Department News

As I write these paragraphs, California is slowly reopening, and the College is looking forward to having students back on campus in the fall. Although we don’t yet know what the Department’s 2021-22 concert schedule will look like, we are hoping to have some live performances starting in September. We’ll keep our website and social media up to date as we move forward, so stay tuned!

When we return to campus in August, things will be different; so will the Department. This summer, Cathy Endress (our Academic Coordinator) and David Vanderlip (our Piano Technician) will retire after 21 and 32 years (respectively) of dedicated service to students and faculty alike. Actually, they were slated to retire last summer, but both decided to stay on to see us through the worst of the pandemic. Talk about loyalty! All of us have benefited enormously from the care and expertise they have provided us for as long as we can remember, but this academic year, no one has benefited from their experience and goodwill more than me as a first-time chair. I can’t imagine surviving those first few months in particular without their steady and reassuring presence.

We will have much to celebrate when campus reopens in the fall, including Gibb Schreffler’s tenure promotion and Melissa Givens’s third-year contract renewal. Congratulations, Gibb and Melissa! But along with this good news, at the top of our long list of overdue acknowledgments will be Cathy’s and David’s decades-long contributions to our Department.

Finally, by the time you read this, graduation will be in sight for four of our music majors, Kate Bolonnikova, Aleja Hertzler-McCain, Cherise Higgins, and Emma van der Veen, and for Tahiv McGee, who is completing a special major titled “Music, Media and Creation.” Congratulations to them, and to all of our Spring 2021 graduates! We wish you all well wherever your next steps take you!

– Donna M. Di Grazia, Department Chair
Guests & Special Concerts

GUEST ARTISTS Alex Meixner ( accordions) and Sandra Wong ( nyckelharpa) joined Gibb Schreffler in a Zoom virtual conversation, “Musical Journeys,” last February in conjunction with two courses—Music 88 (Global Musical Instruments) and Music 65 (Intro to World Music). The online conversations centered around stories of their unique journeys from liberal arts college graduates to multi-instrumental recording artists, touring performers, educators, and cultural ambassadors.

The Department’s student-run reading group welcomed two GUEST LECTURERS, composer Molly Joyce in February, and Dean of Lawrence University’s Conservatory of Music, Brian Pertl in April. Joyce shared stories about her evolution from denying to uncovering and embracing the singular creative potential of her disability. Pertl spoke about the issues he raises in his chapter, “Reshaping Undergraduate Music Education in Turbulent Times Through Cultural Rather than Curricular Change,” published in 2017 in a book titled College Music Curricula for a New Century, ed. Robin D. Moore (Oxford University Press).

This semester VIRTUAL CONCERTS continue to make it possible for us to present exciting, new performances. The series opened in February with a duo-piano recital, “Dancing in Breathtaking Beats” with faculty pianists Jennie Jung and Genevieve Feiwen Lee. In March the Ussachevsky Annual Memorial Festival of Electro Acoustic Music returned to celebrate its 29th season under the thoughtful vision of festival director and host Tom Flaherty. This year’s program, “A Retrospective,” featured recordings of past performances, with new interviews and introductions offered by composers and performers including alumni soprano Lucy Shelton ’65 and composer/guitarist Brendon Randall-Myers ’09. Rounding out the spring series, soprano Melissa Givens offered an April recital, “Love’s Joys, Life’s Shadows: Songs Among Friends” with colleagues and friends Genevieve Feiwen Lee (piano), Joti Rockwell (mandolin), Sara Parkins (violin) and Maggie Parkins (cello). All three concerts, as well as the three Fall 2020 concerts, are available on demand through links on our virtual concerts website.

Performing Ensembles

This semester a contingent of the POMONA COLLEGE BAND has been meeting under the leadership of Graydon Beeks to learn about the history of wind band literature, focusing on music written by American composers since the end of World War II. The band’s November 17, 2019 concert, led by associate conductor Stephen Klein, was broadcast on the college’s radio station, KSPC 88.7 FM, on March 6 as part of the Saturday Afternoon Concert Series co-sponsored by the Music Department and the radio station.

