Fostering a Creative Campus

This issue explores the important impact of the arts at Lehigh when many pursuits exhaust the powers of technical training, yet an arts education is critical in fostering the abilities required of graduates as they enter careers. Students who perform on stage, work backstage, create in the studio, or find a voice through the written word, develop skills such as innovation, creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-direction. Teaching the arts is, at its most basic element, teaching experimentation, risk-taking, and new knowledge generation. Americans for the Arts argues: "Teaching creativity develops critical thinking, engages students and fosters innovation." Lehigh promotes the ability to develop leadership and innovative skills in our students and these talents come to the fore in the College of Arts and Sciences. When exposed to the arts, students learn to approach challenges as opportunities. Working with their professors, their fellow musicians, artists, actors, and technical staff, they learn to collaborate and problem solve. Their critical thinking skills improve and they learn valuable perspectives in dialogue with others. The College is home to an amazing community of faculty and students. In this issue, you will meet Gelsey Bell ’04 who is finding success as a singer, composer, and actress. You will discover Casey Rule ’11, who has founded an online choral publishing company, as well as Ricardo Viera, director and curator of Lehigh University Art Galleries, has grown a teaching collection from 2,500 pieces to 15,000 and created a renowned hands-on-learning environment for Lehigh students. Stephanie Watts, associate professor of English, is receiving well-deserved national and international acclaim for her groundbreaking new novel. During my tenure as dean, I have had many opportunities to meet with alumni who speak of the enduring mark that Lehigh’s arts programs left on them. If you haven’t been to campus in a while, I invite you to come back and attend a performance or spend time in one of our galleries. Lehigh’s reputation is due to the energetic people who form the heart of an educational institution and the soul of students’ educational experience. A university’s reputation is also strengthened by the support of its alumni. I welcome comments from alumni and look forward to the feedback I receive with each issue. If you know of someone who will make a good story, send us a note at acumen@lehigh.edu. Please enjoy this issue of Acumen. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and comments.

Donald E. Hall
Herbert and Ann Siegel Dean
Between Fire and Water
Each March 19, residents of New Orleans celebrate the Catholic feast of St. Joseph. The feast of St. Joseph was brought to New Orleans by thousands of Sicilians who came to the city in the late 1800s. On Anna Chupa’s altar, on display at a recent exhibition, Sicilian traditions merge with New Orleans Voodoo influences to honor the patron saint. The story goes that Sicily was ravaged by drought and famine centuries ago. The people prayed to their patron, St. Joseph, for deliverance from these trials. The rains came, the crops grew, and the people of Sicily never forgot their promises to honor St. Joseph. Sicilian families would lay out spiritual altars, the Mardi Gras connections between the Sicilian traditions and Leap Year is part of Gioia’s latest book, Haunted, a dance opera with three scenes: from Haunted is a dance work as a dancer with the RIOULT Dance Company. Salerni’s 2012 ballet FABLES was written for RIOULT. Supported by a grant from Lehigh’s Humanities Center, Salerni performed three scenes from Haunted in a workshop this spring at Zoellner Arts Center.

We got some good feedback from the performance, and I subsequently went out to California to work on the piece with Danza. Salerni says, “Given what we learned from the workshop, we restructured the piece, cutting much of the spoken narration and reimagining the structure of the piece. We also watched a video of Michael’s choreography for the third scene, a dance of seduction and betrayal. The beauty of that dance confirmed our conviction that dance could communicate the essence of the story.” Salerni compositions completing the work by the end of the year 2019 season. After a quick count, he says he and Gioia have worked together on nearly 20 projects. Gioia is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning poet. Before his role as poet laureate, he was chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. At Lehigh, Salerni teaches composition and theory and directs the Lehigh University Very Modern Ensemble (LUVME). Salerni’s latest CD, Speaking of Love, features songs of poems by Gioia.

Close Than They Appear
Closer Than They Appear is a play that tells the story of an encounter between an American soldier and an Iraqi girl in Fallujah in 2003. Scenic design for this new play is a current project of Melpomene Katakalos. Written by Christine Evans, Closer Than They Appear is a ghost story for the digital war age. Written for multimedia performance, it incorporates projections from Virtual Iraq, an Immersive virtual reality program used in veterans’ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Therapy. It tracks the twin fates of Michael, an African American veteran, and Zaynab, an Iraqi teenager who is video blogging from Fallujah’s war zone through the lens of the technologies that aid and connect them. Their worlds collide in Michael’s virtual therapy room through the powerful Virtual Iraq animated landscapes. In the end, the war trauma Michael recalls, and Zaynab experiences, demands and receives a reckoning. This is a revised script for Katakalos, an assistant professor of theatre. She originally designed it three years later, “It was great. We were sketching it and brainstorming about the technology for the first time. ’That was a great experience in New York, but we’ve always wanted to tour it,’ she says. ‘We wanted to move it in some way because it’s still very relevant. Three years later, the technology is more advanced. It’s amazing. It’s brought new ideas that support the narrative and add to the sense of overlapping realities. Doing this allowed Mezzocchi to project images of Zaynab into Michael’s reality—and vice versa. The video is shot so as to convey to the audience the relationship that develops between the soldier and this young girl. “It was great. We were sketching on notebook paper and really working together because we’re creating this total environment in tandem,” says Katakalos. “That relationship is crucial because what surfaces I pick, what edges I pick really matter. There was this wonderful back and forth of information, as I created these wonderful surfaces on which he can create these layered images. It’s more interesting to create something that an audience hasn’t experienced that adds to the story.”
**The Humanities**

**Modern Languages & Literatures**

**Harraga**

In 1976, French philosopher Michel Foucault described the advent of a new logic of government, specific to Western liberal societies. He called it biopolitics, a complex concept that has been used in social theory to examine the strategies and mechanisms through which human lives are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge, power and the processes of subjectivation. With Foucault’s biopolitics as a springboard, Tessa Berrada is examining Francophone literature and its relationships to addressing migration and immigration policies.

