

# HIXSON-LIED COLLEGE

OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

SPRING 2019



## Hixson-Lied Guest Artist Program

Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theater | Joshua Bell | Harry Connick, Jr. | Chicago Symphony Orchestra | Philip Glass | Idina Menzel | Yo-Yo Ma | Audra McDonald | Itzhak Perlman | Robert Storr | Mariinsky Orchestra | Parsons Dance | Twyla Tharp Dance | John Waters



University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln

# DEAN'S LETTER



Photo: Madeline Cass

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the next installment of our supplemental publication to our annual Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts Magazine, where we are highlighting guest artists and the many world-class artists who work with our students each year through a variety of programs in each of our academic units.

Guest artists are a vital part of the education of our students in every area, and we are fortunate to bring in some of the best artists and performers in the world to work with our students. Much of it is made possible with support from our Hixson-Lied Endowment.

Included among the guest artist programs that the endowment supports is the Lied Center for Performing Arts Artist Residency Program, which allows nearly every artist who performs at the Lied Center for Performing Arts to conduct either a masterclass, question and answer session, or some other type of outreach event. This program has allowed our students to learn from the likes of Yo-Yo Ma, Joshua Bell, Misty Copeland, the cast of many Broadway touring shows, and many more. This valuable program allows them to see the hard work and preparation they need to do to reach that pinnacle level of achievement. A new partnership with the Glenn Korff School of Music has made a number of these sessions available to all music students through their convocation program.

These experiences literally change the lives of our students as they prepare themselves for their own artistic careers. I hope you enjoy reading more about this and other guest artist experiences in this issue, and I thank you for your support of the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts.

Chuck O'Connor  
Hixson-Lied Endowed Dean

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### **Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts:**

#### **Guest Artists**

*For Alumni and Friends of the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

#### **Hixson-Lied Endowed Dean**

Charles O'Connor

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**Cover Image** Cellist Yo-Yo Ma gave a masterclass for Glenn Korff School of Music chamber ensembles during his visit to the Lied Center for Performing Arts in 2010. He is one of many world-renowned artists who work with students in the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts each year. Pictured are Yo-Yo Ma working with (left to right) Lily Spader, piano; Kristi Jenkins, violin; Jessica Dussault, cello; and Lexi Woodard, viola. Photo by Mike Edholm.

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# An impressive list

More than 450 artists and scholars have participated in masterclasses, lectures, Q&As and other guest artist activities in the Hixson-Lied college since 2014, including:

ALVIN AILEY'S AMERICAN DANCE THEATER | AMERICAN BALLET THEATER (WITH PRINCIPAL DANCER MISTY COPELAND) | LEE ARONSOHN | JOSHUA BELL | BOSTON POPS ESPLANADE ORCHESTRA (WITH CONDUCTOR KEITH LOCKHART) | ANDY CAVATORTA | KRISTIN CHENOWETH | CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA | CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA | HARRY CONNICK, JR. | DANNY ELFMAN | BEHNAZ FARAH | PHILIP GLASS | JESSIE GRAFF | MARG HELGENBERGER | BARBARA HENDRICKS | MIKE HILL | RON HIMES | HUBBARD STREET DANCE CHICAGO | THE KING'S SINGERS | VICTOR LEWIS | YO-YO MA | MARIINSKY ORCHESTRA | AUDRA MCDONALD | IDINA MENZEL | TREVOR NOAH | PARSONS DANCE | ALEXANDER PAYNE | ITZHAK PERLMAN | DONALD PETRIE | ALEXANDER ROSS | CHRISTOPHER ROTHKO | RUSSIAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA | ARTURO SANDOVAL | PAUL SHAFFER | THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY | SHANGHAI QUARTET | SNARKY PUPPY | PENELOPE SPHEERIS | ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA | ROBERT STORR | STREB | TWYLA THARP DANCE | JOHN WATERS

*Jessie Graff at the 68th Primetime Emmy Awards on Sept. 18, 2016. Graff returned to the Carson School in 2014 to teach a masterclass and received the Alumni Association's Early Achiever Award. Photo by Alberto E. Rodriguez/Getty Images.*

# Lied Center masterclasses offer students access to world-class performers

Yo-Yo Ma presented an E.N. Thompson Forum lecture titled "Cultural Citizens" in December 2014 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.



Top: Members of Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theater gave a masterclass to students in the dance program of the Glenn Korff School of Music prior to their performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in 2015.

Bottom, left: Internationally acclaimed trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis leads a trombone masterclass during the Glenn Korff School of Music's convocation on March 14.

Bottom, right: Professor of Viola Clark Potter (left) leads and question and answer session with violinist Joshua Bell for students in the Glenn Korff School of Music, prior to his performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in 2015.



Students in the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts enjoy world-class guest artist experiences each year thanks to a partnership with the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

"It's a natural fit," said Sasha Dobson, outreach coordinator for the Lied Center for Performing Arts. "We're on campus, we're affiliated with the

University, and it's the first words in our mission statement—to educate. We're more than just a presenting organization. We are here to connect with students and to connect to the community to help others learn more about themselves and to learn more about the world through the power of the performing arts."

Last year, nearly 4,200 university students

participated in 80 outreach events at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Dobson noted that the numbers are higher in years when the Lied Center hosts the ASCAP New Musical/Grow a Show event. A typical year has 40-60 events reaching 2,000 students. These outreach and student engagement events are supported with grants from the Hixson-Lied Endowment.



Grammy® winner and legendary late-night bandleader Paul Shaffer visits with students in the Glenn Korff School of Music during their convocation on Jan. 10. Shaffer served as David Letterman's musical director for 33 years.

Dobson said these experiences simply wouldn't happen without that partnership with the college.

"We're only able to bring iconic artists to the Lied Center because of the support from the Hixson-Lied Endowment," she said. "We simply would not be able to make that possible with the artist fees. We need that support to bring the artists, and then it also wouldn't happen if the faculty were not so wonderful and generous with their students in advocating for these opportunities and really saying, 'Hey, you need to go to this. You will learn something.'"