The POMONA COLLEGE CHOIR, led by Donna M. Di Grazia, is continuing to work virtually this semester on three pieces: Felix Mendelssohn’s Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich, Eric Whitacre’s Sing Gently, and Shawn Kirchner’s Angel Band. Last fall’s virtual recording of James Erb’s Shenandoah is still available online.

Small but mighty, the six members of the 2021 POMONA COLLEGE GLEE CLUB and their conductor and accompanist, Donna M. Di Grazia and Twyla Meyer, are working with SoundJack, a technology that allows everyone to hear and sing with each other in real time. Thanks to Anna Sipowicz ’22, the Glee Club was also featured in a special
Finally, the ensemble's 2021 tour destination is Claremont! The singers will gather on campus in early May to sing together (outside) for the first time since March 13, 2020.

Over the fall semester, the Pomona College Jazz Ensemble worked on student compositions and arrangements, under the leadership of Barb Catlin. This spring they are planning to record them, and pianists Josh Suh ’23 and Coleman Gliddon ’23 (Harvey Mudd) have contributed original works for both small group and for big band forms. The ensemble has also been learning about recording technology as they look forward to having a collection of recorded music by the end of the semester.

The Pomona College Orchestra is continuing to operate in a hybrid format this semester, combining classroom-style meetings and a performance, led by Eric Lindholm. Guests have included music educator Todd Montemayor and arts administrator Audrey Dunne ’13, and meetings have explored El Sistema and the music of distinguished American composer Joan Tower. Group rehearsals take place on the audio platform Cleanfeed, and the orchestra's performance project for the spring semester is Give Up to Grow, a new piece by William Appleton ’14 written especially for the PCO. Appleton’s piece features 25 individual parts and is designed to work with either precise or imprecise synchronization between the players. Managers Hana Burgess ’22 (Scripps), Olivia DeAngelis ’23, and Adam Dvorak ’21 organized a “virtual Halona” event in February to substitute for the orchestra's annual overnight trip to the college-owned cabin in Idyllwild. The PCO is successfully sustaining its momentum during the pandemic with more than 30 musicians participating in the online experience, and another intense cycle of admissions recruiting is reaching its conclusion.

The Pomona College Balinese Gamelan Ensemble, Giri Kusuma, continues to meet virtually. Directors I Nyoman and Nanik Wenten have been focusing on the history and culture of gamelan performing traditions in Bali and Java. Students are learning how to play suling (Balinese flute), loaned out to them in order to create recorded performances for the end of the semester.

The Pomona College Afro-Cuban Music Ensemble, led by Joe Addington, has a small contingent of students this semester, and they have all received conga drums sent from the Department as they learn rhythms and drumming patterns of the Santería and other traditions.

Faculty News

Barb Catlin, director of the Jazz Ensemble, was awarded the prestigious California Music Educators Association's Paul Shaghoian Jazz Educator of the Year award this spring. The award was presented at the CMEA Awards Gala at the start of the 2021 California All State Music Educators Conference (CASMEC).

Alfred Cramer, Associate Professor of Music, is serving this year as the Music Department’s new Coordinator for Applied Music, and has been heavily involved in moving the Department’s approximately 300 weekly music lessons to an online setting. He is also a 2020-21 fellow of the Pomona College Humanities Studio, and is serving as President of the Pacific Southwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society.

In addition to her work as Chair of the Music Department, Professor Donna M. Di Grazia was a presenter at the “Meet the Author” session at the American Choral Directors Association’s 2021 National Conference, where she discussed her book, Nineteenth-Century Choral Music (Routledge, 2013).
Professor Tom Flaherty has been busy curating the Ussachevsky Festival, which included hosting interviews with numerous composers and performers for the program. He has recently completed a cello octet arrangement of Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance* to be recorded by the 5-C Cello Choir, led by Maggie Parkins. Additionally, he is editing audio for a new recording, preparing several completed scores for publication—Recess for string quartet; Release for violin, cello, and electronics; and Aftermath for solo violin—while composing several new pieces for piano and electronics, for soprano and piano, and for orchestra.

Assistant Professor Melissa Givens filmed three virtual performances from Studio 104A (her office!): Conspirare’s Christmas Big Sing; ACDA’s Genesis Composition Prize concert; and Easter in Memory of Her, an innovative service of music and meditation that celebrates the voices of the women who loved Jesus—Mary the Mother, the woman at the well, the woman who anointed Jesus, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene—to benefit Houston’s Brigid’s Place.

