Alumni News

2000s

PHILIP HORN (Non-Degree Attended, Theatre) has served as the executive director of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts since 1993, and has received the Sidney R. Yates Award for Outstanding Advocacy on Behalf of the Performing Arts by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. During Horn’s tenure, the state council has received the highest funding ever while doubling its grant awards. The council was named among the top 50 “most creative, forward-thinking, results-driven government programs” by Harvard’s Innovations in American Government Awards. Horn, who was a graduate student in theatre at MSU, created the Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour. He was instrumental in establishing the Center for Arts Management and Technology at Carnegie Mellon University. He has received the Gary Young Award from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the Excellence in Leadership Award from VSA (the International Organization for Art and Disability). In 2010, Horn was made an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Pennsylvania PTA and received the “Friend of Pennsylvania PTA” award.

AMY SUMERTON (BA, English, 1999) 826michigan In-school Residency Program Director Amy Sumerton wants all kids to see their value as individuals and as members of their community. Through the small group and one-on-one writing program that she oversees in Ypsilanti schools, kids are encouraged to find their unique voice through writing.

CHRISTOPHER PROFETA (BA, English, 2003) recently published his second book, the novel, “Life in Pieces.” It is the story of an unemployed stay-at-home dad who opens the paper one morning to find that he is running for congress. “Life in Pieces” has received praise from critics and audiences alike, and has been called “a well-written book with something to say about growing up and growing old.” His first book, a collection of short stories and poems called “Skyful of Love,” reached #6 on Amazon.com’s list of bestselling anthologies. In 2012, Profeta was named to the “50 Great Writers” list.

KATIE VON TILL (BA, Theatre and Interdisciplinary Humanities, 1997) was recently featured in an Oikos Greek Yogurt commercial with John Stamos (she is the blonde!). Also, Katie was recently cast as Disney’s official voice of Snow White (the fourth since 1937!).

NICK ADKINS (BA English, Creative Writing Concentration, 2010) published a children’s picture book, “The Great Big Scary Monster.” Nick partnered with his sister, Saraya Evenson, on the book’s creation, serving as the illustrator. The book was released on July 11, and Nick is currently enjoying sharing this special story with kids everywhere. What’s next for Nick? He is already preparing for a 2013 follow-up story—“Cat Forest Monster.”

ANN MARIE MARTENS (MFA, Studio Art - Ceramics, 2011) is ceramics studio coordinator at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, in Chicago, IL, after having completed a 2011-2012 Artist in Residence at Kansas State University in Manhattan, KS. In 2013, Anne Marie engaged in a solo exhibition at the biGallerie Noir, Dallas, TX, and a two-person exhibition at the Schacht Gallery, Saratoga Clay Arts Center, Schuylerville, NY. Her website is: www.ammartens.com/
ALEXANDRA KIRSCH (BA, Professional Writing, 2010) completed a specialization in Jewish Studies in addition to her degree. She now works for Finn Partners, a division of the Ruder Finn Group, as the digital practice’s managing associate. Her job involves working closely with clients to craft, plan, and execute social media campaigns, and with senior staff to develop new business proposals and present to new business leads. She is also a part of the FINNstitute committee, giving workshops on social media and workplace etiquette, and educating staff on social media practices. “In my spare time,” she says, “I blog, cook, and explore New York, sometimes all at once.”

KATE WILSON (BFA, Theatre–Production Design, 2010) has accepted a position as a production stage manager at Allenberry Playhouse in Pennsylvania. As a student, she had the opportunity to serve as stage manager or assistant stage manager for several MSU Department of Theatre productions as well as working with digital design for at least two productions. In addition, she worked in stage management for the Williamston Theatre, Barrington Stage Company, and Cortland Repertory Theatre, the last of which led to a recommendation that aided in her upcoming move to Pennsylvania. Among her first productions at Allenberry Playhouse will be “Footloose.”

STEPHANIE KOENIG (BFA, Theatre, 2009) is an actress who recently starred as Nelly Gold in “Hello! My Baby.” The play ran through most of November 2011 and was produced by Goodspeed Musicals at the Norma Terris Theatre in Connecticut. She also appeared as a lead in 360 Productions’s “Midnight” and has appeared in several other films.