Berrada, associate professor of French and Francophone studies in the department of modern languages and literatures, is using Foucault to investigate various aspects of illegal immigration in Francophone literature, by analyzing novels and films and critiquing the current postmodern and postcolonial interpretations of displacement and exile. The phenomenon of harraga, where illegal immigrants burn their documents and cross borders between North Africa and Europe, has been the topic of many literary and cinematic works. Berrada posits that the phenomenon has itself changed. It is more than geographic, and his current book project examines the ways in which these works help modern readers reconsider, reshape and redefine the notion of borders within which individuals as well as their bodies are confined to a space of “discipline and punishment” before becoming disposable commodities. These narratives about, or by, illegal immigrants constitute a “common denominator” argument that interrupts mainstream discussions regarding transnationalism and notes that these works demonstrate a need to reassess the idea of migration between France and North Africa, he says. Berrada is comparing two ways in which people look at the world. On one hand is biopolitics and demographics; the other exposes the views of the oppressed. Berrada examines works that give voice to those who cannot speak and whose authors provide alternative views as to what constitutes borders. These narratives represent the details and the experience of harraga, bringing to light a fragment of the journey and explore it with new meanings. He is particularly interested in the metonymic functioning of harraga narratives (a fragment of a story or a part that refers to a whole). Biopolitics as a representation of the whole (anomalous crowds of clandestine migrants crossing borders) v. harraga narratives as a representation of only a fragment of the whole but that generate a counter-discourse to biopolitics. By using this metonymy, it gives us an alternative or a contrasting view to biopolitics and, therefore, a political stance against dominant discourses on illegal migration. These works help us understand the ideas surrounding immigration and the concept of borders—not in terms of geopolitical terms and a recontextualization of borders, Berrada says. “They are not aligned. They are more a set of networks,” he says. “Evidence and a recontextualization of borders.”

Berrada’s project is an expansion of work he addressed in his last book, La figure de l’intrus: représentations postcoloniales (The Figure of the Intruder: Postcolonial Representations). In that work, he addressed ideas surrounding immigration and biopolitics as an ambivalent figure of the relationship that occurs when a concrete or abstract subject or object is introduced and/or is designated and perceived as an intruder somewhere in a set, domain or series.

**Making a Monster**

When 12-year-old Jesse Pomeroy tortured seven small boys in the Boston area and then went on to brutally murder two other children, one of the most striking aspects of the case was his inability to answer the question of why he did what he did. Whether in court or in the newspapers, many experts tried to explain his horrifying acts. Despite those efforts, and attempts since, the mystery remains.

In her latest book, Making a Monster, Dawn Keetley, professor and chair of English, details the story of Pomeroy’s crimes and the intense public curiosity. She explores the governing theories at the time—that he was molded psychologically before birth through a basic metaphysical and social interaction. She asserts that there is no evidence this is the case.

“I haven’t found a shred of hard evidence that Jesse Pomeroy’s father beat him,” she says. “I know that’s how from age one month to six months, he was covered in weeping abscesses, including one over his eye, which left a permanent white cast. That must have all kinds of effects on his personality. That’s a critical period developmentally for any child, and he was living in constant, severe pain. That’s likely why it distorted his personality so much he became what we now call a psychopath. Back then, many argued that he was ‘morally insane.’ Other authors have recently asserted that Pomeroy was beaten as a child by his father and came to take pleasure in the torture of others. It has commonly been held that Pomeroy did to other young boys what his father did to him, but Keetley argues that there is no evidence this is the case.

“The world of thoughts, which can be true or false, and reasoning, which can be rational or irrational, is a world of normativity. I argue that these two worlds of the mind and of facts have been split since the pre-Socratic Greeks. It’s not necessary that it be this way. It’s possible to think of mental phenomena as emerging from other sorts of phenomena, but we have been taught to believe that everything is natural without emergence. But in order to get to emergence, we have to go back to process.”

For Mark Bickhard, who holds dual faculty appointments in the departments of philosophy and psychology, challenges to biopolitical thinking have particular relevance.

**PHILOSOPHY**

**The Whole Person**

The history of science is a narrative of how humans view the world around them and the reformation of our assumptions about our place in the world. Theoretical psychologist Mark Bickhard has focused considerable energy trying to understand how minds emerge from, and yet remain integrated with, the world of facts.

This is a problem because the standard understanding holds that we cannot derive norms from facts, yet minds and persons are inherently normative. There is a historic split between the world of minds and the world of facts, and this split is an inherent normativity. Bickhard, the Henry R. Luce Professor of Cognitive Robotics and the Philosophy of Knowledge, explains that “a new metaphysics is needed if we are to develop true models of the normativity of mind. It is only when science studies minds and persons that we run into this fundamental problem of normativity—of true and false, rational and irrational and so on—in the factual world.” In his book project, The Whole Person, he attempts to bridge the gap between the world of minds and the world of facts. He focuses on the evolutionary and developmental emergence of normative phenomena out of prior forms of process. Bickhard, who holds dual faculty appointments in the departments of philosophy and psychology, challenges the standard understanding that holds that minds emerge from, and yet remain integrated with, the world of facts.
The Balance of Sound

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

The Natural Sciences

Matthew Kelley, discovered that a bone morphogenetic protein (Bmp-7) is expressed in the developing cochlea and signals tonotopic specificity in the ear. Exposure to Bmp-7, along with another protein called chordin, balance one another to control cell fate. The relative dose of each protein tells each cell whether to become tuned to low or high frequencies.

The tonotopic organization of hearing arises in development? Burger thinks it may be explained by one mechanism. The mapping of “frequency to place” is called tonotopy. This tonotopic organization is then preserved everywhere in the brain where sounds are processed. The tonotopic organization of hearing is of particular interest to neuroscientists and audiologists, who study the development of the auditory system. Burger has recently identified several properties of auditory neurons that appear to “tune” their own frequencies and may be influenced by the ear, brain, and even the environment. Burger suggests that these properties could be influenced by the neural environment and that they may be important for the function of the auditory system.

Anions (ions with negative charges) that interact weakly with cations (ions with positive charges) are known as weakly coordinating anions (WCAs). These anions are characterized by their ability to interact weakly with cations, which makes them useful in a variety of applications. For example, WCAs have been used as catalysts in the production of hydrogen gas, which is an important energy source.

