consider lending their inventive and collaborative styles—especially in this year of the story.

Shin recently worked as a social media intern at World Wrestling Entertainment, which he calls a dream job. “It has been my childhood dream to work for the company—my college essay was actually about pro wrestling,” he says. “So I feel like I’m checking off my bucket list by working there.”

He uses a multidisciplinary approach to empower his messages, practicing on a wide range of media platforms—including film, infographics, web design, and graphic design. Having worked on projects in Seoul, Chicago, Paris, and Cape Town, Shin believes he’s only just starting to create content in new and innovative ways.
WAA-MU’S REIMAGINED DIRECTION
For 86 years the Waa-Mu Show has been regarded as a defining Northwestern experience. Yet recently School of Communication leaders embraced a progressive vision for the student-written revue, revamping it as a new-work incubator that is changing the professional musical theatre landscape. Through training, industry connections, international partnerships, and undergraduates’ innovative spirit, Waa-Mu is all new. “The greatest college show in America” has managed to become even greater.
David H. Bell (at left above) is fond of a quote attributed to Stephen Sondheim—one that he’s found eminently true, both at Northwestern and in professional theatre: “The only way to learn how to write a musical is to write one.”

“It’s the single hardest thing I can imagine doing,” says Bell. “I don’t know what can prepare you for it.”

After traveling the world as a freelance theatre director and writer, Bell took on his most challenging assignment yet: as Northwestern’s Donald G. Robertson Director of Music Theatre and the man behind the educational force that is the Waa-Mu Show.

This beloved University tradition began in 1929 when the Women’s Athletic Association and Men’s Union student groups banded together to put on a variety show. Their first revue triggered a sensation in student theatre, and Waa-Mu became an annual event, with undergraduates taking the reins of all production elements. The revue format lasted for nearly 80 years—until Bell’s first Waa-Mu in 2011.

“I realized we had kind of a problem,” says Bell. “The style of entertainment was not represented in any analogous form in the professional world.”

“I realized we had kind of a problem. The style of entertainment was not represented in any analogous form in the professional world.” –David H. Bell

The lavish, vaudeville style of Waa-Mu was more Ed Sullivan than Lin-Manuel Miranda, and today’s actors, musicians, and writers were in need of a different skill set. Learning to create a new work of theatre, and having a hand in every twist and turn, was decidedly current—and practical.

With the assistance of faculty—including longtime Waa-Mu director and professor emeritus Dominic Missimi and lecturer Ryan T. Nelson, music director of the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts—Bell began the arduous work of converting a revue into an original book musical. Facing this daunting task, given the timing and undergraduates’ level of experience, Bell fell back on Sondheim’s apt observation. And they simply did it.

“I would not have thought this possible six years ago,” says Bell, “and each year we set the bar a little higher.”

Bell now begins each Waa-Mu experience with a weeklong summer trip abroad with the four assigned cochairs to settle on a theme for the coming year’s show. Bell and his team came up with the idea for 2015’s Gold, about the 1936 Berlin Olympics, their first day in Paris. Last year’s Another Way West, about a graduate student’s retracing of the Oregon Trail, required more
WHERE CAREERS ARE BORN

The value of the Waa-Mu experience becomes more apparent after graduation when writers and actors achieve professional success—sometimes very quickly. “I met incredible people when I was at Northwestern,” says composer-lyricist Alan Schmuckler (C05). “They turned into lifelong friends and lifelong collaborators.” Schmuckler cowrote music and lyrics with Michael Mahler (C04) for last spring’s Diary of a Wimpy Kid at Minneapolis’s Children’s Theatre Company, among other high-profile shows. Dave Holstein (C05), currently coexecutive producer for two original Showtime series and a writer for stage and screen, says, “I owe my entire musical theatre writing career to Waa-Mu.”

Last summer alone, Daniel Green (BSM08) reconnected with David Bell on their show Museum of Broken Relationships at Connecticut’s Eugene O’Neill National Music Theatre Conference, where it was named one of the top three new musicals, and Dream Ticket by Ryan Bernsten (C14) was seen at the New York Fringe Festival. Myrna Conn (C16), Charlie Oh (C16), and Chris Anselmo (C16) were selected to take part in the exclusive BMI Musical Theatre Workshop, former stomping grounds of Ben Diskant (BSM/WCAS07), Laura Winter (C14), and Jack Mitchell (C13).

Celebrated Waa-Mu alumni also include lyricist Sheldon Harnick (BSM49), director-producers Jason Moore (C93) and the late Garry Marshall (J56), and performers Bryan d’Arcy James (C93), Kate Shindle (C99), Heather Headley (C97), Cloris Leachman (C48, H14), and Warren Beatty (C59), among scores of others.

Back on campus, the machine revs up. The cochairs and designated head writers spend the fall quarter mapping out plot points, creating marketing strategies, coordinating with the first-year ambassador Waa-2 program, organizing workshops with industry leaders, and collaborating with the team at the Wirtz Center, Waa-Mu’s production partner. In the winter quarter Bell teaches the 70-student Creating the Musical class as well as its advanced counterpart, in which the writers and their selected teams hammer away at individual scenes. Between early January and late April—through these courses and demanding out-of-class obligations, and with faculty assistance—an original work is written, cast, orchestrated, designed, staged, choreographed, rehearsed, and performed by roughly 200 students. No other undergraduate music theatre program comes close to what Waa-Mu does, says Bell; even most graduate programs fall short.

Waa-Mu’s close collaboration with the Bienen School of Music, where students are recruited especially for this style of music theatre, has led to the development of classes such as Theatre Orchestration, offered in winter quarter. Ryan Nelson recalls that the 37 songs and other musical cues in Another Way West were orchestrated by nine first-time and five second-year
OPENING DOORS

To experience the Waa-Mu Show as a student is singularly life changing—but there can be a sizable intimidation factor. This year the innovative Student Outreach Committee of the 86th annual Waa-Mu Show is opening the doors wide and inviting all to come in.

“What a crazy thing we do, putting 70 students in a room and asking them to write a musical,” says senior theatre major and Waa-Mu cochair Charlotte Morris. “But I’d rather have 100 voices in the room.”

The committee has enlisted the help of Waa-2, the first-year ambassador program, in organizing a series of biweekly workshops, lectures, and events to educate the wider community about the process—specifically, that it is more inclusive than is generally perceived.

Prominent industry professionals such as Michael Mahler (CO4), Ian Weinberger (BSM09), Cheryl Coons, Ryan Cunningham, and Craig Carnelia will speak about topics ranging from storyboarding to songwriting; groups from the student-run theatre collective StuCo will cosponsor workshops. To keep minds open and casting fair, inclusivity panel discussions with students and faculty (including lecturer Melissa Foster) have addressed pressing issues such as diversity and casting students of color in nonstereotypical roles.

“We want to provide an opportunity for students to want to create for the theatre,” adds Morris. “And the first step is making sure all feel welcome.”

“Orchestrators—a challenge best met when in- and out-of-class goals dovetail. ‘Many of them go on to make this very specific type of work part of their professional careers,” says Nelson. “All Northwestern Music Theatre Program productions use student instrumentalists,” he adds. “This is not the norm anywhere in the country.”