Melissa was invited to give two career interviews, one for Rollins College’s “Health & the Musician” and the other for Veritas Christian Academy’s “Dream Career.” She judged the MTNA Southern Division Senior and Young Artist Voice Competition, held virtually, and in March she was interviewed by Randy Edwards for YouthCUE’s CUecast for a podcast entitled “Art As a Way of Embracing Social Justice and Racial Equality.” YouthCUE serves conductors of church and school youth choir programs. She was also invited to serve on the NATS Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, which aims to determine additional steps toward diversity and inclusion in its processes and training of officers, and in January helmed the annual MLK Observances for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.’s Epsilon Eta Omega Chapter. The virtual event focused on the relevance of Dr. King’s legacy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing concerns of racial injustice and inequity.

While on sabbatical this semester, Professor Genevieve Feiwen Lee is working on Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* on both harpsichord and piano, and studying the complete nine volumes of *Játékók* (Hungarian for Games) for piano by György Kurtág. She has also been heard on KSPC’s Saturday Afternoon Concert Series, and she has continued to collaborate on the Department’s virtual concerts.

Professor Eric Lindholm is in the process of selecting several of the lesser-known art songs by pioneering Black composer Florence Price and orchestrating them to create a concert suite. He is drawing from a recently edited volume by Richard Heard and a new recording of a different set of songs, produced by the soprano Christine Jobson. Among the most striking songs are I Grew a Rose, on a pair of poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar called Promise and Fulfilment, and Don’t You Tell Me No, with a text by Price. Eric also made a presentation for Family Weekend about his piece Soundscape No. 1 for Quasi-Synchronous Ensemble, last fall’s performance project for the Orchestra. Soundscape No. 1 is available to hear on YouTube. He has also been active in online discussion groups about how
to adapt large performance ensembles to the unique circumstances posed by the pandemic.

This spring Joti Rockwell, Associate Professor of Music, is teaching a course entitled “Musical Mathematics, Mathematical Music,” in which class sessions feature a Zoom musical spaceship. He continues to work on a project involving musical motion and the pedal steel guitar, and he will pursue this work as a Faculty Fellow of the Pomona College Humanities Studio in the upcoming academic year.

Assistant Professor Gibb Schreffler is working with University of Illinois Press on the production of his book, *Dhol: Drummers, Identities, and Modern Punjab*. Scheduled for publication this fall, the book tells, for the first time, exclusive stories of the professional drummers whose family lineages have for centuries maintained the traditions of a now globally-popular drum.

“By the time the shanty style of song had reached ships and other cultures adopted it, the music had become everybody’s, “like rock ’n’ roll,””

In the meantime, Prof. Schreffler has been fielding requests for information about one of his research specialties, sailors’ shanty songs, in the wake of a recent upsurge of popularity of the genre on social media. His statement in response to the phenomenon at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), has been downloaded hundreds of times, and he has been quoted by such news outlets as [WTTW Chicago](http://www.wttwchicago.org). Among related activities, he recently conducted a remote workshop on shanty singing for one of the University of Connecticut’s choral ensembles.

Emeritus Faculty

Graydon Beeks presented a paper titled “Some Overtures to be Played before the First Lesson” in March at the American Handel Festival and Conference hosted by the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and sponsored by The American Handel Society, of which he is president.

Karl Kohn’s *Meditation II* for accordion (2019) had its premiere performance in Vienna by Alfred Melichar at a concert of the Ensemble Wiener Collage, where he also performed Kohn’s *Meditation I*. Both works are available on YouTube. Kohn is currently spending his time primarily composing sets of piano music, most recently *Three More Vignettes*, and has been named Theodore Front’s April 2021 Composer of the Month. Read more and listen to the Gregg Smith Singers’ recording of his *Madrigal* on their website.

William Peterson’s concert from February 2, 2020 was broadcast this spring on the Saturday Afternoon Concerts on KSPC 88.7 FM. The program included music by Buxtehude, Sweelinck, Frescobaldi, Bruhns, and Franck.