The weak coordination of WCAs has been found to be very useful for stabilizing high-potential solutions or catalysts. They are often used as ligands to form porous structures, which are located inside nanopores. These porous materials can be used for gas separation and storage. For example, the use of WCAs in gas separation membranes can improve the efficiency of gas separation processes.

There is also evidence that the ions can be exchanged, which makes WCAs useful for applications in environmental science. For example, WCAs have been used to remove heavy metals from water, which can be contaminated by industrial or agricultural activities.

The unique properties of WCAs have also made them attractive for use in catalysis, where they can be used to activate weakly coordinating reactions. These reactions are important for applications in the production of chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and other materials.

In a project funded by the National Science Foundation, Cremonini studies the microstructure of space-time, the four-dimensional continuum into which the three physical dimensions of the universe are woven. She demonstrates that the framework of the universe’s lattice is, to date, the best framework for quantum mechanics, especially in its most extreme. She shows that these techniques are much more challenging to model than is high-temperature superconductivity, which achieve superconductivity at temperatures as high as -70 degrees Celsius, compared to the 240-degree threshold for ordinary metallic superconductors. Cremonini has been searching for the fundamental unit we have to look at all these properties broadly because we're accessing a new class of compounds so we don’t know in which area our materials will perform well,” Landskron says. “We have to look at all these properties systematically to find out what's the most promising area. Once we know that, we can focus on a specific application and further tailor these materials toward these applications.”

In related research efforts, Landskron’s lab investigates other nanoporous materials, which are highly important for a range of technological challenges facing society. The applications of nanoporous materials span many areas, including greenhouse gas reduction. This makes the exchange to air and water purification, to energy storage applications.

Synthesizing porous materials with interconnected WCA building blocks (P-WCAs) is the focus of new research by Landskron. Similarly to the molecular WCAs, there are no strong coordination sites for the nanofibers, which is relevant for gas separation and storage.

“We are investigating these properties broadly because we’re accessing a new class of compounds so we don’t know in which area our materials will perform well,” Landskron says. “We have to look at all these properties systematically to find out what's the most promising area. Once we know that, we can focus on a specific application and further tailor these materials toward these applications.”

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Churchill School and Governance

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failed transition to democracy was failed to materialize. period of legislative reforms. “ says Grigoryan. “It had been lost and 1 million took hold in 1994, 30,000 lives a Russian-negotiated ceasefire 1992, the conflict had escalated becoming independent following communist societies succeeded to explore a fundamental ques- INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Social Sciences

In the years immediately preceding independence, a conflict had erupted between Armenia and its neighbor, Azerbaijan. In 1992, the conflict had escalated into a full-blown war. By the time a Russian-negotiated ceasefire took hold in 1994, 30,000 lives had been lost and 1 million people had been displaced.

In the first half of the ’90s, Armenia was often referred to in the Western media as an “island of democracy” says Grigoryan. “It had a government that had been elected in free and fair elections and had embraced on a fertile period of legislative reform.” However, its early promise failed to materialize. The main culprit behind Armenia’s failed transition to democracy was the war with Azerbaijan and the continued state of belligerence after the ceasefire was signed in 1994, he says. He is exploring the broader topic of war and democratic transition for an upcoming book.

“There is no consensus in the literature on how war and demo- cratic change are related,” he says.

A popular international relations theory known as the democratic peace theory maintains that there is something special about democracies and their foreign policy—particularly the way they relate to other states. It posits that liberal democracies have carved peace causes democracy rather than wars. It has to have the ability to control information.” None of these things, he points out, “is true, Russian societies are vulnerable to what Grigoryan calls a “psychological predisposition toward totalitarianism.”

“Given a serious effort to ensure that Armenia will ever become a democracy.”

PSYCHOLOGY

Historicist Narratives

It happens every day. A husband blames his wife for her perceived shortcomings. Women blame a supervisor for his office bullying. One social group blames another for the social problems in their community. Sometimes, blame can be construc- tive and can motivate its target to change. All too often, however, blame is overly harsh. Blame can be detrimental to relationships and is the focus of research by Michael Gill. “Blaming permeates every type of human relationship,” says Gill, associate professor of psychology. “Whether it’s intergroup or interper- sonal, the way we handle situations in which we disagree of another’s behavior has a tremendous impact on relationships and on society.”

Gill’s Blame Lab examines how harsh, spiteful blame can be shaped into something calmer and more constructive. As the cornerstone of his work is the historicist narrative. He defines a historicist narrative as a stated account of the life history of a wrongdoer, which explains his or her actions in terms of a shift in the state and weakens society. This

say, “Historicist narratives are quite effective at removing harsh- ness from blame responses.” To date, Gill’s published work has centered on demonstrating that historicist narratives can temper blame (other researchers have cast doubt on this possi- bility) and on exploring through examination of why they do so. He has shown, for example, that perceptions of the extent of the transgressor’s prior emotional suffering and perceptions of the degree of intentionally behind his bad actions cannot account for the effect of historicist narratives. So what about? Gill focuses on perceptions of free will and makes the novel argu- ment that everyday people utilize two distinct free will concepts: freedom of action and control of self-formation. Freedom of action refers to a person’s “in the moment” capacity to choose actions (e.g., Can she choose to do either X or Y at this moment?). Existing theories focus on whether a person is the architect of her stable, dispositional will (e.g., Is she the creator of her stable tendency to be hypercritical?). Gill’s research finds that historicist narratives have no effect on perceived freedom of action. Narratives mitigate blame when the disruptive effect of the story of her life of a wrongdoer, which explains his or her actions in terms of an unfortunate life history. “The story provides an under- standing of the process by which a person or group came to have some object-ionable quality.”

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impacts the quality of subsequent communication between the partners (e.g., is it more supportive, less hostile?). Other planned activities include trying to understand when and why jury’s in malicious “mock jury” contexts—will be receptive to historicist narratives regarding criminal offenders. Existing research suggests that jurors are often dismissive of such narratives. This work will have implications for how to bring an element of mercy into the criminal justice system, which existing evidence suggests has beneficial effects on important outcomes such as criminal recidivism.