Alan Schmuckler (CO5), an actor and writer-composer for major theatrical productions, is a prime example of how the show can launch a career (see sidebar on page 19). “Waa-Mu was the absolute center of my Northwestern existence,” he says. “There’s a long and storied tradition of writing for Waa-Mu, and students have made lives and careers out of it.”

This quality is evident in the final product. Shows often sell out Northwestern’s thousand-seat Cahn Auditorium. Audience members who have been attending the show for decades jump to their feet at the curtain call. Through ingenuity, tirelessness, and collaboration, a new work is born.

“This is truly an invaluable experience that will prepare me for the ‘real world,’” says junior Kaja Burke-Williams, a theatre and economics double major and a development director for the Waa-Mu executive board. In professional theatre “more and more material is going through a workshop period where things are being cut and added on the fly, just like Waa-Mu,” she says. “Being a part of it has been life changing.”

Waa-Mu is where writing partnerships often begin, where the give-and-take of working collaborations is lived, and where postcollege ambitions are hatched. It’s a big takeaway for students and Bell alike.

“If in four years of university they have defined themselves as creators of music theatre, that’s something that Waa-Mu gives them, and it’s extraordinary,” says Bell. “As long as Waa-Mu continues, it’s going to be the single biggest force contributing to the American musical.”
rehearse the two one-acts. Then the international Waa-Mu-inspired team will perform the double bill at the monthlong Edinburgh Festival in August. Bell will act as mentor of both processes, as he does for Waa-Mu, and he is thrilled about the partnership’s possibilities.

“We will have a wonderful blending of both school philosophies in a production,” he says. “The authors have brilliant ideas of how to relate the two of them.”

American Music Theatre Project

As a valuable adjunct to Northwestern's innovative and ever-growing Music Theatre Program, the School of Communication's new-musical development initiative—the American Music Theatre Project—brings leading professional writers to the Northwestern community.

“It’s a beautiful marriage,” says Brannon Bowers (C15), AMTP’s producing director. “Writers have their works read aloud, maybe for the first time, and in exchange we can get our students in the room working with professionals, also maybe for the first time, with new work. It demonstrates the level of professional education that we have here.”

Each workshop ends with a free on-campus staged reading. Student performers, often working alongside Equity actors, are eyewitnesses to everything that goes into honing book, lyrics, music, and direction in the development process. The writers

The Waa-Mu Show is scarcely the School of Communication’s only new-work incubator. Student writers benefit from curricular and cocurricular programs on campus and even a cooperative program with an institution abroad.

From Evanston to Edinburgh

The Waa-Mu model crosses the pond

In an exciting development, the innovative Waa-Mu model has attracted international attention—and a promising partnership has been forged.

This summer, 10 Northwestern students and Waa-Mu director David H. Bell will travel to the United Kingdom to premiere an original work of musical theatre at the Edinburgh International Festival in collaboration with the prestigious Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. This is intended as the first of many multicultural exchanges to advance the practice of student-created musical theatre works.

“The Edinburgh Festival is probably the premier emerging-artist platform in the world,” Bell says, “and to have our program represented as a major international collaborator on such a platform is going to be a game changer for us.”

Talks began after Bell learned from alumnus Tom Casserly (C11) that the Conservatoire was moving in the direction of Northwestern's own American Music Theatre Project (see next column). Bell met Andrew Panton, the artistic director of musical theatre at the Conservatoire, and soon they created a plan in which two teams of alumni—one from each institution—would each pen a one-act musical. Bell tapped accomplished up-and-comers Desiree Staples (C14), Ryan Bernsten (C14), and Chris Anselmo (C16) as the Northwestern team. In July, with original book, music, and lyrics in hand, Bell and yet-to-be-named Northwestern student performers will join Panton and 20 Conservatoire students in Glasgow to workshop and
make changes on the go, and the actors nimbly adjust. Last fall AMTP presented Rockne: There's Something in the Game, about the famed Notre Dame football coach. Producers John Girardi and Greg Schaffert worked with book writer Buddy Farmer, composer-lyricist Michael Mahler (C04), and director-lyricist David H. Bell to bring the story to Northwestern's campus as well as to South Bend, Indiana, where it was applauded on Knute Rockne's home turf.

In fall 2015 at Chicago's Thalia Hall, AMTP presented a rollicking reading of La Révolution Française by the writing team behind Les Misérables. In 2017 students will have the chance to work on Michael Collins by Ryan Cunningham and Joshua Saltzman and Proxy Marriage by Adam Gwon and Michele Lowe. The process underscores the school's commitment to experiential learning and its strong ties to the professional world.

**Launching new playwrights**

The School of Communication's innovative playwriting module, which marries in-class studies with out-of-class work and professional networking, gives promising students an entrée into postcollege writing success—and so does the annual Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival. Selina Fillinger (C16) is an outstanding recent example of how these programs launch our students.

The playwriting module culminates with students pairing up with local professional theaters to workshop new plays. During the process, mentored by module coordinator and senior lecturer Laura Schellhardt, each theater gives its assigned student a prompt, which that student uses to craft two new play pitches. The theater selects one pitch, and the student writes a script that is then workshopped and given a staged reading by Northwestern actors.

Schellhardt paired Fillinger with Skokie-based Northlight Theatre, where artistic director B. J. Jones gave Fillinger the prompt “ISIS in America.” Jones was so taken with one of her pitches, about a teenage girl on trial for conspiring to commit acts of terrorism, that he chose to include the resulting play—Faceless—in Northlight’s 2016–17 season. And as a result, one senior earned a major professional credit. “I don't think I've worked so hard in my entire life,” says Fillinger. “It was an incredible experience.”

“The idea is strong and her storytelling is poignant,” says Jones. “Our new-plays program is very successful, so I had confidence that our collaboration would succeed.”

This was an understandably big moment for Fillinger, who initially majored in theatre as a performer, not a writer. It was an introductory playwriting class her sophomore year that changed her direction, plus the support of faculty such as Schellhardt, who quelled Fillinger's many doubts.

“When I first talked to Laura, I thought, ‘This woman is going to change my life,’” Fillinger recalls, adding that lecturer Gail Shapiro was another influence. “They were pushing me so hard—they were pushing me because they knew I could do it.”

At Northwestern, Fillinger earned entry into two consecutive Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festivals—a launching pad for the likes of John Logan (C83), Lydia Diamond (C92), and Laura Eason (C89), among others—and won the Agnes Nixon Playwriting Award her senior year, in addition to performing in the New York senior acting showcase. She stayed in Chicago after graduating to work on Faceless, which premiered January 26 at Northlight.

Selina Fillinger (left) with the late Agnes Nixon
New doctoral program takes off

The School of Communication’s innovative, multidisciplinary new doctoral program in speech-language pathology has garnered unprecedented attention even before offering a single class. More than 70 students have requested applications to be part of its first cohort, and that number is sure to grow before the March deadline.

