



HIXSON-LIED COLLEGE

OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

SPRING 2018

CELEBRATING ALUMNI:

Aaron Douglas (B.F.A. 1922),
“Window Cleaning.” Douglas was
a leading figure in the Harlem
Renaissance.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

DEAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

One of the questions we hear frequently from prospective students and their parents is some variation of "What can you do with an arts degree?"

The answer is, of course, "You can go anywhere and do just about anything." The fact of the matter is that talented, hard-working, creative-thinking and skilled collaborators are in high demand in almost any field. Our alumni have been living proof of that for more than 100 years. They are working as artists and performers, designers and technicians, curators, educators and administrators, all over the globe. But they are also in law, medicine, business and other fields. They are pursuing their passions and improving their communities.

In this next installment of our supplement to our annual Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts Magazine, we celebrate alumni success. It's not hard to find successful alumni from the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts. Our challenge was narrowing it down to just 10 alumni to profile for this issue, but I think we found an interesting mix of alumni representing various fields and stages of their careers. We hope you enjoy learning more about them as much as we enjoyed visiting with each of them about their careers since they graduated from Nebraska. What they all share in common is their pride in and their preparation from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

We take great pride in each of our alumni and their successes, too, and our faculty and staff work hard every day to prepare our current students to be our next successful alumni. Please see page three to learn how to share your own alumni news with us.

Chuck O'Connor
Hixson-Lied Endowed Dean

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We want to hear from you!

Do you have alumni news to share? Send us notice of your latest activities and achievements for publication in the next Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts magazine. Send an e-mail to unlarts@unl.edu with your name, class year(s) and degree(s), and your alumni news. Or you can mail it to Kathe Andersen, 102 Woods Art Building, Lincoln NE 68588-0144.

Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts:

Celebrating Alumni

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

Hixson-Lied Endowed Dean

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Cover Image Aaron Douglas (B.F.A. 1922), "Window Cleaning," 1935, oil on canvas, 29.5" x 23.75". Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection, N-40.1936.

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UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

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Our alumni by the numbers

These statistics were compiled with data from the Nebraska Alumni Association.

Visit <http://huskeralum.org> for more information on the Nebraska Alumni Association and its member benefits.

Total number of living Fine and Performing Arts Alumni:

8,211



By class decade:

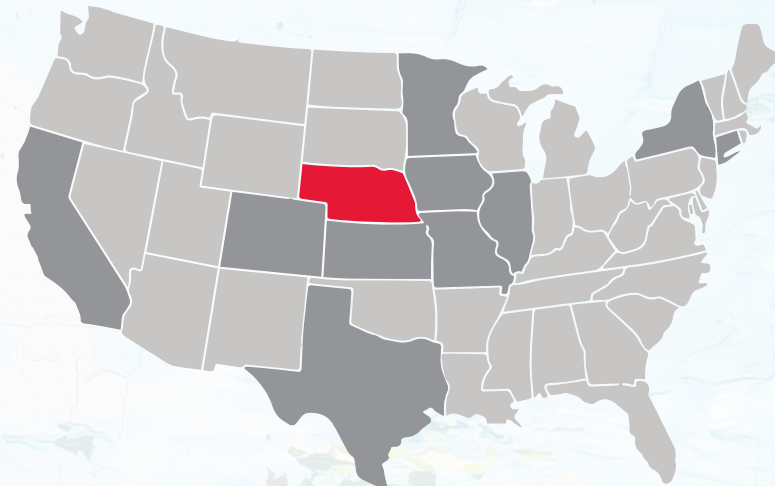
1910s: 1	1970s: 1,509
1920s: 64	1980s: 1,162
1930s: 100	1990s: 1,119
1940s: 125	2000s: 1,597
1950s: 395	2010s: 1,386
1960s: 753	

Where they live:

We have alumni living in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., and 28 foreign countries.

The largest concentrations of our alumni are living in the following states:

- Nebraska: **3,591**
- California: **452**
- Colorado: **389**
- Texas: **306**
- Illinois: **244**
- Iowa: **232**
- Minnesota: **214**
- Missouri: **196**
- Kansas: **191**
- New York: **186**



By School:

- School of Art, Art History & Design: **3,131**
- Glenn Korff School of Music: **3,667**
- Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film: **1,395**
- Integrated/Interdisciplinary/University Studies: **18**

The largest concentrations of our alumni living in other countries are:

- Canada: **20**
- South Korea: **7**
- China: **5**
- United Kingdom: **4**

Richard Svoboda



Excellence, persistence matter for Boston Symphony principal bassoonist

University of Nebraska–Lincoln alumnus Richard Svoboda (B.M.E. 1978) describes his job as principal bassoonist with the Boston Symphony as “truly rewarding in every way.” He has been principal bassoonist there for 28 years.

“I am basically living a dream, doing what

I always wanted to do, but at a level that is truly rewarding in every way,” he said. “But also it’s just the people and the conductors and the performances and being in an environment where excellence matters and is evidenced by everything and everyone that you see on stage and offstage. It’s just a different place.”

Born in Idaho, Svoboda said he “moved

around a lot” growing up, living in Utah and South Dakota, before settling in Nebraska. He graduated from Lexington High School in Nebraska.

He began playing the bassoon in eighth grade when he lived in Valentine, Nebraska. Aside from simply being a musical instrument, Svoboda said he likes the bassoon because it is an important instrument in the orchestra.

“Principal bassoon, which is the particular position I play, I find especially interesting because we just play a lot of solos, and you play everything—you play bass lines, you play the countermelody, you play solos,” he said. “The bassoon has a huge range so it can fill a lot of roles, and it has a unique sound, which can be very beautiful in the right hand,” he said.

With parents who were alumni of the University of Nebraska and two older siblings also attending the university, his choice of Nebraska for his undergraduate degree was an easy one.

"I didn't consider anything else," he said. "I had a small world view back then, so I didn't apply any place else. I knew the bassoon professor there."

He had attended All-State Music Camps, where he had met Professor Emeritus Gary Echols.

Following completion of his Bachelor of Music Education degree, he took a teaching position in St. Charles, Missouri, just west of St. Louis. He also studied bassoon with principal bassoonist George Berry of the St. Louis Symphony.

"I had met him my freshman year at Nebraska because the St. Louis Symphony was doing a one-week residency," he said. "They came to town and gave perhaps multiple concerts in Kimball Hall and did masterclasses and such. I loved my time at Nebraska. I used my education immediately, but clearly I was able to become a fine bassoonist while I was there. I got a really good musical education and a broader education."

He then earned a job as principal bassoonist for the Jacksonville (Florida) Symphony, where he played for 10 years prior to joining the Boston Symphony.

At the Boston Symphony, he occupies the Edward A. Taft chair, endowed in perpetuity. He also serves as New England Conservatory's Chair of Woodwinds and is a member of the faculty at Tanglewood Music Center.

He remembers his first performance with the Boston Symphony well. His first week in the orchestra was during the orchestra's final two weeks at the summer Tanglewood Music Festival, where the Boston Symphony is in residence.

"My first concert is seared in my memory because we played a piece by Ravel, 'Rapsodie Espagnole,' which has a section where there is a bassoon duet, which is uncondacted," he said. "In other words, the bassoonists

have to be able to play together, which is sort of a tall order with someone new and someone who is used to something completely different. And to complicate it even more, there were TV cameras all around because it was being broadcast to Japan. I had just come from Jacksonville, and you're pretty anonymous down there. But the Boston Symphony is an old, storied, big-time orchestra—it's one of the best orchestras in the world. I got thrown into the deep end with everything they had to throw at me. I don't know if that's a highlight, but that's seared in my mind."

