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
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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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 FARahi | 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
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.

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 Clare Potter (left) leads a 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.
“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.”

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 conversations 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 said she didn’t even finish college. Interacting with these artists has made it on a national tour of a Broadway show. In fact, Laura Osnes mentioned to us that “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 were 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.”

The only thing they all had in common was that a lot of UNL students need, in order to visualize a successful future in their respective fields.”

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.”

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These experiences are invaluable to our students,” said Hixson-Lied College of Fine Arts 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 regimen. These opportunities change the lives of these students as they prepare for their own artistic careers.”

The Lied Center has also connected with the University Orchestra, among many others. “They all have such amazing stories to tell.”

They were 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 Alon Ailey American Dance Theatre, Darello; 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 Arts 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 regimen. These opportunities change the lives of these students as they prepare for their own artistic careers.”

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Students gain confidence by participating in masterclasses

By Abby Kurth

A t 10 a.m., 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 violist’s comments, and could see the student participants’ excitement as they worked with one of the best violists 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.
The 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 to build a relationship that can foster mentorship.”

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.
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 artist 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.”

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 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 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. “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.”

Composer Carter Pann in residence in Glenn Korff School of Music

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

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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 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 200th 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.
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.

“Sheldon is part of a multi-disciplinary 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 programs that students in the classes on campus would like to hear from—where 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 and created partnerships with departments and faculty across the university.

“We had tables set up in the Great Hall, so the students were creating visual messages. Eric named 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 Hixon-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,” and Mazow’s lecture drew nearly 200 people to Sheldon on March 13 on “Edward Hopper’s ‘Hotel Consciousness.’” The lecture was co-sponsored by the School of Art, Art History & Design’s Hixon-Lied Visiting Artist & Scholar Lecture Series. Photo by Justin Mottinger.

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 Hixon-Lied Visiting Artist & Scholar Lecture Series. Photo by Justin Mottinger. Bottom: Edward Hopper, “Room in New York.” Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, R-166,1936.
The Carson School 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 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 a 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 2012.

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 screenplay. 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.”

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**Director Seth Pinsker (second from left) gives instructions to actors Stephen Mack and Kasey Henson, while assistant to the director Adam Turner (left) listens. Photo by Jordan Opp.**
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 in 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 training—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 theater, 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.

“Working with these professionals is, honestly, really exciting,” said senior theatre performance major Emily Raine Blythe of Austin, Texas. “It’s really exciting 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.

“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.”

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“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 a 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 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 training—you learn so much from day one. Plus, half of 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.”

Students work alongside professionals in Nebraska Rep productions
Andy Cavatorta.

BEHNAZ FARAHI

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, Luma 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 and Wired 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 and Wired.

For more on her work, visit behnazfarahi.com.

“I think curiosity is the essence of creativity,” she said. “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 isn’t 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.”

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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 expressing 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 exhibitions include MoMA (Museum of Modern Art), TED, The Royal Opera House and short documenta- ries 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 Björkulus 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 big 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 key for his work.

“The big thing that I got from collaboration is that I end up working with people who have talents that I don’t have. I become an instrument that just amplifies what we do,” he said. “I think emerging media arts being something like that.”

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Ted Schilowitz
Futurist, Paramount Pictures

Ted 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. 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 creative members 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, 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.

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.”

Ted Schilowitz visited with students from Lincoln’s Arts & Humanities Focus program during a visit to the Ross in February.

“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 Misadventures of Cameron Post), Dan Mvirvish (Bernard and Huey), Shumiru Daryia-Gya (The Sheepdogs of the Glaciers), and Amanda Lamlapti and Rebecca Lamlapti (Pride).

Previous participants have also included John Waters (The Films of John Waters), animator Bill Plympton (Shorts), Penelope Spheeris (The Decline of Western Civilization), Seymour Cassel (Bunheads) 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.

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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 programs.”

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.