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The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley
 College of Fine Arts



Special Events:

Performing Art Center Distinguished Artists Series:

The Office of Public Art hosted the “Music on the Border” International Chamber Music Festival and Competition, March 8-11, 2017. The festival and competition inspired South Texas and the nation with the musical artistry of world class guest artists and chamber music performers from throughout the nation. “Music on the Border” was the second event on the PAC Distinguished Artists Series and was made possible by a gift from the Brown Foundation. The guest performers and competition judges are internationally renowned and included Christopher Taylor, pianist, who has performed around the world with the most recent international tours taking him to Korea, China, Singapore, Italy, and Venezuela, and Cheng-Hou Lee, accomplished cellist and world class musician. Cheng-Hou has appeared in hundreds of solo and chamber music performances (Avalon Quartet) throughout the United States, Germany, Italy, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The third judge and clinician was our own faculty flutist, Krista Jobson, who has an active career as a soloist, chamber musician, orchestral player, and teacher.

The Festival of International Books and Arts (FESTIBA) 2017 took place on February 27 - March 5, 2017. FESTIBA promotes literacy and appreciation for reading and inspires the South Texas community to broaden their cultural awareness and appreciation of the arts. We invite you to join us as we celebrate another momentous year in the history of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. In celebration of the opening of the new School of Medicine, which welcomed 55 students into its charter class, the theme and focus for FESTIBA 2017 was The Healing Arts: Arte y Salud – Una Buena Alianza! Healing is more than the curing or absence of disease — it’s about the heart, the mind and the spirit! Traditional healing arts include music, art, dance, creative writing, and drama. The healing arts have been described as creative activities and practices of artistic expression that promote wellness and healthy living. Join us for FESTIBA 2018 as we continue to explore the positive impact of the healing arts on good health!



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Escandon Elementary, Esparza Elementary, Travis Elementary, Trevino Elementary, Truman Elementary, and Zavala Elementary. The concert featured the Wind Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Saul Torres with music from West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein among other compositions. The students were fascinated with the exciting music and variety of instruments utilized in a full wind symphony.

The **Bravo Opera Company** delighted hundreds of elementary school children from Brownsville, San Benito and Harlingen at the TSC Arts Center on October 14th. Engelbert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" was performed with the theme of Día de los Muertos, with Mexican folklore, costumes and traditions woven into Grimms' fairy tale. The university music students involved in the production sang the roles as well as helped with sets, costumes and props.

The Dance Program also presented a program for young audiences on Friday, November 4th and featured **Senior Choreography Projects** at the Performing Arts Complex. These projects are the final culmination of ten dance majors' degree programs, and each dance major, mentored by two dance faculty, presented a 6 minute final project incorporating all of the dance skills and knowledge gained during the path toward graduation.

The final Productions for Young Audiences Concert for the Fall featured the UTRGV Ballet Folklórico and Mariachi Aztlán in a performance of traditional folk music and dance, including some Christmas favorites. This concert was held at the PAC in Edinburg. During the week of October 20th through October 24th, the UTRGV Mariachi Program, in collaboration with the College of Fine Arts and the Office of Public Art, presented **Enhancing Mariachi Education Across the RGV**, which included workshops and master classes with high school mariachi

students across the Rio Grande Valley. The goal of the workshops was to promote and inspire excellence in mariachi education and performance in South Texas. Guest clinician, José Hernández of Mariachi Sol de Mexico and Mariachi Aztlán, delivered the workshops with the study of the history and style of the mariachi genre, performance practices, proper technique for the various instruments, and the study of new repertoire. Participants included over 400 students from Brownsville, Los Fresnos, Port Isabel, San Benito, La Grulla, Roma, Sharyland, Edinburg, McAllen, Pharr/San Juan/Alamo, and Edcouch/Elsa. Workshops took place in Brownsville at the TSC Fine Arts Center, at La Grulla High School, Roma High School, Edcouch Elsa High School, and at the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex. Enhancing Mariachi Education Across the RGV was offered free to all student participants and was sponsored by the UTRGV Mariachi Program and Dean Block of the CFA.