Some of the recent artists who have held masterclasses or a question and answer session include Yo-Yo Ma; Joshua Bell; Harry Connick, Jr.; Doc Severinsen; Paul Shaffer; dancers from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Diavolo and Streb; and musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, among many others.

"These experiences are invaluable to our students," said Hixson-Lied College of Fine

and Performing Arts Endowed Dean Chuck O'Connor. "This is an opportunity for them to see world-class artists and either perform for them and get feedback or ask questions about their preparation or practice regiment. These opportunities change the lives of these students as they prepare for their own artistic careers."

The Lied Center has also connected with the

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## **"Interacting with visiting artists is exactly the spark that a lot of UNL students need, in order to visualize a successful future in their respective fields."**

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Glenn Korff School of Music to partner their outreach activities with the Korff School's convocation, which has helped the artists reach more students.

"Who wouldn't enjoy talking about their life and career in front of 300 or so eager music students?" said Professor of Oboe William

McMullen, who helps coordinate convocations for the Glenn Korff School of Music. "Obviously these visiting artists have made it to the top of their profession, which is why they have been booked for their events at the Lied Center. The students and faculty all agree that personally getting to know these artists and getting advice from them continues to be an incredible inspiration. They all have such amazing stories to tell."

In January, Shaffer gave the students inside information about his career on *The Late Show with David Letterman*.

"He talked about how he was able to create a top-notch band for the show with musicians who had incredible ears and flexibility," McMullen said.

Cooper Creal, a junior vocal performance major from Lincoln, said he enjoys hearing the stories of how artists got started.

"The only thing they all had in common was an unwavering, passionate love for what they do, whether that be performing professionally or being on the crew of a show, the joy that it brings is what got them to where they are," Creal said. "They didn't have to attend Julliard to make it on a national tour of a Broadway show. In fact, Laura Osnes mentioned to us that

she didn't even finish college. Interacting with visiting artists is exactly the spark that a lot of UNL students need, in order to visualize a successful future in their respective fields."

Other artists who participated this semester include jazz trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis and members of the San Francisco Symphony.



Misty Copeland performed the title role in Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* Feb. 16, 2018, at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Dance students attended a dress rehearsal of the performance. Courtesy photo.

And it's not just theatre, dance and music students in the Hixson-Lied College who benefit from Lied Center masterclasses.

"We connect to everyone from all different majors," Dobson said. "For example, I teach an Intro to Theatre class, and I'll invite some of my students. They're not majors, but are from all different colleges, so they get the opportunity to have these enhancement education opportunities as well."

Dobson hopes students learn a lot about themselves through these outreach opportunities.

"The arts are really something that holds up a mirror to society and shows us who we really are," she said. "I hope that through any of these events that we have at the Lied Center that students really can honestly and refreshingly take a look at that and learn how to grow from that as human beings that are all connected."

The outreach events that have stood out the most for Dobson was last year's events surrounding the American Ballet Theatre and St. Louis Symphony performance of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird*, which featured principal dancer Misty Copeland in the iconic *Firebird* role. Dancers from the American Ballet Theatre and musicians from the St. Louis Symphony gave masterclasses, and Copeland answered questions during the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues.

"That was groundbreaking and hugely impactful for everybody that attended," Dobson said. "Anything surrounding that event, even if it was watching a dress rehearsal, just to be in the presence of these iconic and very elite, top-notch, world-class artists was pretty amazing."

McMullen stressed the importance of students attending these masterclasses and outreach events.

"Hearing comments about the real world of a musical career is so important to all the

students—even if they don't play the specific instrument of the guest artist," he said. "They all talk about how much hard work it is and how devoted the students need to be to make it their profession. I know hearing these stories are really inspiring to students at Nebraska—they are inspiring to me, too."

Dobson has been coordinating these outreach events for seven years and has seen the results of these experiences.

"I'm so proud of some of the students that I've seen graduate from these programs, and I know they have participated in these amazing events that we have at the Lied and are now having very successful careers in their field of study," she said. "How many students can say, 'I got to sing for Stephen Bray [who won the 2017 Grammy Award for the Best Musical Theater Album of the Tony Award-winning revival of *The Color Purple*] one of his songs, and he gave me compliments.' And we've had quite a few students who have had that experience. It's awesome." ■



Top: The Daily Show host Trevor Noah answers questions from students during his October 2017 visit to Lincoln to perform at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

Middle, left: Award-winning actress and singer Kristin Chenoweth (front, left.) with students at the Lied Center for Performing Arts following her 2017 performance.

Middle, right: St. Louis Symphony First Violinist Celeste Golden Boyer (right) gives coaching to Glenn Korff School of Music violinist Grace Lamb during last year's masterclass.

Bottom: Composer and lyricist Stephen Bray (second from right) visits with students during the ASCAP/Grow a Show New Musical Theatre Workshop in September 2017.

# Students gain confidence by participating in masterclasses

By Abby Kurth



Abby Kurth

As I walked into the Johnny Carson Theater, I was feeling pretty nervous. Sheet music in hand and looking like I had put at least some effort into my appearance, I sat in the front row of chairs among my friends, all of whom were talking to each other excitedly.

Jason Michael Webb and Stephen Bray were going to be giving a masterclass, and we were the lucky few who were going to perform for them. When it was my turn, I walked up to the piano, handed my music to the accompanist, introduced myself, and sang. My nerves faded away as I could see our two guest artists smiling at me out of the corner of my eye.

Over the next 10 minutes, they worked with me on various musical interpretation choices and specific acting movements, occasionally throwing out compliments like, "I'm obsessed with your vibrato!"

This masterclass experience was a year and a half ago, and I still remember the way I felt when Jason Michael Webb appreciated the way my voice sounded and how I had performed. I thought (and still think) to myself, "If these Broadway-level professionals like the way I'm performing, I must be doing something right."

Working and having such a positive experience with Mr. Webb and Mr. Bray, two men who have worked on Broadway shows throughout the process of casting, directing, writing, music directing, and more, meant so much to me, and I remember it happily to this day.