“The remarkable number of applicants to the inaugural Northwestern SLP-D program speaks to our team’s vision, systematic needs assessment, novel instructional delivery methods, and faculty specialization,” says Bonnie Martin-Harris, the school’s associate dean for academic affairs and the Alice Gabrielle Twight Professor in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. “Distinct from the research PhD and entry-level master’s degree, our SLP-D program will fill a longstanding void in the field for preparation and placement of advanced professional leaders, master clinicians, clinical educators, clinical administrators, and research collaborators.”

Students in the program will advance their knowledge in both clinical science and leadership through innovative classes and mentorships. The two-year program is designed to meet the needs of working clinicians, with virtual courses, a flexible schedule, and minimal required campus visits. Dean Barbara O’Keefe and department leaders held meetings with alumni in the field to determine how the program might best function, and department chair Sumit Dhar says that “the curriculum was largely and importantly shaped by this input.”

The SLP-D’s innovative format—distinct from those of institutional peers—is striking a chord among applicants. “It is great to see this level of interest and excitement,” says program director Stacy Kaplan, “and it demonstrates how hungry practitioners in our field are for this type of program.” The school will welcome its first cohort this June.

A sound experience

Gary Rydstrom—Academy Award–winning sound designer of such blockbuster films as Jurassic Park, Saving Private Ryan, and Star Wars: The Force Awakens—knows a few things about eliciting audience response.

“There’s a magic that happens when you put sound effects to picture,” he said at the John J. Louis Hall soundstage in October during an intimate presentation for students in the new MA program in sound arts and industries. “Remember sounds that make you feel something.”

For Rydstrom, those feelings arise most often when he’s experiencing real sounds in the real world. Innovations in technology can create an abundance of original notes and tones, but it’s the unexpected—though definitively real—that moves him.

“Most of the really great sounds are the sounds you don’t expect,” he said. Take the screechy shriek of Jurassic Park’s flying pteranodon, whose sound comes from the wheel inside a box of dental floss. Or Terminator 2: Judgment Day’s shapeshifting antagonist, who emerges from a linoleum floor to the digitally enhanced sound of dog food slipping out of a can. Rydstrom delivered one particularly epic “Easter egg” for sound enthusiasts: the TIE fighters’ roar in The Force Awakens is a composite of the original Ben Burtt–created wail (taken from an elephant’s call) married with a “Wilhelm scream” stock sound effect.

Program director Jacob Smith, associate professor of radio/television/film, called Rydstrom a “sonic creator with massive influence” who has “profoundly shaped” the way we experience films. Rydstrom’s innovative and generous spirit is likely to have the same effect on the school’s first cohort of graduate students in sound studies.
A leap for LEAP

Language Empowers All People (LEAP), a nonprofit founded and run by School of Communication alumni, is one of five finalists in the US Health Resources and Services Administration’s Bridging the Word Gap Challenge. LEAP is dedicated to improving language and literacy among Chicago youth.

“We’ve been working on the word gap problem before it had a name,” says Katie Gottfred (GC73, GC79), who founded LEAP in 1986. She adds that whereas most of the other four finalists are led by linguists, only LEAP is driven by speech-language pathologists.

HRSA awarded each of the five finalists a $25,000 prize for testing their ideas in preparation for the competition’s final round. LEAP will use the money for large-scale testing of its Beginning with Babble mobile app, designed to improve parent-child communication through audio and video prompts that remind parents to interact with their children—one of the single most important factors for children learning language.

“People sometimes think that poverty causes the language gap, and there is a correlation with poverty, but it’s really low-print, low-verbal households that cause the language gap,” says Gottfred. “There’s not as much talking going on, not as much print, and parents do not have enough stimulating interactions with their babies. That can happen in any economic environment.”

LEAP executive director Nina Smith (C07, GC10) says that Beginning with Babble reflects LEAP’s decades of field experience. The app features 1,500 prompts that change as a baby matures and a program that adjusts to a parent’s schedule. She believes these factors make LEAP a strong candidate to win the challenge in March.

“Our background in language makes us experts at developing language for the families, educators, and students we serve,” says Smith. “Bridging the gap between our expertise and technology makes us a strong competitive candidate and greatly expands outreach to the families LEAP serves. We hope that the app is a starting point of momentum that will get the word out about the work LEAP does to empower parents, teachers, and students through language.”

From STEM to STEAM

Nina Kraus, professor of neurobiology and physiology and of otolaryngology and the Hugh Knowles Chair in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, delivered a policy briefing to the US Department of Education in September. Supporting then-president Obama’s conviction that “the best antipoverty program is a first-rate education,” she presented her groundbreaking neuroscience research on the biological effects of music training on at-risk youth.

“We have heard a lot about the critical importance of a STEM-based curriculum lately—the importance of focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math to prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s world,” said Kraus. “This work provides biological evidence that an A for art is a worthy fifth pillar of a STEAM education.”

Also showing the benefit of bilingualism, Kraus’s work has further demonstrated that speaking two languages can help the brain better identify sounds and make sense of them. This form of auditory enrichment strengthens brain mechanisms that are important for learning and reading, providing neuroscience-based evidence to support then–education secretary John King’s argument that a child who “speaks a language other than English at home has an asset that should be valued.”

Emmy nominee shares insights

David Hollander, Emmy-nominated Northwestern alumnus and creator of CBS’s The Guardian and Showtime’s Ray Donovan, spoke to a rapt group of students in the writing for the screen and stage MFA program at Norris University Center on October 14. Hollander (C90) covered such topics as how a script can change during collaboration on set and how students can work on developing their own perspective and voice.

“Curate an aesthetic,” he told the students. “Be a fan. Be honest about what you like. I like soft rock—ironically and not ironically. I like a song that makes you want to cry. I think it’s apparent in my work. I’m an emotionalist at my core. I’d rather risk something to feel something.”

Urging students to learn how to collaborate, he discussed how working with actors can lead to changes in dialogue, especially when veteran performers challenge what’s on the page. Hollander told students that his time at Northwestern was invaluable in laying the groundwork for his successful career, and he urged them to take advantage of their professors’ expertise and the school’s proximity to Chicago, a hub for innovation and creativity.
Improvisation speaker series

The Department of Performance Studies, in collaboration with the Department of Theatre and Program in Dance, kicked off a yearlong speaker series last fall on the art and practice of improvisation. “It is meant to bring together an interdisciplinary group of faculty and students from across the campus to explore the ways in which performance serves as a technique and a key aesthetic element in a wide array of artistic practices—from theatre and dance to performance art, music, visual arts, and more,” says performance studies department chair Ramón H. Rivera-Servera. “Following the tradition of our department to center the practice of performance as a method of research, we have been gathering to work together under the leadership of established as well as emergent artists and scholars for whom improvisation is both an important component of how they develop artwork and a central analytic for how they think about the world around them, their daily exchanges with others, and the serious play that performance enables.”

Fall-quarter speakers were Clare Croft, assistant professor of dance at the University of Michigan, who specializes in American dance of the 20th and 21st centuries, cultural policy, feminism and queer theory, and critical race theory; and Nibia Pastrana, a Puerto Rico–based movement artist and choreographer interested in laziness practices, disappearance, and producing autonomous compositions with locations and spectators. The wide range of guest speakers will continue through this spring, expanding the Northwestern community’s perspective of what improvisation can lend to a performance.