The UTRGV Office of Public Art will host hosted The South Texas Literacy Symposium on January 21, 2017 at the Edinburg campus. This regional symposium is was sponsored by Literacy Texas in partnership with the South Texas Literacy Coalition. The goal of the symposium is to provide professional development opportunities to those who work in the field of literacy and will features a variety of training topics that promote adult literacy awareness and initiatives. Literacy Texas is the statewide literacy coalition connecting and equipping literacy providers through resources, training, networking, and advocacy. The South Texas Literacy Coalition is a nonprofit organization that serves as a resource to literacy providers through the facilitation of professional development opportunities.

SPECIAL EVENTS

San Antonio Ballet

On October 21-23, the acclaimed Ballet San Antonio performed at UTRGV under the new PAC Distinguished Artists Series, and was enthusiastically received by students and community. Workshops, master classes, and performances were held at the Performing Arts Complex in Edinburg. Over 85 young dancers from local dance companies and studios were invited to the University to participate in a dance class. In collaboration with Community Engagement, invited community groups from LUPE, ARISE, Edcouch-Elsa ISD and IDEA Academy attended the concerts and enjoyed an unforgettable experience. The students of our own UTRGV Dance Program also benefited with a private master class with Willy Shives and the San Antonio Ballet dancers. The Ballet San Antonio performance on Saturday had an audience of close to 600, and Sunday had over 500 in attendance. The performance was made possible by a gift from the Brown Foundation.

Productions for Young Audiences (Fall events)

The exhibit, A T. Rex Named Sue at the UTRGV Visitors Center thrilled audiences with the largest, most complete, and best-preserved Tyrannosaurus rex ever unearthed. At a heart stopping 42 feet long and 12 feet high, Sue is remarkable and was enjoyed by over 15,000 students and community members at UTRGV.

Several community outreach concerts for young audiences have featured the School of Music and the Dance Program. The first Productions for Young Audiences Concert was held on October 5th at the Performing Arts Complex in Edinburg. The 1,000 seat house was full to capacity with students attending from Freddy Gonzalez Elementary, Guerra Elementary, Eisenhower Elementary,



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Dr. Steven Block
Dean of College of Fine Arts

WELCOME to the first issue of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley College of Fine Arts Newsletter, celebrating the first year of our new university!

Have you read the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley vision statement? It says:

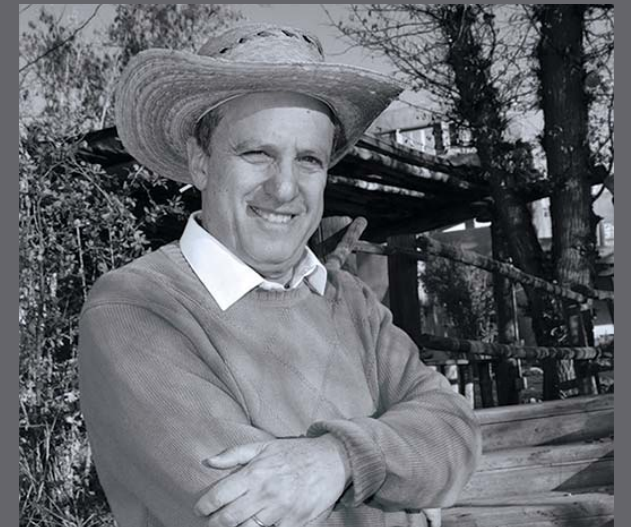
To be the nation's premier Hispanic-serving institution, a highly engaged bilingual university, and an exceptional educational and research institution recognized as a catalyst for transformation in the Rio Grande Valley.