These are the kinds of experiences students are granted through the support of the Hixson-Lied Endowment. I have seen students in all disciplines work with some of their idols. One that immediately comes to mind is the UNL Graduate Student Jazz Combo performing for Michael League, the founder of popular jazz/rock/funk band Snarky Puppy. This masterclass happened during convocation in the music school, so every student was able to watch as Michael listened to the group and gave suggestions on how they could improve.

I'm not sure that's something people necessarily realize—that students can gain so much from observing masterclasses that may not directly correlate to the discipline they're studying here at UNL. I sat in on the Mariinsky Orchestra Viola masterclass, and I know very little about string instruments, but I could appreciate the intricacy of the master violinist's comments, and could see the student participants' excitement as they worked with one of the best violinists in the world.

What students gain from masterclasses through the Hixson-Lied Endowment and efforts of the Lied Center for Performing Arts is absolutely invaluable. Not only do we receive advice from world-class musicians and performers, but we gain valuable connections, learn how professionals can come from any kind of background, and make realizations about ourselves based on a new perspective from an outside teacher.

I'm incredibly thankful for the masterclass experiences I've had during my college career, and I'm excited for future students to have similar experiences. ■

—Abby Kurth, from Bettendorf, Iowa, graduated in May with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music and a theatre minor. She recently earned 2nd place in the 2019 North American Vocal Competition sponsored by music publisher Hal Leonard. She was an education and outreach intern at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

## Hixson-Lied Visiting Artist Series brings notable artists, scholars to campus



Artist, critic and curator Robert Storr, dean of the Yale University School of Art, delivered his lecture last spring. Photo by Mallory Trecaso.



Left: Kris Graves, a photographer and publisher based in New York and London, visits with photography students in the School of Art, Art History & Design. Photo by Mallory Trecaso. Right: Ceramic artist Kim Dickey demonstrates for students and faculty. Photo by Justin Mohling.



**T**he School of Art, Art History & Design's Hixson-Lied Visiting Artist & Scholar Lecture Series brings notable artists, scholars and designers to Nebraska each semester to enhance the education of students.

Francisco Souto, the director of the School of Art, Art History & Design, said it's critical for students to learn from a variety of artists.

"The School of Art, Art History and Design has a highly regarded faculty of national and international stature," he said. "This extraordinary group of faculty and scholars represents only a small percentage of all the potential directions in contemporary studio art, design and art scholarship. It is fundamental to supplement any art program with periodic visits by recognized national and international artists and scholars who can speak directly about other innovative approaches within our fields. This certainly provides our students with a broad educational and professional experience invaluable as they develop their careers."

Underwritten by the Hixson-Lied Endowment with additional support from other sources, the series enriches the culture of the state by providing a way for Nebraskans to interact with luminaries in the fields of art, art history and design. Each visiting artist or scholar spends one to three days on campus to meet with classes, participate in critiques and give demonstrations.

Previous participants in the series have included critic and curator

Robert Storr, ceramist Doug Casebeer, printmaker Sukha Worob, photographer and publisher Kris Graves, painter Robert Bubp, graphic designer Ellen Lupton and art historian Jeff Fontana, among many others.

"We are privileged to have such a strong visiting artist program here at Nebraska," said Neil Celani, a graduate student in ceramics. "The constant flow and exchange of ideas that occurs through this series has had a profound impact on the way I think about art and my life as an artist."

During his time in graduate school, the ceramics program has brought in six visiting artists with additional support from the Clay Club.

**"OUR ARTISTS SPEND THREE DAYS GIVING DEMONSTRATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY STUDIO, WHICH OFFERS A GLIMPSE OF THE ARTIST IN THEIR ELEMENT," CELANI SAID.**

"The opportunities for critiques have allowed fresh insights into my own studio practice from respected voices in the field. Last semester we were able to bring in two very different ceramic artists to UNL, Kim Dickey and Simon Levin. The simultaneous demonstrations sparked engaging conversations among the artists and attendees. The time the artists spend in our studio allow students to not only learn but are able build a relationship that can foster mentorship." ■



Composer Carter Pann (right) offers advice to pianist Madeline Rogers during a masterclass in December. Photo by Justin Mohling.

# Composer Pann in residence in Glenn Korff School of Music

Composer Carter Pann was in residence in the Glenn Korff School of Music in December. His visit included a guest artist recital, as well as the Wind Ensemble performing his works in a concert.

“These engagements really freshen me up, as a musician and as a human,” Pann said. It keeps me fresh and really engaged with an incredibly robust itinerary that they put you through for three days. It’s just great. In addition to meeting all the new students and colleagues and other faculty, these residencies enrich my musical life in different ways that I don’t always get in my home job.”

Pann is associate professor of composition

at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where Glenn Korff School of Music Assistant Professor of Composition Greg Simon received his master’s degree and studied under him.

“He was terrific and one of the best teachers I ever had,” Simon said. “Even before I got to Colorado, he’s been a composer that I looked up to. He’s a tremendously gifted artists and someone who has found what I think of as an unmistakable voice for himself. That admiration for his music led me to always want to find ways to work with him.”

Composer and pianist Pann has written for musicians from around the world. He

has received a Charles Ives Fellowship, a Masterprize seat in London and five ASCAP awards. His numerous albums have received two Grammy® nominations to date. In 2016, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music.

“If there was one thing that I was going to describe Carter’s music as being, I would say it’s an exercise in joy,” Simon said. “And that can take all sorts of forms. There are some themes that Carter visits in his music that are very complex and not necessarily light entertainment, but there’s always this undercurrent of joy and gratitude running through it.”

Simon helped organize a piano prelude project to also take advantage of the fact that Pann, in addition to being a composer, is also a talented pianist. Students from the composition program were paired with pianists and wrote new preludes for piano that the composers wrote in collaboration with the pianists that were performed during Pann’s guest recital.

“His piano concertos are among his most celebrated pieces,” Simon said. “And I thought to myself when I was thinking about what we could do with Carter as a resident here: How can we welcome the pianists into the process so they can benefit from his residency as well?”

