

scenes



Fall 2018

STORIES FROM THE STAGE

Performance Profiles the "Movement"

Theatre is our mirror.

Memories Through Music

Celebrate four decades
of iconic hits.

The Hit Men

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*Written by Sharon Morrissey
Designed by Carollyn Hamilton*

Mission

The mission of the Center for Performing Arts (CPA) is to serve as a public square within Governors State University, to encourage and support arts education, presentations, and community dialogue; and to provide creative innovation for students and community members throughout the Chicago Southland. CPA uses the arts as a platform for initiating community dialogue across social issues with relevant programs, making its community a better place to live and raise families.

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STRAIGHT FROM THE MIC: DIRECTOR'S WELCOME



As a community resource, we think a lot about our mission. We know the stage is one of the best platforms to educate, inspire, and illuminate a universal language; in many cases where no other connection exists.

As part of the university's College of Arts & Sciences, we are an entertainment venue with a heart for education in all we do. As a performing arts presenter, we're not known for one thing. We don't just do Broadway, or concerts, or comedy. We do it all, but we do it intentionally, with a few key goals in mind. I'd like to share those goals with you, our CPA family, because together, we are poised to meet these opportunities head-on:

- to serve as a place of connection and innovation for the community, artists, and educators
- to expand arts access for south suburban students in grades K to 12 and underserved communities
- to serve as a resource for teachers
- to serve as an entertainment destination offering relevant programs for southland communities

So, welcome to the first edition of **Scenes: Stories From the Stage**. Throughout these pages, you'll see how we are progressing towards these goals—by the numbers, but also experientially—because what we do is so much more than the bottom line.

Our aim is to keep you in the know about new programs, ways to make new connections through the arts, opportunities to support our work, how the arts can work for you, and so much more. We'll share goals, results, community impacts, and innovations. And we hope you walk away inspired, hopeful, and aware of the scenes unfolding all around you.

Lane Kopchenko



Performance Profiles: the “Movement”

Playwright Yasmina Reza (*God of Carnage*) said that “Theatre is a mirror; a sharp reflection of society.” The ability to provoke dialogue, or comment on the social issues of the day, is one of the differentiating aspects of GSU’s academic theatre program, Theatre and Performance Studies (TAPS). Since Spring 2013, when the TAPS program was in its infancy as the only public state program in Illinois to combine the two disciplines, Program Coordinator Dr. Patrick Santoro has used the stage as a platform to unveil the pulse of the people.

Santoro tackled gender equality and women’s issues in *A... My Name is Alice* (Fall 2013). Veterans’ issues and the effects of war trauma were brought to the forefront in *Still Life* (Spring 2014), well before the national conversations on veterans’ care of the 2016 Presidential election. *A Raisin in the Sun* (Fall 2014) highlighted racial and civil rights issues, prior to the #Black Lives Matter movement exposing a divided nation. In 2015, a National Endowment for the Arts BIG READ grant enabled a modern staging of the already futuristic *Fahrenheit 451* where the concepts of censorship, surveillance and power were explored, years before Facebook’s data breach laid bare the frightful realities of personal surveillance through online footprints. And now, as we live in the world of #MeToo moments and in the aftermath of profound abuses, Santoro addressed the silence of child sexual trauma through the lens of a classic childhood fairytale (*Alice in Wonderland* November 2018).

Nowhere else could all these movements be exposed with luminous transparency but the stage. It allows us to clearly see what our senses, or our social circles, might have filtered from our personal experiences. Whether predictive or post-facto, theatre is a necessary part of civilized society. It is our mirror—cracked, distorted or picture-perfect as life may be.



“Theatre is a mirror; a sharp reflection of society.”