He's had many other highlights, having played under many of the world's top conductors.

"I played a couple of concerts with Leonard Bernstein," he said. "I actually played his very last concert before he died, so that was obviously a highlight. It's one highlight after another, I guess you would have to say. This is a dream job. In a way, it's just very normal, but at the same time, I have to pinch myself from time to time just to remind myself how lucky I am to be here."

His advice to music students who want to become professional musicians is to work hard.

"Work hard, that's probably the first thing," he said. "When I was at the University of Nebraska, I made a point to look around and see who the hardest working people were and make sure I worked at least that hard. If you see other people in the practice room, and you're not there, maybe you should be there."

He also recommends taking advantage of the opportunities you have.

"It's good to get other insights, too, and broaden your exposure," he said. "Listen to recordings—YouTube has so many great performances on it these days. You can go to the Boston Symphony website and access live performances from the last few seasons. There's so many opportunities to hear various things just with technology that I didn't have when I was a student."

"This is a dream job. In a way, it's just very normal, but at the same time, I have to pinch myself from time to time just to remind myself how lucky I am to be here."

--Richard Svoboda



Bassoon player Richard Svoboda (right) and Randall Hodgkinson perform Dutilleux's Sarabande et Cortège in 2016. Photo by Winslow Townson.



Left to right: Elizabeth Rowe, Richard Svoboda and William Hudgins perform Piston's Three Pieces for flute, clarinet and bassoon in 2015. Photo by Winslow Townson.

Blessen creates 29 Pieces organization in response to tragedy

“It was my first experience of the idea that life can be beyond our ability to plan or dream, even.”

--Karen Blessen on winning a Pulitzer Prize

“At 2:21 a.m. on Aug. 19, 2000, I was lying awake in bed. I heard voices from the street and then a shot. A young man was murdered in front of our home. This tragic event changed my life and work as I knew it.”

Karen Blessen (B.F.A. 1973) describes this as the event that separates chapter one and chapter two of her successful career as an artist. During chapter one, she was an artist and writer. During chapter two, she founded 29 Pieces, a nonprofit arts organization.

“29 Pieces embodies everything that I am, and everything I hope for this world,” she said. “The name 29 Pieces refers to 29 pieces of sculpture that I did in 2006. The work is inspired by phrases from sacred passages

from the world’s great traditions. ‘If the very world should stop’—the first of the 29 pieces of sculpture asks the big question, ‘Why am I here?’ The 29th piece is titled ‘Dying of Love is What I Hope For’ and offers the answers that I discovered.”

Since the launch of 29 Pieces in 2005, the organization has developed the Artists Making a Kinder World curriculum of 19 lessons that use art to teach non-violence and social and emotional learning. They have worked with more than 50,000 youth in North Texas and trained more than 400 teachers in the curriculum.

“When the shooting occurred in front of my home, I could not just accept it. I couldn’t let it go,” Blessen said. “I got to know the parents and siblings of the victim, the shooter and the mother of the shooter. I wanted to understand what this one act of senseless violence did to those in the families of the victim and shooter and to the homicide detective investigating the case.”

Editors at the Dallas Morning News approved a story and art package about this, and three years later, “One Bullet” was published (go.unl.edu/onebullet).

“Between the murder and publication, I did a series of interviews with those impacted by the murder,” Blessen said. “Per my agreement with the Dallas Police Department, I did not talk about any of these interviews until all the trials in the case were completed, and that took three years. In those three years, I submerged myself in the world of grieving families, statistics about gun



“One Bullet,” a story and art package created by Karen Blessen for the Dallas Morning News, was published on Aug. 17, 2003. Courtesy photo.



Karen Blessen. Photo by Danny Fulgencio.

violence, the prison system, brain development and systemic socio-economic factors that contribute to violence.”

After “One Bullet” was published, Blessen heard from many people whose lives were damaged by violence.

“A personal metamorphosis began. A difficult time of finding form for my ignited passion was underway,” she said.

She traveled to Africa twice with Save the Children and wrote and did art for a newspaper story called “Faces of a Plague” (go.unl.edu/faces). She was also part of a small Methodist church group called ArtSpirit.

“Several of us in the group started a nonprofit with the idea of using art to raise awareness about issues of social justice,” she said. “It was first called Today Marks the Beginning and is now 29 Pieces.”

Originally from Columbus, Nebraska, Blessen came to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln for her undergraduate degree and studied with Tom Coleman, James Eisentrager, Doug Ross, Gail Butt and Peter Worth.

“My professors communicated a belief in me that went a long way in instilling boldness and confidence,” she said. “They each planted seeds in me that have been fruitful and memorable. They were such colorful characters.”

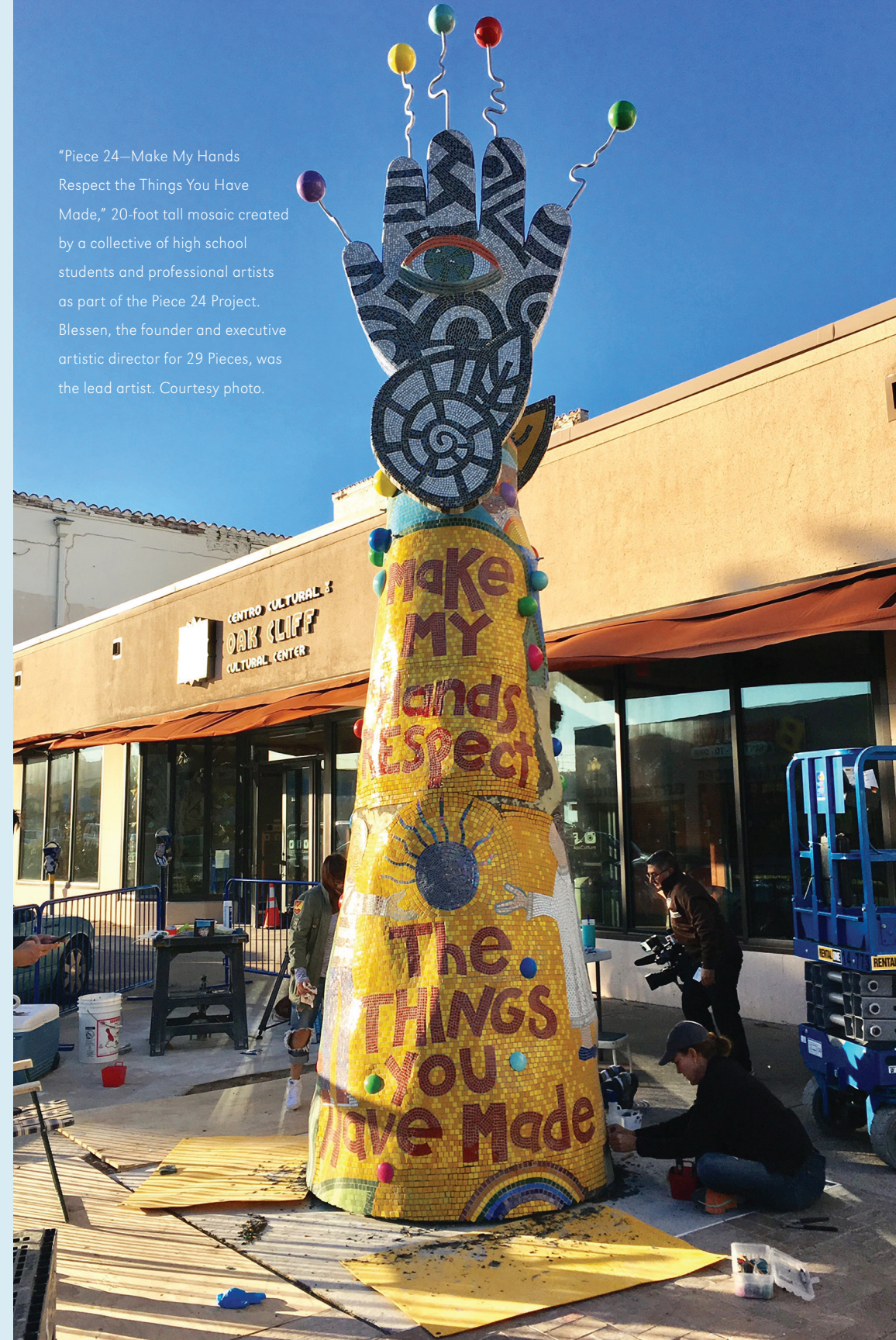
She initially moved to New York City in 1977 to build her career, but her now-husband, Kelly Nash, got a job with the Environmental Protection Agency in Dallas, so she moved to Dallas in 1979, where she has been ever since.

