Jazz Alumni Hit Professional Highs

Two School of Music jazz alumni have moved into the top of their professions, one in performance and one in recording.

Percussionist Benny Reiner is playing in the orchestra for the Broadway hit “Hamilton.” He was recommended by a drummer in the Broadway community to Alex Lacamoire, orchestrator and music supervisor of the show. Benny sent over a few recordings and was soon offered the position. Reiner says, “Having the opportunity to be a part of something so influential is something we all dream about as creators. It is easily the most challenging gig I’ve ever done, but also the most inspiring.”

Reiner is also an artist representative for three instrument manufacturers. He is humbled that these companies have the faith in him to represent the instruments they make. He plays exclusively on Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth drumsticks, and Craviotto drums. He says, “Not only because I’m signed with them, but because I truly believe they are the best at making their respective instruments.”

The time he spent at the University of Memphis, Reiner remembers as the most formative and revolutionary of his life. “I cannot thank professors like Tim Goodwin, Jack Cooper, Mike Assad, and Frank Shaffer enough for really pushing me. I remember Tim pulling me into his office... and we just played quarter notes for an hour. It was moments like those that were priceless.” He also notes the extremely high standards of his fellow students.

In addition to the School of Music, Reiner benefited from just being in Memphis. He was involved in the Memphis music scene with fellow students and professionals. He met countless musicians from all over the world and always tells people there is something special about Memphis. “I don’t know if it’s in the water, but everyone is just so naturally talented,” he says.

(Continued on page 3)
In 2016, the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music began another community partnership, this time with the Art For Life’s Sake organization. The School is providing the program with space to deliver music education classes and instruction on string instruments. The organization’s founder, Dr. Hattie Isen, requested the arrangement because the space they had been using had become unaffordable.

Art For Life’s Sake (AFLS) has provided arts access and musical exposure for at-risk children for two decades. AFLS was founded in 1990 by Dr. Isen while she worked as an elementary counseling supervisor for Memphis City Schools. She learned from her experience and research that training in and exposure to the arts empowers students who may be at risk of making choices that are counter-productive to a healthy future. Although AFLS programs are available to young people regardless of gender, race, family income, ethnic background, religious traditions or disabilities, the organization’s main mission is to create opportunities for under-served and under-represented children to have access to the arts. Programs are aimed at children ages 4 to 14, with pre-K children reached by special projects.

According to John Chiego, Director of the School of Music, “Our partnership with Art for Life’s Sake allows us to serve the community in a way that perhaps no other organization can. We have the expertise on our faculty and with our students to help in their educational mission and by having them on our campus, it gives them a more prominent profile in the community which should allow them to grow in their mission.”

Since 1990, approximately 723 students have had access to Art for Life’s Sake. Of this number, some have auditioned for and entered one of the Memphis Youth Symphony programs, middle and high school orchestras, and a few have participated in college level strings programs. Progress consultations, informal surveys and performance assessments suggest participants are better focused as students, are inspired to achieve more, and show more appreciation for the arts. The engagement of students in the arts after school, weekends and summers also reduces the likelihood that youth are making choices that are counter-productive to a happy, safe and productive future.

According to former participant Sokoya Cooper, “I began studying the violin at Art For Life’s Sake at the age of four. I participated in the myriad opportunities that existed at AFLS — summer programs, Saturday classes, cultural activities, performances and so much more. Studying violin at AFLS provided me with the opportunity to work with highly experienced violin instructors. It was this foundation that provided me the opportunity to play in multiple orchestras: Colonial Middle School, Overton High School, and both the Memphis Youth Symphony Ensemble and Sinfonia. I am so grateful for all of the opportunities that this organization has given me and opened doors to, that I decided to come back to help the next generation of AFLS students and help the organization as a whole.”
Jazz Alumni (continued from page 1)

“I Can Do All Things” is the premiere recording from jazz artist, composer, and UofM alumnus Jeremy Warren. The album features prominent performers and composers such as Andy Milne, Lenny Pickett, Leon Marin, and Jack Cooper. The music mixes jazz with elements of contemporary popular music and is a personal journey of overcoming life’s obstacles through music.

The album contains the many influences from Warren’s musical upbringing and musical journey from Little Rock to Memphis and eventually to New York City. He was born and raised in North Little Rock and was heavily exposed to music growing up. In 2003, he received a full scholarship to the University of Memphis Scheidt School of Music. Warren notes his greatest and most influential musical growth happened in Memphis where he performed with numerous local and national artists as well as leading his own group every Saturday night on Beale Street.