“Performance is ephemeral and does not exist as a physical object, which makes it challenging to analyze as one would a painting or a dramatic text,” says Posner. “The materials in this online archive show that we can analyze historical performances by engaging deeply with the traces they leave behind.”

Funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Fulcrum was developed by the University of Michigan Press in partnership with the university presses of Penn State, Indiana, Minnesota, and Northwestern. The online archive to The Director’s Prism can be accessed at www.fulcrum.org/northwestern.

An avant-garde archive

The Director’s Prism: E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Russian Theatrical Avant-Garde—the second book by Dassia N. Posner, assistant professor of theatre and Slavic languages and literatures—was released in August by Northwestern University Press. The work investigates the revolutionary innovations of Russian directors Vsevolod Meyerhold, Sergei Eisenstein, and Alexander Tairov through the lens of their fascination with German romantic fantasy writer E. T. A. Hoffmann. Posner argues that breaking the fourth wall, as well as many other devices associated with avant-garde theatre, emerged from this intercultural exchange.

Posner conducted extensive research at Russian, German, and US archives. Her book is accompanied by a web-based archive—the first to be featured on the new publishing platform Fulcrum, which is redefining scholarly publishing by providing a stable home for multimedia materials and innately digital projects that can’t be accommodated in traditional monographs. In her online archive, digitally enriched source materials such as theatrical designs, film clips, and playbills illustrate the vivid, innovative theatrical approach that was later suppressed by Stalin. The easy access and high quality of these digitized items bring a new dimension to their original medium.

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Jeff Award winners

The Equity Joseph Jefferson Awards, honoring excellence in Chicago theatre, were again awash with School of Communication winners last year. The 48th annual ceremony was held October 17 at Drury Lane Oakbrook.

Lecturer Ryan T. Nelson (left), music director at the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, took home the award for best music direction for Man of La Mancha at Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire. The Tempest at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where Barbara Gaines (C88) is artistic director, was honored as best production (large) of a play, and the production’s directors—Aaron Posner (C86) and Teller—won the best director award.

The Mercury Theater’s The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes, cowritten by John Reeger (C72), Michael Mahler (C04), and the late Julie Shannon, shared the award for best new work—play.
Jeremy Birnholtz (PhD, University of Michigan) received a three-year National Science Foundation grant to study people’s understanding of how social media platforms work and the implications for users and how they present themselves and behave online.

Joshua Chambers-Letson (PhD, New York University), with McGill University political science professor Yves Winter, received an Ignition Grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to support the research and development of Shipwrecked Sovereignty, a jointly authored book project that combines approaches from performance studies and political theory to explore the crisis and transformations of the global sovereign order through a study of an international dispute regarding a 19th-century Spanish shipwreck.

Aymar Jean Christian (PhD, University of Pennsylvania) is the founder and head of development for Open TV (beta), an art and television platform for those identifying as queer, trans, cis-women, and people of color. As head of development, he seeks to understand and gather information on TV series development practices that center on these audiences. Christian is executive producer of the Open TV (beta) series Two Queens in a Kitchen, released on Vimeo last August; its producer is Daniel Dvorkin (GC16).

Zayd Dohrn (MFA, New York University) received the prestigious Horton Foote Prize for Promising New American Play for The Profane, which premieres at New York City’s Playwrights Horizons in March. He is also developing the TV series Foreign Babes in Beijing for BBC America with Rachel DeWoskin.

Marcus Doshi (MFA, Yale) designed set and lighting for Party People at New York’s Public Theater. It ran November 1 – December 11.

Shawn Douglass (MFA, University of Missouri–Kansas City) directed a winter production of Shaw’s Pygmalion for Chicago’s Remy Bumppo Theatre. The Chicago Sun-Times highly recommended the show, calling it “captivating.” The production featured costume design by Kristy Hall (C07) and a cast that included Sean Foer (C15) and Eliza Helm (C13). Last summer Douglass directed Billy Siegenfeld’s Jimmy Blues and the Strange Case of the Accidental Dancer, a new one-act play with dance, at Chicago’s Links Hall. Costumed by dance faculty member Jeff Hancock, the production costarred Jordan Batta (C04) and featured the work of Wirtz Center technical specialists.

Paul Edwards (PhD, University of Texas at Austin) directed his original adaptation of Shirley Jackson’s 1958 novel The Sundial at Chicago’s City Lit Theater this winter.

Melissa Foster (MM, Northwestern University) represented Northwestern at the 54th annual National Association of Teachers of Singing conference. A final-round adjudicator for its National Musical Theatre Competition, she also gave a presentation on belting, a popular-music technique that is not widely accepted as “healthy” singing.

Marcela A. Fuentes (PhD, New York University) traveled to Buenos Aires to conduct research on the social media and performance tactics of the collective NiUnaMenos (NotOneLess), which emerged in 2015 in response to a dramatic increase in gender violence in Latin America.

Linda Gates (MA, NYU), with program development partner Guy Roberts of the Prague Shakespeare Company, welcomed 12 Northwestern students to a monthlong intensive program in the Czech Republic last summer. On this inaugural trip the group performed Richard III at the Prague Castle before Gates traveled to Italy to perform monologues, scenes, and sonnets at the Valle Christi Theatre Festival in Rapallo.

Rebecca Gilman (MFA, Iowa Playwrights Workshop) was inducted into the Alabama Writers Hall of Fame in September. Her play Soups, Stews, and Casseroles 1976 was directed by Robert Falls at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre last spring.
Cindy Gold (MFA, Alabama Shakespeare Festival) appeared at the Kennedy Center last fall in the Washington National Opera production of The Daughter of the Regiment. She shared her role with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who performed it opening night.

The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship by Robert Hariman (PhD, University of Minnesota) was released by the University of Chicago Press in November.


Bruce Lambert (PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) received research grants for “Preventing Wrong-Drug and Wrong-Patient Errors with Indication Alerts in CPOE” at two large academic medical centers and for “Develop and Validate Health IT Safety Measures to Capture Violations of the Five Rights of Medication Safety” at Columbia–New York Presbyterian Medical Center and University of Illinois Hospital as well as observational sites.

Susan A. Lee (PhD, Northwestern University) was named a Field Leader in dance by Ingenuity Inc., a Chicago-based advocacy organization for arts education. Lee was also selected to chair Dance 2050: The Future of Dance in Higher Education, the 2016 National Dance Education Organization conference at George Washington University.

Viorica Marian (PhD, Cornell University) received the University of Alaska Anchorage Alumni of Achievement Award in recognition of her research and scientific breakthroughs in the study of bilingualism. Last year Marian was named to Northwestern’s Ralph and Jean Sundin Endowed Chair in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

Kelli McHugh (MA, Northwestern University) played Elizabeth Elliot in Chamber Opera Chicago’s United Kingdom tour of Persuasion last summer. The tour included stops in Aberdeen, Sterling, York, Stratford, Lyme Regis, and London’s Shaw Theatre.

