

NOVEMBER 2021

- THE GREEN ROOM -

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMANCE STUDIES
AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Page 1: Introduction
- Page 2&3: Faculty Spotlight
 - Grace Adinku
 - Patrick Sullivan
- Page 4: Red Moon Rising
- Page 5: Maroon Steel
- Page 6 : Student Spotlight
 - Jacob Gallimore
 - Joesph Ramsbacher
- Page 7: Student Spotlight
 - Thomas Todd

CREATED BY: JACOB GALLIMORE AND BETHANY SOUKANYA

WHAT'S UP & COMING

- **Brubeck Brothers Quartet**
 - January 27, 2022 (7:00 PM)
 - Presented by AVPA, in Rudder Theatre
- **Alpha Psi Omega's Annual Student New Works Festival**
 - The first weekend of February, TBD
- **Live concert accompanying classic Georges Méliès films: *Right in the Eye*, by Alcoléa & Cie**
 - February 27, 2022 (7:00 PM)
 - Presented by AVPA, in Rudder Theatre
- ***SHE, a Choreoplay*, by Jinah Parker**
 - March 23, 2022 (7:00 PM)
 - Presented by AVPA, in Rudder Auditorium

FACULTY

spotlights

DR. GRACE ADINKU

SPOTLIGHT

by Bethany Soukanya

Grace Uchechukwu Adinku is a Lecturer in the Department of Performance Studies. In the spring, Dr. Adinku will be teaching PERF 156: Dress in World Cultures, PERF 200 : Intro to World Theatre, and PERF 281: History of Theatre II. Dr. Adinku expresses her enthusiasm about how each course is designed to provide her students with aesthetic, historical, literary, and theoretical perspectives on global performance. Her work explores the connections between theatre, dance, dress culture, religion, performance art, and individual and societal performative roles in everyday life.

Dr. Adinku's classes explore cultural practices, social structures, religious beliefs, grooming styles, and the artistic influences of theatre. They also expose students to the riches of diverse performance cultures in non-western communities. Additionally, her courses introduce Aggies to the social and political frameworks that structure European societies and to the expansion of Western theater from the 1500s to the present day.

Paraphrasing scholar-activist Lois Weaver, Dr. Adinku states that "Performance Studies is not a one-size-fits-all exercise, but all sizes try to fit in. One must be prepared to handle conflict, cope with ambiguity, and relish the tensions that arise from it all." She adds that "Performance Studies courses **make you grounded** because they touch on all aspects of life: religion, art, government, justice, and basic human relationships." Dr. Adinku stresses how vital the Performance Studies Department is and how it has **the power to challenge and intellectually develop the individual**, whether one is a major, minor, graduate student, or just an Aggie taking a single class or two.



DR. PATRICK SULLIVAN

SPOTLIGHT

by Jacob Gallimore

Coming from the Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester, where he recently defended his dissertation, Patrick Sullivan is the newest member of the Performance Studies faculty. He currently teaches the popular gateway course, History of Film. Dr. Sullivan brings to the department extensive knowledge in animation, new media, and fandom and a belief that art in any genre, high or low, is worthy of academic attention.



After asking Dr. Sullivan what he believed the difference is between A&M's Performance Studies Department and other performance/cultural research institutions, he said, "I think the strength of Performance Studies is that it's not bound to a particular medium. You look across all forms of media. There is performance in television; it's in playing video games, it's in Twitch streams; it's in cinema and it's in theatre, really, just general life: sports, politics... **Performance Studies is inherently interdisciplinary. That's the strength, that it's not bound.**"

Dr. Sullivan recently received a grant from the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research to explore UCLA's television archives for his upcoming monograph. In the spring he will be teaching FILM 481, Seminar in Film Studies on the cultural politics of fandom, which will explore how fandom operates in contemporary society.