Pann worked with the pairs in a masterclass prior to the performance.

“It was just so successful with this crop of students pairing up to collaborate with each other,” Pann said. “Every single piano work I heard, the

their career. Getting the chance to explore those life and music perspectives with the actual composer is always incredibly insightful.”

Simon said students benefit from Pann’s residency.

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**“I got really inspired in that masterclass. That was a first for me. I have never done a masterclass like that. I’m always just asked to do composer classes.”**

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eight preludes, every single one had its own character. It was just wonderful piano music. I got really inspired in that masterclass. That was a first for me. I have never done a masterclass like that. I’m always just asked to do composer classes.”

Joshua Spaulding, a graduate composition student from Johnson City, Tennessee, wrote a prelude titled “Resonance,” for pianist Seung-Kyung Baek. He appreciated the opportunity to have the masterclass with Pann.

“Any chance we get to work with a guest composer is an opportunity to explore different methods on how to write and how to establish ourselves in our careers as creative artists,” he said. “Everybody has a different creative process, and everyone also has taken a different route to get to where they are in

“There are an innumerable number of ways to think about art and music at a very high level, so I think that students always benefit from hearing a different perspective,” Simon said. “I also think it’s always just a great privilege to interact with an artist who is working at the highest possible level. Students get a chance to work with a terrific composer and a terrific teacher.” ■

Below, left: Graduate piano student Seung-Kyung Baek performs a prelude titled “Resonance,” written by graduate composition student Joshua Spaulding during the Carter Pann recital. Photo by Odochi Akwani.

Below, right: Glenn Korff School of Music Director of Bands Carolyn Barber visits with composer Carter Pann during a pre-concert talk before the Wind Ensemble concert Dec. 5. Photo by Odochi Akwani.



## Composer Philip Glass attends premiere of ‘Annunciation’

Composer Philip Glass was in Lincoln last spring for the Celebration of Philip Glass event at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. The event has won Outstanding Event honors from the Mayor’s Arts Awards, sponsored by the Lincoln Arts Council, and was recognized May 9.

The program included the world premiere of Glass’s piano quintet, “Annunciation,” performed by Marguerite Scribante Professor of Piano Paul Barnes and the Chiara String Quartet, as well as performances of “Pendulum for Violin and Piano” with Chiara violinist Hyeyung Yoon and Barnes; the University Singers performing “Father Death Blues;” and Piano Concerto No. 2 “After Lewis and Clark,” a piece commissioned by Barnes for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the expedition of Lewis and Clark and performed by the UNL Symphony Orchestra, Barnes and Native American flutist Ron Warren.

While in Lincoln, Glass attended rehearsals for the piano quintet and piano concerto and met with students in the Glenn Korff School of Music’s composition program.

“[Glass] has been so generous to me with his time, and the fact that he made himself available here in Lincoln—and only in Lincoln—I think that is a wonderful testament to his generosity as a composer and as a musician,” said Barnes, who has been collaborating with Glass since they first met in 1995. ■



*Philip Glass watches last April’s performance backstage at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Photo by Walker Pickering.*

# Honorary degrees bring acclaimed artists to campus

Three honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees have been presented recently by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, giving students an opportunity to interact with the following prestigious artists:



*Photo: Greg Nathan, University Communication*

### BARBARA HENDRICKS

An opera singer and UNL alumna, Barbara Hendricks delivered the undergraduate commencement address in May 2015.

The Glenn Korff School of Music hosted Hendricks, who gave a masterclass for six voice students and presented a Q&A about her career as an international opera celebrity, jazz performer, film star and United Nations humanitarian. She has sung at the Paris Opera, the MET in New York City, Covent Garden in London and La Scala in Milano.



*Photo courtesy of Jazz in June.*

### VICTOR LEWIS

An internationally acclaimed drummer and composer, Victor Lewis received an honorary doctorate in December 2016 and performed with the Jazz Ensemble.

Born into a family of musicians in Omaha, Lewis moved to New York City in 1974 after studying music at Nebraska. He performed with many top jazz artists, including Woody Shaw, Carla Bley, David Sanborn and Dexter Gordon. He was a member of the Stan Getz Quartet from 1980 to 1991. In 2003, he joined the jazz faculty at Rutgers University, where he teaches drums and coaches chamber jazz groups.



*Photo: Craig Chandler, University Communication.*

### ALEXANDER PAYNE

A director, producer and an Academy Award-winning screenwriter, Alexander Payne received an honorary degree last May.

Known for such acclaimed films as *Citizen Ruth*, *Election*, *About Schmidt*, *Sideways*, *The Descendants* and *Nebraska*, his movies have been nominated for 18 Academy Awards. He has won two Oscars for best adapted screenplay (*Sideways* and *The Descendants*). *Sideways* also won the Golden Globe for best motion picture-musical or comedy in 2004.

# Sheldon promotes engagement with students

Sheldon Museum of Art brings visiting artists, scholars and other experts to the museum each semester to engage in conversations with faculty, students and the community.

“It’s a natural part of an art museum’s outreach program,” said Carrie L. Morgan, Sheldon’s Curator of Academic Programs. “We have a collection and resources here, but how can we enhance them by bringing in alternative and specialized voices?”

Most recently, Sheldon has focused on the campus as its primary audience and created partnerships with departments and faculty across the university.

“We’ve been thinking about the kinds of conversations and guests that students in the classes on campus would like to hear from—where we can find some synergy,” Morgan said. “And sometimes that takes us a little bit outside of the arts.”

While classes in the School of Art, Art History & Design (SAAHD) are natural partners, Sheldon has reached out to create events and experiences for other students in a range of diverse programs and

departments on campus, such as sociology, political science and environmental science, among others. An annual grant from the Hixson-Lied Endowment helps support all of these student engagements.

Last fall, Sheldon invited artist, educator and activist Eric Gottesman to Lincoln in conjunction with the exhibition, “For Freedoms: In the future days. . . .” Gottesman is co-founder of the For Freedoms Federation, a platform that promotes ways for artists and art institutions to engage in public life and sponsor programs for civil discourse. The group’s 50 State Initiative established a network of academic art museums, libraries and other organizations that presented concurrent exhibitions and events last fall.