Stephan Moore (PhD, Brown University) is performing through April at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art in Merce Cunningham: Common Time, for which he also curated the music. His collaborative group A Canary Torsi produced Performance/Portrait, which opened in Brooklyn.

Radio/television/film faculty Stephen Cone, Maria Finitzo, Spencer Parsons, Ines Sommer, and JP Sniadecki were named to New City Film’s annual list of “Chicago’s Screen Gems.” Focused on artists rather than producers, this year’s list recognized creativity and prominence in the filmmaking industry, both local and well beyond.
in December. The group was awarded a NewMusicUSA grant for an upcoming triple-commission piece and will be performing its Court/Garden at the Chicago Cultural Center in March. Moore is also involved in an Australian research project in noise mitigation and processing.

Jennifer Phelan (AuD, Ohio State University) received board recognition in pediatric audiology from the American Board of Audiology.

Angela G. Ray (PhD, University of Minnesota) has received the 2016 Faculty Mentorship Award from the National Communication Association’s Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division. This award recognizes a scholar-teacher who invests substantial time and energy in fostering the success of others as academic professionals, particularly those in historically underrepresented groups.

Michelle Shumate (PhD, USC) was recently awarded two prestigious grants: from the Army Research Office for “Collective Impact and Common Goals: Planned vs. Emergent Networks as Tools for Leveraging Community Outcomes” and from the National Institutes of Health for “A Culturally Targeted Transplant Program to Increase Live Donation in Hispanics.” Shumate coauthored a paper that won the Carlo Masini Award for Innovative Scholarship from the Academy of Management’s Public and Nonprofit Division.

Billy Siegenfeld (MA, NYU) received the Chicago National Association of Dance Masters’ annual Artistic Achievement Award in July. Also that month he was a featured presenter and speaker for Jazz Dance: Roots and Branches in Practice, the National Dance Organization’s special conference on jazz dance, held at Rhode Island’s Salve Regina University. Time Steps, which he directed last spring for Chicago Tap Theatre, has been nominated for Dance magazine’s Reader’s Choice Award. In addition, he was invited to teach and perform at the Vancouver International Tap Dance Festival and this past fall was a guest teacher at New York’s two largest dance studios.


Jessica Thebus (PhD, Northwestern University) became a fellow at the Center for Humans and Nature, working on ongoing performance and environmental policy exploration. In the Chicago area she directed the world premiere of Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley this past fall at Northlight Theatre and is directing For Peter Pan on Her 70th Birthday this spring at Shattered Globe Theater as well as an upcoming world premiere for the Gift Theatre.

Cynthia Thompson (PhD, University of Kansas), with members of the NIH-supported Center for the Neurobiology of Language Recovery and fellow faculty member Aaron Wilkins, visited Beijing in September to develop and implement a joint research project addressing language and brain recovery in Mandarin-speaking people with chronic aphasia. Focused on recovery of sentence processing in a tonal language, the project is the first of a series of research and clinical projects to be undertaken as part of the Joint Centre of Aphasia at Beijing Language and Culture University.

David E. Tolchinsky (MFA, USC) is currently in production for the film Cassandra, a psychological thriller he wrote and directed about the 1990s memory recovery movement. His short film The Coming of Age, which he was commissioned to write and also coproduced, screened at the Long Island Film Festival, Chicago’s Global Mixx Film Shorts Festival, and the Chicago International REEL Shorts Film Festival. He and Brett Neveu (BA, University of Iowa) cocurated the June production Sick by Seven, a collection of plays and videos for A Red Orchid Theatre’s Incubator Series. In October,
Tolchinsky discussed “Great Neurotics of Stage and Screen” as an invited speaker for Lookingglass Theatre Company’s Reflect postshow series.

Debra Tolchinsky (MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago) is currently in production for True Memories and Other Falsehoods, a new documentary feature on the interaction of memory contamination and the criminal justice system. David E. Tolchinsky is associate producer. She and her husband were featured in an inaugural Northwestern podcast about couples at the University.

James Webster (PhD, Indiana University) gave the speech “Watching Television: From Individuals to Audiences” at New York City’s Time Warner Center in September for the Council for Research Excellence. An organization of media researchers dedicated to improving audience measurement, CRE includes the chief research officers from many US television networks, broadcast groups, and media agencies. Webster’s book The Marketplace of Attention was released in China by Renmin University Press. To mark the occasion, he gave two speeches in Zhengzhou. The first, to 700 broadcasters and journalists, described the forces that shape audiences in a digital age; the second, to 200 big-data specialists, explained the role of metrics in audience formation.

Mary Zimmerman (PhD, Northwestern University) directed Wonderful Town at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre this past fall and Rusalka this winter at New York’s Metropolitan Opera. The White Snake, her 2012 adaptation of a Chinese fable, opens in February at Baltimore’s Center Stage.

Collins and Schellhardt at Kennedy Center

New Visions/New Voices is the annual invitation-only gathering sponsored by Washington’s Kennedy Center to workshop original plays with seven professional playwriting partnerships in the medium of theatre for young audiences. In its 25 years of existence, New Visions/New Voices had never invited a team from a university—until 2016.

Associate professor of theatre Rives Collins and theatre senior lecturer Laura Schellhardt, in partnership with the Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, were the Kennedy Center’s first director-writer invitees from an academic setting. In the weeklong workshop last May, the duo received praise and feedback for Schellhardt’s Ever in the Glades, a play about island-bound Florida teenagers contending with the threat of alligators and even more insidious parents.

“We were really focusing on story, on this rich language,” Collins says of the workshop experience. “It’s thrilling to attend to the essence of the story, what is at its deep heart’s core.”

After they returned to campus last spring, the play was given a table reading by Northwestern actors and faculty. Production plans are in the works, and this fall Schellhardt and Collins received word that the Kennedy Center will stage Glades at a date to be determined.

“I believe with full faith that if you put the right stories into the world, you can make a difference,” adds Collins. “This is the time to tell stories that are meaningful—doing this work with young people who are open, who have great, empathetic hearts.”
Alumni achievements

Class notes are selected from stories of alumni featured in the media as identified by the University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Development and updates sent to Dialogue by mail or by email at dialogue@northwestern.edu.

1950s

Sue C. Dietrich (C58), director of the Madison County Historical Museum and Archival Library for the past 17 years, retired in November.

1970s

The one-act play Dora’s Dynamic Dates by Marjorie Bicknell (GC72) was one of nine winning one-acts produced by the Group Rep at the Lonny Chapman Theater in North Hollywood, California. Additional one-act plays by Bicknell were finalists last summer at the Scrap Mettle Arts Emerging Playwrights Program, the Harrisburg Shakespeare Festival, and the Hershey Area Playhouse.

Jeff Ravitz (C72) designed the lighting for Kevin Hart’s stand-up comedy movie What Now?, which features the comedian performing his act before an audience of 56,000 at Philadelphia’s Lincoln Financial Field in August 2015. A 4K shoot released by Universal in October, the production required over 900 lighting fixtures to illuminate the stage, the elaborate scenery, and the expansive audience. More recently, Ravitz wrapped comedy specials for Roy Wood Jr. and the Impractical Jokers.