JANEL SCHULTZ (MFA, Studio Art, 2009) has taught, held several residencies, and worked as a practicing artist in the Chicago area since her graduation from MSU. She recently relocated to New York City to work with artist and MacArthur Genius recipient Julie Mehretu. Janel was a studio assistant for Mehretu while in graduate school at MSU and joined Mehretu’s team of assistants in Berlin, Germany as well. For more information on Janel’s work, visit janelschultz.com.

LISA TRUAX (MFA, Studio Art, 2009) is currently a professor of art at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in Winona, Minnesota, teaching foundations, ceramics, and graphic design. She was also included in the “After the Pedestal” exhibition at the Sculpture Center in Cleveland, and her work was featured in a solo show at the University of Wisconsin in late 2011. To view Lisa’s work, visit redreduction.com.

ANTHONY KEITH GIANNINI (BFA, Studio Art, 2007) has an upcoming solo exhibition called “Crossing the Line” at the Oliver Francis Gallery in Dallas, TX this September. He had a piece of his art shown at The Pace Gallery in New York, one of the premier galleries in the world. This exhibition is quite exciting for a young artist so early in his career. Currently a graduate student at Rhode Island School of Design, Anthony notes that his piece, “Gather Then Mourn,” 2011, “questions the role of media-generated imagery in creating a contemporary grand narrative.” It was shown alongside a slew of very prominent artists as part of the gallery’s “Soft Machines” exhibit, which ran July 14 through August 26, 2011. During his final year at MSU, Anthony was an artist assistant for Julie Mehretu (a visiting artist in the Department of Art and Art History). After graduation, he traveled to Berlin with Julie to help her prepare for an exhibition at the Deutsche Guggenheim. Also while a student at MSU, Anthony was among a small group of students interviewed as part of a video feature on undergraduate research on campus. The video provides an opportunity to hear the artist speak about his work.

KAREN MYERS (BFA, Studio Art, 2006) recently accepted a position as executive director of the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art (HICA) at the College of Charleston School of the Arts in South Carolina. Following her MSU studies in Art Education and Painting & Graphic Design, Karen
attended graduate school at Boston University. Following graduate school, she became executive director of Redux Contemporary Art Center in Charleston and began teaching at the College of Charleston. Under her supervision, Redux expanded its facilities and garnered support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

ALLISON REIMUS (BFA, Studio Art, 2005) went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts degree from American University in Washington, DC, in 2009. She now lives and paints in Chicago with her work featured in exhibitions and publications, including the prestigious “New American Paintings,” No. 88, South Edition. She has been active as well with her blog called “Jumping in Art Museums.” She describes herself as an avid art jumper who, when viewing art or visiting a museum, is compelled to jump out of sheer excitement. As it turns out, many others feel the same way and submit photos to her for inclusion in her blog, highlighting the many places and pieces that prompt people to jump for joy. In addition to her blog, her website is allisonreimus.com.

RYAL CURTIS (BA, English, 2004) is the social media strategist for BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina where he works to make a more authentic, transparent, collaborative and profitable company through the use of scalable social media programs. Previously, he was director of public information, College of Hospitality, Retail, & Sport Management at University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, http://www.hrsm.sc.edu, where he was responsible for print, web and social media communications for the third largest college at the University of South Carolina.

LEONA WHITNEY BEATTY (BA, Theatre, 2000) of Los Angeles, California, is currently vice president of development at Mathis Productions at WB/Telepictures, creating new show ideas for Judge Mathis. She describes it as a job she loves and credits MSU with opening her eyes to possibilities in the entertainment industry that she never knew existed. Originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Leona had the opportunity to executive produce a college soap opera called “Six’s Wild.” She now holds an MFA in film from Loyola Marymount, a DGA Award for best student film, had a film she directed shown at the Cannes Film Festival and has seven years of experience developing and producing non-fiction television shows with companies that have made hits like “Extreme Makeover Home Edition” and “Intervention.”