In addition to his public lecture, Gottesman led a campus conversation with students in Associate Professor of Art Stacy Asher’s graphic design course, Design+Social Change (GRPH 491).

“She built her syllabus around an engagement with ‘For Freedoms’ and Eric when he came to campus,” Morgan said. “When he was here, Sheldon hosted a workshop for this class. The students got to sit with Eric and Stacy and have a conversation, during which students asked a number of challenging questions that they may not have felt as

comfortable asking in a traditional classroom setting. The open, informal format, plus the new perspective that Eric, as a For Freedoms founder brought, proved relevant and interesting for the students.”

Following the conversation, students, along with Gottesman and Asher, explored some of the issues they discussed in a poster workshop, making posters to participate in the For Freedoms advocacy effort.

“We had tables set up in the Great Hall, so the students were creating visual messages. Eric roamed the room and interacted with them, so they got a little feedback on their artistic decision making and the messaging,” Morgan said.

The students recreated the poster workshop for the community at a First Friday event.

**“IT WAS TRULY A FULL-CIRCLE EXPERIENCE—SHELDON BROUGHT AN EXPERT FROM THE OUTSIDE TO CAMPUS, THE FOUNDER OF THIS ORGANIZATION THAT WE WERE PARTNERING WITH, PROVIDING STUDENTS UNIQUE ACCESS TO HIS EXPERTISE, AND THEN STUDENTS TRANSLATED WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED WITH ERIC AND PUT THAT BACK OUT INTO THE WORLD WITH THEIR POSTERS,” MORGAN SAID.**

This spring, Sheldon partnered with the SAAHD’s Hixson-Lied Visiting Artist & Lecture Series to present a lecture by Leo G. Mazow on “Edward Hopper’s ‘Hotel Consciousness.’” Mazow is the Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of American Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the author of “Hopper’s Hotels,” which explores the hotel, motel and boarding house subjects of Hopper’s body of work.

Sheldon owns Hopper’s iconic 1932 painting, “Room in New York.”

Mazow’s lecture drew nearly 200 people, many of whom were students, suggesting that the museum’s ongoing initiative to grow student awareness and pride in the campus art collection is taking root.

“We have an awesome football team. We have an awesome volleyball team. We are leaders in scientific research. We also have a world-class art museum,” Morgan said. “There are so many points of pride, and it’s really easy to point to something like the Hopper and say, ‘Other people know about this painting.’ We’re really lucky to have it. This puts Nebraska on the map.”

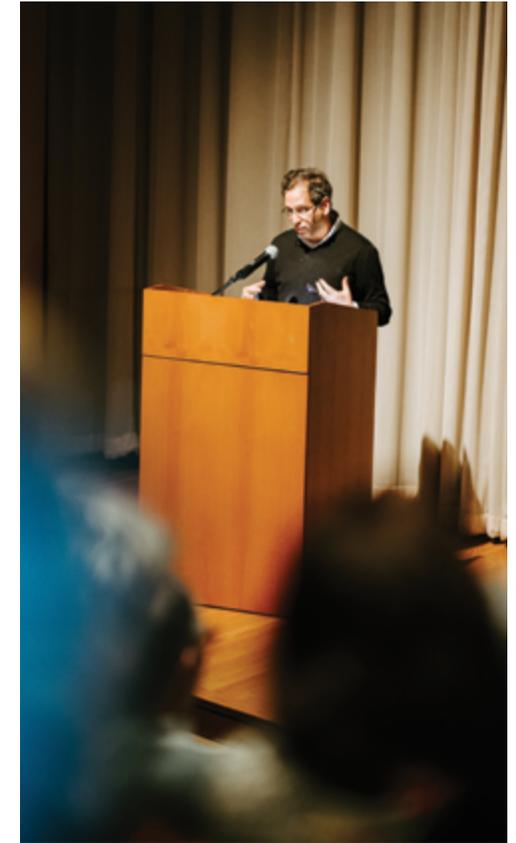
In addition to his public lecture, Mazow met with Associate Professor of Art History Wendy Katz’s American Art 1865-1945 (AHIS 252) class.

“Wendy’s students came to Sheldon and had a conversation in front of our Hopper painting with a Hopper expert,” Morgan said.

The students also were able to interact with about a dozen other works from Sheldon’s collection that were pulled from storage by artists connected to Hopper. Associate Registrar Genevieve Ellerbee facilitated this observation session with both Katz and Mazow contributing their perspectives as scholars of American art.

Morgan hopes all of these kinds of engagements help students to think differently and see the world in a way they hadn’t before.

“I just want people to think critically and creatively,” she said. “I don’t always see works of art so differently than a text that you might be reading for a class. Of course, art can provide an aesthetic experience—it can be spiritual, emotional and personal—but it also can be unpacked, experienced and interpreted from many different perspectives. Engaging with art shouldn’t be foreign. It should be part of how we understand literacy in the 21st century. We want to position the fine and performing arts a little more central to everybody’s experience at the university.” ■



Top: Art historian Leo G. Mazow spoke to nearly 200 people at Sheldon on March 13 on “Edward Hopper’s ‘Hotel Consciousness.’” The lecture was co-sponsored by the School of Art, Art History & Design’s Hixson-Lied Visiting Artist & Scholar Lecture Series. Photo by Justin Mohling.

Bottom: Edward Hopper, “Room in New York.” Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-166.1936.

Eric Gottesman (right), co-founder of the For Freedoms Federation, visits with students in Associate Professor of Art Stacy Asher’s Design+Social Change graphic design course last fall. Courtesy photo.



# Carson Film Series gives students professional film experience

The Carson School Film Series gives students and faculty in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film the opportunity to work with film industry professionals to create a 20- to 25-minute short film.

The objective is to provide students with an opportunity to work directly with faculty and outside professionals to create a professional production that is larger and broader in scope than can reasonably be expected of students working independently.