Jeremy taught elementary music in the Shelby Co. Schools in Memphis before moving to New York in 2013 to attend New York University. He received his master’s degree in music from NYU in May 2015. Jeremy has performed and recorded with artists such as Deanna Martin, Andy Milne, Lenny Pickett, John Scofield, Luis Bonilia, Antonio Hart, and many more. His influences include Tony Williams, Steve Jordan, Chris “Daddy” Dave, and George “Sparky” McCurdy. Since moving to NYC, Jeremy has been working non-stop.

National critiques of the album include editor and publisher Chris Spector, who wrote “The title of this drummer’s album is no idle boast. Coming up to New York from down home, he’s taken his place in line managing to play with everyone that matters. This is a diversely textured album that plays like something deeper than a resume piece but does show off the various points of his diversity scale. A jazzbo that came up through gospel, he knows how to share and play well with others which will probably assure his spot at the back of the bandstand for a long time to come. Well done.”

Flute Studio Thrives

The flute studio of Professor Elise Blatchford has become very active in the past year and is thriving. Last spring they hosted the MidSouth Flute Festival which drew several hundred flute players from Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama.

The studio has graduated five students this year: Delara Hashemi (MM, flute performance), Cecelia Allen (MM, flute performance), Justin Brown (MM, woodwind performance), Haley Thompson (BM, flute performance), and Mary Love Himebook (BM, flute performance). Former students have gone on to professional positions, including Cecelia Allen, who is currently working for Amro Music; Delara Hashemi, working for the Prizm ensemble and the Memphis Symphony, and Justin Brown, currently on tour with “Elf: The Musical” in Texas. Haley Thompson is on fellowship pursuing a master’s in flute performance at Wichita State University. Nicole Jackson (MM, flute performance ’17) was a performer at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival. Nicole’s advice to music majors was included in the August edition of Flute Talk magazine.

Current students in the studio are active as well. Kelly Herrmann (MM, flute performance ‘18) went on tour throughout Europe with the Youth Orchestra of the Americas. Freshman Jordan Hiley (flute performance ‘20) planned and performed a recital in the first semester of his freshman year. Junior Katie Hook worked on an honors project to market the UofM flute studio through development of social media and a website.

Upcoming, Philip Dikeman, professor of flute at Vanderbilt and interim principal flute of the Nashville Symphony, will present a recital on Sunday, March 26th at 7:30 pm in Harris Hall. Philip is former principal flute of the Detroit Symphony. Also, students from the flute studio will begin an experiential learning project that will culminate in a released CD of solo flute music. The students will engage in a crowd-funding campaign to fund the recording, and will edit, mix, and master a commercial-quality CD. The students themselves will record a piece of music and they will help each other co-produce the work and develop a plan to market and release the album.
The School of Music is once again offering its summer camp program this year, bringing in top guest clinicians for students to work with.

Guest clinician for the band camp will be Sally S. Wagner who retired after 40 years of public school teaching. For the last 34 years she served as Director of Bands at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Maryland, where she conducted four concert bands, jazz band, and oversaw the Dixieland Combo, Clarinet Choir, Woodwind Quintet, and Brass Quintet. During her 34 years at the school, her bands earned a reputation for superior musicianship and performance standards and were recognized as outstanding by respected adjudicators at local, national, and international music festivals. Before coming to Eleanor Roosevelt, she taught junior high band, strings, choir, general music, high school choir, elementary general music, and beginning brass and percussion.

Guest clinician for orchestra camp will be Wesley Schulz. He is garnering attention for his fresh programming and imaginative performances as well as building orchestras and growing audiences. In constant demand, Schulz is Music Director of the Bainbridge Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Festival Orchestra and serves as Director of Orchestras at the University of Puget Sound. In 2014-2015 Schulz was the Conducting Fellow at the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. He has been lauded by musicians for his “intensity and emotion” in performances and for his “approachable and inspiring” leadership.

At the camps, students will have the opportunity to work with School of Music faculty in classes, chamber coaching, exploratory electives, and planned social activities, and to work with world renowned conductors of their ensembles. They will have the option of staying on campus or can be day campers.

According to School of Music Director John Chiego, most major universities use summer camps to introduce students to their campus as a precursor to recruiting them. The more familiar students are with a university, the more likely they are to enroll there. He observes that the biggest and most successful schools of music have the biggest and most successful camp programs. “We need to join the ranks of those schools and we intend to start moving in that direction.”

Albert Nguyen, Director of Bands, believes the experience will be intense but fun for students. “There will be a big focus on the art of what we do.” The intent is to reach a large population of students, including those from other cities and states in the region.
**STUDENT**

Students from our Vocal Arts Division returned as winners from the National Association of Teachers of Singing Auditions held at Union University in Jackson, TN on October 29, 2016. Winners included undergraduates Garrett Addington and Emma Wieland, students of Susan Owen-Leinert, and Gabriella Galletti, student of Kyle Ferrill. Our graduate level students also brought home first place prizes: Jacob Paul, Andrew Harper and Sarah Harper, all students of Kyle Ferrill.