Tony Denton (C79) is the 2016–17 chair of the board of directors for the Center for Healthcare Research and Transformation, an independent nonprofit organization housed at the University of Michigan.

1980s

Michael Greif (C81) directed the critically acclaimed world premiere production of War Paint, starring Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole, last summer at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre.

John Logan (C83) is writing a stage adaptation of Baz Luhrman’s musical film Moulin Rouge.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus (C83, H07) smashed Emmy Awards records on September 18 with a historic win at the 68th annual ceremony—her sixth Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series award and her fifth in a row playing President Selina Meyer on HBO’s Veep. (She was previously tied for the comedy-series lead-actress record with Mary Tyler Moore and Candace Bergen.) Veep, with Louis-Dreyfus as executive producer, also won the Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series.

Newton N. Minow (C49, JD50, H56), Walter Annenberg Professor Emeritus at Northwestern, was named one of 21 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom by then president Barack Obama in November, along with such luminaries as Diane Ross, Tom Hanks, Ellen DeGeneres, Bill Gates, and Michael Jordan. Appointed to the Federal Communications Commission by President John F. Kennedy in the early 1960s, Minow was instrumental in legislation that implemented communication satellite technology. Obama was once an intern at Minow’s law firm and famously bumped into his boss while on a first date with his wife-to-be, Michelle.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus in Veep

Gideon, a Christian novel by actor and director Randall Hahn (C84), was published in 2015 by Xulon Press.

Deborah Villin Tudor (GC84, GC92), the associate dean for academic affairs for Southern Illinois University’s College of Mass Communications and Media Arts, is serving as interim dean.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus in Veep
Stephen Colbert (C86, H11) hosted the prestigious 39th annual Kennedy Center Honors in December for the third time, President Barack Obama’s last. Colbert and The Late Show with Stephen Colbert writers—including Jen Syrpa (GC12)—were nominated for a Writers Guild Award. Colbert nabbed the coveted post–2016 presidential debate time slot for his show after each event and produced an election-night special in November.

Harry Lennix (C86) of The Blacklist launched his production company Exponent Media Group and signed a distribution deal for his films H4 and Revival, to be screened through Nehst Media's Digiplex chain.

Scandal star George Newbern (C86) served as grand marshal for Northwestern's Homecoming parade and pep rally on October 21.

Aaron Posner (C86) shared a 2016 Joseph Jefferson Award with magician Teller for directing The Tempest at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Posner’s play Life Sucks, based on Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya, received its Midwest premiere last fall at Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre.

David W. Zucker (C86) is president of television for Scott Free and executive producer of The Man in the High Castle for Amazon, the PBS Civil War medical drama Mercy Street, the CBS satirical summer series

Braindead, the AMC historical anthology series The Terror, an online all-access spin-off of The Good Wife, an Amazon action-comedy half-hour pilot starring Jean-Claude Van Damme as Jean-Claude Van Johnson, and Killing Reagan, the fourth in the acclaimed National Geographic Channel series of Killing tele-films. Notable projects on the current development slate include Strange Angel for AMC, Vatican City for Amazon, and 3001: The Final Odyssey for Syfy as well as limited series adaptations of Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West and the best-selling nonfiction thriller The Hot Zone. The Man in the High Castle and (in its final season) The Good Wife were each nominated for four 2016 Emmy Awards.

Audrey Skwierawski (C89) — assistant attorney general at the Wisconsin Department of Justice, was awarded the Wisconsin Law Journal's Women in the Law Award in June. The award recognizes women who have achieved excellence and opened doors for others in the field. Skwierawski is also Wisconsin’s Violence Against Women resource prosecutor and provides training and support to fellow prosecutors working on cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and related offenses. She is an alumna of the Northwestern Debate Society.

Mike Knobloch (C82), president of film music and publishing at Universal Pictures, was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Tom Mizer (C93) and Curtis Moore (BSM95) received the 12th annual Fred Ebb Award for aspiring musical theatre songwriters in November (above, from left: Moore, theatre legend and alumnus Sheldon Harnick, and Mizer). The award is presented by the Fred Ebb Foundation in association with New York’s Roundabout Theatre Company. Mizer and Moore’s romantic mystery Triangle premiered in 2015 at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley and received six Theatre Bay Area Awards, including outstanding world-premiere musical.

Eric Rosen (GC93, GC99), artistic director of the Kansas City Repertory Theater, directed the revue Side by Side by Sondheim there this winter.

Greg Berlanti (C94) — producer of Arrow, The Flash, Legends of Tomorrow, and Supergirl— is developing another series based on DC Comics superhero Black Lightning.

Kathryn Hahn (C95) received widespread critical praise for her role in the summer comedy Bad Moms with Kristen Bell and Mila Kunis. She also stars in the Amazon series I Love Dick, written by Sarah Gubbins (C97, GC08).

Corey Perman (C95) was recently promoted to senior vice president and chief compliance and ethics officer at Chicago-based Accretive Health. His frequent presentations on compliance and business ethics topics have included “Third-Party Vendor Compliance Programs: The Value, the Need, the Risk” for the April 2016 Health Care Compliance Association’s Compliance Programs: The Business of Doing the Right Thing: Building a Culture of Ethics, Transparency, and Accountability” for the June 2016 Loyola University Chicago School of Law’s visiting lecturer program.

1990s

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Seth Meyers (C96, H16) received an honorary doctor of arts degree from Northwestern and delivered the Commencement address last June. NBC’s Late Night with Seth Meyers was nominated for a Writers Guild of America award in the comedy/variety series category and received high praise for its treatment of the contentious presidential race. Meyers welcomed a son last spring.

The Kite Runner, a play by Matthew Spangler (C96) based on the novel by Khaled Hosseini, is running this winter at Wyndham’s Theatre in London’s West End.

Zach Braff (C97) is developing the single-camera comedy Stand Up for NBC as star and director.

Philip Napoli (GC97) was recently appointed the James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy in the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. He is also a faculty affiliate with Duke’s DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy.

Nicole Snyder (C97) and her Ringer cocreator Eric Charmelo (WCAS95) have signed a two-year overall production deal with Universal Television, where they will develop and produce the new drama Midnight, Texas.

Kate Shindle (C99) is currently starring in the touring production of the Broadway musical Fun Home.

Peter Austin Duchan (C05) collaborated on the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and RKO Stage’s premiere of Carefree: Dancin’ with Fred & Ginger, which opened on November 4.

Dave Holstein (C05) is developing two series, I’m Dying Up Here and Fatua, both of which will premiere on Showtime. The former stars Richard Kind (C78).

Jessica Puller (C07) has received a two-book deal with Disney Hyperion. Her debut novel, Captain Superlative, is a middle-grade mystery about an enigmatic superhero racing through a school’s halls committing random acts of kindness. Publication is scheduled for fall 2018.

Brett Abraham Schneider (C07), an actor, magician, and illusion designer, portrayed the raved-about main character in The Magic Play this fall at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre.

Jenny Hagel (C09) is part of the writing team nominated for a comedy/variety series Writers Guild Award for Late Night with Seth Meyers.