1990s

TERI SLICK (BA, Interdisciplinary Humanities, 1997) began her current position as director of student services for New Century College in December 2010. New Century College, part of George Mason University in Virginia, offers interdisciplinary degree programs (including an innovative first year experience program known as Cornerstones). Teri spent the past 10 years primarily in Ohio, where she worked in the field of academic advising within several departments through the University of Cincinnati system. She has had the opportunity to advise for a wide range of academic and career interests that include education, liberal arts, allied health and pre-medicine. In addition to her degree from Arts & Letters, she also earned a Masters in Student Affairs Administration from MSU.

SUSAN WILCZAK (BA, History of Art, 1996) is an art history lecturer at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, and works as an art consultant, currently working on the public art master plan for the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy. In 2011, Susan curated an exhibit at the Hope College De Pree Art Center entitled “Island Reflections: The Contemporary Art of Curaçao.” She first visited Curaçao in January 2010 and was impressed by the island’s vibrant, diverse, unique and refined art community. She developed the exhibit to share the art and culture of Curaçao, a small southern Caribbean island just off the coast of Venezuela.
LANE GLENN (Ph.D., Theatre, 1994) has been named president of Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Following a vote of approval by the State Board of Education on February 1, 2011, Glenn was promoted from his position as vice president of academic affairs and will begin his new duties at the college on July 1. He will be only the fourth president in the college’s 50-year history. Glenn had served in several academic leadership positions in Michigan, including Oakland Community College, prior to returning to his home state. He and his wife, Kim Chilingirian-Glenn (BA, Theatre, 1995), have two daughters and are active in their community.

GEORGE KINGHORN (MFA, Studio Art, 1994) is director and curator of the University of Maine Museum of Art. From 1999-2008, Kinghorn worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville and served in several positions, including deputy director and chief curator and also as director. During his time at MOCA Jacksonville, he worked cooperatively with architects and designers on the renovation of the six-floor historic building in downtown Jacksonville, assisted with fundraising efforts related to the capital campaign and exhibition sponsorship, managed the opening of the museum’s children’s interactive center the ArtExplorium Loft, and curated the series of grand opening exhibitions featuring a roster of national and international artists. As director he opened the successful upscale bistro restaurant Café Nola, worked with trustees to develop and adopt a comprehensive strategic plan for the institution, and facilitated an array of substantial gifts to the permanent collection. He has organized over 70 modern and contemporary art exhibitions and served as juror for the 2009 Mid-Atlantic edition of the prestigious “New American Paintings” publication.

ROBERT NOSANCHUK (BA, Humanities-Interdisciplinary, 1991) moved to Cleveland, Ohio and was installed as Senior Rabbi of Anshe Chosed Fairmount Temple. Early in 2010, while living in Northern Virginia, he was named one of the Washingtonians of the Year by “Washingtonian Magazine,” and received an award as Best of Reston from the homeless relief organization Reston Interfaith, in honor of the interfaith initiatives he has led with Imam Mohammed Magid of the Islamic Society of North America.

KERI WITMAN (BA, English, 1991) is the director of marketing for Cincinnati, OH. She is also the founder of a group called NYC Women in Publishing. Begun in 2008, the group’s mission is to provide “the community of women working in the publishing industry in the New York City area a way to expand their networks and stay connected.” From a first meeting with 40 attendees, membership in the group has grown to nearly 350.

1980s

RANDY BARRETTE (BA, Humanities/James Madison College, 1989) was one of 21 teachers from across the state of Kentucky honored with 2013 Ashland Inc. Teacher Achievement Awards and $500 cash. He is also immediate past president of the Kentucky World Language Association. A 15-year veteran educator, Randy Barrette has taught Spanish/world cultures at Menifee County High School in Kentucky for nine years. He also completed a teacher education program and is enrolled in an instructional design and technology integration program at Morehead State University. Barrette co-authored a winning proposal for an Enhancing Education Through Technology grant.
ANDREA SALLOUM (BA, Theatre, 1989) has served as the artistic director for the Kidworks Touring Theatre Company in Chicago for the past 22 years. Kidworks is a non-profit organization that has “reached over half a million children by traveling to schools, libraries, park districts, and museums, offering interactive touring productions, a variety of ‘hands-on’ drama workshops and long term artist-in-residency programs for children pre-K through 12th grade,” according to its website.