SOCIOLOGY

Commuter Marriages

The concept of marriage may be in flux, but commuter marriage—which involves live apart in service to their dual professional careers—appear to confirm that marriage remains an important institution. In a study that appeared in “Journal of Family Theory & Review,” Gill explored how commuter couples engage in discourse about their geographic separation.

• More than 75 percent described the usefulness of communication technolo- gies for task sharing.
• A substantial minority inter- preted their cohabitation as paradoxically facilitating their interdependence—15.5 percent of respondents reported from nine couples engaged in this narrative.
• Only six percent of respon- dents said they had felt judged negatively for their lifestyle—mostly family members. Female respondents spent more time discussing both individualism and interdependence.

The narrative about non- cohabitation facilitating interconnectedness was more common (though not exclusive) among respon- dents who lived geographi- cally further apart and saw each other less frequently.

Lindemann presents commuter marriage as suddenly and the shift toward the “individualization” of the American marriage. This shift has been largely due, he says, to “a manifestation of the male breadwinner/female homemaker model, decreasing task complementation for male and female partners, increasing the diversity of marriage.”

“Commuter marriages may be viewed as an extreme manifestation of major transitions in the nature of work and family that have been taking place in the U.S. since the 1970s,” says Lindemann. “The results not only shed light on this under-studied population, but also broaden our understanding of the evolving cultural meaning of marriage.”
Like a Great Comet
Actor, singer, composer Gelsey Bell ’04 pushes artistic boundaries with her multi-dimensional career

BY CHRIS QUIRK

With his 1952 composition 4’33”, John Cage challenged the definition of music by having the pianist close the lid over the keyboard and sit playing nothing for the designated four minutes and 33 seconds. The lid was opened and closed only to designate new movements. At first, the piece seemed an act of musical insouciance, and contemporary accounts report that some audience members were indeed miffed. But in silence blossomed a kōan—the chance to appreciate the richness of ever-present ambient sound. Cage had devised a way to dissolve for a few minutes the veil between art and life; he later said about his approach to composition that his concerns had become social rather than musical.

A similarly broad spirit of the possibilities for music and performance animates the work of Gelsey Bell ’04. Her artistic output—which includes performances, theater, songs, musical collaborations and a role in an acclaimed Broadway musical—almost always has an element that reaches beyond the recognized domain of her medium and into the real-time life of her audience members.

It would not have taken a Tiresias to foretell Bell’s life in theater and music. Her mother is an accomplished pianist and played frequently in the Northern California home where Bell grew up. Bell took piano lessons as a child, and her nickname in elementary school was “Melody Box” because she sang all the time. In high school, she switched from piano to voice lessons, and she traveled east for a summer program at New York University in musical theater writing. While there, she decided she wanted to attend college near—but not in—New York City.

“I was looking for a very balanced liberal arts college experience,” Bell said. “Lehigh was perfect for that.”

Bell won a choral scholarship to Lehigh and came to Bethlehem, where she was a dual major in theater and music and a minor in philosophy.

“The Humanities Center was quite a bustling place, and many of my classes there, spending time with a lot of people who were not necessarily involved in the arts.”

Bell recalls, in particular, a course taught by her philosophy adviser, Gordon Beam, that helped her lay the intellectual foundation for her later work. The course centered on Fluxus, an interdisciplinary, rebellious art movement begun in the 1960s that combined the chaotic methods of Dada with often biting sociopolitical commentary. Bell also participated in a philosophy reading group that examined the work of Deleuze and Guattari, post-structuralists, along with perennial philosophical themes.

“We might take an hour to just talk about ariusm. Does it actually exist, and what real benefit does it produce for the world? That was one of the magical things about being at Lehigh—having a space where people in their early 20s, and often from very different backgrounds, could air things like that out,” Bell said.

While Bell had plenty of musical DNA from her mother, her father was a professor of philosophy, and Bell credits, in part, the academic milieu and erudite banter around the home for the conceptual slant of her art. One of Bell’s first forays into performance was Song Cycle in Time/Space, an alternative campus tour with musical accompaniment featuring a soloist and chorus that walked the audience through different locations—including a bathroom.

“Song Cycle in Time/Space is a piece that I’ve spent a lot of time learning from the singers around me and also trying various things out,” she said. “I work with composers who are interested in putting a lot of different techniques in the same space.”

Recently, Bell performed in a Broadway musical, but as you might expect, it wasn’t your typical musical. Bell played Princess Mary/Opera Singer/Maid servant in Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812 at the Imperial Theatre. It was a staging of a section of War and Peace, but that surrounding the audience with the play. At one point in the show, Bell’s character snuggled a man from the audience as a stand-in suitor. The production won two Tony Awards, including the prize for Best Scenic Design of a Musical, a nod to the adventurous way in which the play encompasses the audience. The New York Times called the show “intoxicatingly good” and dubbed it “the most innovative and the best musical to open on Broadway since Hamilton.”

Bell’s current dance card is as full as ever. She recently completed her doctorate in performance studies at New York University and just released Ciphony, an album on which she collaborated with fellow composer and instrumentalist John King. She is an active member of thingNY and Vari-speed, bands are composer/performer collectives. This summer, she traveled to Tokyo to study Noh theater and worked there with a Japanese choreographer to develop a feminist re-envisioning of that classical genre. Earlier this year, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts awarded Bell a $40,000 grant in the Music/Sound category. The grant will fund some of Bell’s future projects, including an upcoming solo album.

Calling from a wide range of techniques and styles to create her own performance works, to literally voice those of contemporary composers, and to explore improvisation, Bell’s work is not tied to an object-based economy, rethinking the way music and performance can function on a societal level. Like Cage, Bell continues to create music that transports the listener to the moment where he is.
Zoeller Arts Center builds on a rich cultural heritage as it shapes a creative campus

by JENNIFER MABANGOS

According to all public accounts, the official groundbreaking for Zoellner Arts Center, currently celebrating its 20th anniversary season, took place on April 7, 1995. Only a handful of people are aware that the ground was actually broken a few nights before.

