Department News

With everyone back on campus, the Music Department is once again teeming with life! Our classrooms are full, with students eager to learn and thrilled to be seeing their friends in the flesh. Some 395 students are enrolled in private lessons (a record, we think), and our ensembles are thriving despite the challenges brought about by the Delta variant and the resulting LA County restrictions for winds, brass, and singers. Many lessons are being held outside or in large rooms in Thatcher and Rembrandt, while four of our ensembles are scattered around campus, rehearsing variously in the courtyard in front of Little Bridges (outdoors and at night!), in Carolyn Lyon Garden, and in a combination of Little Bridges, Lyman, Bryant, Big Bridges, and Edmunds Ballroom. The students (including our terrific ensemble managers!) have been great in dealing with what are less than ideal conditions, and we all recognize that no matter where we are, being in person is so much better than being on Zoom.

It is no coincidence that for the third Gazette in a row, I mention the wonderful work of our staff. Elizabeth Champion, Sherrill Herring, and Barry Werger-Gottesman remain critical to keeping everything going, especially our series of live concerts that have returned this semester. As of this writing (early October), we have heard the ever-creative Joti Rockwell play Bach on a variety of American-made plucked instruments: pedal steel guitar, mandocello, mandolin, and banjo, among others. In addition, Genevieve Lee presented her latest concert, which included a world premiere by the California-based composer, Kurt Rohde. A champion of new music, Genevieve’s concerts showcase her enormous talents as a pianist and as an exceptional interpreter of music written...
by living composers. Check out our website for a list of future concerts this semester and next.

Finally, I want to welcome two new members of our staff. Ryan Maas, our new piano technician, comes to us from The Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he served as a piano technician for ten years. Natasha Cockrell, our new Academic Coordinator, has a strong background managing large groups of people and in business. We are delighted to have Ryan and Natasha as our colleagues, and if their first few months here are any indication of the future, we are in very good hands indeed.

– Donna M. Di Grazia, Department Chair

Performing Ensembles

The POMONA COLLEGE BAND is scheduled to perform concerts on November 12 and 14. The program will include a new composition by emeritus professor Karl Kohn and works by J.S. Bach, Jack Stamp, Frank Ticheli, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Rehearsals have moved mostly outdoors this semester, held on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

Due to COVID restrictions, the 80-voice strong POMONA COLLEGE CHOIR started the semester under the stars, singing outside in front of Little Bridges. It is quite a setup! Although singing outdoors allowed the group to begin the semester singing together, it is very difficult to hear each other in that environment with the mandatory distance requirements. When LA County issued new requirements for indoor rehearsals mandating distancing of six feet for wind and brass players and singers, the orchestra had to move to a larger space to prepare for their first concert. This opened up Little Bridges for the Choir, where the ensemble takes up all the hall’s downstairs seating—all of the chairs and raised pews—as well as the entire stage. The distance is not ideal, but the group can finally hear itself, and it is making a wonderful sound indeed. They are currently working on music by Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Harry Burleigh (arr. D. M. Di Grazia), Morten Lauridsen, Mark Buller, and Elaine Hagenberg.

The POMONA COLLEGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE is rehearsing in person for their concert entitled “Celebración” on November 13. The theme is Cuban dance music from Danzón to Mambo, as well as some Brazilian music and a tribute to Sammy Nestico—the legendary Los Angeles big band composer who died in January. Students Dylan Yin ’23 on alto saxophone and Charlie Yun ’23 on jazz violin will be featured soloists.

Eric Lindholm led the POMONA COLLEGE ORCHESTRA last spring in an online experience that combined classroom-style meetings with a performance component. The classroom-style meetings featured such topics as “El Sistema” and “The Music of Joan Tower,” as well as guest visits by arts administrator Audrey Dunne ’13 and local public school music educator Todd Montemayor. The performance project was a new piece commissioned by the orchestra for the semester’s distinctive circumstances,
Give Up to Grow by William Appleton ’14. As the composer wrote in his program note, “Sometimes the only way to progress is to ‘give up’ intense control—to let go of the part of yourself that is trying so hard that it ends up sabotaging your efforts.” This year, the orchestra has returned to live playing, with repertoire including Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 1 (“Classical”), a set of songs by the twentieth-century Black American composer Florence Price, a new work by faculty composer Tom Flaherty, and additional music by Fanny Hensel, Tchaikovsky, and Chen Yi.