In addition, Andrea has acted since graduation from MSU in various Chicago theatres and on film and television.

CORY GOODRICH (BFA, Musical Theatre, 1988) is an actress, singer and writer living in Chicago. She has won two Joseph Jefferson awards, which recognize excellence in Chicago-area theatre, and she is the co-founder of Wagtail Productions, LLC, serving as creator and executive producer of “Cory’s House.” She has had starring roles in theatres across the country, working with such luminaries as George Hearn and Patti LuPone, among others. She can also be heard on many voiceover and studio singing recordings, and she has also sung live with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Auditorium Theatre’s acclaimed Ovations series, and as a soloist at the distinguished Ravinia Festival. She is married to David Barron, who is also a graduate of MSU’s Department of Theatre. They have two children.

JOHN TRIERWEILER (BA, Humanities, 1983) is the chief marketing officer at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business where he is responsible for managing and continually improving the school’s global reputation. Since entering this position in August 2012, John launched a new school mission, positioning the school via key differentiating strengths. John has worked in advertising, product management, sales and marketing.

ELLEN BRUSS (BFA, Studio Art, 1982) is the owner of Ellen Bruss Design in Denver, CO, which she founded in 1990. In early 2011, the company was recognized twice for excellence. The first for the firm was an AltPick Award for its design work on the restaurant Mark & Isabella. AltPick Awards are presented by The Alternative Pick/AltPick.com, one of the nation’s leading sources for creative talent that annually celebrates and rewards “all that is great in the world of art.” Making it special for Ellen was the fact that her firm won the juried portion of that competition. Around the same time, the firm received formal recognition from “Creative Quarterly” for its work on the Hammond’s Candies cocoa tin.

RICK URBIS (BA, Humanities – Prelaw, 1980) followed his bachelor’s degree by completing law school. Located in Rochester, Michigan, he is now an attorney doing pro bono work in his community. In his “Spartan Saga” video, he says that while at MSU he learned “that a lot of people don’t have the opportunities that some have, and it’s important for us to give back to our community by focusing on those people and doing what we can to make their lives better.” View his full “Spartan Saga” video online.
MICHELINE MAYNARD (BA, Humanities – Prelaw, 1978) is the editor for “CulinaryWoman,” which focuses on quality food and travel. She spent 10 years as a reporter and bureau chief with “The New York Times,” based in Detroit, and directed the Times’ coverage of the auto industry bailout as well as other issues across the state. She has written for “Fortune Magazine,” and has been a staff writer or bureau chief at “USA Today,” “Newsday,” “U.S. News and World Report,” and the Reuters News Service. She began her career as a legislative correspondent for United Press International in Lansing, Michigan, and served as an intern in the White House press office. Maynard is the author of four books, including her newest, “The Selling of the American Economy: How Foreign Companies are Remaking the American Dream,” which was published by Random House in October 2009. She also wrote the acclaimed book, “The End of Detroit: How the Big Three Lost Their Grip on the American Car Market,” which foresaw the collapse of Detroit carmakers. Her graduate degree is from Columbia University, and she is an adjunct faculty member at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

ERNEST HARDEN JR. (BA, Theatre, 1974) completed filming the latest Clint Eastwood movie, “J.Edgar,” about the life of J. Edgar Hoover, the famed leader of the FBI. The film stars Leonardo DiCaprio as J. Edgar and was released in late 2011. Ernest plays J. Edgar’s personal driver of some 40 years, James Crawford, and it is the latest role in an acting career beginning its fifth decade. From his early appearances on “The Jeffersons” television show to his memorable role in the film “White Men Can’t Jump,” Ernest has been a recognizable face in television and film since his graduation from MSU.