From Gary Ashwal’s Booster Shot Media
Chad Eschman (GC13) wrote the screenplay for the film Never Stop, selected as Indiewire Project of the Day in August.

Scott Schroeder (GC14) began a tenure-track faculty position at New York’s Hofstra University.

Trevor Siemian (C14) was selected as 2016–17 starting quarterback for the NFL’s Denver Broncos and was named AFC Player of the Week in September. Siemian succeeded legendary quarterback Peyton Manning.

Selina Fillinger (C16), a two-time Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival winner at Northwestern, wrote the play Faceless as part of her advanced playwriting sequence. The play premiered at Skokie’s Northlight Theatre in January.

Jesseca Simmons (GC16), the School of Communication’s cinematography specialist, was nominated in the graduate category of the American Society of Cinematographers’ 2016 Student Heritage Awards.

NUEA East

This summer NUEA East sponsored two film screenings in the city: Here One Minute, edited by Russell Yaffe (C10), and Lace Crater, written and directed by Harrison Atkins (C12). The group cosponsored a spring happy hour on the Lower East Side with the NU Club of Greater New York, a networking event in Chelsea with the Northwestern Alumni Association, and a summer send-off at the Boat Basin with other local Big Ten alumni clubs. In addition, NUEA East organized a TV industry panel in conjunction with “Wildcats in NYC,” a project of the undergraduate student group Northwestern University Women Filmmakers Alliance (pictured above), and continued its monthly networking series of “First Friday” bar nights.

NUEA West

In July NUEA West offered its third annual casting director workshop for actors. This year’s workshop featured alumna and casting associate Amanda Tudesco (C08), whose credits include Guilt, Uncle Buck, Banes, Backstrom, Mr. Robinson, and Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children. After a Q&A, participants performed their own prepared audition sides.

In September NUEA West hosted “The Great Purple Pitchfest,” giving NUEA members the opportunity to pitch completed scripts to studio and production company professionals who are also Northwestern alumni. As part of the Pitchfest, the group held an industry panel on advanced pitching techniques and tips that featured Jordan Cerf (C05) of William Morris Endeavor, Korin Huggins of Will Packer Productions, The Big C and I Heart Huckabees writer-producer Darlene Hunt (C92), and Glendon Palmer (C93) of IM Global. Additionally, NUEA West held a pitch webinar on September 15 with Roadmap Writers.

Author Jessica Cluess (C07) read from and discussed her debut novel, A Shadow Bright and Burning, at NUEA West’s “Becoming a Novelist” event on September 21. The group’s Storytelling Series continued on September 28 with “Lies: A Storytelling Event,” featuring Todd Aaron Brotze (MEAS96), Damona Hoffman (C00), Mackenzie Horras (C07), Lisa Kaminir (C82), Liz Kenny (KSM10), Cori Clark Nelson, Rebecca Russ (C04), Andrea Sabesin (C90), Kevin Seldon (C00), and Tim Smight (Medill75). It was directed by Joe Hauler (Medill98).

Cara Rifkin (C09) is developing and producing nonscripted lifestyle television shows in Los Angeles. She won the 2016 outstanding culinary program Emmy Award for the Food Network’s Patricia Heaton Parties.

Alex Weisman (C10) won critical acclaim for his starring performance this past fall in Hand to God at Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theatre.

Harrison Atkins (C12) wrote, directed, and edited the film Lace Crater, which received its Chicago premiere on August 12.

Greg Porper (C12) cowrote, codirected, and coproduced Don’t Tell Larry. The pilot screened at the New York Television Festival in October.

Jen Spyra (GC12) is part of the writing team nominated for a comedy/variety series Writers Guild Award for The Late Show with Stephen Colbert. She continues to contribute to the New Yorker’s “Shouts & Murmurs” humor section.

Mackenzie Barth (C13) and business partner Sarah Adler (Medill13) were featured on Fortune magazine’s 2016 list of the most innovative women in the food and drink industry. While at Northwestern, they cocreated Spoon University, a training platform for students who want to get involved in the food industry. Spoon U now has 170 chapters at colleges worldwide and 4 million visitors to its website each month.
In memory

Philip D. Block III, former chair of the Shedd Aquarium board of trustees, died on July 1 in Chicago at age 79. A Chicago-reared Yale graduate, Block spent 27 years with Inland Steel, a company founded by his grandfather and great-grandfather. In 1985 he opened the Chicago office of Capital Guardian Trust Company, where he remained for nearly two decades. A life trustee for the Chicago History Museum, Block chaired the Shedd Aquarium’s board of trustees for a three-year term. He is survived by his wife, School of Communication National Advisory Council member and University trustee Judith Block (C83), and two children.

Garry Marshall (Medill56), esteemed creator, director, producer, and writer of some of the most memorable television shows and movies of his time, died on July 19 in Burbank, California, at age 81. Although the New York native was a graduate of the Medill School of Journalism, he was a great friend to the School of Communication. Creator of Happy Days and Laverne & Shirley and director of Pretty Woman and many other beloved series and films, Marshall was a proud Northwestern alumnus and often returned to campus to speak to the community, visit classes, or simply visit family attending the University. His generosity funded the Marjorie Ward Marshall Dance Center and the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio Wing of John J. Louis Hall, in addition to contributing to construction of the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts. Marshall’s legendary wit and warmth made him a beloved fixture in his Hollywood circles but also on campus in Evanston. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, as well as three children, five grandchildren, and two sisters.

Elizabeth Forrer Applebee (C40) on June 29 at age 96 in Naples, Florida
Eugene R. Bayliss (C40) on September 15 at age 89 in Newtown, Pennsylvania
David Kaplan (C40, GC41) on May 22 at age 98 in Lincolnwood, Illinois
Betty McCandless (C41) on November 7 at age 96 in Dallas
Correan Cushman (C43) on May 26 at age 94 in Middlebury, Vermont
Florence Teuscher (C47) on July 30 at age 91 in Chicago
Dorothy Johnson (GC48) on September 21 at age 92 in Huntington, West Virginia
Marjorie Jean Glassco (C49) on August 16 at age 88 in Charlottesville, Virginia
Juliana H. Wheatley (C49) on October 29 at age 88 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Howard Grafman (C50) on August 17 at age 89 in Pacific Palisades, California
Jane Colby (GC52) on July 28 at age 87 in Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts
Barbara Biery Plummer (C52) on October 19 in Green Valley, Arizona
Robin Rieper (C52, L55) on November 21 at age 86 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Edward Wooten (C52) on June 13 at age 85 in Little Rock, Arkansas
Donna C. Dumbell (C53) on October 27 at age 84 in Dubuque, Iowa
Evelyn Johnson (C53) on July 22 at age 85 in Chattanooga, Tennessee
Dorothy L. Terry (C53) on August 21 at age 85 in Chicago
Archie P. Brown (C54) on June 1 at age 83 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Joanne Izumi (C54) on October 13 at age 84 in Haddam, Connecticut
Gail Paynter (C54, GC55) on June 29 at age 83 in Newtown, Connecticut
Diane Solwedel (C55) on May 31 at age 83 in Pasadena, California
Audrey Spiegel (C55) on October 29 at age 83 in Northfield, Illinois
Margaret Lindman (GC56) on October 22 at age 87 in Lake Forest, Illinois
Paul W. F. Harms (GC57, GC73) on August 15 at age 92 in Santa Rosa, California
Mary Robinson (C57) on August 22 at age 83 in Denver
Bruce Watson (C57) on August 8 at age 86 in Flossmoor, Illinois
Robert B. Wight (C57) on August 10 at age 80 in Savannah, Georgia
Samuel R. Levene (C58, GJ62) on November 24 at age 80 in Toronto
Agnes Eckhardt Nixon (C44), the prolific “queen of soaps,” died on September 28 in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, at age 93. Creator of *One Life to Life* and *All My Children*, both telecast for nearly 50 years, she was the architect of some of the most memorable moments in daytime television. Nixon prompted dialogues about such topics as interracial marriage, drug addiction, the Vietnam War, and AIDS by weaving them into her storylines. Her spectacular imagination fueled decades of drama, mysteries, cliffhangers, and comic relief that drew a loyal fan base committed to daily viewing. Winner of a 2010 Daytime Emmy Award for lifetime achievement, she established the Agnes Nixon Playwriting Award at Northwestern, where she had studied acting as an undergraduate. Nixon had recently finished her memoir, *My Life to Live: How I Became the Queen of Soaps When Men Ruled the Airwaves*, to be released this spring. She is survived by her four children, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Gail Freeman Dowty (C59) on August 7 at age 78 in South Bend, Indiana