Red Moon Rising:

A NIGHT OF MAGIC IN THE COURTYARD

by Jacob Gallimore

On Thursday, October 21st, the Department of Performance Studies welcomed a long-time collaborator back to Aggieland. Christopher Blasdel, along with his wife of thirty years, Mika Kimura, returned to present a concert to A&M students and the community after having been unable to travel from Japan in 2020 due to COVID-19. Although vaccinations and mask-wearing allowed the couple to visit College Station this year, a change of venue had to be made in the interest of public safety and health. Performance Study's Theater Facility Coordinator and Building Procter Jeff Watson set out to create a space to welcome these renowned artists. He draped the LAAH courtyard canopies with string lights, lit trees with LEDs, and built a decorated platform for the performers. All of this was done in our beautiful, fresh-air courtyard, as per COVID guidelines. Performance Technology and Studio Manager John Moeller set up state-of-the-art audio equipment at the location. Regardless of the necessary move from the Black Box Theater to the courtyard, students and faculty members experienced the beautiful performance as if it were an event in pre-COVID times.

After an evening of sublime music, I had the pleasure of asking Mr. Blasdel himself a couple of questions. As we continued to talk I found out that his interests in religion, music, and self-awareness were all expressed through the shakuhachi flute, the historical roots of which can be traced back to Zen Buddhism. "Why is the shakuhachi important," I asked, to which he replied, "I was in a place and in a time where I was introduced to it and it fit exactly what I wanted to do. It doesn't have to be shakuhachi. What's important is getting to know **who you are and what you're supposed to do and how to help people**, how to make something out of your life. It could be anything, but the important thing is to **find your tool, your agency, to do something with your life, whatever it is, as a way to grow as a person.**"

As audience members, we experienced a moving repertoire of music. We heard Blasdel perform solo pieces and were left mesmerized as Kimura graced us with a vocal performance, offering haunting duo pieces with her husband. To end the evening, Blasdel performed an original piece composed by Department Head, Dr. Martin Regan. This haunting piece, "Red Moon Rising," was inspired by an experience Dr. Regan had while in Costa Rica. He and his friends watched as the "moon appeared from below the horizon, rising up diagonally across the ocean. It was a very subtle shade of red, glowing very intensely." Dr. Regan explained that "Red Moon Rising" is the third movement of a four-movement work entitled *Music for Solitude*. In the end, what made the night of shakuhachi different from an ordinary concert was simple. As Dr. Regan eloquently stated, "This music is the kind of **music that demands that you listen to it**, pay attention to it, and concentrate your attention by focusing on **subtle details and nuances**. It comes from a deep culture, and many people aren't familiar with it. By becoming familiar with genres of music from other cultures, I think it **expands our artistic horizons** and presents us models for other ways to be creative and engage in music-making."



Maroon Steel:

A SYMPHONY OF STEEL

by Bethany Soukanya

Maroon Steel is a student organization founded in 2013 and currently under the supervision of Performance Studies Associate Professor Kim Kattari. This organization is committed to celebrating the art of steel pan music, which was developed on the Caribbean island of Trinidad.

But what are steel pans? Steel pans are percussion instruments made from 55-gallon oil drums first "designed" for that purpose in the mid-twentieth century. A&M's Maroon Steel plays traditional steel pan music such as Calypso and Soca as well as contemporary pieces from composers all over the world. Many of these musicians have been influenced by jazz, funk, pop, and classical music. On some occasions, they even perform pieces arranged by members of the ensemble themselves. Besides performing, Maroon Steel offers presentations and workshops across campus, educating students about the historical and cultural context of steel pan and the group's specific performing style.

When Maroon Steel President Jack Bahmer was asked what makes steel pan a unique form of music, he replied that "traditional pan music is generally learned by ear, rather than from sheet music." Dr. Kattari is a firm supporter of the ensemble, speaking enthusiastically about how each individual learns their own part while working together to arrange and develop pieces collaboratively within the group.

When asked what one thing he wanted people to understand about Maroon Steel, Jack stated, "I wish people knew more about the history of the instrument and about **opportunities to play and listen** to steel pan music" here at A&M. Joining this amazing group requires no previous musical experience. Maroon Steel is always looking for new members, those wanting to come and be **enriched by the history of the art** form by a new-found passion for music. For more information please contact student President Jack Bahmer at bahmerj@tamu.edu or faculty advisor Dr. Kim Kattari at kkattari@tamu.edu. You can also stop by the LAAH building room 129 on Tuesday's and Thursday's from 5:30 to 7 pm.