DAVID STEVENS (BA, Justin Morrill College, Theatre concentration, 1969) has had an extensive career in theater since his MSU graduation. He went on to earn his Ph.D. in 1973 from Bowling Green University and spent 20 years in university teaching, including theatre history, dramatic theory and criticism, and acting and directing. In addition, he has published five books, 25 articles, more than 50 reviews, and has been retired since 1993 from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He then began a second career as an attorney in 1993 and retired from that profession in 2009. His involvement in theatre has included directing over 40 productions, serving as department chair, producing summer stock, and acting in over 75 roles. He is still active in community and university theatre.

JANET (KLOECKER) HALFMANN (BA, English and Spanish, 1967, BA, Journalism, 1979) is the award-winning author of more than 30 fiction and nonfiction books for children. “Star of the Sea: A Day in the Life of a Starfish” (Henry Holt/Ottaviano) was released in spring 2011 to great reviews from “Publishers Weekly” and “Kirkus Reviews,” and is a Junior Library Guild Selection. Other recent titles are “Seven Miles to Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story,” “Good Night, Little Sea Otter,” “Fur and Feathers,” and “Little Skink’s Tail.” After earning a second bachelor’s degree in journalism, she wrote for a newspaper in Kansas and then spent 12 years creating coloring and activity books for the Golden Books company in Wisconsin. After connecting with the Creative Company in Minnesota, she was offered a chance to write a series of insect books for children. As Janet says on her website, “a children’s author was born.” It was the realization of a long-held dream, one which she enjoys to this day. Her career has included authoring several nature books for Soundprints, which publishes in association with the Smithsonian Institution. Janet now lives in South Milwaukee, WI. You can find out more about Janet and her books at her website: www.janethalfmann.com.
1950s

MILTON STERN (Ph.D., English, 1955) passed away in July 2011 at the age of 83. From his obituary on (Hartford) Courant.com, “Mickey Stern was an intellectual, a teacher, and a passionate advocate of extending the world of ideas from academia to Main Street. He was an authority on American literature and wrote outstanding books on Hawthorne, Melville and Fitzgerald, his favorite author in his later years. He also was a professor of English at the University of Connecticut for 33 years, and a founder of the Connecticut Humanities Council.”

JOANNE EICHER (BA, Arts & Letters, 1952) followed her undergraduate studies by going on to earn an MA and PhD in Sociology and Anthropology from MSU, and she was on the MSU faculty from 1961-1977 in the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Art (renamed Human Environment and Design) before joining the University of Minnesota as department head of Textiles and Clothing from 1977-1987. She returned to faculty and was named a Regents Professor in 1995, retiring in 2005. Since “retirement,” she has been working as an author for Fairchild Books, NYC (“The Visible Self,” 2008) and Berg Publishers, Oxford, UK (“Dress and Gender,” 1992; “Dress and Ethnicity,” 1995; “Beads and Beadmakers,” 1998), where she is also a series editor for “Dress, Body, Culture,” which has published a total of 52 volumes since 1994. For several years, Eicher has identified primarily as an anthropologist and conducted extensive fieldwork in the Niger Delta of Nigeria with the Kalabari people on dress and textiles. This directly relates to her latest undertaking: editor in chief of the 10-volume “Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion” (Oxford University Press, 2010, in hard copy and also online at bergfashionlibrary.com), which won the 2011 Dartmouth Medal for outstanding reference presented by the Reference and User Services Association.

It’s All About You!

As always, the Michigan State University College of Arts and Letters is keenly interested in what its alumni are doing. We particularly want to know about your professional awards, achievements, and latest activities. And we want to share these milestones with our readers, your fellow alums, and the world.

Recently promoted or taken a new job? Won an award for your work, your art, or your organization? Been singled out for praise by your peers? Written a book, been featured in an art exhibit, or worked on or in a Broadway or other professional theatre production?

We want to know, and we hope you will let us know about your professional accomplishments. A high-resolution photo – either a portrait shot or an action shot of you doing what you do – would also be welcomed, so we can share the news with the 28,000 CAL alums on our mailing list.

We hope you enjoy reading about the latest happenings in the lives of your fellow alums as much as we do publishing this information. As MSU reminds us daily, whenever great work and achievements are required, Spartans Will.