POMONA COLLEGE BALINESE GAMELAN ENSEMBLE, GIRI KUSUMA, is meeting again in person. While virtual meetings during the past year focused on suling (Balinese flute), I Nyoman and Nanik Wenten are focused this semester on teaching the group music for the ensemble’s percussion instruments.

POMONA COLLEGE WEST AFRICAN MUSIC ENSEMBLE is back in person and flourishing. Director Nani Agbeli is spending the semester preparing the students for an exciting program of Ghanaian cultural forms for their late-November concert to be held in Little Bridges, a new venue for the ensemble.

Faculty News

Alfred Cramer, Associate Professor of Music, is in his second year as the Music Department’s Coordinator for Applied Music. In addition to moving forward with an online registration system to serve the Department’s record number of students taking music lessons, he is involved with projects such as the renovation of the Victor Montgomery Music Library on the second floor of Thatcher. As a 2020–21 fellow of the Pomona College Humanities Studio, he moved forward in studying the genesis and cultural meanings of Woody Guthrie’s song This Land Is Your Land. He is looking for the right moment for a post-pandemic return to the stage on baroque or modern violin.

In addition to chairing the department, Professor Donna M. Di Grazia recently co-authored an essay for the Library of Congress with the eminent Renaissance scholar Jessie Ann Owens on the Roger Wagner Chorale’s 1951 recording of Palestrina’s Pope Marcellus Mass. Wagner’s recording was selected in 2010 for the Library’s National Recording Registry: the essay is now available. In addition, Di Grazia’s chapter on Franz Liszt as a conductor has just appeared in Liszt in Context, a new book edited by Joanne Cormac (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Professor Tom Flaherty’s new piece for orchestra, as yet untitled, is due to premiere in February by the Pomona College Orchestra. He is also working on a piece for piano and electronics to be premiered this November by pianist Nadia Shpachenko on the Outpost Concert Series at University of California, Riverside. His piece Steps and Leaps for guitar and electronics received its online premiere last August in the hands of guitarist Aaron Larget-Caplan at New Music Gathering 2021 in Minneapolis, MN, and later that month it received its live premiere, also by Larget-Caplan, at Windhover Center for the Performing Arts in Rockport, MA.

As a performer, Tom can be seen performing the Prelude from Bach’s C-Minor Suite as part of the Los Angeles Violoncello Society’s posting of Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Cello, available on YouTube.

Assistant Professor Melissa Givens is on leave this semester with plans to travel to archives in Chicago, Little Rock, and D.C. to conduct new research, and is collating her Mendelssohn research for a possible article. She also hopes to be able to present recitals during her time away from campus.
In July Professor Genevieve Feiwen Lee returned as a faculty member to the Bennington Chamber Music Conference at Bennington College, VT. She coached chamber music groups and performed Gabriela Lena Frank’s Four Folk Songs for piano trio in her first concert in front of a live audience since the beginning of the pandemic. In August she joined Melissa Givens on a pre-recorded video broadcast recital: “Out of the Shadows: Art Songs by Black Composers” at the second annual PriceFest, a conference celebrating the work and legacy of Florence Price.

This Fall she was a guest artist for a Piano Spheres benefit concert at the Audubon Society performing a movement from Messiaen’s monumental Catalogue d’oiseaux; the concert was reviewed in the Los Angeles Times (10/4/21).

Professor Eric Lindholm continues his work orchestrating several of Florence Price’s lesser-known pieces for a concert suite to premiere this spring by the Pomona College Orchestra. He now splits his loyalty between Pomona and rival Oberlin College, where his daughter is a member of the Class of 2025.

This fall Associate Professor of Music Joti Rockwell begins a year as a Faculty Fellow in Pomona College’s Humanities Studio, where he is working on a project about motion in music. In early September, he performed at the BottleRock music festival as a pedal steel guitarist, electric guitarist, and Wurlitzer player in Peter Harper’s band. Later in September, he presented “Plucked on Bach,” which featured two violin sonatas and a cello suite played on a variety of American plucked-string instruments. In November, he will give a paper at the Society for Music Theory annual meeting entitled “Theorizing Musical Motion: Moving with the Steel Guitar.”