Jacob Gallimore

Class of 2021

by Bethany Soukanya

This month, Jacob Gallimore graduates with a Major in Performance Studies and a Minor in Religious Studies. During his final semester at Texas A&M, he created a short film that he has submitted to the *October 2021 Halloween Contest*, hosted by his favorite live streamer, DrDisRespect. Jacob's short film highlights the path of a young man (who represents himself), who is forced to deal with the tragic loss of a beloved idol. He then chooses to carry on the Doc's legacy.



Although Jacob's ultimate hopes for the short film were not achieved (winning the competition), he realized the real value of the process along the way; he created a piece of cinema he is proud of. In an interview, Jacob expressed his gratitude that the Department of Performance Studies supported him in the production of this film, giving him the opportunity to bring his vision to life. He asserts that throughout his studies during the last three and a half years, he's been taught not only to chase his dreams but to **become more of a well-rounded individual** in terms of understanding the diversity of other people's walks through life, their hardships, and to recognize his own faults as well. For Jacob, it was sometimes hard to accept outside help, yet as time passed and his perspective, with the help of his professors, grew, he realized that **asking for help does not signify weakness**. He wishes more students would accept this simple truth because of how important collaboration and collegiality truly is.

Joseph Ramsbacher

Class of 2021

by Bethany Soukanya



During his last semester, Joseph Ramsbacher has worked on a unique capstone project. As he puts it, the project "is **endeavoring to offer artists**, creatives, intellectuals, and performers... a **toolbox of Altered States of Consciousness**." His project touches upon the relationship between these Altered States and the toolbox we have surrounding them and is based upon the practical application of Arnold Ludwig's theory.

Joseph's project focuses on two main types of Altered States: Meditative States and Flow States. These two are considered "pinnacle" performance states with the potential to trigger our best possible ideas and insights while also inspiring profoundly peaceful experiences. Joseph has noticed that many wait around for these experiences to happen spontaneously, so he built his project after asking the question: **"why wait for lightning to strike, when we can bottle it?"** When asked why he chose this specific topic for his capstone project, Joseph says that he was inspired by Dr. Kattari's PERF 450 seminar, "20th-21st Century Performance: Altered States of Consciousness," which helped him realize the importance these states have played in his own life. Now that his project is released, he hopes to inspire introspection in others and motivate people to take more time to reflect on the potential of embracing Altered States in their lives.

Thomas Todd

Class of 2021

by Jacob Gallimore

Thomas Todd is a Senior Performance Studies major from Austin, Texas who is also graduating this month. He arrived at A&M after serving four years in the US Navy. Upon arrival, he quickly offered to volunteer his time and efforts to the department in any area possible. In addition to being a full-time student, Thomas has a wife and a one-and-half-year-old daughter. Upon graduation, Thomas plans to move to San Antonio with his family and pursue a career in healthcare. Thomas' favorite aspect of Performance



Studies is its interdisciplinarity. He states, "There is a lot of room in the department where chemistry and engineering could easily find a place in the shows... because we simply need props, stage elements, special effects, costumes, you name it. We already do some of it, but I think there's a lot of room to expand."

Thomas' interests in healthcare were put on display during his capstone project where he presented a paper discussing performative elements within the healthcare industry. "The paper particularly focuses on contemporary bedside manner training but also covers some of the historical and cultural elements in our healthcare system, like the short history of the white coat ceremony and the origin of the CPR dummy." Thomas has participated in many individual and departmental events and performances and is constantly looking for ways to help others. When asked, what advice he would have for other students, he said; "Don't be afraid of looking foolish or saying something that risks being perceived as off-color if you **have good intentions behind your words**. If you made it here, you are not a fool. So if you have questions, others probably do too. Also, there is **a lot to gain from making friendships** in your own department, but don't underestimate the benefits of diversifying."

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SPOTLIGHT



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