Amber Joy Cleveland, a senior instrumental music education student, was awarded “Outstanding Collegiate Member” by the Tennessee Music Education Association for her leadership as President of the UofM NAfME chapter.

Naomi Ziegler, a senior instrumental music education student, received the “Collegiate Leadership Award” from the Tennessee Music Education Association.

**ALUMNI**

Alumna Delara Hashemi (MM ’16, flute performance) performs regularly as a substitute flutist for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Several 2016 music education graduates received teaching jobs in the area. Kinsey Moline (choral music education major, 2016) – Colonial Middle School choir director. Chris Weiner (instrumental music education major, 2016) – Millington Elementary music teacher. PhD music education graduate, Cheryl Kelley-Henderson (Class of 2016), was named Upper School Assistant Principal of KIPP Memphis Collegiate Schools.

Garrett Nichols (MM clarinet performance) competed in the Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Competition at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville. In November he performed at Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro in New Orleans, with Robyn Jones’ clarinet trio Threed, and jazz clarinetist Evan Christopher.

**FACULTY**

In November, Dr. Jack Cooper began hosting “The Voice of Jazz” on WUMR 91.7 FM, a focused presentation of historically significant jazz music and artists plus new releases.

Dr. Ken Kreitner is one of a team of international music historians working on a project entitled “The Anatomy of Late 15th-Century and Early 16th-Century Iberian Polyphonic Music.” The team includes researchers based in CESEM at the Lisbon NOVA University, Portugal, Institución Milà i Fontanals, Barcelona, Spain, and the University of Oxford, UK.

Dr. Armand Hall presented at the Tennessee Music Education Association All-State Conference and the All-West Conference. He taught at camps in Traverse City, Michigan and at the Archipelago Chamber Music Festival. Hall was selected for the PRIZM ensemble Board of Directors and the CBD-NA/NBA/MFA Title I Mentorship Sub-Committee.

Assistant Professor Heather Klossner made presentations at the Texas Music Educators Conference, Eastman School of Music, the Capital Area Orff Chapter of the American Orff Schulwerk Association in Austin, Texas, and the Galena Park districts in Houston, Texas and at the American Orff Schulwerk Association National Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey. She was also awarded the Donald J. Shetler Prize for Excellence in Music Education, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY.

Assistant Professor of flute Elise Blatchford went to Yale University in October to begin work with harpist/composer Hannah Lash on developing new duos for flute and harp. The pair will perform at Yale again in February. Other activities include concerts and master classes at Indiana University, University of Kentucky, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Southern Mississippi, and concerts in New York and Boston with her wind quintet, the City of Tomorrow. She was also involved in the creation of the Greater Memphis Flute Association, a local group that supports the development of middle school and high school flute players and works to increase opportunities for networking and development for local professionals.

Dr. Armand Hall

Dr. Ryan Fisher

Dr. Ryan Fisher was recently awarded the 2016 Lee University School of Music Distinguished Alumnus Award. He was selected to serve on the Update: Applications of Research in Music Education editorial board and as the Higher Education chair for the Tennessee Music Education Association.
In Jerald Walker’s fourth grade music class, his teacher showed the students each of the string instruments and asked them which one they wanted to play. Jerald, who was short, immediately chose the double bass but his teacher said there wasn’t one his size. On his second try, he chose the violin and has never regretted it. Now he is studying the instrument with Tim Shiu and the experience has opened his eyes. “I always loved playing Mozart, but I didn’t realize what it really took to play his music until I came here,” he says. Shiu welcomed Jerald with open arms and he is very grateful. “When I see him perform, it inspires me.”

Jerald, a freshman from Memphis, considered several schools before choosing the School of Music. In addition to a University academic scholarship, he was given a talent based scholarship from the School of Music. He says the School is so much more than he expected and he is particularly impressed with the teachers and ensembles.

Jerald has also been composing music since the eighth grade. At that time, his teacher gave him the assignment of writing a harmony line for a folksong. The result was successful, so he extended the composition to a 50-measure piece entitled Parade in E Minor. The teacher liked the composition and even had the sixth graders perform it. “Still, he says, “I didn’t become really serious about composition until high school when I heard a little melody in my head.” He wrote it down, a grand three measures, and then put it aside. Months later he took it up again and the little melody became his first symphony.

In the summer of 2015, Jerald started asking his friends to help him perform some of the pieces he was writing. An ensemble, which started with 6 people, eventually became a 20-member group. The first performance was at All Saints Episcopal Church in Memphis, and they received excellent feedback. “From then on, I wrote more and more,” he says. Jerald is studying composition with Dr. John Baur. One of the goals they are working on is to move his composing to a more contemporary style. He is learning how much music has changed since Mozart and Haydn. “They were all I knew of before I came here,” he says. The new styles are now inspiring his compositions.