“Just before the ‘official’ groundbreaking for Zoellner Arts Center in the spring of 1995, Bob Thompson, music department chair, Nadine Sine and I made our way to the future site of the arts center,” recalls Deborah Sacarakis, Zoeller’s artist director. “In a last-minute, impromptu ceremony, we dug a little hole in the earth with a spoon and declared the location duly dedicated to arts. Dr. Sine is still in possession of the ceremonial spoon. The potential envisioned for the center was invigorating and inspirational.”

Sine says: “The spoon with a carefully typed label commemorating the event still sits in my office.”

This incident actually speaks volumes about the resourcefulness, tenacity, ingenuity and imagination that characterized the arts at Lehigh University in the decades before Zoellner Arts Center.

“Without question, there was an active and remarkable cultural life at the university prior to the construction of the center,” Sacarakis says.

“Performances, however, were staged in the old dining room in Lamberton Hall, in Wilbur Powerhouse, in Grace Hall, in the Asa Packer Dining Room, in Packard Lab Auditorium, in Whitaker Lab Auditorium, in Broughton Middle School, in just about any space that could be ‘adapted’ to accommodate a performance.

“Staging performances was daunting and difficult,” she says. “At most of these venues, the stage had to be built, folding chairs set out, lighting and sound instruments loaded in and set up, dressing rooms jerry-rigged. I think both artists and audience members made allowances for less-than-desirable venues. That was to the credit of both groups.

“After Zoellner was inaugurated, professional staff including technical support, box office and marketing personnel took over for student and subcontracted personnel who were engaged on a show-by-show basis,” she says.

Fostering Creativity

Indeed, Zoellner Arts Center facilitated a whole new level for performances and presentations at Lehigh University. The 105,000-square-foot facility on Lehigh’s Asa Packer Campus, which is home to the department of music, the department of theatre, the art galleries and the guest artist series, officially opened for the 1997-98 season, with construction taking place the year before. Funded by a $6 million gift from the late Robert E. Zoeller ’54, the building was designed by Philadelphia architectural firm Dagit Saylor and houses three theatres: a 1,000-seat proscenium theatre (Baker Hall), a 300-seat thrust theatre (Diamond Theatre) and a 125-seat black box theatre. It also contains a two-story art gallery, several rehearsal rooms, a recording studio, dance studio, scene shop, costume shop, dressing rooms and green rooms, practice rooms, classrooms, a music library, box office, faculty and staff offices, and three large lobbies suitable for receptions. A 345-car parking deck is attached to the center.

There was no Zoellner Arts Center when Erica Hoelscher, who is today the chairperson of Lehigh’s department of theatre, came to Lehigh in 1980.

“When I first arrived at Lehigh,” Hoelscher recalls, “the Zoeller Arts Center was a large hole in the ground. Shortly after, the entire department faculty and staff put on hard hats and came over to tour the foundation and initial construction of the building. I remember standing in the audience area of the Diamond Theatre in awe of how much it resembled an ancient Greek theatre. Later, when we first moved into the building, I frequently would get lost in the lower level, where the costume shop is located.

“As the faculty member specializing in costume design, it was my job to pack the entire costume inventory that was stored in the attic of Chandler-Ullman and organize it in Zoeller Arts Center. I was also responsible for outfitting the Zoeller costume shop in terms of tools, machinery and equipment. It was a very exciting time because we were venturing out in new territory and were recipients of considerable investment on the part of the university,” she says.

Hoelscher emphasizes that theatre has always been an important aspect of the Lehigh education, dating back to the days when the university’s students were exclusively male engineers. In 1884, those students created the Mustard and Cheese Drama Society, writing, producing and performing plays at Lehigh and even touring the surrounding community.

Far from Rening’s Bar

Students were instrumental in bringing theatrical professionals to Lehigh University to advise the M&C Drama Society and advocated for theatre to be recognized as a valuable academic pursuit, complementing the other areas of study available at Lehigh.

Sine first came to Lehigh in 1980, becoming department chair in 1992, which she describes as "the moment when the university first gave serious consideration to building an arts center. We worked very hard to make it a reality. It was an exhausting process but worth every bit of it.”

Zoellner has totally transformed the music department, according to Sine, who has remained department chair for all but three of the past 25 years (except for the 2006-09 period). While we did some excellent work in our old quarters in Lamberton (Hall), having such a wonderful, acoustically superior concert hall has put us on the map in the Lehigh Valley region,” she says. “We have used Baker Hall in every possible configuration, including some of the architects never
envisioned. The faculty has nearly doubled in size, and hundreds of students are participating every semester, even though we have few majors. That we are able to do high-level performances with non-majors is a testament to the dedication of the students and the top-notch faculty who direct them. Those of us who were around in the days before Zoellner can attest to the impact the center has had on the entire campus. It gave the arts a visible presence, and all the activity there has provoked an entirely new atmosphere throughout the university, she says.

From a numbers perspective, Zoellner’s impact on the department of theatre is clear. Since 1996, Hoelscher says, student enrollment in theatre department courses has increased 64 percent, and since the department moved to Zoellner, the number of students involved in theatre productions has tripled to more than 3,500 students per year.

“The department of theatre’s long-term commitment to diversity is reflected in our productions, one-quarter of which are plays highlighting minority themes, marginalized or alternative voices,” she says. “Our graduates pursue further studies at top-tier institutions, such as Yale, NYU, Brandeis, Columbia and Northwestern, or enter the industry in the country’s most competitive markets.

“Lehigh theatre alumni are working in television, film and theatres across the United States, as well as in other professions, such as education, law, business, arts administration and public relations. Many of our graduates leave Lehigh to pursue professional and doctoral degrees from the most prestigious educational institutions in the country,” Hoelscher says. “Since one of her earliest memories of Zoellner is a sensation of being over her head while standing in the balcony during the first rehearsal in Baker Hall in January 1997.

“I was feeling a wave of relief upon hearing the wonderful acoustics in the hall,” she recalls. “Having great acoustics is never given in even the most celebrated venues and cities, so it was joy to hear the music in our new hall.”