While working for the Dallas Morning News in 1989, Blessen and two others wrote “Anatomy of an Air Crash,” which she illustrated and for which they were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Journalism. She was the first graphic designer to win a Pulitzer Prize.

“It was mind-blowing, satisfying, validating, joyful and fun,” she said. “We drank champagne at noon in the middle of the newsroom. It was my first experience of the idea that life can be beyond our ability to plan or dream, even.”

She was also doing freelance work as an artist and writer. She created public art for the Times Square Business Improvement District in New York

“Piece 24—Make My Hands Respect the Things You Have Made,” 20-foot tall mosaic created by a collective of high school students and professional artists as part of the Piece 24 Project. Blessen, the founder and executive artistic director for 29 Pieces, was the lead artist. Courtesy photo.



City and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit rail station and the park adjacent to it. She illustrated two books, “Peace One Day” and “Be an Angel.”

“This career has been a perpetual act of faith and trust,” Blessen said. “These projects that fall within the realm of community space and social cause happened not simply because I love this work, but because I was tasked to do them. Art is a powerful vehicle for communication, informing and opening hearts.”

In 2013, 29 Pieces produced the Dallas LOVE Project, as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas. They worked with 120 community partners and 20,000 artists and exhibited 10,000 pieces of art in 68 locations on the theme of love.

This year, 29 Pieces will begin work on a new piece of sculpture, Piece 10, and is planning a collaborative project with the University of North Texas Department of Emerging Education.

“Leading 29 Pieces has been the greatest joy, the most work, the most obstacle-filled endeavor that I’ve been involved in,” Blessen said.

“It is deeply fulfilling and a great teacher in persistence, focus and love.”

Chapter three in Blessen’s life is still ahead and still unwritten.

“In the next years, we hope to build a digital platform

from which all 29 Pieces content can be accessed for free,” she said. “At that time, I have some ideas for writing and sculpture projects that I will turn to. But, the universe may have something entirely different in mind. I am open and looking forward to what’s next.”

To learn more about 29 Pieces, visit 29pieces.org.



“Faces of a Plague” was originally published in the Dallas Morning News on June 23, 2002, and told the story of five women that Blessen met and interviewed on a trip to Malawi and Mozambique with Save the Children as a member of the HIV/AIDS Leadership Council. Courtesy photo.

Strong musical roots ground Taylor's entertainment law practice

Stephanie Taylor (B.M.E. 1999; J.D. 2002), who is now living in Nashville, Tennessee, working as an entertainment lawyer, began her life-long passion for music at the age of three when she began learning both classical violin and fiddle music.

"I started playing the violin through the Suzuki method when I was three," said Taylor, who is from Burbank, South Dakota. "I started taking Suzuki violin lessons from Karen Lipp. She was a member of the Sioux City Symphony and lived in Vermillion."

At the same time, she was also studying old-time, fiddle music.

"A farmer up the road from my parents, Chester Olsen, taught me fiddle tunes," Taylor said. "We would go there every week, and he would teach me fiddle lessons, so I was learning Suzuki classical and learning old-time fiddle, all at the same time."

Taylor loved the people involved with fiddle music.

"I had a lot of grandparents. They weren't really my grandparents, but they were my fiddle grandparents," she said. "They were mostly retired people who encouraged and mentored me, and we would play



"I wouldn't trade my Nebraska education for anything. I think I'm fully prepared to compete in the marketplace."

--Stephanie Taylor

An image from a CD Stephanie Taylor recorded in 2010.



Stephanie Taylor (far right) performs with the Boxty Bluegrass Band at Music City Roots. Photo courtesy of Music City Roots.

county fairs and play at nursing homes and different events. I was getting to be on stage and playing music with this wonderful, loving group of people. There were no real rules other than to have fun and to be nice and to be creative. That gave me amazing improvisational skills that I don't think you get through traditional band or orchestra programs."

After completing the Suzuki curriculum, Taylor began taking lessons from David Neely, who was then teaching at the University of South Dakota and is now professor of violin in the Glenn Korff School of Music. When he came to Lincoln, he recruited her to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Taylor values the education she received at Nebraska.

"What I loved about the university was not only was I getting a great music education, but I was getting a great overall education," she said. "I had friends from both campuses, East Campus and City Campus, with diverse backgrounds, getting degrees from all of the colleges. I was just exposed to a lot of wonderfully intelligent and creative people. I interact with people from Ivy League schools every day as an attorney, and I wouldn't trade my Nebraska education for anything. I think I'm fully prepared to compete in the marketplace."

She saw school orchestra programs getting cut across the nation, so she decided to go to law school at Nebraska after graduation. She had no idea, however, that she could be doing entertainment law like she is doing today.

"Nowhere on my radar was I aware that I could do what I'm doing today," Taylor said. "You know, there weren't TV shows about what was happening in the music industry in Nashville. I couldn't Google news articles about entertainment attorneys. That just wasn't available to me at the time. So really, the law degree was something I got, but I didn't really know how it was going to fit into my life until I moved to Nashville."

When she moved to Nashville, she began pursuing her M.B.A. (Master of Business Administration) at Belmont University, which is well known for its music business program.

"I started my master's in business, and I pulled a phone number off of a bulletin board. From that, I got my first gig, which

was playing with Chris Young, who was just inducted into the Grand Ole Opry this year. And really just from that, I have met everyone that I have met,” she said.

From her first tour with Chris Young, to her last tour with the country duo Joey + Rory, she said she has had a wonderful experience as a musician in Nashville.

“But ultimately, being on the road is not easy, and road musicians do not make a ton of money, and I wanted to have kids,” she said. “So somewhere in that process, I started building a law practice with artists and songwriters and record labels and publishers and venues as clients. And that’s been a perfect marriage of the things I love—the practice of law and music.”

She currently has a solo practice that continues to grow. Taylor describes herself as a transactional attorney, who helps negotiate deals. One client she likes to talk about is Bluegrass Underground, which is a world-class venue located inside of a cave.

“People come into this cave, and they hear music from some of the finest Americana, roots, rock and country musicians in the world in a really cool atmosphere,” she said. “And that is a really fun experience, but it’s also turned into a series on Public Television that you can see in Nebraska actually. So the deals I make are to make sure everybody in the deal has the rights they need to use the music, to use the songs and to create whatever exploitation—exploitation being a good word—that they need. So maybe it’s a television show or a live performance or maybe it’s an album. What I’m doing is figuring out what rights need to be cleared and making sure the money is fair and equitable and that it’s a positive opportunity for the client.”

Her advice for aspiring musicians and artists is to know your rights and how to protect them.