Two ensembles performed at the masterclass. Graham Emberton, violin; Elizabeth White, viola; and Carrington Truehart, cello, performed the first movement of the Beethoven String Trio No. 5 in C minor, Op. 9 No. 3. Basil Alter, violin; Olivia Palazzolo; Matthew Palazzolo, cello; and Brian Chan, piano, performed the first movement of the Schumann Piano Quartet in E flat Major, Op. 47.

According to Assistant Professor of cello, Dr. Kimberly Patterson, “David Finckel and Wu Han were extremely generous to our students with their time and knowledge. This was an incredible experience for our students and we are thrilled to be working with Concerts International, allowing our students access to great artists.”
EXPERIENCE PUCCINI AGAIN

Giaccomo Puccini breaks our hearts with La bohème and Madama Butterfly. He takes us on a political thrill ride with Tosca. He leads us into a terrifying fairytale with Turandot. His works are emotional powerhouses that are as moving as they are musically unforgettable.

In his trio of one-act operas known as Il Trittico, composed near the end of his life, Puccini gives us pure comedy, pure tragedy and pure melodrama in three perfect packages. This April, UofM Opera presents two of these masterworks, Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi.

Suor Angelica is the story of a young noble woman who has been hidden away at a convent by her family after she has a child out of wedlock. After seven years of isolation, her stern aunt arrives to demand that Angelica sign away her inheritance. She also brings the news that Angelica’s son died two years beforehand.

This work begins as an amazing portrait of the cloistered life. The first twenty minutes of the piece are devoted to musically and dramatically evoking the serenity of the world behind the convent’s walls as well as the honest humanity of the women who live there. Once Angelica knows of her son’s death, all of the forces are the drama are used to portray her internal journey from desperation to peace and joy.

The story of Gianni Schicchi was born almost exactly six hundred years before Puccini immortalized it as an opera. Dante Alighieri, in his famous Inferno, dedicates a few lines to a man named Gianni Schicchi, condemned to eternal flame for forging a will. From these lines, Puccini’s librettist Giovacchino Forzano created a delicious tale of disguise and deception. A greedy family finds themselves disinherited when their richest relation dies. Desperate, they turn to a man they hate to try to get the money back. That man, Gianni Schicchi, schemes a way to change the will, but rather than giving the fortune to the family, he keeps the best parts for himself.

The music is a lively romp, alternately chaotic and melodic. We hear the dissonance of the family’s desperation at being cut out of the will. We hear the sweeping melody of naive young love. We hear the thin, clever vaudeville of Schicchi’s plotting as he explains his trap to the desperate family. In other words, the music is perfectly crafted to illustrate the drama of the story.

Gianni Schicchi and Suor Angelica couldn’t be a more different musically and dramatically. Where Angelica begins with serenity and space, Schicchi begins with chaos and clamor. Where Angelica plumbs the depths of loss and faith, Schicchi delivers an almost caricatured take on greed, family dynamics and naive young love.

Together, these pieces will take you from desperation and heartbreak to comic delirium.

We look forward to taking the journey with you.

Performances of the two operas are on April 21 at 7:30 pm and April 23 at 3:00 pm, both in Harris Concert Hall.

One Orchestra, Six Conductors

On April 26, Maestro Pu-Qi Jiang will conduct the University of Memphis Symphony Orchestra for the last time. Joining him on the podium will be five UofM alumni from our graduate conducting program. The five all hail from different countries and now work in varied locations:

Fouad Fakhouri, Lebanon, Music Director and Conductor of the Saginaw Bay (MI) Symphony Orchestra; Tom Rimes, Australia, Kapellmeister, Musiktheater Revier, Germany; Xiao-ou Zhao, China, Dean of Conducting, Shanghai Conservatory of Music; Jonathan Schallert, U.S., Associate Music Director of the GPAC Youth Symphony Orchestra; Nadezda Potemkina, Russia, Music Director of Wesleyan University Orchestra and Choir; Kevin Suetterlin, Germany, Director of Orchestral Activities, Concordia College (MN).

The conductors will present works by Wagner (The Flying Dutchman), Bernstein (Candide Overture), Tchaikovsky (Romeo and Juliet Overture), and others. The concert is the final event in a symposium dedicated to conducting authority Max Rudolf.

To support the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music

Mail your check payable to the University of Memphis Foundation and specify ‘School of Music’

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The UofM Foundation
P.O. Box 1000
Memphis, TN 38148-0001

For questions, contact Katherine Goliver at 901.678.4372.
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For times and locations, please call 901.678.2541 or visit our website memphis.edu/music.