The College of Fine Arts – which is comprised of the departments of School of Art, Creative Writing and Dance programs, the School of Music, and the Department of Theatre – is an essential component of that vision... and our alumni, faculty, staff and friends are an essential part of the College of Fine Arts.

Professor **Philip Zwerling** saw publication of his fourth book in 2016: *The Theater of Lee Blessing: A Critical Study of 44 Plays* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co. Publishers). It joins his previous books in print: *The CIA on Campus: Academic Freedom and the National Security State*, *After School Theater Programs for At-Risk Teenagers*, and *Nicaragua: A New Kind of Revolution*. Creative Writing Lecturer and Alumnus of our old UTPA Program, Robert Moriera, has won the annual fiction prize of the National Association of Chicana and Chicana Scholars Tejas Foco for his book *Scores*. He also earned his Ph.D. at UTSA in May 2016.



Professor **Chris Carmona** was chosen as the inaugural Langdon Review of the Arts in Texas Writer-in-Residence for 2015 and published his new collection of short stories *The Road to Llorona Park* with the Stephen F. Austin University Press in July 2016.



If you are a member of the MFA, please make every effort to become acquainted with these individuals, as they can help you navigate through the graduate program, and help achieve the goal of graduating with a Master's degree.



Professor **Steven Schneider** presented his new book *The Magic of Mariachi* at the Texas Book Festival in Austin in November 2016. He also received his fourth Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and his poem, “Chanukah Lights Tonight” was featured as the poem of the day by the Poetry Foundation of America.

Last September, Professor **Britt Haraway** had his collection of fiction *Early Men* published by Lamar University Press. This year he has readings from the new book scheduled in San Antonio, Buda, New York, San Francisco, Memphis, and Washington D.C. Additionally, Professor Britt Haraway’s story “Papa, Too,” was selected by Stuart Dybek for *The Best Small Fictions 2016* publication. The story was nominated by the editors of *Great Weather for Media*, where it was originally published.

Professor **David Carren** received recognition for several of his screenplays. *Lullabies for Lieutenants* was a Bronze Prize Winner in the 2016 Hollywood Screenplay Contest; *The Clever Girl* was a Finalist in the 2016 Hollywood Screenplay Contest, as well as an Honorable Mention in the 2016 *Writer’s Digest* Writing Competition; *My Monster* won an Honorable Mention in the 2016 *Writer’s Digest* Writing Competition and was published in *Writing Texas*, No.3, 2015-16. Carren’s novel, *Saving Toby* was a Finalist in the 2016 William Faulkner - William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition.

Professor **Emmy Perez** published a new book of poems called *With the River on Our Face*, from the University of Arizona Press. The book can be found here: <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/Books/bid2620.htm>.

Professor **Jean Braithwaite** published an essay about the Star Trek transporter. She’d been working on it for a long time and finally decided to put it out there into the world:

<https://devilfishreview.com/issue-seventeen/covert-dualism-science-fiction-and-the-mind-body-problem-by-jean-braithwaite/> In addition, Braithwaite has created an interdisciplinary faculty group at UTRGV for the academic study of comics as literature/art. It’s called the “Words + Pictures Group” and consists of faculty from multiple departments including Art, Creative Writing, Literature, Theater, Writing and Language Studies. Anybody who’s interested in being part of it can send Braithwaite their name, departmental affiliation, and email.



So, to keep you informed, here’s...

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN EVERY ISSUE

DEAN’S CORNER – The Dean’s corner will set the stage for each issue’s primary topic. In this inaugural issue, we are discussing our first year as a new university, particularly as it has affected the College of Fine Arts. That means that we’ll be looking at some of the spectacular events that we have already experienced and at some of the exciting plans scheduled for the future. We’ll be discussing our challenges and our ambitions. This is an exciting time!

ALUMNI NEWS – This is the place to honor the achievements of our graduates...but, we need your help! Please submit short articles telling us how you have put your education to work so that today’s College of Fine Arts students will be inspired and encouraged.