“That means knowing who to call if something is happening in your

Stephanie Taylor



career, so typically artists, as things are happening, work with me pretty early on. That’s important because you want to make sure you sign the right deal, especially because as the industry has changed, the money has

changed. Too often if you’re in the wrong deal and you’re not making a living, you’re going to have to go back to waiting tables or whatever you were doing before.”

Taylor loves what she does.

“I love that I get to have amazing experiences with incredibly talented people,” she said. “This last spring, my husband and I went to Cuba with a client that is a TV production company, and we filmed a show in Cuba that was a convergence of amazing, Cuban musicians performing with the American band, The Mavericks, and it was just an unforgettable experience seeing how music crosses borders and creating this amazing television show to share that convergence of

music with the world. I love that part of my job. I also love that on an everyday basis, I get to hear music, and talk to people about music, and enjoy and celebrate the successes of my artist and songwriter clients as they happen.”

Taylor still performs herself from time to time.

“I get my violin out almost every day because my daughter is five and learning to play,” she said. “But I do get a chance to play with some musician friends now and again. It’s still an important part of my life, and I love that I have a strong enough skill set that I can pull it out of the case and still feel like I can hold my own with the boys and girls in Nashville.”

Music will always be an important part of her life.

“Music is important to me because of what it created for me, which is this amazing network of fascinating people, from those early fiddle grandparents to the amazingly interesting artists I work with today,” Taylor said. “Music does cross borders. You know, I can go to Ireland and get my fiddle out to play in a jam session. That’s an amazing tool to have in your toolbox, and there’s just nothing like it.”

Ceramics alumnus opens studio in China

“I love clay’s directness. It requires the best tools in the world—one’s own hands. It is this connection that has allowed me to build my own language with clay,” said Ryan LaBar (M.F.A. 2010).

LaBar works in Jingdezhen, China, where he has built a studio with three business partners.

“I was invited back to China in September 2015 as one of the first artists at the International Studio in Taoxichuan,” he said. “The studio was one of the first of 30 or so buildings that opened on the renovated grounds of an abandoned plate factory. I came with a fellow UNL classmate, Lauren Mabry, and we had to make our work for the first month in a shell of a building until our studio was finished.”

The project fell behind schedule, and LaBar was unable to finish his work within his 60-day visa stay. But he was invited back in January 2016, and he completed his first body of work in Jingdezhen last March.

“I had then fallen in love with the porcelain city, China’s namesake, and began to seek opportunities to stay,” he said. “A couple of enterprising men found me on Instagram and contacted me about building a studio. I agreed to partner up and build within Taoxichuan, as I had been following the scope of the project and wanted to be a permanent part of it. The four of us pooled our resources, and we built our private studio, breaking ground in June and finishing in late August



Ryan LaBar touches up glaze application for “Out of Mind.” All photos courtesy of Ryan LaBar.



Ryan LaBar, "Things Are Going Better," 58cm x 111cm x 17cm, composed of wheel-thrown Jingdezhen porcelain fired to 1300C.

of 2016. It is a dynamic space and established as an innovative center."

He hopes to stay for a while.

"I am still in Jingdezhen and plan on being here for some time,"

LaBar said. "My art sales are doing well, and our programming scheduling is off to a good start."

"Pottery was my new passion, and I owned it and began to develop my life's plans around this pursuit."

--Ryan LaBar

They hosted the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning last semester with 10 students and two professors filling a 25-day program with museum, studio, factory and cultural outings, as well as studio time.

LaBar spent his formative years in Great Falls, Montana, and completed his undergraduate degree at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

"There, I was introduced to clay, and my early love with the material led me to tuck on an art minor to my biology and chemistry studies.

After graduating in 1998, prepped for med school, I decided to claim my identity for the first time in my life and began to redefine my purpose.

Pottery was my new passion, and I owned it and began to develop my life's plans around this pursuit."

After graduating, he moved to Helena, Montana, to be close to the community created by the Archie Bray Foundation, a world-renowned ceramic residency center.

"I bought an income house with four percent down with a menial day job. I built a studio in the basement," he said.

"I then built a kiln in the backyard and began honing my pottery making skills."

Under the advice of his mentor, Josh DeWeese, the director of the Bray at that time, he applied to the graduate program at Nebraska.

"UNL's graduate program is three years, as opposed to many two-year programs, which gave me time to experiment with new ideas and directions," LaBar said. "I came in making functional pots and left making abstract sculptures, similar to the ones I compose today. The team of three professors—Gail Kendall, Pete Pinnell and Eddie Dominguez—directed my experiments with sometimes painful criticism. In retrospect, my determination to prove myself

to the faculty led me to find my voice. This voice began as a dialogue with material, porcelain. Soon that voice became my language, which I continue to communicate."

Following graduation from Nebraska, he was invited to make work at California State University at Long Beach during their biannual summer intensives. He then was invited to become the program director of the LH Project, a ceramic residency center outside of Joseph, Oregon, where he was for four years. He had winters off during this time, so he sought out residency programs.

"I sought out other residency opportunities during these months and made work in Bali, Poland, Germany, the Philippines, Denmark and China," he said. "My lust for world travel began there."

He enjoys adapting to his surroundings, which can influence his work.

"Some of those forced adaptations fuel breakthroughs," he said. "My



Ryan LaBar, "Humming With Danger," 38cm x 58cm x 28cm, composed of wheel-thrown Jingdezhen porcelain fired to 1300C.



The first-floor pottery studio at Ryan LaBar's Lab Artz.

work is very process oriented, where content is within the process. Every place has different clay with varying qualities. In Bali, I made forms that looked like the basket weavings that surrounded me. In Denmark, I made works with bright colors, in contrast with many minimal, all-white wares I was exposed to. Within the Polish insulator factory, I could only fire once, so my work took on more rigidity. Each environment creates restrictions and possibilities."

In 2015, he received a first-place grant from the Virginia A. Groot Foundation for his work. He has also completed a residency in Icheon, South Korea, in conjunction with the ceramic biennale. He has had a solo exhibition in Jingdezhen and participated in many group exhibitions. He is currently working on a commission project for the new Bellagio Hotel in Shanghai.

LaBar sees a growing market for handmade objects.

"I believe we are going to become more responsible consumers and begin to value the handmade and the objects we surround ourselves with, as we have relationships with objects in the same way we have relationships with people," he said. "Believe you can create, market, sell and ship to outperform the faceless factories behind our superstore products. The reason your grandma's soup is the best is because it's made with love. Put love into your soup, and others will taste that ingredient."

To see more of LaBar's work, visit his website at ryanlabar.com.

Fine and Performing Arts alumni newsmakers

AARON DOUGLAS

In the spring of 1922, Aaron Douglas became the first African-American to graduate from the University of Nebraska with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. His success at Nebraska became the foundation for a career as one of America's foremost 20th-century visual artists and a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a period of vibrant, African-American cultural, artistic and political activity that spanned roughly from the end of World War I until the Great Depression.

"It's truly remarkable to have an artist of the caliber of Aaron Douglas as one of our early alumni," said Associate Professor of Art Aaron Holz. "His stature as a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance and his contributions to American art are extraordinary."

Douglas combined traditional African and African-American images with the prevailing Cubist and Art Deco stylings, creating a distinctive and imaginative visual form.

Douglas was born on May 26, 1899, in Topeka, Kansas. Following his graduation from high school, Douglas moved to Detroit, where he worked in the auto factories for two months and took advantage of free art classes offered in the evenings at the Detroit Museum of Art.

After completing his degree at Nebraska, he taught art at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri, and then moved to New York



Portrait of American artist, painter and professor Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), as he works at his easel, Tennessee, 1970s. Photo by Robert Abbott Sengstacke/Getty Images.