Student Happenings

The Department created a new program this semester called Student Musical Encounters to replace in-person student recitals, which are on hold while we are in a virtual environment. Students currently available are Becca Blynn ’22 (Harvey Mudd), euphonium; Dylan Bresnan ’21, piano; Sara Uehara ’21, violin; and Ilana Shapiro ’22, flute, with new performances added every two weeks.

The Music Department’s student liaisons Shaheed Muhammad ’21, Anna Sipowicz ’22, Megan Chang ’23, and Nam Do ’23, have established a new Instagram account to
support the activities of the Department. Follow them the next time you are on Instagram @musicatpomona!

Alumni Spotlight

Last November, Megan Kaes Long ’08, Associate Professor of Music Theory at Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, received the Society of Music Theory’s 2020 Emerging Scholar Award, recognizing her article, “Cadential Syntax and Tonal Expectations in Late Sixteenth-Century Homophony,” (Music Theory Spectrum, Spring 2018). The article, says Megan, “looks at sixteenth-century popular songs from England and France and talks about the ways those songs create expectations for the listener; they ask musical questions, then provide musical answers.”

A double major in Music and English at Pomona, Megan was fully engaged in the Music Department as a performer and scholar, including receiving a SURP (Summer Undergraduate Research Program) to work with Donna M. Di Grazia on a project involving late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English sacred music. About her undergraduate days, Megan reflects, “I didn’t just learn that I was interested in understanding music better—I learned to be creative in how I asked musical questions and voracious in what I read. And my professors in the Music Department showed me that a life of music scholarship and a life of musical artistry could go hand in hand. I am so inspired by their example.”

After graduating, Megan earned her master’s degree and a Ph.D. in music theory at Yale. Her studies have focused on European song traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the theoretical discourse that describe them. Her first book, Hearing Homophony: Tonal Expectation at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century, was published in 2020 by Oxford University Press.

Pomona’s Music faculty was thrilled to learn about Megan’s most recent accolade. Alfred Cramer writes, “Megan is doing significant work toward understanding how Renaissance harmony turned into the tonal functional harmony that we still live with daily. She takes a really broad view of music-theory scholarship, making source-based historical musicology, music cognition, popular

music studies, and performance practice all bump elbows with each other, and it pays off.” Another of Megan’s mentors, Joti Rockwell, declares, “Megan is an inspiration! She brings so much musicality and insight to her work,” while Donna DiGrazia adds, “Megan’s numerous successes have been wonderful to see. She is an exceptional teacher, a much sought-after singer, and a multiple award-winning scholar, a trio of strengths that not every professor can claim. We are very proud of her indeed, and we look forward to seeing what happens next!” [oberlin.edu/megan-kaes-long]

Alumni News

Paskalina Bourbon ’19 is pursuing doctoral studies in philosophy at the University of Chicago, where she weaves her musical studies into her work. She has synthesized these scholarly interests in the recently published article, “A Philosophical Account of Listening Musically,” Contemporary Aesthetics 18 (2020). [contempaesthetics.org/2020/08/11/a-philosophical-account-of-listening-musically]

Alexander Woods ’18 completed his master’s degree in Collaborative Piano and Coaching at the University of Minnesota and is living in the Twin Cities where he teaches piano lessons, accompanies for recitals and competitions, provides liturgical music at local churches, plays jazz gigs, and has performed with the Mississippi Valley Orchestra and St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral Orchestra. He is on the staff of the Minnesota School of Music in Blaine, Minnesota and also serves as a staff collaborative pianist at the Borrormeо Music Festival in Altdorf, Switzerland. [alexanderwoodspiano.com]
Alexander Cannon ‘05, Lecturer in Music at the University of Birmingham, moderated a conversation with Vân-Ánh Võ titled “The Music of Vietnam—Roots and Resilience: A Musical Conversation.” The talk was part of a series sponsored by the Center for World Music’s Spring 2021 Virtual Encounters with World Music and Dance. His article “Awakening the Soul with the Left Hand: Narration and Healing in Vietnam’s Diasporic Traditional Music” was published in the Winter 2021 issue of the journal *Ethnomusicology*. [birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/music/cannon-alexander.aspx]