The most recent film, *The Healing of Harman*, was produced last spring and premiered in Los Angeles and Lincoln last fall. The cast and crew included around 75 students, faculty, alumni and professionals.

"I'm really impressed by what has been pulled together, in terms of the scope of what this production is and can be," said Director Seth Pinsker during filming last May. Pinsker has received more than 50 major national and international awards for

his creative work in film, television, commercials and branded content, including an Academy Award Nomination for Best Short Film (Live Action).

"I've been really impressed with the talent of the students and the quality of their work," he said. "The students are amazing. This is such a good thing that Nebraska is doing for its students. Every once in a while you come across something and say, 'How come that hasn't been done before? How come they aren't doing it elsewhere?' It's a great idea."

*The Healing of Harman* is a story about a Kurdish interpreter living in Lincoln, Nebraska, who meets a mysterious man from his past who asks for help with life and death consequences. While not

**"We had more than 70 people working together. There are a lot of things you can't learn in class that they can teach you in a day on set, skills you can't get from a lecture."**



Director Seth Pinsker (second from left) gives instructions to actors Stephen Hailo and Kasey Halvorson, while assistant to the director Adam Turner (left) listens. Photo by Jordan Opp.



Producer and Screenwriter Jorge Zamacona (Oz, Homicide: Life on the Street) addresses the cast and crew before filming "Vipers in the Grass" in Ashland, Nebraska, in 2009.



Director Donald Petrie (right) sets up a shot during the filming of Digs in 2012 with Carson School student Neil Larson. Photo by Craig Chandler, University Communication.

autobiographical, the film is based on stories told by Harman Doski, a local refugee from Iraq.

Elijah Watson, who graduated in December 2017 from the Film and New Media program, came back to work as co-producer and line producer on the film. He said working on the film was a great experience for him and the other students.

"I had a pretty high role on the project, so it was challenging and rewarding to see the film go from text on a piece of paper to a fully realized production with cameras, actors, directors, sound and production," he said. "We had more than 70 people working together. There are a lot of things you can't learn in class that they can teach you in a day on set, skills you can't get from a lecture."

The film had a one-week run at a theatre in Los Angeles in September and two, sold-out screenings at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center. It is being entered into various domestic and international film festivals during this year.

*The Healing of Harman* is the third film in the Carson School Film Series, supported by the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts and the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film. The first film, *Vipers in the Grass*, was completed in 2010. The second film, *Digs*, was completed in 2013.

Julie Uribe, an Emmy Award-winning producer with more than 30 years of experience in the television industry, served as executive producer of the project and co-wrote the screen-play. She hopes students learned that quality film matters.

"It's such an incredible opportunity for the students when someone at the level of a Chris Welch, our sound consultant, with credits like *Frozen*, *Pearl Harbor* and *Silver Linings Playbook*, or Hope Parrish, our prop master, with credits like *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* and *X-Men*, devote weeks of their time pro bono," Uribe said. "True artists, no matter where you are in your career, gravitate to important stories that need to be told." ■



# Students work alongside professionals in Nebraska Rep productions

As the state's only professional regional theater, the Nebraska Repertory Theatre gives students an opportunity to work alongside professional actors, directors and designers on its productions.

"Working with these professionals is, honestly, really exciting as a student," said senior theatre performance major Emily Raine Blythe of Austin, Texas. "It's uplifting getting to work with people who are actually

making it as successful, working artists. They all come from different backgrounds and trainings—you learn so much from day one. Plus, half of this business is about making connections. Not only have I benefitted from their experience and knowledge, but I've also made those connections that will help me thrive once I'm out in the real world."

In its first two seasons since relaunching as a year-round, professional

theatre, the Rep has hired more than 30 professional actors, directors, designers, choreographers and musicians for its productions.

Blythe has been cast in four different Rep productions, including *The Serpent* and *The Lord of the Flies* last year and *Mother Courage* and *Dutchman* this year.

In *Dutchman* she worked with guest director Ron Himes, the founder and producing director of the St. Louis Black Repertory Company.

"I was definitely nervous to start this process because I had heard so many incredible things about Ron Himes," Blythe said. "He's extremely good at what he does. Like anybody, I wanted to make sure I was doing my best, too. As a director, he has been an absolute joy to work with, and he's a really funny guy. He knows exactly what he wants and knows exactly how to help you get to that point. He's very hands-on with his directing style, and that fits in really well with how I work as an actor. I've learned so much about acting and even directing from him in these past three weeks."

Blythe said working with guest artists helps students elevate their own work.

"If I'm working with professionals in the Rep productions or not, my dedication to a project is the same. However, there is a certain skill level that I feel that I have to match when I'm working with these professionals," she said. "They push me to be better, make tastier choices, to try something new. It's enlightening to be surrounded by other artists just as committed to this profession as you are. Every new artist I get to work with expands my point of view and my ability.

I'm really thankful for that."

Nebraska Repertory Theatre Artistic Director Andy Park said bringing in guest artists is at the heart of what the Rep is about.

"Students and professionals can work side by side and everything raises up—the whole

quality of the show moves up," Park said. "It makes students work at a higher level, and they learn best practices from working side by side with these working professionals. I feel like it's really working as planned."

In addition, students can earn Equity Member Candidacy (EMC) points toward becoming professional actors themselves.

"To become an Equity actor is a real challenge because you can't be in an Equity show until you're an Equity actor, and you can't earn your Equity until you're in an Equity show. So it's this catch-22 that students have to navigate," Park said. "It's a huge advantage for our students, and we're one of the only schools that have that."

Blythe said guest artists provide an outside perspective that is essential to students growing as artists and as people.