Associate Professor Gibb Schreffler’s book, Dhol: Drummers, Identities, and Modern Punjab (University of Illinois Press) is scheduled for release in December 2021. The book tells exclusive stories of the professional drummers whose family lineages have for centuries maintained the traditions of a now globally-popular drum from the Punjab region. In a similar vein, he is currently working on a chapter contribution to an edited volume tentatively titled Punjab Sounds, which details the relationship between the sound of the dhol drum and Punjabi nationalism.

Following the wake of a 2021 surge of popular interest in “sea shanties,” Prof. Schreffler has been quoted in articles and participated in a discussion about his research on the genre of chanty songs. The latter included an April appearance on the podcast, The Shanty Show, which is available on YouTube. His 2018 book, Boxing the Compass: A Century and a Half of Discourse about Sailors’ Chanties, was reviewed in Ethnomusicology Forum.

In addition, Prof. Schreffler performed a couple of chanties at this Fall’s opening Convocation, an outdoor ceremony.
Emeritus Faculty

Graydon Beeks saw his article “Alternate Performing Options for Handel’s op. 2 Trio Sonatas Found in Continental Sources” published in the spring 2021 issue of the Newsletter of The American Handel Society. In June he presented a paper titled “Sir George Smart’s Advice to Jenny Lind on Performing Messiah” at the online conference Redemption and the Modern Age—Handel’s Messiah Between the Late 18th and the 21st Century sponsored by the Georg Friedrich Händel Gesellschaft in Halle, Germany. In July he presented the paper “Coriolano Transformed: The Early History of Attilio Ariosti’s First Royal Academy Opera” in video format at the 19th Biennial International Baroque Music Conference hosted by the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and also held online.

Karl Kohn continues to enjoy his relationship with Theodore Front Musical Literature, and they continue to distribute all of his new works, with one exception—a new composition for the Pomona College Band, which is scheduled to premiere this semester. For the past year Kohn continued to compose sets of pieces for piano as well as some chamber music for piano and string instruments.

During the summer Kohn worked with Pomona College faculty members flutist Rachel Rudich, pianist Gayle Blankenburg, guitarist Jack Sanders, and others to record all of his music for solo flute and for flute and piano, along with several additional works for guitar and for organ. The project, organized by Rachel Rudich, will culminate with a set of recordings expected to be released in spring 2022.

Student Happenings

This fall we celebrate two students presenting senior recitals and two offering senior projects. The first of the two recitals features Jack Szulc-Donnell (composition/guitar). He is a student of Tom Flaherty and Jack Sanders, and his program includes music by Villa-Lobos, Brouwer and himself. Later that weekend, Anna Sipowicz, a voice student of Melissa Givens, will offer excerpts from Hector Berlioz’s song cycle Les Nuits d’été, as well as other works for soprano by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Howells, Mendelssohn, and others. She will be joined by pianist Kyungmi Kim. The two seniors offering senior lecture-performances are Sean Smith (composition), a student of Tom Flaherty, and Kahale Naehu-Ramos (guitar), a student of Jack Sanders.

Alumni Spotlight

The Music Department mourns the passing of distinguished alumna Dr. Barbara Barnard Smith ’42 on July 3, 2021 at the age of 101. Smith is remembered as a tireless promoter of the study of the world’s musical traditions, a philanthropist of music education, and a remarkable Pomona College music major and benefactor.

Growing up in Ojai, California, Smith was the organist at her local church before matriculating into Pomona College in 1938. Her musical activities during her years at Pomona were many. Concentrating in piano performance, she studied with Everett Olive; she also sang in the Choir, played oboe in the Orchestra under the direction of Kenneth Fiske, and played timpani in the Band under “Doc” Blanchard. She studied...
composition, too, and all the while continued to play organ locally.

After graduating from Pomona in 1942, Smith continued her piano performance studies at Eastman School of Music and, thereafter, took a job at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of students in her classes in Honolulu, Smith took it upon herself to expand the university’s curriculum to include instruction in non-Western musical traditions. In pursuit of knowledge for this objective, Smith engaged in fieldwork, gathered resources, and studied with local teachers in over a dozen Asian and Pacific Island countries. She became part of the early conversations of the then recently founded Society for Ethnomusicology. Hundreds of Smith’s former students and associates, the fruit of seven decades of her mentorship, celebrated her centennial year in 2020 with a monthly series of colloquia.