FACULTY NEWS – The Fine Arts faculty of UTRGV is amazing! This section will not only explore the myriad ways they enliven and enhance communities in the Rio Grande Valley but how their work carries those artistic gifts to a larger and appreciative audience.

SPECIAL INTEREST NEWS – While one can never predict what unique event will be featured, you can be sure that something is going on in the College of Fine Arts that is compelling and unique.

DONOR NEWS – You will be touched by the generous support our students have been given by people who, like you, value beauty and art. This is an opportunity to meet our donors, up close and personal.

IN CLOSING:

One of the mottos being used at UTRGV begins “Together We Will...”

- “Together We Will” celebrate the creative work of College of Fine Arts alumni, faculty, staff and friends.
- “Together We Will” support the vibrant learning environment that UTRGV provides the next generation of young artists.
- “Together We Will” make something beautiful!

WHAT BROUGHT ME TO UTRGV?

When the challenge of overseeing the much larger arts program at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley presented itself, I was excited by the possibilities. The newly formed institution, forged of preexisting entities that each had their own, strong, unique identities and cultures struck me as both daunting and full of potential. I wondered how we could unite these various locations and programs. The more closely I looked at this new university, the more exceptional I found it.

Here are a few of those unique qualities the UTRGV College of Fine Arts boasts:

When UTRGV uses the title “Hispanic Serving University,” it means something quite distinctive. Its programs are enriched by the thoroughly bilingual and bicultural environment in which they operate – and they, in turn, reflect this fact back into the community with a rich, bicultural curricular content.

Mariachi, Flamenco, and Ballet Folklórico are three examples of such programs in the fine arts. These disciplines have been nurtured by the public school system and exist at UTRGV at a semi-professional level that I've heard described by artists around the country as “the gold standard.”

The undergraduate and graduate programs in Creative Writing are, at most universities, auxiliaries of the English department. At UTRGV, however, we understand creative writing to not only encompass all writing arts, including playwriting, but to also encompass other languages. In particular, aspiring writers at UTRGV can study writing in Spanish as well as English, and be exposed to the rich traditions of notable Spanish writers, from Cervantes to Borges, and from St. John of the Cross to Carlos Fuentes.

adventure and crime that captured the attention of an entire county.

Our second Main Stage production in the spring is the dramatic comedy *She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen. It is set to run April 19 – 22 at 7:30 p.m. and April 23 at 2:00 p.m. A comedic romp into the world of fantasy role-playing games, it tells the story of Agnes Evans as she leaves her childhood home in Ohio following the death of her teenage sister Tilly. Nguyen offers a heart-pounding homage to the geek and warrior within us all.

Our spring season concludes with the Theatre for Young Audiences production of *Bug Joy*, a fantasy by Jan Seale. It is set to run April 27 – 29 at 7:00 p.m. and April 28 and 29 at 2:00 p.m. Come celebrate creature happiness with us.

We begin our Summer 2017 productions with *Rough Magic* by Roberto Aguirre Sacasa, a Shakespearean action adventure, fantasy in the tradition of *Harry Potter* and *The X-Men*. It is set to run June 29 – July 1 at 7:30 p.m. and July 2 at 2:00 pm. It is followed by *RX*, comedy by Kate Fodor. A delightful comedy about workplace depression. It is ideal entertainment for anxious people living in anxious times!



are offered three times per academic year, usually in December, May, and July. The program includes plays and musicals, usually with mixed casts of both children and adults, for young audiences. Additionally, the TYA program offers courses in Children's Theatre and Creative Drama. The program is dedicated to connecting to children through theatre and thereby promoting awareness and knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought.

Our facilities in ELABS house two full service theatres. One is the Jeffers Theatre, a 299-seat thrust performance space, with 180 degree seating and large comfortable permanent seats where plays for public performance are staged. Beside it, there is ELABS 107, a large black box, our Studio Theatre, with flexible seating for up to 150 people. These are on movable seats that also double as classroom chairs with detachable arms. Both theatres are served by the lighting and sound booth on the second floor. Behind the two performance spaces are the scene shop, the costume shop, the makeup and dressing rooms, and a laundry room and kitchenette.