"At the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, we are so often surrounded by the same environment and people," she said. "Sometimes it's easy to get too comfortable here, and things can become redundant. I think having professional guest artists work with us helps to push us to leave our comfort zones and strive to do bigger, better things." ■

*Left: Senior theatre performance major Emily Raine Blythe (center) and Eugene Russell, IV (in the suit sitting on top of the seat) in Dutchman in February. Photo by Sabrina Sommer.*

*Top, right: Ron Himes, the founder and producing director of the St. Louis Black Repertory Company, guest directed Dutchman. Photo by Jordan Opp for the Daily Nebraskan.*

*Bottom, right: Travis Banks (left) and Emily Raines Blythe perform with London-based actor, aerialist and movement director Morgan Barbour (inside ring) in The Serpent. Photo by John Ficenc.*



# Mid-America College Art Association Conference featured two cutting-edge artists

The School of Art, Art History & Design hosted the 2018 Mid-America College Art Association Conference last October, which explored the theme “Techne Expanding: Tensions, Terrains and Tools.”

The School partnered with the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts to present two cutting-edge keynote speakers: Behnaz Farahi and Andy Cavatorta.

## BEHNAZ FARAHİ

Behnaz Farahi is a designer and creative technologist based in Los Angeles, who works at the intersection of fashion, architecture and interaction design. Trained as an architect and specializing in 3D printing and physical computing, her ultimate goal is to enhance the relationships between human beings and their environment by following morphological and behavioral principles inspired by natural systems.

Her work has been exhibited internationally at Ars Electronica, Linz and Context Art Miami, and has been featured in several magazines and websites, including *Wired*, BBC, CNN, and more. She has worked with leading firms such as Adidas, Autodesk, Fuksas Studio and 3DSYSTEMS/will-i-am. She has also collaborated with Professor Behrokh Khoshnevis on two NASA-funded research projects developing a robotic fabrication technology to 3D print structures on the Moon and Mars.

She is currently an Annenberg Fellow and Ph.D. candidate in Interdisciplinary Media Arts and Practice at the USC School of Cinematic Arts.

One of her more well-publicized projects was

“Caress of the Gaze” (2015), which is a 3D-printed, gaze-actuated wearable that can detect other people’s gaze and respond accordingly with life-like behavior.

“I got really excited about the idea of interactivity,” Farahi said. “When I was just sitting in public spaces, I was seeing that people get really excited when something was interactive. There was a different level of engagement. So for me, I knew that I was interested in developing new interactive experiences in order to engage with users—that could be interactive architecture, it could be interactive garments, interactive objects. It doesn’t matter. For me, the basic line was the engagements. I wanted to increase that level of interactivity and create emotional connections.”

Farahi is on the advisory council for the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts, which opens this fall.

“I’m very excited to see where this program is heading,” she said. “It’s emerging out of nothing, which is very exciting. I think the goals that have been laid out for it provides fascinating opportunities.”

She says emerging media arts is a big umbrella.



*Behnaz Farahi. Photo by Justin Mohling.*



*Andy Cavatorta. Photo by Justin Mohling.*



*Behnaz Farahi's "Caress of the Gaze" (2015), a 3D-printed, gaze-actuated wearable that can detect other people's gaze and respond accordingly with life-like behavior. Courtesy photo.*

“I think anything that doesn’t fit in other disciplines can be part of emerging media arts,” Farahi said. “A lot of disciplines are pretty much dictated by certain strict rigidity or structure that dictates what they can be. I think emerging media arts provides a nice platform for whatever is left out in between disciplines that is not yet defined. There is this very sweet spot between these disciplines that can provide new opportunities for expressing new ideas and new applications. I think that’s where innovation really happens.”

Her advice to students interested in emerging

media arts is to stay curious.

“I think curiosity is the essence of creativity,” she said. For more on her work, visit [behnazfarahi.com](http://behnazfarahi.com).

## ANDY CAVATORTA

Andy Cavatorta is an artist and researcher working with physical sound and robotics. His work explores technologically mediated emotions, opportunities to express the previously inexpressible, and how we make meaning with sound. This work is entirely new, but also part of a centuries-long tradition of

exploring the artistic possibilities opened by every new technological or scientific development.

Cavatorta is a graduate of the MIT Media Lab. He is the recipient of the Lincoln Prize. His recent collaborations include Björk and Matthew Herbert. His recent exhibits include MoMA (Museum of Modern Art), TED, The Royal Opera House and short documentaries by National Geographic, Vice and Stella Artois.

One of his notable projects was “Gravity Harps,” with Björk. He was commissioned and collaborated with the singer to invent and create instruments for her Biophilia project. “Gravity Harps” is a robotic musical instrument consisting of four pendulums that slowly swing back and forth to play musical notes while they hang 25 feet in the air.

“When I first started this work, I thought that music and artistic expression were sort of at this inflection point where suddenly all this electronics and computer technology was coming in, and it would change it all in this huge direction, but that’s not really true,” he said. “We were just participating in a thing that has been going on non-stop for hundreds of years. When new things become possible, you see them show up in the arts. And it’s the ability to say things that are true that couldn’t be expressed before, that’s the thing that’s most exciting about this.”

Collaboration is a key for his work.

“The big thing that I get from collaboration is that I end up working with people who have talents that I don’t,” he said. “And then it just amplifies what we do.”

He sees emerging media arts being somewhat like a horizon.

“We’re participating in a very long and exciting tradition. It seems like it’s a horizon that keeps coming,” he said. “But that implies that there’s some kind of direction in which everything is simply unrolling, and that’s not true. It’s very unpredictable. But we’re part of basically riding this endless sort of branching trajectories of possibilities, and that’s exciting.”

For more on his work, visit [andycavatorta.com](http://andycavatorta.com). ■

# Ted Schilowitz

## Futurist, Paramount Pictures



Ted Schilowitz

**T**ed Schilowitz, the first-ever Futurist-in-Residence for Paramount Pictures, visited with students and faculty in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film in December on the future of emerging technologies and cinema.

In his new role, Schilowitz, who was previously a consulting futurist at Fox, works closely with the Paramount and Vicacom technology teams to explore all forms of new and emerging technologies, with an emphasis on virtual reality and augmented reality.

Schilowitz said his job involves taking risks and trying new things at a firmly established studio. Paramount Pictures is more than 100 years old.