For the stellar Baker Hall acoustics also bring to mind a particular guest artist — a Zoellner gala performance by Tony Bennett. Few can forget "the moment in which he put the microphone down and sang without amplification. It was another testament to the wonderful atmosphere of Baker Hall," Sine says.

Andy Cassano, who became part of the Zoellner team in the fall of 2012, says it’s difficult to name the most notable Zoellner performer or event. "With the construction of Zoellner, the aesthetic of the venue finally came together," he explains. "Now that we have a theater that matches the aesthetic of the productions and art being presented," she says. "It’s always a pleasure and interesting to welcome back to campus, alumni who have participated in the performing arts at Lehigh and to share their performances in our beautiful center. Whether those students graduated before the center opened in 1997 or after, they are part of the Zoellner Arts Center story. There are many dedicated alumni, faculty, administrators and staff members — some no longer with us — whose work built a strong foundation and whose generosity enabled the vision to be realized. They are all part of Zoellner Arts Center’s living legacy.

Sacarakis says that she has come to view Zoellner as "the heart" of the Lehigh campus.

"Creative inquiry is now an important avenue of cross-disciplinary study at Lehigh, and the department of theatre has long been associated with interdisciplinary pedagogy," she explains. "I hope that the university will see the wisdom, practicality and marketability of educating students with the ability to work in a team, appreciate philosophical, ideological and political perspectives that differ from their own, who are innovative, imaginative and empathetic, and who value diversity and collaboration. All of those area skills that can be acquired through participation in the arts.

Looking Ahead

Visioning the center’s next 20 years, Cassano says that Zoellner’s ultimate vision to Lehigh and the surrounding community will likely extend far beyond the artists trained inside the building’s classrooms.

"We train artists, we develop artists, and we are — at our core and primary focus — about the art," he says. "But what we also do well, perhaps even better, is train advocates, leaders and the next generation of audiences. Music and theatre have about three to four dozens majors. But every year, we have about 1,000 students from all four colleges who participate in performances, in design, technical and audience services. They find their passion in the arts at Lehigh. They find how they can use their creativity in the arts in their academics. They find their outlet for expression in performance. They also connect with their passion through their experiences in attending transformational events. These are the next generation of leaders who will hopefully go into their communities and have the arts as a part of their lives.

"Zoellner Arts Center still has a lot of potential to make a bigger impact."

Zoellner has been, and will continue to be, a part of a rich cultural heritage in Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley, according to Sacarakis.

"As recorded by the early Moravians, " she explains, "Bethlehem residents were creating and recreating music, literature and other arts in the 1700s. In that regard, Lehigh University Choral Arts fits into the long and great tradition of singing that projected the city’s founding. Similarly with orchestral work, the early Moravians had one of the nation’s first oratorios, and we continue that tradition with the Lehigh University Philharmonic.

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"It’s pretty unbelievable when I take time for recollection and reflection, she says. "I can only hope that, as Tony Bennett sang on stage at Zoellner Arts Center (fall 2011), “The Best Is Yet To Come.”"
By Geoff Gehman ’89 M.A.

As head of Lehigh University Art Galleries, Ricardo Viera has assembled a world-class art collection that provides students with hands-on experiences found nowhere else.

An Advocate for the Arts

Two years ago, Ricardo Viera celebrated Lehigh’s 150th birthday with a five-layer cake of stories.

The university’s curator/director of galleries and museum organization boasted an exhibit of 56 photographs depicting three centuries in South Bethlehem. He filled Maginnes Hall’s first floors with portraits of everyone from a boxer to a football kicker, everything from a farmers market to Bethlehem Steel’s Machine Shop No. 2. He added living color to the black and white photos by commissioning conversations with them by Bill George ’73, a Founding member of Touchstone Theatre’s ensemble, who collaborated with Viera in a street version of “Don Quixote.”

The shows exemplify Viera’s skill at turning exhibits into experiences. For 44 years he’s been engaging and engulfs Lehigh viewers with a global village of remarkably eclectic, remarkably magnetic objects: historic baseball artifacts; avant-garde photographs by Japanese women; multimedia installations by Latin Americans; West African sign paintings of America’s first African-American president.

At the same time he’s supervised an extremely wide range of boundary-pushing collections, installations and residencies. Since then Viera has engaged in many intellectual embraces. In 2011 he curated an exhibit of images by the late Mr. Imagination (aka Gregory and Other Sordid Figures in Pre-Nazi Germany. He chose the pictures because they were the first color images by a master of black-and-white social commentary, and because they were "well-composed political cartoons” based on paintings by Max Beckmann, George Grosz and other German Expressionists. "The Forbidden Pictures" immediately became an international sensation, spurring a furore extending to the talk show of pundits Bill O’Reilly. Conservatives denounced Fink as a lunatic and a heretic. Viera was castigated as a traitor and a terrorist. Some critics erroneously demanded his deportation to Mexico.

Viera regards the Lam show as his Lehigh Swan song. He pauses to contemplate what he’ll wear to the opening reception. "Should I..." he says with an impish grin, "dress like a swan?”

Fink urged Viera to close the show early, a radical proposal from someone who swats controversy like a peseta filled with homework.

Viera’s response—"Over my dead body”—strengthened his admiration for Fink as an intellectual dragon slayer.

"Ricardo wants to break through the status quo into real thinking and impulses and feelings," says Fink. “How often do you stand with a person and have a decent intellectual conversation and feel like you’re being hugged?”

Since then Viera has engaged in many intellectual embraces. In 2011 he curated an exhibit of photographs by women to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the admission of female students to Lehigh. There were so many styles and subjects, the exhibit was less about gender and more about the democracy of photography.

In 2012 he marked the re-election of Barack Obama with West African shop-advertising portraits of America’s first African-American president as a tribal king, superhero and friend of Tupac Shakur, the martyred rapper.

Three years ago Viera began planning an exhibit fusing his present with his past. He grew up admiring Lam’s dynamic blend of abstractionism, surrealism and Afro-Cubanism. His admiration grew in 1997 when he discovered a private collection of the artist drawn during Operation Peter Pan.