Noel Matkin (GC59, GC65) on July 4 at age 84 in Tucson, Arizona

Janet Allison (Glaser) (C60) on August 14 at age 78 in Raleigh, North Carolina

Kenneth Crannell (GC70) on August 19 at age 82 in Saugus, Massachusetts

Amy Van Singel (C71) on September 19 at age 66 in Ellsworth, Maine

Georgie Blaeser (GC74) on June 1 at age 76 in Poughkeepsie, New York

Arthur Lauriston Buist (C74) on October 12 at age 62 in Baltimore

Lex Glen Wadsworth (GC75) on August 6 at age 66 in Washington, DC

Jeffrey T. Totaro (C79, GJ81) on July 17 at age 59 in New York

Deborah Dempsey (GC82) on June 5 at age 62 in Plymouth, Massachusetts

David A. Droge (GC83) on November 1 at age 68 in Tacoma, Washington

Danielle Irene Parker (GC83) on November 16 at age 71 in Barto, Pennsylvania

Stephen Whitney (GC16) on December 25 at age 29 in Evanston, Illinois
Gala to celebrate opening of new space

In spring 2018 School of Communication administration, staff, and prominent alumni will produce a gala to commemorate a monumental development—the opening of a Chicago-based performing and media-arts space that will draw Northwestern and the city’s creative communities even closer together.

A long-vacant second-floor cafeteria in Abbott Hall, a former residence hall in the heart of the University’s downtown campus, will be retrofitted into a dynamic hub for creation, collaboration, performance, and innovation, predominantly for students pursuing MFAs in directing, design, writing for screen and stage, and sound arts and industries. Featuring a black box space and supporting work and design rooms, the new facility will lay the groundwork for creating new graduate programs in the arts.

All of which deserves the party of this century. “Hearing about the proposed additions at the school is extremely exciting,” says Elizabeth Clark Zoia (C89), who cochairs the gala committee with Amanda Silverman (C93). “We want to offer an opportunity for our community to reconnect and an event to celebrate the tremendous talent associated with the school.”

The 2018 gala will in some respects be a reboot of the star-studded 1980 campus affair celebrating the dedication of the Theatre and Interpretation Center, now the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts. Aired on CBS, that event drew Charlton Heston, Ann-Margret, Cloris Leachman, and a host of other acclaimed alumni to fete the school’s immense contributions to the performing arts. Next spring’s gala will do much the same—and will also attract big names. “It’s about bringing people together in celebration of this education,” adds Clark Zoia, a New York–based entrepreneur and former publicist for high-profile celebrities and film and television projects.

Silverman, who lives in Los Angeles and has produced for television, expressed similar enthusiasm for the school’s direction under Dean Barbara O’Keefe’s leadership. “I hope that alumni new and old will be excited and reinvigorated by this celebration. Our history is very rich, and we hope that people feel connected and invested,” she says. “It has been amazing to see how willing talented and famous alumni have been to volunteer their time and skills. It is an incredibly dedicated community, and so far they have risen to every challenge we have presented.”

Equally amazing, though, are the talent and vision of these generous women. Clark Zoia and Silverman have proven themselves integral to the school’s community and growth, earning heartfelt gratitude.
Innovation: Genius or luck?

Is innovation a product of genius or luck?

That question evolved into an often lively debate at “Inventing the New: Innovation in Creative Enterprises,” last academic year’s dynamic two-day Lambert Family Conference at the School of Communication. The weekend in early April featured nearly 20 scholars from esteemed universities around the world who gathered to probe the hows and whys of innovation.

The conference dovetailed with school- and University-wide efforts to highlight the innovation of faculty and student work. The school’s own Department of Communication Studies is a prime example; once heavily focused on public speaking, the discipline now includes the study of marketing, entrepreneurship, collaboration, argumentation, computation, data science, and, of course, the forces behind innovation. The conference’s discussions mirrored the growth of the field.

The keynote speaker was Pierre-Michel Menger, chair of the sociology of creative working process at the Collège de France and author of Creative Labour and The Economics of Creativity: Art and Achievement under Uncertainty. Noting that geniuses are often also hard workers, Menger cited the artist Rodin as someone who practiced, a lot, before he perfected anything.

Other guest scholars included University of Chicago sociology professor Andrew Abbott, University of Michigan communication studies and screen arts and cultures professor Amanda Lotz, MIT comparative media studies professor T. L. Taylor, and Harvard Business School entrepreneurial management associate professor Mukti Kahire.

Funded by a generous donation from Bill and Sheila Lambert, the annual Lambert Conference was organized last year by Claudio Benzecry, associate professor of communication studies, and Pablo Boczkowski, AT&T Research Professor of Communication Studies and director of the master’s program in leadership for creative enterprises.

“This conference started as a conversation on innovation across different fields,” says Benzecry. “We started thinking of combining our work and had a discussion about what kind of scholarly production was taking stock of innovation and creativity. Like schoolkids trading cards, we started asking, What have you read? What is interesting? What is—no pun intended—new about innovation?”

Boczkowski says the School of Communication makes innovation a priority with such programs as leadership for creative enterprises. “It’s great to see people connecting who might not otherwise talk,” he says. “We’ve got art historians talking to communication professors, talking to legal scholars and social scientists. The energy is great, and the talks have been fantastic.”

—Cara Lockwood
Dialogue is published for the alumni of the School of Communication. Comments and suggestions may be mailed to Dialogue, Northwestern University School of Communication, Evanston, Illinois 60208, or emailed to dialogue@northwestern.edu. Please email all address changes to BioUpdate@northwestern.edu.

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