**“MY JOB IS TO SEE IF THESE GIGANTIC ENTITIES (LIKE PARAMOUNT) CAN ACTUALLY THINK AND WORK LIKE A START-UP, NOT A 105-YEAR-OLD COMPANY,” HE SAID.**

Schilowitz grew up in Orlando, Florida. He moved there when he was 7 years old. Disney World arrived the second year he was there.

“I got thrust into this world of the future when I was really, really young,” he said. “I learned about a culture and a company that embraced change and embraced creativity, that understood that failure to try was the failure. I literally grew up in the future. I wondered what would happen if, and I lived in the world of ‘if.’”

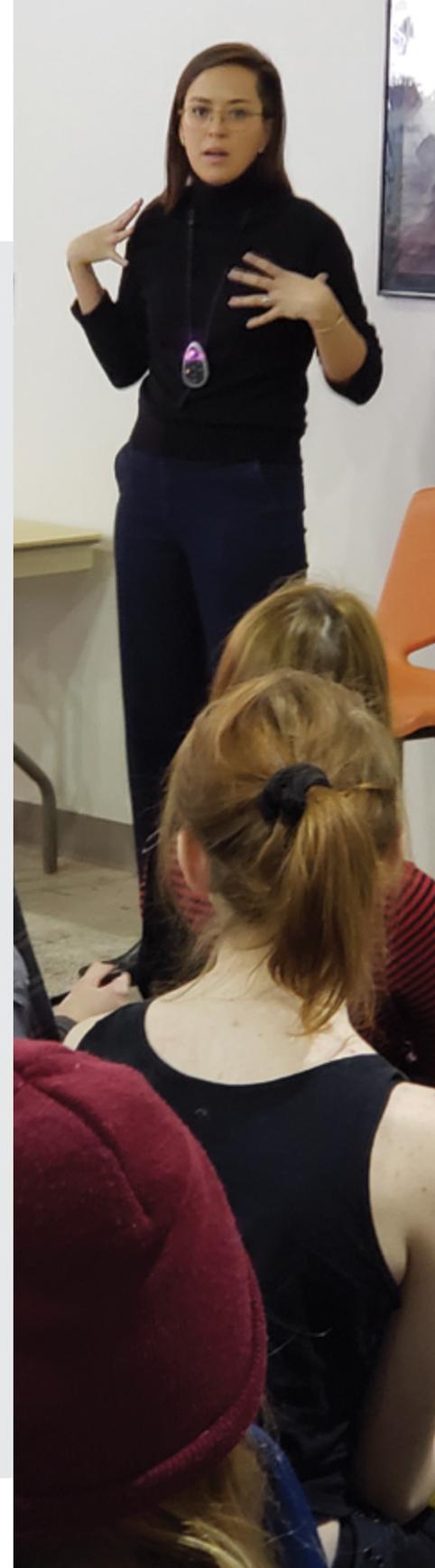
Later in life, he worked in TV production, including several Nickelodeon shows. Then, he moved into the technology world, as it related to storytelling.

An expert on the evolving art of motion picture creation, Schilowitz is a founding member of the product development team at RED Digital Cinema, producing ultra-high resolution digital movie cameras. He also is one of the founders and creators of the G-Tech product line of advanced hard-drive storage products implemented worldwide for professional TV and multimedia content creation.

Schilowitz also continues in his role as chief creative officer at Barco Escape, where he’s been spearheading the creative aspects of the Barco Escape cinema project, which adds immersive right and left screens to movie theaters. Previous titles that have used the technology include *The Maze Runner* and *Star Trek: Beyond*.

Schilowitz is a member of the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts Advisory Council. ■

Filmmaker Alexandria Bombach (*On Her Shoulders*) meets with students from Lincoln’s Arts & Humanities Focus program during a visit to the Ross in February.



### GESKE CINEMA SHOWCASE CREATES DIALOGUE BETWEEN FILMMAKERS, AUDIENCE

**T**he Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center’s Geske Cinema Showcase series brings movie directors and others involved in cinema to Lincoln to appear with their movies at The Ross for Q&A’s with their audiences.

“The Geske Cinema Showcase is one of the most important aspects of the Ross’s film exhibition program,” said Danny Lee Ladely, director of The Ross. “Artists and audiences are given the opportunity to come face-to-face resulting in an interchange of dialogue and information beneficial to both.”

Audiences learn about the creative processes involved in the making of a film, while the artists experience, first-hand, the audiences’ response to their work.

“Showcase participants sometimes meet with students in UNL classes and most often meet with students in the Lincoln Public Schools Arts & Humanities Focus Program,” Ladely said. “Those high-school-aged students are very enthusiastic and provide lively discussion and questions with the Showcase participants.”

Some of the recent Geske Cinema Showcase participants have included Alexandria Bombach (*On Her Shoulders*), Emily M. Danforth (*The Miseducation of Cameron Post*), Dan Mirvish (*Bernard and Huey*), Stanzin Dorjai-Gya (*The Shepherdess of the Glaciers*), and Amanda Lundquist and Rebecca Lundquist (*Pinsky*).

Previous participants have also included John Waters (*The Films of John Waters*), animator Bill Plympton (*Cheatin’*), Penelope Spheeris (*The Decline of Western Civilization*), Seymour Cassel (*Reach for Me*) and Jon Jost (*The Digital Cinema of Jon Jost*).

Ladely began this series in 1973, the year he was hired by Norman Geske to be the Director of the Sheldon Film Theater, which eventually became the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center.

“It was always Norman’s intention to exhibit film as art in the Sheldon,” Ladely said. “Consequently, he collaborated with architect Philip Johnson to create a multi-purpose auditorium that would be a supremely excellent space for viewing movies. He was a great fan of the idea of bringing film artists to the Sheldon; hence, my idea to name the series after him.”

Ladely also appreciates the series.

“Personally, for me, it has been the most gratifying and most fun aspect of my tenure as director of the university’s movie exhibition program,” he said. “We have had a plethora of guests over the years—some famous, but most not-so-famous, but many incredibly important to the history of cinema. They have come to Nebraska from all over the world, and they have always left very impressed with The Ross, the university and the Lincoln community.” ■



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