Raj Bhimani ‘82 was invited by the Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center to play a piano recital in Bruno Walter Auditorium on Saturday, March 20, 2021. The recital is available for the next month on the library’s YouTube channel. The program consists of Franz Schubert’s Sonata in A Major, D.959, which he completed three weeks before his death in 1828 at age 31. [pianoupperwestside.com]

Nathan Wang ‘79 has been selected to receive the Blaisdell Distinguished Alumni Award from the College in recognition of his distinguished achievements as a composer for Hollywood and Asian cinema. He has written scores for more than 300 television shows and movies, and his compositions have been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Shanghai Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Opera, and the Chicago Symphony. Wang is an associate professor of film scoring at Beijing University and also lectures at Nanjing University, Hangzhou University, and the Shanghai Institution for Visual Arts. Recently, he was named the 2021-22 composer-in-residence at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. For this residency, Wang will be writing a new musical in collaboration with lyricist and fellow Pomona alumnus Matthew Leavitt ‘03 entitled *Shanghai*. It is scheduled to receive its premiere in 2022. [nathanwang.com]

Early Music America has established an award recognizing outstanding performance, research, or other activities celebrating the clavichord in memory of Joan Benson ‘46, a leader in the revival of the historical clavichord, who died this past year at the age of 94. She studied briefly at Pomona before receiving her B.M. and M.M. degrees from the University of Illinois and pursuing additional graduate studies at Indiana University. Initially trained as a pianist, she gravitated to the clavichord while studying in Europe in the 1950s and became a tireless advocate of that instrument as well as of the eighteenth-century fortepiano. She taught at Stanford University and the University of Oregon. [joanbenson.com]

We hope you will share your music-specific happenings with us for our next Music Gazette. Please submit to: edc04747@pomona.edu
Please email broader life submissions to the PC Magazine at pcmnotes@pomona.edu.

In Memoriam

With a heavy heart, the Music Department announces the passing of two beloved longtime members of its performance faculty: Raymond Burkhart and Mary Dropkin.

Ray Burkhart, Lecturer in Trumpet from 2002 to 2019, died unexpectedly in December. He was a musical polymath: a recognized performer on modern and historical instruments, a composer, a conductor, and a scholar. After earning his B.A. in music at Occidental College in 1983 and his M.M. in trumpet from USC in 1985, he completed his Ph.D. in musicology at CGU in 2010 with a dissertation called “Brass Chamber Music in Lyceum and Chautauqua,” a topic on which he continued to publish. During his 17 years at Pomona, in addition to teaching trumpet lessons, he had on occasion directed the Band and the Orchestra, taught a music theory lab, and performed with faculty and student ensembles, including several concerts with the Choir. And for more than a dozen years, he made a mark on every
Pomona Commencement, including the online ceremony in December 2020, providing music at each ceremony since they moved outdoors in 2007. Under his leadership, Ray’s 10-member brass ensemble ushered students, faculty, and guests in and out, almost always with celebratory music that he composed himself. Ray had moved to Boise, Idaho in 2019 to start a new chapter of his life. He is survived by his brother Reed and extended family.

Mary Dropkin, Lecturer in Harp, passed away on January 8, 2021. She joined the Pomona College faculty in 1995, making her one of the longest serving teachers in our applied music curriculum. A native of Green Bay, Wisconsin, she moved with her family to Pomona, California when she was young and never left. She completed her B.M. degree in harp performance from the University of Southern California, where she also did graduate work. A much-beloved leader in the Inland Empire harp community for decades, Mary maintained a large studio of private students as well as faculty affiliations with the University of Redlands School of Music, CSU San Bernardino, and of course Pomona, where her students found her to be a patient, encouraging, positive guide who got them excited about the instrument and raised the level of their playing. In addition to teaching, Mary served as Principal Harpist of the Redlands and San Bernardino Symphony Orchestras and other Inland Empire professional ensembles. She also performed with the Pacific Symphony and the California Philharmonic. As longtime President of the Inland Empire Harp Society, she organized the 2018 national conference of the American Harp Society. She often performed on our campus as a chamber musician and founded the locally-based ensemble LA Harptette. She is survived by her partner of 30 years, John Gann, her children Brian and Scott, and their families.