SEL: The New Education Frontier

Self-awareness. Positive relationships. The ability to demonstrate responsible behaviors and good decision making. These are the qualities that lead to success, whether you're a parent, an employer, or a student. Together they capture a growing education concept: **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**. The arts teach these behaviors more effectively than just about any other discipline, and your Center's Arts in Education series is one of the best resources around. *The World of Anne Frank: Through The Eyes of a Friend* illuminates the power of friendship, empathy and compassion. *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad* demonstrates courage, resourcefulness, and the necessity of perseverance to achieve a breakthrough. These qualities and more come alive in real, tangible ways for students from all over the southland, who visit the Center on a field trip, and leave forever changed.

Arts in Education

Up to **20,000** youth ages pre-K through high school for school field trip performance

Americans for the Arts, 2018

93% of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education.

Want to lend your support? Attend one of our upcoming donor luncheons to sustain our Arts in Education series. You'll see us in action by watching a performance with area school children, and then enjoy lunch. Donations will be accepted via cash, check or credit card. **RSVP to artsed@govst.edu** with your name, # of attendees and chosen performance.

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad
Tuesday, February 5 at Noon

The World of Anne Frank: Through the Eyes of a Friend
Wednesday, April 10 at Noon



PERFORMANCE EXTRAS

Memories Through Music

The smell of mom's pineapple upside down cake in the oven. Black and white photos of your parents (Mom has a beehive. Dad, is that a unibrow?). Those were the days. On November 10th, we gave you a chance to relive them. As the culminating **GSU's Homecoming Weekend**, alumni, faculty, staff, students and the community came together with old friends to experience the new GSU. Your Center celebrated with **The Hit Men** to close out the week with a trip down memory lane. This legendary rock supergroup has played a significant part in singing the soundtrack of our lives, with hits on a whopping 85 albums! These five talented musicians have sung and recorded with Frankie Valli, Carly Simon, Tommy James, Carole King, Cat Stevens, Jim Croce, Cheap Trick, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Barry Manilow, Rod Stewart, Blood Sweat & Tears, and many, many more. As you can see a good time was had by all!



From Rebellion to Patriotism

A workshop for Veterans was held in conjunction with **The Hit Men** performance on November 10, 2018 on how we remember and commemorate war, and the role that music plays in that process. More than 20 veterans and community members attended Suzanne Patterson's listening workshop to hear and discuss the music of the era ('60s through '80s) and how it impacts our memory of war.

Listeners were first brought back briefly to the propaganda songs of WWI such as "Over There" and "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag" ... then moving up to the protest songs of the 1960s, '70s and '80s as well as rebellious and patriotic songs of more recent times. Classics such as Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Universal Soldier" and Staff Sgt. Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets" were enjoyed along with Edwin Starr's infamous War and Buffalo Springfield's hippie anthem "For What It's Worth." From the mothers' perspective, the songs of Freda Payne ("Bring the Boys Home") and Kate Bush ("Army Dreamers") were heard and discussed and foreign wars were explored in Jackson Browne's "Lives in the Balance." Re-entering the 21st century, patriotism was honored as we listened to and discussed Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the USA."

The workshop ended with musical suggestions from the attendees, from which a unanimous request to hear Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" was honored, with many standing as the song played.



IMPROV for All Majors

Legendary sketch comedy and improv troupe **The Second City** returned to the Center on October 6, just in time for election season! Tomorrow's biggest comedy stars spoofed our great, big dysfunctional nation in *Made in America: Some Assembly Required*. But, before they went live on stage, they taught a dozen students basic improv techniques—valuable skills for entering the job field! The workshop provided a safe and fun environment to practice communication, collaboration, innovation, flexibility, and conflict resolution.

It was an opportunity to learn from the best in the business, and we extend a special thanks to The Second City!

Leading a Culture of Philanthropy

GSU President Elaine P. Maimon and her husband, Dr. Mort Maimon, recently shared their views on philanthropy with the university community. Patrons and supporters of the arts, they set an example for all of us with their giving.