City a year later. He illustrated for "The Crisis" and "Opportunity," and then was recruited to create woodcuts for the seminal publication of the Harlem Renaissance, "The New Negro," edited by Alain Locke.

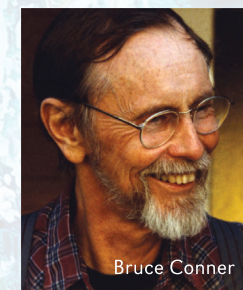
By 1936, Douglas had become a leading figure in the African-American art community, and the Nebraska Art Association displayed his paintings, "Window Cleaning" and "Eighth Ave. Market" in its March 1936 art exhibition at Morrill Hall. The Board of Trustees of the Nebraska Art Association voted to purchase "Window Cleaning" on March 13, 1936, and the painting remains in the collection of Sheldon Museum of Art today, along with a set of four woodcuts on paper titled "Emperor Jones."

Douglas left Harlem in 1937 and founded the art department at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he taught until his retirement in 1966. He died in 1979. Fisk University established The Aaron Douglas Gallery in 1994 in his honor.

In 2008, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln created the Aaron Douglas Professorships for Teaching Excellence to recognize faculty members who demonstrate sustained and extraordinary levels of teaching excellence and national visibility for instructional activities and/or practice.

BRUCE CONNER

Born in McPherson, Kansas, in 1933, Bruce Conner studied art at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1956. In 1957, attracted by stories of a vibrant art and literary scene, he and his wife, Jean, moved to San Francisco. Conner became a key figure in the burgeoning Beat community, along with visual artists Jay De Feo, Joan Brown and Manuel Neri, and poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Michael McClure and Philip Lamantia.



Bruce Conner

Conner first attracted attention in the late 1950s with his moody, nylon-shrouded assemblages, which were complex amalgams of such found objects as women's stockings, bicycle wheels, broken dolls, fringe, fur, costume jewelry and candles, often combined with collaged or painted surfaces.

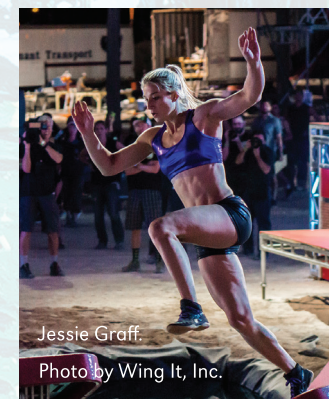
Simultaneously during the late 1950s, Conner began making short movies in a singular style that has since established him as one of the most important figures in postwar independent filmmaking. His films have inspired generations of filmmakers and are now considered to be the precursors of the music video genre.

Conner continued to make art until shortly before his death in 2008.

JESSIE GRAFF

Stuntwoman and Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film alumna Jessie Graff (B.A. 2007) continues to make history as a frequent competitor on NBC's "American Ninja Warrior," breaking stereotypes and breaking records.

In 2016, during season eight, she made history when she became the first woman to complete stage one in the national finals. Last summer, she again made history when she became the first woman to complete stage two in the



Jessie Graff.

Photo by Wing It, Inc.

national finals during the USA vs. the World competition. She returned to the national finals last summer in season nine, but did not complete stage one. She also continues her career as a professional stuntwoman, performing in the TV shows "Future Man," "Supergirl" and "Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.," among others.

"I always wanted to play a hero on TV, but now kids are telling me that I AM their hero," Graff told us last summer. "It's better than a dream come true."

Graff is filming for a movie in Europe this spring, but hopes to return to the U.S. in time to compete on the 10th season of "American Ninja Warrior."

JOHNNY CARSON

While not an alumnus of the College Fine and Performing Arts, Johnny Carson did receive his Bachelor of Arts degree in radio and speech with a minor in physics from the University of Nebraska in 1949 and took his radio classes in the basement of the Temple Building.

He is forever linked to the college thanks to more than \$33 million in total philanthropic support from Carson and the Johnny Carson Foundation, including a gift from Carson in 2004 that helped renovate and expand the Temple Building and resulted in the renaming of the theatre arts department to the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film and a gift from the Johnny Carson Foundation in 2014 to create the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts, which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2019.

On Oct. 1, 1962, Carson became the Tonight Show's new host. When he retired on May 22, 1992, after more than 4,000 shows and more than a half century of comedy performance, his final show was a national event. He is credited with launching the careers of many popular comics on his show and is regarded worldwide as a television icon. He died in 2005.



Johnny Carson interviews David Letterman on "The Tonight Show." Photo courtesy of Carson Entertainment Group.



Theresa Shook

Carson School alumna creates magic for Disney

Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film alumna Theresa Shook (M.F.A. 1997) helps create Disney magic through her job as Senior Show Set Designer at Walt Disney Imagineering.

Shook has been at Disney Imagineering since 2012, and her projects have included the Storybook Circus area



The Na'vi River Journey ride at Pandora: The World of "Avatar" inside Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World made its debut on May 27, 2017, and features the Shaman of Songs animatronic. Photo by JeniLynn Knopp for insidethemagic.net.

of the Fantasyland expansion at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom inspired by "Dumbo" and the recently opened Na'vi River Journey within Pandora: The World of "Avatar" at Disney's Animal Kingdom theme park at Walt Disney World, which Shook worked on for nearly four and a half years.

The Na'vi River Journey takes guests on a river tour through the bioluminescent forest of Pandora from the 2009 James Cameron film "Avatar." The ride features an advanced audio-animatronic character known as the Na'vi Shaman of Songs. Foliage and other objects are re-created physically, while other elements, such as a Na'vi warrior and a pair of Viperwolves, appear as projections.

Shook and her team at Disney Imagineering worked with a team from Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment production company to re-create the world of Pandora.

"It was fun because they had all the knowledge of this planet, so in talking about the plants that they created and the animals and just the environment, we asked 'How does all this work?' and 'How did you come up with this?'" Shook said. "That was really great, and it was fun to create this for them and with them because it was all things they have only seen in their computer screen. It was fun just watching that come to completion."

She enjoys being a part of creating Disney magic.

"I went with a friend to Disneyland, and she had a five-year-old son," she said. "We rode on an attraction, and he was so excited. And when we were done he said that was so amazing and can we go again? That just hit me. This is why I'm doing what I'm doing. It's for that kind of reaction from our guests, whether they are little kids or adults."

Originally from Onawa, Iowa, Shook received her undergraduate degree in mass communications and theatre from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. It was her freshman year there that she got hooked on theatre.

"I had taken speech and drama in high school," she said. "But my freshman year, I needed a fine arts credit, so I took Intro to Theatre, and we had to do 15 hours in the shop. I just kind of got the bug in that one class, and the rest, as they say, is history."

Shook likes the collaboration involved in creating theatre.

"It was more the teamwork involved in putting something together and just the process of getting there," she said. "Once the show opens—this is going to sound terrible—I really didn't care. I was ready for the next thing. To me, the fun part was the process of getting in and getting it done. I enjoyed working with a bunch of different people toward a common goal."

She then received her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, studying under then-Profeesor of Theatre Design Charles O'Connor, who is now the dean of the Hixson-Lied College.

"I enjoyed it," she said. "I miss it, actually, because I met a lot of people from different parts of the country, and I'm still in touch with a few of them. I just really enjoyed my time there, and I learned a lot."

She first worked as a scene designer and in prop houses, eventually making the connections to land her a job with Disney.