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Making Music, Writing Code & Creating a Portfolio Career

by Weld Royal ‘88

“Sometimes, it takes a name to identify a trend. Back when the World Wide Web emerged in the 1990s, a big thinker wrote an influential business book called The Age of Unreason (1989). In the book, author and management expert Charles Handy coined the term “portfolio career” to describe the dramatic social changes going on in life and the workplace, brought on by new technologies, a decline in full-time positions and other forces that required people to abandon established rules and experiment with new ways of working with one another. The book was later named by Time among the most influential business management books.

The term portfolio career is now a mainstream trend that continues to grow. Today, an individual’s portfolio might consist of an income-producing activity in an area in which they are highly skilled and a lower-income-generating pursuit in an area that is personally meaningful or professionally challenging, or both—such as starting a business, volunteering abroad and making and selling art. Examples abound: tech CEOs who write novels, accountants who make music, architects who design buildings, and social workers who write books about their experiences.

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Feature

How a software entrepreneur built a music publishing business

Preparing Students for Portfolio Careers

Rule also took advantage of a new program, one that seemed designed to prepare students for portfolio careers or simply the sheer number of full-time positions people now hold over a lifetime. The new normal is four different jobs by the time a person turns 32, according to recent research by the networking platform LinkedIn, which analyzed career moves of 3 million college graduates. Lehigh’s Integrated Degree in Engineering, Arts and Sciences (IDEAS) program is administered by the College of Arts and Sciences and the P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science. A four-year honors program, it allows students to earn a bachelor’s degree with concentrations in both colleges.

“In the program appealed to me because it didn’t focus solely on specific fields of study, but rather on how to synthesize a wide range of interests and skills,” said Rule, who pursued computer science and music and was in the first class to graduate from the program.

Links Between Musicians and Software Developers

Theories abound about the connections between musicians and computer science. Wired magazine explored the issue in “Do Musicians Make Good Programmers?”

“In labs doing electronic media around Chicago, the programmers are often musicians and software developers. They have similar interests and skills, and that provides composers with the same flexibility and control as self-publishing, but without all the hassle, expense or required technical expertise,” recalls Rule.

NoteNova bills itself as a new approach to music publishing, designed for and by composers, directors and performers. With a carefully curated catalog, the two-and-a-half-year-old company now publishes several hundred scores by around 30 composers.

What’s more, NoteNova allows composers to retain full ownership of the copyright to their music, an unusual approach in the industry. Rule has not sought outside investors because he says he’s concerned he would have to compromise on his founding principles for the sake of higher returns.

“I designed this business model based on what I want to exist as a composer, not neces-
No One Is Coming To Save Us

Jay Fergason, once a boy with no family or prospects, returns triumphant after years away, poised to build a big house on the hill and fill it with the girl he left behind.

But that girl didn’t freeze in time where he left her, and that’s just the beginning of the problem. The book is filled with these disappointments, complex truths that move far beyond The Great Gatsby’s thin spine. Now approaching middle age, Ava has her own desperate mission to fulfill: conceiving a child, against mounting odds. Her mother, Sylvia, also poses a challenge to Jay’s grand dreams. She helped raise Jay and knows better than anyone about both his past and the likelihood of his long-shot future.

And yet, Sylvia knows that she can’t stop him from trying. That may be the crucial point in the book: Ava, Sylvia, Jay and the town itself will not stop pushing forward despite the knockouts they’re weathered.

“The energy, the money, the great emotion you’re going through, and you don’t know if it’s going to pan out,” Watts said, describing the difficulty her characters face. “You have to do that with no way to see to the other side.”

She related that push to the very real remnants of the Jim Crow South that her characters must navigate. Simmy’s, the town’s fast food spot of choice and a historical institution, is poised to build a big house on the hill and fill it with the girl he left behind.

“There’s something about that that’s just unanswerable,” she said. “There’s something about that that’s just spiritual, or maybe it’s anti-spiritual or something,” she laughed. “Faith is that, right? You don’t know if you will spend your life doing something—and really being caught up in it. You don’t know if it’s going to be okay.”

One option is denial, and all of the characters try that out. Ava denies that her pregnancy may not be viable. Jay denies that the past can be rewound. And others deny their own bitter truths.

“Nobody wants to live in that uncertainty. And it is necessary,” said Watts. Watts feels this way about the process of creating in general. She remembers the agonistic effort it took to bring the book into being, when there were no guarantees of success or support.

“I don’t come from people who have money, I don’t come from people who know how to negotiate the world of higher education,” she said. “It was very difficult to be in the place where I am. But it’s not impossible, and sometimes you have to just keep doing something until you believe you can. And I want to stress that.”

Part of ambition is seeing others succeed and feeling disconnected from that success, according to Watts. And that is crucial to making it, too.

“That is the feeling that will keep you going. That ‘it’s beyond me, but it can also push me.’ Fear is powerful in that way to Watts; it can make a person forward.

“It’s okay to feel it,” she said. “It feels awful, but it’s okay to feel a little bit awful sometimes.”

Watts is considering these challenges as she contemplates her next book, inspired by themes from the Salem witch trials and the power of teenage girls. It was young women, often, whose accusations landed their peers in deep trouble.

“The power of that kind of nasty subversive-ness is so interesting to me,” she said. “It is gossip, (which) I suppose is a way of taking power.”

One character in No One Could have used this kind of power, and Watts is experimenting with the ways she might harness it through a spiritual awakening.

Watts tells aspiring writers about what an aunt calls gray days: “Days when you feel like, ‘this is not how I should be spending my life. Life is too short to be spent doing x.’”

When this feeling struck in the course of her writing, Watts said, it was the people who believed in her work, including her department at Lehigh and its dean and provost, who gave her the time and confidence to continue.

“It’s been huge for them to see this as something worthwhile and important,” she said.

From approving travel for conferences and interviews to allowing her the space to get the energy, the time and confidence to continue, Watts said, it was the people who supported her writing, Watto, Watto said, it was the people who were pivotal in her journey.

“Watts feels fortunate for the university’s support.”