Nine days before Dr. Elaine P. Maimon's official installation as the fifth president of Governors State University, she and her husband Mort—the other Dr. Maimon—gave their first \$10,000 to the school. With that gift, they established the GSU Promise, an endowed scholarship (read as: it will keep growing and help students in perpetuity), and kicked off a personal tradition of making that donation annually ever since—amounting to just over \$255,000 in personal donations to date.

"It's part of leadership," President Maimon said, "both here and nationally. I cannot think of a single region that has been strong that isn't philanthropic. And it's something I believe in—something we both believe in."

Mort Maimon, bespectacled and unhurried, agrees with his wife about the virtue of giving and the need for modeling philanthropy in higher education.

"I'm very uneasy about publicity," he said. "If I had my druthers and knew we would be equally effective, I would like to be anonymous."

But in the authentic spirit of leading, they give in hope that it will inspire others.

"We want our legacy to help establish a culture of philanthropy at Governors State University," President Maimon said.

GSU isn't your typical university. It sits at the top of Will County, adjacent to Cook—"where the city meets the prairie"—and for its first 45 years, served as an upper division university. It was only in 2014, under President Maimon's leadership, that the university welcomed its first freshman class, added residential housing and competitive athletics, and became a true 24-hour campus.

Looking toward its 50th year—an important milestone for the only full-service public university in Will County—GSU continues to evolve and grow. As part of the celebration, the university's philanthropic arm—the GSU Foundation, led by Will Davis—will launch a new initiative: Legacy Leaders.



Elaine and Mort Maimon, front and center, supporting student actors tackling *The Tempest*.



“Legacy Leaders Society is a way to recognize lifetime cumulative support to the university through the GSU Foundation. These leaders’ individual cumulative gifts range from \$5,000 to \$395,000 to Governors State University,” Davis said. “Their contributions directly benefit the students—whether the donation goes to academics, the arts, athletics, or any other area of GSU as defined by the donor—and they grow the institution. We appreciate and thank everyone who participates in giving to GSU at any level. It is a wonderful testament of leadership when the Maimons walk the talk of philanthropy. I can assure you their giving is sincere. The Maimons want anyone who works hard to achieve a higher education degree to be able to access it without financial burdens.”

Mort, like his wife, holds a degree in English. Ever the literature professor, he views his world—and giving—through metaphor.

“I was talking to Elaine this morning over breakfast,” he said, “and looking out the window at some trees. ‘There are three trees growing that weren’t even noticeable when we moved in eleven years ago,’ I told her. ‘They started as seeds, and now they’ve matured. That’s the process of growth that giving encourages.’”

Written by Angela Denk

ARTS INNOVATORS

John Concepcion

John has been a full-time Lyric Opera tenor since 1993 and is also a regular member of the Grant Park Festival Chorus each summer. A past recipient of The American Prize in Vocal Performance in Opera and a finalist in the Bel Canto Regional Voice Competition, John has also appeared with Santa Fe Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, Hawaii Symphony, Tulsa Opera, Cleveland Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Portland Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, and the Pine Mountain Music Festival.

We spoke with John about his role as a member of the Advisory Board for Center for Performing Arts, where he curates and hosts a popular series of operatic programs called “Opera Up Close.”



CPA: How did you come up with the opera up close concept? And what inspires your choice of program?

JC: I originally wanted to bring classical voice programs and recitals to the south suburban community but couldn't find a venue willing to incorporate my vision. When the opportunity to be part of GSU's Center for Performing Arts presented itself, I found the perfect place to showcase some of Chicago's and the Southland's best operatic talent. Creating a performance space that shares the stage with the audience was the right combination at the right time.

My programming ideas come from the world I live in. My friends inspire me, my family challenges me, and my colleagues seek to create collaborative experiences. I pay attention to what my friends are singing and where they're working... and the wheels start turning on how that can be shaped into a program.



CPA: Tell us about your latest project for “Opera Up Close?”