Never forgetting her roots in Pomona, Smith remained connected to the Music Department throughout her life. She received an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Pomona in 2001, hosted a Glee Club performance at her Honolulu residential community in 2009, and invited Professor Gibb Schreffler to give a talk at the University of Hawai’i in 2016. Most substantially, she regularly interacted with Professor Katherine Hagedorn during her tenure leading Pomona’s non-Western curriculum, and more recently with Professor Schreffler, who has further developed and broadened the Department’s offerings since 2014. Driven by a personal mission to nurture world music education, Smith began giving to Pomona in the 1980s. Her gifts have since made possible the flourishing of non-Western musical ensembles, resources for the teaching of ethnomusicology, and the invitation of regular guest performers and lecturers of diverse traditions. Thanks to her recent $3.5 million bequest, the Music Department is now poised to support even more robust study of the music-making of humankind for many years to come. We are ever grateful to Dr. Smith as a supporter of Pomona College’s Music Department programming and remember in awe her visionary initiatives. Mahalo, Barbara!

Alumni News

Matthew Cook ’20 has been cast in the role of the Traveller in Benjamin Britten’s Curlew River in USC Thornton School of Music’s production this November.

Oliver Dubon ’20 is spending 2021 in Estonia on a Fulbright Fellowship. Among other activities, Oliver had the opportunity to meet with Arvo Pärt outside the famed composer’s home.

Pianist Alex Woods ’18 has recently been appointed Lecturer of Music in Piano at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, rounding out his schedule between performing and teaching in the Twin City area.

Adrien Tishkowitz Redford ’14 is a 2020/21 returning member of the VOCES8 US Scholars Program, a program that offers coaching on small ensemble rehearsal/performance techniques, and that provides opportunities to perform with VOCES8. He also continues as co-artistic director of the LA-based vocal chamber ensemble PRISM.

Composer Brendon Randall-Myers ’09 has received three recent reviews: two for his performances with Miki Sawada in his new piece A Kind of Mirror, and one for his crossover contemporary-metal group Real Loud and their first

“RANDALL-MYERS WRITE MUSIC THAT CAN INDUCE A TRANCELIKE STATE, WHETHER IT’S HEARD IN A CONCERT HALL OR YOUR LIVING ROOM.....”

recording. The reviews are in online publications including *SF Classical Voice* by Tamzin Elliott (9/19/21), *Percorsi Musicali* by Michele Palozzo (9/1/21), and *Bandcamp* by Vanessa Ague (8/30/21).

**Joanna Takagi Habermann** ’01 has accepted a permanent position to teach 6th through 8th grade music at the Punahou School in Honolulu, O’ahu, Hawai’i, after having taught there as a guest during the 2020-21 academic year.

**Bonny Hough Miller** ’75 has authored a full-length life-and-works on Augusta Browne, a nineteenth-century composer whose “outsider status and self-agency offer a potent narrative that transcends antebellum and Victorian-era norms” (quote courtesy of University of Rochester Press). According to the book’s publisher, Miller’s *Augusta Brown: Composer and Woman of Letters in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Rochester Press, 2020) is the first comprehensive biography of any American woman musician before the Civil War.

**Joan Kimball** ’70 and Robert Wiemken, founders and co-artistic directors of *Piffaro*, The Renaissance Band, will receive the *Howard Mayer Brown Award* for lifetime achievement in the field of early music presented by Early Music America. The award is named in memory of the renowned and beloved University of Chicago musicologist Howard Mayer Brown (1930–93), whose scholarship covered a wide range of subjects on the music of the Renaissance, especially the chanson and instrumental music, and frequently returned to problems in historical performance practice, a subfield in which he was one of the most important commentators. “What an honor to receive the Howard Mayer Brown Award, following in the footsteps of so many distinguished early music colleagues who have received it in the past,” said Kimball. “Bob and I couldn’t be more grateful to EMA and to all who nominated us, and we hope that what we have built with Piffaro over 40 years can be a model for others who wish to pursue this crazy and wonderful path!” Kimball and Wiemken will step down as directors of the ensemble after the 2021-22 season.

**Lucy Shelton** ’65 created the role of The Teacher in the premiere performance of Kaija Saariaho’s opera *Innocence* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival on July 3, 2021. Her performance, which is delivered in *Sprechstimme*, was described as “wrenching” by Alex Ross in his review in *The New Yorker* (July 26, 2021). A video of the performance is available online through ARTE Concert.

We hope you will share your music-specific happenings with us for our next Music Gazette. Submit to: edc04747@pomona.edu

Please email broader life submissions to the PC Magazine at: pcmnotes@pomona.edu.