

Wednesday, Nov 04, 2015

## Music, Theatre and Dance November 2015 News

The fall is always such a busy time and we have lots of news to share with you.

### Students

Music education doctoral student **Jocelyn Fekel Zelasko**, who already has two degrees from OU, a BM in vocal performance and a BS in economics, performed at the Strange Beautiful Music Festival at the Fisher Music Center in September to great acclaim. **Larry Dunn**, who is a blogger for International Contemporary Ensemble wrote, "Soprano Jocelyn Fekel Zelasko . . . [is] a stunning discovery . . . She tore into George Crumb's Madrigals Book I and *The Yellow Moon of Andalusia* with verve, vigor, and commitment." Jocelyn performed alongside **Vicky Chow** and OU jazz professor **Miles Brown**, as well as percussionist **Chris Sies**.



*Jocelyn Zelasko at The Strange Beautiful Music Festival*

Jocelyn's fellow doctoral student **Shinko Kondo** defended her dissertation on October 29. She's been researching Musical Communication in Scaffolding of Young Childre Musical Learning. Congratulations to our music education program's newest scholar. Well done Dr Kondo.

**Claire Toupin**, a vocal music education student, had a stand-out



*(Left to right) Dr. Jackie Wiggins, Dr. Deborah VanderLinde and Dr. Shinko Kon*

performance opportunity in September. She was selected to sing the national anthem for President Obama's visit to Macomb Community College. When first asked if she was available to sing for "someone special" she declined because she had a full day classes, but once she was told it was the president, she changed her mind. "It was an amazing experience," she said, "and after it got to shake the president's hand." This [video](#) of her performance is unofficial and a little shaky but the quality of her singing is first class.

**James Lentini**, OU's provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, is also a professor of music, and we are delighted to report that he has earned a spot on the first-round ballot for the 2016 Grammy Awards for his album "The Four Seasons for Guitar." The recording, which was released in November 2014, includes original compositions for solo guitar and a duo for guitar and soprano voice. It features Dr. Lentini on solo guitar and in a duo performance with his wife, soprano **Dana Lentini**. The album is entered in classical categories of Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, and Contemporary Classical Composition. You can read more details in this [OU News story](#).

Assistant Professor **Jeffrey Heisler's** most recent CD, "Gradient," has also reached the first round Grammy ballot. His recording is in the Best Classical Album category. It features new music he commissioned or premiered for the saxophone, including works by **Steve Reich, Chen Yi, Philippe Leroux, Baljinder Sekhon, Timothy Stulman, and Frank Wiley**. "It's a nice honor," Jeff said modestly. Congratulations to both distinguished musicians.

Another distinguished faculty member, Professor of Theatre **Karen Sheridan**, was recently named the 2015 Sunrise Pinnacle Awards Educator of the Year by the Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce. She received her award during a breakfast at the Royal Park Hotel, which was attended by 650 dignitaries and award recipients. **Jennifer Kincer**, who is a special lecturer in music, was also honored. She received the 2015 Business Woman of the Year Award. Congratulations to both Karen and Jennifer.

Assistant Professor of Dance **Ali Woerner** was also recognized for her work this fall. She was interviewed for the website Clementine Daily. The site features original content of interest to "today's multi-faceted, modern woman." Ali was part of their "Everyday Icon" series. There is a lot of wisdom in the interview; it's a great read, and not just for women. You can find it [here](#).



*Professor Karen Sheridan (left) and Karen Kincer at the Sunrise Pinnacle Awards*

Finally, we are a little late in bringing you an update about Assistant Professor **Mark Stone's** summer travels in Africa. In Johannesburg, SA he was an adjudicator and clinician at the International Marimba and Steel Pan Festival which drew more than 1,600 participants from all over Africa. He found the festival "an absolutely exhilarating experience!" In Uganda he continued his work with **Haruna Walusimbi** and his group Nile Beat Artists, but he also made time to catch up with old friends.

"The highlight of my trip was visiting my friends and teachers in Nakibembe village, Uganda. Words cannot express the happiness in being reunited with the Nakibembe Xylophone Group after 18 years and seeing them carrying on their beautiful embaire traditio. During my visit, Haruna took a photo of me with the group, which so clearly captured the moment that I decided to use it as the cover of my new album." Mark released his new album, "Kakaire," this fall. You can watch a YouTube video of Nakibembe Xylophone [here](#).

If all of this talk of Africa has inspired you, check out the information about our Global Arts in Ghana 2016 study abroad opportunity. You will find more information [here](#).