“Lehigh has been very generous with me,” she said. “And that’s invaluable.”

No One Is Coming To Save Us

The Great Gatsby in her new novel

Stephanie Powell Watts re-visions The Great Gatsby in her new novel

How do we recover from great loss—mother from her child, a young man from his dream or a town from its main industry, the jobs and identity that have given it life? Stephanie Powell Watts, associate professor of English and author of No One Is Coming To Save Us, asks this question again and again in her new novel.

Watts’ characters must reckon with what seems like more than their share of loss and hardship. Poor, African-American and living in a Southern town where livelihoods are disappearing again and again in her new novel.

The memory of exclusion does not just disappear, and it is not clear what should replace it.

“There’s something about that that’s just spiritual, or maybe it’s anti-spiritual or something,” she laughed. “Faith is that, right? You don’t know if you will spend your life doing something—and really being caught up in it. You don’t know if it’s going to be okay.”

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CREATIVE WRITING AT LEHIGH

The Creative Writing program, an integral part of the English department, recognizes the importance of creative writing in helping students develop their own powers of expression, empathy and critical reading and thinking. Creative Writing faculty are committed to providing a learning experience that enhances students’ creative, literary and professional lives; to building a community of writers, scholars and critics; and to developing productive relationships between that creative writing community and the university, the region and the larger society.

The program uses a combination of traditional studio workshops, lectures, seminars and literary study to help students acquire the tools of good writing and to allow them to develop their individual voices within the long conversation that is the literary tradition.

If you would like to learn more about how you can support the Creative Writing program, please contact Kelly Stazi at (610)758-2824 or kbs415@lehigh.edu.
Lewis Baer ‘72 has many reasons to be an advocate for the arts at Lehigh. As head of a New York City-based antiques and prop house, he often raves about his college experience, just like a good friend of his father did when Baer was deciding on colleges.

“I thought it would be a real stretch for me to get admitted based on the academic reputation of the school,” explained Baer. “Lehigh had a business school, too, which didn’t have a language requirement. Also, the geographic location was ideal, as I wanted access to both Philadelphia (I grew up in the suburbs) and New York City, where my family’s business was based. Finally, I thought I could play college-level soccer and lacrosse and wanted to give that a try, too.”

Baer is the managing principal of Newel LLC, now in its fourth generation, which deals in fine antiques and the decorative arts. He has directed the company, founded as a prop house for Broadway theatre by his grandfather, since 2001. He started working at Newel as a summer job after graduating from Lehigh and never bothered to take any college courses in art history, design or architecture. He took electives in advanced accounting and business and wanted to reap the rewards of his degree and work for an accounting firm. The summer after he graduated, however, he had gotten an internship with a British accounting firm in Malta through AISAC, an international college organization that recruits internships around the world. AISAC

“On the whole, my academic preparation was excellent, but life in the business world is something that a school can never duplicate,” Baer said. “The interpersonal environment of dealing with people and business decisions in the outside world is a big stretch. Certainly, having an internship or some form of outside work experience is important.”

Baer added, “Over the course of my career, I have implemented computer and database systems that have advanced the company into the digital world. With 40 years as a witness to the art and antiques industry, as well as the film and television industries, I have made my observations known with a blog that regularly criticizes industry practices and commentaries on trends.”

A resident of Englewood, N.J., Baer has been an active Lehigh alumnus and volunteer, having twice chaired his Reunion Fund Committee, and was a founding member of the Lehigh Leadership Council. In addition, he has offered his gallery resources to faculty and students in the theatre and the art, architecture and design departments. Also, Baer was a trustee at the Dwight-Englewood School, where he led building fundraising campaigns and a master plan for the school. Presently, he is on the Englewood Planning Board, where he recently directed the 2014 City of Englewood master plan and is a board member of Regents-Superior, Ltd., an auction house.

All in all, Baer is happy with the career path he took.

“Sports have always been an interest of Baer’s. He played soccer and lacrosse at Lehigh, but gave them both up when he realized he was only capable of doing two out of three activities (sports, social life, academics) in college.

“T he need for real-life actual business experience is to extrapolate what I was taught at Lehigh; I wanted to see a real purchase order and trial balance, which big businesses create in the real world.” – Lewis Baer

Feature

Lewis Baer ‘72 is proud of his family’s connection to Lehigh.
Kalpani Singh ’18 is a tour de force. An actor, singer and songwriter with a passion for social justice, she is looking to combine her loves to effect social change.

Singh, the Theodore U. Horger ’61 Visual & Performing Arts scholar for 2017-18, says it was the opportunity to combine her interests in theatre and political science that drew her to Lehigh.

“I knew I wanted to dual major in theatre and political science when I was looking at colleges,” she says. “Theatre has been an integral part of my life since I was small. I always sang. I played an instrument; I sang in the choir. I loved performing, and I wanted a school that would allow me to balance both majors.” Singh says the fit was perfect when she met with Augustine Ripa, professor of theatre, at a Diversity Life Day for accepted students.

“Was I was looking at colleges, ” she says. “I knew I wanted to dual major in theatre and political science that drew her to Lehigh. Singh is exploring her options as she looks at opportunities after Lehigh. Her interests lead in many directions. She’s open to life showing her which path to explore next.

Singh is an active member of the Lehigh University Choir. She is energized by the artistic paths open to her.

“One of the great things about the theatre department is that you’re entrepreneurial, and having these tools is a huge asset,” Singh says. “I definitely appreciate that there is freedom in theatre, you can act, you can design a set. I put my handiwork into something you are working collectively to create something. Creating something requires having these skills to help empower people and help communities to change for the better.”

“I’d like to find a way to merge theatre with politics to help empower people and help communities to change for the better.”

Kalyani Singh ’18 is a tour de force. An actor, singer and songwriter with a passion for social justice, she is looking to combine her loves to effect social change.

Singh, the Theodore U. Horger ’61 Visual & Performing Arts scholar for 2017-18, says it was the opportunity to combine her interests in theatre and political science that drew her to Lehigh.

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“I think it’s all about giving back to the institution what you have accumulated over the years.”

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