"I worked for a smaller firm that was doing a theme park in Abu Dhabi and then got canceled," Shook said. "Then I ended up getting a phone call from a guy that was providing Disney with scene set designers. He got my name from one of the set designers that I worked with a lot when I was doing fabrication drawings. He brought me in as a contractor for a couple of years, and then Disney hired me directly."

Her love of her job goes back to the same reason she loved theatre in that freshman-year class in college.

"It goes back to even when I took that first theatre class, only it's a much larger group of people," she said. "Instead of 15 to 20 of us, there are hundreds of us working together to create these experiences for our guests. It's a lot of fun."



Dance alum pursues her dream in New York

“It’s a very powerful thing for me to be able to express myself through movement and not always have to say anything. That resonates with me a lot.”

--Katie Heckman on dance.

Katie Heckman performs with the KSSL Collective in a show titled “Lost: Found.” Photo by Noel Valero.

Katie Heckman’s dance career began with a Christmas present from her grandparents for dance lessons. It wasn’t exactly a hit with four-year-old Heckman.

“I wasn’t too happy about that,” she said. “Because I opened it on Christmas morning, and it wasn’t a toy. I really did not want to do it, but I did it for that first year, and the rest is history.”

She has been dancing ever since and loves it.

“You can emote without words,” she said. “It’s a very powerful thing for me to be able to express myself through movement and not always have to say anything. That resonates with me a lot.”

Born and raised in Lincoln, Heckman received training from the Karen McWilliams School of Dance before enrolling at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in dance in 2011. After dancing with Megan Lynn Astial Dance in New York City from 2012 to 2016, Heckman now dances in her own KSSL Collective with three other dancers from Astial.

“I had thought about other programs out of state,” Heckman said. “But I had friends who had gone away to college before and paid thousands of dollars more to go out of state and then ended up coming home halfway through the semester or didn’t last a year. And so I said to myself I would try UNL for a year, and if I wasn’t happy, maybe I would go somewhere else. But I ended up being incredibly happy and had such a great experience right where I was at.”

About a year and a half after moving to New York City, she auditioned with Megan Lynn Astial Dance and became an apprentice there in 2012.

“I was learning understudy roles and having small parts in new pieces that we were producing, and within three months, I was bumped up to a company member,” Heckman said. “And then within a year, I was asked to be a rehearsal director, and I did that for the next three years I was in the company.”

The artistic director stepped away from the company, and so Heckman and three other dancers formed the KSSL Collective in 2016.

“We decided we wanted to work some more,” she said. “We wanted to put ourselves in the studio, and we wanted to put more of our work out into New York. We formed a collective that was called KSSL, and in the summer of 2016, we created, produced, choreographed and performed in our own show in New York.”

They have continued to perform throughout New York City.

“We put pieces in smaller dance festivals across the city,” she said. “We’ve performed in some small theaters in the West Village and theaters up in Harlem. The wonderful thing about New York is that there’s always somewhere to perform.”

Heckman also does administrative assistant work for a wholesale diamond company. She plans to continue dancing, but knows that may not be permanent.

“As a dancer, you’re sort of a ticking time clock,” she said. “It’s different for everybody, but our bodies are not made, unfortunately, to do this forever. And it’s not so much that I’m feeling that, as just New York, as a whole, is a very expensive place to live. Just keeping up financially with the lifestyle would be more so the ending point than the performing or the physical aspect of that, so I’m kind of grappling with that at the moment.”

Heckman said Associate Professor of Dance Susan Ourada gave her good advice that she would pass along to other dancers considering a professional career.

“Susan always told us if you’re going after a dream, don’t have a fall-back plan because you will fall back on it,” she said. “That is something that was such a driving force for me to come here in the first place. I would advise you to just go for it, because there’s work out there to be found. There is. You just have to be willing to take some risks and step out of the comfort zone.”



The set of the "Late Late Show with James Corden."
Art direction by Dawn Schaefer. Courtesy photo.

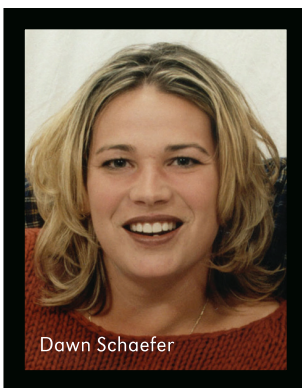
Theatre alum is art director for CBS

"I still love it every day. I get to be creative. It's easy for me. . .It's not work."

--Dawn Schaefer

Dawn Schaefer (M.F.A. 1999) is living out her dream. "It's something that I've always wanted to do since I was in high school," she said. "And I still love it every day. I get to be creative. It's easy for me. I enjoy it. It's not work."

Schaefer is the Executive Art Director for CBS, where she has been for more than 18 years. She



Dawn Schaefer

has been the art director for the television show "Survivor" for 36 seasons, which includes the live reunion shows and some of the cast photo shoots. In 2003,

"Survivor: Thailand" was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Art Direction for a Variety or Music Program.

For the last three years, she has also been the art director for the "Late Late Show with James Corden."

"Behind home base is a scale-version of Hollywood," Schaefer said. "The idea behind the set was to make it look like we were shooting from the top floor of Television City looking over the roof through the roof-top sign, 'Late Late Show,' to the Hollywood hills with iconic buildings of Hollywood between."

She also designs the swing sets, as needed, for the comic bits used for the guests on the show.

"It has been fun juggling these two shows, along with designing new office space layouts for the different departments within Television City," she said. "The one I am currently working on is for CBS International, who will be taking over the mezzanine floor of our main building here at Television City."

Schaefer, who is originally from Parkston, South Dakota, has wanted to design for television and film since high school.

"I was always an artist," she said. "I couldn't decide between being an interior designer or an architect until a theatre instructor pointed out what art direction was, and I instantly fell in love."

She still loves it.

"The most rewarding thing about my career is simply that I have been working here at CBS for 18 years and designing sets for theatre, film and TV and nine years before that—and I still love it," Schaefer said. "I love what I do every day. The thing I love most about working here at CBS is that every day is something different. I go from designing large sets for air to large commercial-level projects for large amounts of people here at Television City and even corporate parties. I love the change."

She came to the University of Nebraska—Lincoln for her Master of Fine Arts degree, where she studied under current Hixson-Lied College Dean Charles O'Connor.

"I remember sitting in the design lab at all hours of the night drawing something, building a model or creating something simply because I loved it," she said. "Then to continue with building the set while playing a little basketball in the shop, painting the set and staying late to paint marble tiles on the stage floor of the Howell Theatre, where I swear I saw a ghost watching me from the balcony (tired) yet stayed because I loved it. Those are the memories I will always have and remember."

Nebraska helped prepare her for her career as an art director.

"I was always determined to come to Los Angeles to design for film and television," Schaefer said. "This would have happened either way, but because of the time and knowledge I received from Chuck and his level of expertise he brought to UNL, it made my move to L.A. very easy and put me above all the others who would search for work," she said. "The classes in AutoCAD [Computer-Aided Design], 3D design and Photoshop set me apart from others, making

it easy to get work at a time when the industry was just starting with CAD drawings. At a time when all I wanted to do was move to L.A. and get started with my career, staying back and going to UNL was the best decision I ever made."

After completing her M.F.A., Schaefer set her sights on Los Angeles. She did freelance work for five months before someone gave her name to CBS, who was looking for a designer with AutoCAD skills.

"They had been looking for a couple of months for a designer who had AutoCAD skills and couldn't find anybody," she said. "Anybody with the AutoCAD skills was in architecture. Anybody who was a designer didn't have AutoCAD skills. Finally, they got my name from somebody who knew I had those skills, and I got work."