JC: Opera Up Close opened its ninth Season on Sept 30 to a sold out crowd! For the first time, we presented a program featuring the music of one composer. This being the 100th anniversary year of the great American composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), we showcased his greatest works, including *West Side Story*, *Candide*, *Wonderful Town*, *On The Town*, and more. Bernstein's music is not exclusive to one type of voice, so we presented singers from the operatic and musical theatre stages. It was a great experience!

CPA: If you had to describe in one word what makes our opera different, what would you say?

JC: Accessible! As an audience member, you are literally up close to the performers so you can really feel like you're part of the performance. We present each program in a way that draws the audience in, using narration and graphics to highlight the context of each piece you're hearing.

STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



The Next Generation is Nurtured Here

Our first Arts Fellow, Maya Shelton, has graduated (May 2018), and she's going on to do big things! You might have seen one of her many moving performances in our Theatre and Performance Studies productions: Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, Miranda in *The Tempest*, and Helen in *Fat Pig*. She's taking her experience here all the way to The New York Film Academy in Los Angeles, CA, where she will be pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Acting for Film starting in Spring 2019.

As a year-round fellow, Maya had the opportunity to experience many facets of the business, both from the front of house perspective (including observing volunteer orientation and training) and behind the scenes (working on database management). Maya honed her problem-solving, communication, and customer service skills while gaining a better understanding of the varying business models we employ as both a presenting and producing house. The opportunity to work in the field while taking a Performing Arts Management class allowed Maya to apply what she learned in the classroom to real-world situations.

An actress since the third grade, some of her favorite productions include *Li'l Abner*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Annie*. She is truly grateful that the TAPS program has given her so many opportunities to delve deeper into what it means to perform. We look forward to following Maya's progression as an actor, and we hope to see her on stage (or the big screen) in the near future!



Our House is Getting a Makeover

As with any house, upgrades are a necessary, but costly, part of ownership. When we talk about a makeover, we think of smaller cosmetic changes like paint and furniture. But your Center is investing in the core functions of the theater to ensure a safe and welcoming theater experience for years to come. With the help of GSU's new Technology Advisory Committee (TAC), co-chaired by Associate Provost Colleen Sexton and Charles Pustz, AVP and Chief Informational Officer, we're getting outfitted for the future of live performance.

TAC was formed to provide recommendations on technology usage, guidelines, approaches, and direction, and to suggest long-term GSU technology strategy. We are grateful to be supported by this forward-thinking group of professionals. We've made a five-year plan of upcoming improvements, so visit often to see the latest in technology trends for live performance.



Here are a few of the ways you can expect to feel the makeover difference during your theater experience:



Lighting has changed significantly with the development of LED sources. With new LED lights and upgraded light board in our inventory, our patrons will see some stellar lighting effects and students will enjoy a state-of-the-art learning environment.

Wireless microphones and wireless stage communication equipment allows performers and crew to move uninhibited allowing for better production quality. Often requested by popular touring shows, your center can now attract these artists to our state-of-the-art performance space.

Our new platform lift will expedite show transitions for seamless production quality while ensuring safety for the crew.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Invest in Your Community

We partner with up to **100** non-profit or charitable organizations annually to help them reach their fundraising goals.



The Secret to Our Success

After 22 years of service to the southland community, we're still going strong thanks to all of you. Presenting organizations need exceptional artists, funding support, and quality customer service for the show to go on. However, it is the connection to community that makes or breaks any presenter. Center for Performing Arts welcomes organizations of all kinds to join us for a night out, to connect what's happening on stage to the page in schools, to celebrate like it's church, or to plan a fundraising event around one of our performances. We partner with churches, libraries, sororities and fraternal organizations, non-profits, restaurants, businesses, senior living communities, youth groups, schools, student clubs, credit unions, and many, many more. We host parties and help you commemorate special occasions or recognize milestone achievements. Thank you to all of our partners, and we look forward to another great season of meeting our friends, neighbors—our extended family.



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Ways to Connect with Us



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