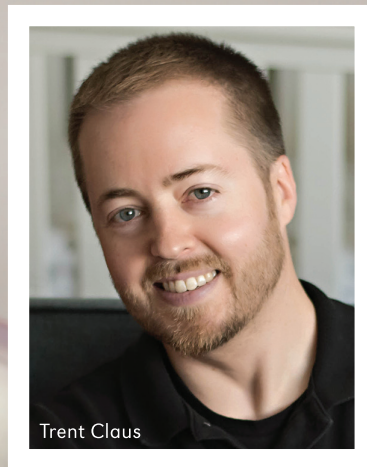
She loves her job.

"It's a dream. It's incredible," Schaefer said. "I go to work, and I get to have fun all day long. It's what I enjoy. It's not work."



"Survivor: Cagayan" Finale Live Reunion Show from Season 28. Art direction by Dawn Schaefer. Photo by Monty Brinton/CBS.

Art alumnus creates visual effects in Hollywood



Trent Claus

“To be a part of such a huge collaboration between so many different artists and craftspeople is always exciting.”

--Trent Claus

Trent Claus was the visual effects supervisor for “Captain America: Civil War” (2016).
Courtesy photo.

Trent Claus, who received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in studio art in 2006, is an award-winning visual effects (VFX) supervisor with Lola VFX in Los Angeles.

He has been with Lola VFX for 11 years and has worked on more than 100 films, including 16 that were nominated for the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects, and four that won the award. Additionally, nine of the films were nominated for Best Picture, and cumulatively, the films he has contributed to have earned more than \$32 billion dollars in worldwide box office.

In 2012, he was awarded a Visual Effects Society Award for Outstanding Compositing in a Feature Motion Picture for his groundbreaking work on “Captain America: The First Avenger.”

“I’ve been very fortunate to work on some big films throughout my career,” Claus said. “It can be intimidating, at times, to work on something so big—films are so heavily reviewed, discussed and analyzed that there can be a lot of pressure. But to be a part of such a huge collaboration between so many different artists and craftspeople is always exciting.”

His most recent credits include “The Post,” “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales,” “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2” and “Captain America: Civil War.”

“The Post’ is a good example of ‘invisible’ or supporting visual effects, in which the audience is meant to be unaware that any work was done,” he said. “For instance, these films often need VFX teams to remove anachronisms for the time period, recreate facades of buildings, extend the sets beyond what was practical to film on location, or even to replace one entire city for another. Virtually every film and TV show released today has some amount of VFX.”

One of the first films he worked on was a re-release of “Blade Runner” (1982) titled “Blade Runner: The Final Cut,” released in 2007.

“It was an opportunity for the director, Ridley Scott, to revisit the film and, with a light touch, make some alterations and adjustments to fix continuity errors and to improve upon the effects,” Claus said. “That one was really exciting for me as I grew up being a big fan of the film.”

He has also worked on several projects for director David Fincher, including “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” In that film, actor Brad Pitt stars as a man who starts aging backwards.

“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button’ was a big opportunity for us at Lola to showcase some of the cosmetic effects that we’d been working on, specifically ‘aging’ and ‘de-aging’ effects that have become something of a specialty for me.”

Claus has also been able to work on several Marvel Studios films.

“Another highlight has been my relationship with Marvel Studios throughout their first decade,” he said. “I worked on their first film, ‘Iron Man,’ and have since worked on 15 out of their 18 films. I started reading comics as a kid, and in fact, my first job at age 13 was at a comic book store in Lincoln called Cosmic Comics. I worked there for six years and then moved on, with no idea that I’d be helping to make movies about those characters someday.”

He loves the experience he got at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

“I had a great experience at UNL, and I think that there are a lot of things from my time there that have helped me along the way,” Claus said. “Having an art background has allowed me to approach problems from a different perspective than many of my colleagues, who often have more technical filmmaking backgrounds. I feel the differences have always benefited the team and ultimately the work.”

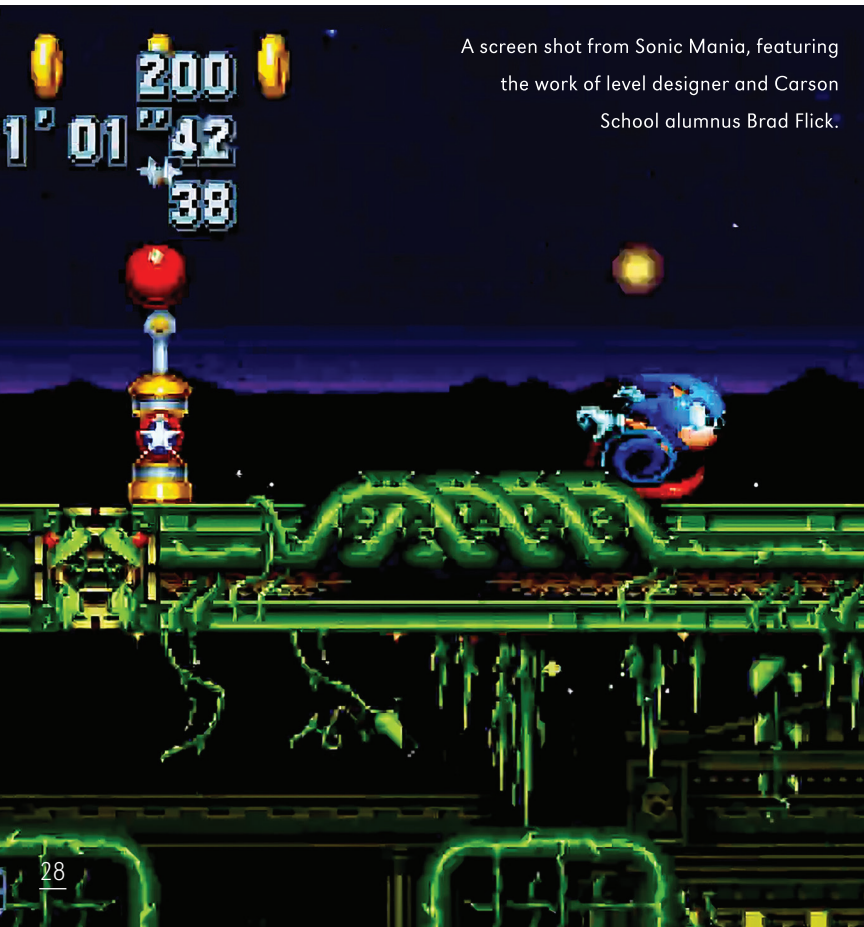
His advice to students interested in visual effects is to focus on their portfolio.

“Always remember that your portfolio is your artist resume,” he said. “Employers will be looking at your portfolio/reel first, so always keep it in the back of your mind for every project and assignment. Also, take an active role in critiques. Working in film means having your work critiqued daily, so being able to discuss your own work objectively, as well as being able to provide actionable advice for your colleagues, is very important.”

There is plenty to love about the field of visual effects.

“I love the fact that each day I might be asked to do something entirely different from the day before,” Claus said. “And it may very well be something that I’ve never done before.”

Love of video games leads Flick to level designer work for Sonic Mania



A screen shot from Sonic Mania, featuring the work of level designer and Carson School alumnus Brad Flick.

Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film Alumnus Brad Flick (B.F.A. 2010) worked on the creative team as a level designer for the new Sonic Mania video game released last August by SEGA.

The acclaimed game, which is one of the most successful Sonic games in 15 years, won “Game of the Year” from Digital Foundry and a Gold Award from Famitsu Magazine, one of the most revered gaming publications in Japan, as well as nominations for 2017 awards at almost every single gaming publication and The Game Awards. In February, it received three nominations from the National Academy of Video Game Trade Reviewers (NAVGTR) Awards.

Christian Whitehead, Headcannon and PagodaWest Games, who were all chosen for their work in the Sonic community, developed the game in collaboration with SEGA of America. Sonic Mania celebrates the series’ 25th anniversary and features the best of Classic Sonic, while pushing the envelope forward with 60 frames-per-second gameplay and pixel-perfect physics.

“I still don’t think Sonic Mania is real because the scenario where a big Japanese publisher gives their top I.P. to a small, Western, independent team is unheard of,” Flick said. “And they gave us a lot of creative freedom, too.”

As a level designer, Flick and the other designers were responsible for the area that the player plays in.

“Basically, you take the area that the player plays in from the conceptual stage all the way to the finished form,” Flick said. “In the case of Sonic Mania, we had a handful of original levels, so those are ideas that we had to come up with completely from scratch. Then there’s Sonic Team, which is the Japanese development studio responsible for doing the Sonic titles at SEGA. We had a modest proposal of a couple of original zones, and then they wanted us to add a bunch of zones from Sonic’s previous games. We had to cherry pick from Sonic’s history, update the graphics, update the mechanics and figure out how to make it fresh and new without feeling like it’s a retread. Then, I helped build the environments that everyone has fun in.”

Flick has been a fan of the game since he was growing up in St. Louis, Missouri.

“When I was younger, we didn’t have a gaming console, but we had a Windows 95 computer,” he said. “My uncle had a SEGA Genesis with Sonic on it, and that’s all he had for it really, so we would go to my grandma’s house, where he lived at that time, and played it. And then when you play for a while, you just want to figure out how it works.”

SEGA and Sonic Team eventually stopped making the two-dimensional Sonic games, but Flick remained intrigued.

“Around age 13, I started trying to teach myself how those things work,” he said. “I thought it would be good to have design, programming and art in my skillset. I would spend a lot of time doing homework, then just sitting on the computer and practicing techniques. Eventually, you run into communities where other people are doing the same thing.”

Those online forums are where he met Whitehead and Simon Thomley, who are now all part of the Sonic Mania development team.

“I thought it would be good to have design, programming and art in my skillset.”

--Brad Flick

Flick found there was no direct path into designing video games, so he ended up attending the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film and majoring in theatre with an emphasis in film and new media.

“At UNL, Brad was always the go-to for film audio,” said Associate Professor of Film Rick Endacott. “He worked on a lot of student films, building tracks and mixing audio. He also worked very closely with me and our colleagues at NET on our first Carson Film, ‘Vipers in the Grass.’ I think that experience cemented Brad’s plan to move to Los Angeles and pursue a career in film and television audio post-production.”

Flick has been a sound effects and dialogue editor for a number of television shows and films, including the Oscar-nominated film “Get Out.”

“I think being that malleable is pretty important now in entertainment,” he said. “I’ve lived through a couple of sound company bankruptcies, and some of the people only have one skill in the field, and they can’t adapt. For



Brad Flick on the Sonic Mania train in Tokyo, Japan. An entire commuter train was decorated to be Sonic themed to promote the game in November 2016.

me, getting all the other skills at Nebraska was important, too.”

Flick is adjusting to life as a video game designer.

“I have kids coming up to me at conventions and talking with us,” Flick said. “People send fan art. I’m getting e-mails, Twitter, DMs. It’s nuts,” he said. “The original Sonic Team has told us that we’re doing a good job and said the game’s fantastic. I still don’t think it feels real right now.”

Designing blockbusters: Carson School alumnus is specialist set designer for Hollywood's biggest films



Tim Croshaw's set design for "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," the interior of the Queen's Throne Room. Courtesy photo.

Tim Croshaw (B.F.A. 2000) grew up in Omaha making movies with his friends. Now he is a specialist set designer in Hollywood, designing for some of Hollywood's biggest recent blockbusters, including "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," "The Fate of the Furious," "X-Men: First Class," and the upcoming films "Godzilla: King of the Monsters," "Ad Astra," "Aquaman" and "Avengers: Infinity War."

"My friends and I would make movies with our camcorders," Croshaw said. "I volunteered at the Omaha Community Playhouse whenever I could. I enjoyed taking part in live theatre. Whenever we loaded in a show, I would watch the set and lighting designers, I wanted to be them—making decisions on the look of a show," he said.

He said set designing has been a rewarding career.

"Designing in these fantastical environments can be very challenging as we attempt to create new looks that you haven't experienced before," Croshaw said. "The most rewarding experience is always the collaboration between departments."

With many comic book adaptation movies on his resume, it comes as no surprise that Croshaw is a fan of comic books.

"I was and still am a fan of comic books," he said. "Comics can still create dynamic action on the space of a page that would cost a movie hundreds of thousands of dollars. And although it still might be achievable in a shot, it is still not as interesting as pouring over the details of a still illustration."

He came to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln as an undergraduate with no clear goal.

"I wanted to come to a school where I could have many choices of study," he said. "I loved writing and filmmaking, and I was passionate about theatre. At UNL I took creative writing classes, various life drawing and art history classes, film studies and many courses in theatre design, history and its disciplines."

He loved his time at Nebraska.

"The theatre department was as accessible as you wanted it to be. I was able to study costume, lighting and set design and technical principles in the classroom and gain practical, hands-on experience on the various stages. We were also graced with top-of-the-line equipment and software in our CAD lab," he said. "By the time I left Nebraska, I had a huge leg up on my peers because I already had technical and practical design experience."

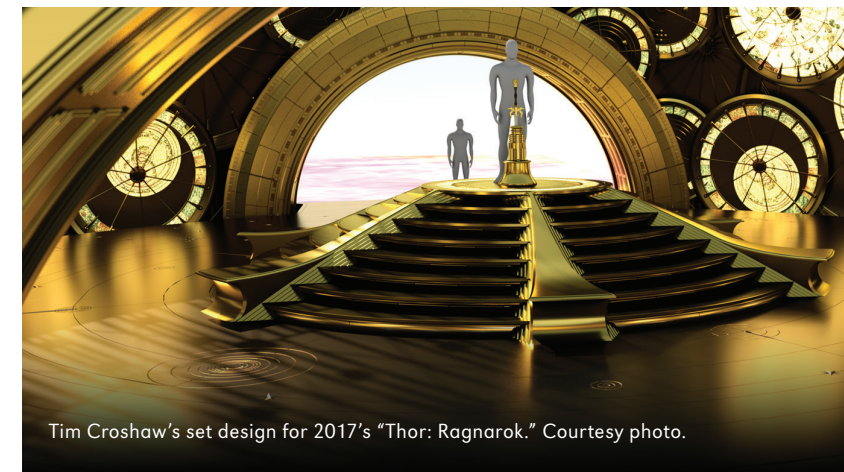
His advice to student designers is to observe the world around them.

"In order to be a successful designer, you have to have a solid basis in the fundamentals of design, but you also have to keep an open mind and observe the world we live in," he said. "Read books—fiction and non-fiction. Not only books about design, but about history, humanities and politics. This will help you understand your audience. Always attempt to be enhancing the story and the characters. That is our job."

He credits hard work for his success.

"I often have problems when people ask about a 'big break' because it sounds like someone allowed you to shortcut to the end goal," Croshaw said. "Everything I have done is backed by years of study and practical work. When I arrived in Los Angeles, I met with various designers and artists. What stood out was my preparedness to work. I had a very complete skill set and technical know-how. That all started with my studies at UNL."

To see more of his work, visit his website at timcroshaw.com.



Tim Croshaw's set design for 2017's "Thor: Ragnarok." Courtesy photo.



Tim Croshaw with his son, Isaac.

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