Our department also has access to the TV stages and editing facilities in the TV studio in the library complex. There are two standing sets, one on each stage, plus sound booths and recording areas.

OUR 2016-2017 THEATRE SEASON:

Productions are scheduled for the Albert L. Jeffers Theatre and the Studio Theatre in the Edinburg Liberal Arts Building South (ELABS) formerly the Arts & Humanities Building on the corner of University Drive and Sugar Road at the UTRGV Edinburg Campus.

The fall season kicked off with the Studio production of *Chemical Imbalance*, a play by Lauren Wison. An evening of laughter was enjoyed with a wildly hilarious version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as if Oscar Wilde had told it. Our fall Main stage performance was *Antigone* by Sophocles, translated by Don Taylor. This classic Greek play poetically inspires us to re-examine our own lives and personal fortitude.

The studio production was of *The Life and Times of Winter Texans*, "A Collection of Short Plays" by Eric Wiley. Eight original plays take a humorous look at the cantankerous snowbirds of South Texas, from the author of the hit comedy, *Late Bloomers*. These are delightful sketches of the retired life on wheels and was a world premiere!

Our first Main Stage production in the spring is the musical *Bonnie and Clyde*, book by Ivan Menchell, lyrics by Don Black and music by Frank Wiidhorn. It is set to run March 1 – 4 at 7:30 p.m. and March 5 at 2:00 p.m. Come see and hear their electrifying story of love,

Theatre Departments that include the study of film and video in the university are rare, despite the importance of these three communication mediums in contemporary society. Even rarer is the understanding of how closely the skill sets of these three are interlaced. At UTRGV, however, we enable students, who can easily move from medium to medium on their computers and iPads, to develop their talents holistically and realistically.

Taken together with the Creative Writing program, students are given the opportunity to explore the same associations of mixed media that they will encounter and need to utilize in their professional work.

Two other extraordinary programs at UTRGV are the School of Art's degrees in Latin American Art History and an interdisciplinary advanced degree that can focus on Latin American, Mexican, and Native American/Pan-Hispanic Viceregal art and architecture of the Western hemisphere. These disciplines are both unique and integral to the population and culture of the Rio Grande Valley, reflecting a tremendous pride of culture. These are all special and exciting aspects of the UTRGV College of Fine Arts and there are many more.

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

This has been the year of transition. It has not only entailed the formation of several disparate, legacy institutions into a

single university and new administrative personalities but the creation of a unified program on multiple campuses. Much of the time has been simply to meet one another – getting to know one another's faculty, community members, and staff. A new vision has begun to take shape and slowly, slowly, we are creating the team that can build UTRGV's future. It hasn't been easy. Before we merged, the Brownsville campus offered two programs in the School of Music and in the Art Program. As of this writing, the School of Art is expanding, with more courses and faculty on site and new programs in the planning stages. Some critical renovations have been done to Rusteberg, the old art building. The School of Art has taken the first steps in creating an alliance with the Rio Grande State Center in Harlingen where our mission to the community and its medical and health-related needs (more on that later) will begin to take shape. The School of Music is in the process of figuring out how two separate and formerly rival programs can combine to form an even better program. A pilot project this year will be a unified orchestra led by maestro Peter Drabowski (who is also the Music Director of the Valley Symphony Orchestra) that will feature the finest student musicians from the Valley combined into a single performing orchestra for the first time. Not only is this a great boon for the students' educational experience but the Valley Community will get to hear concert programs that are not only ambitious but show off our students considerable classical training. The core

priorities of UTRGV, with Student Success as the central and preeminent goal, will include community engagement, educational opportunity, health and medical education, and research impacting the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. The College of Fine Arts will be addressing these priorities in so many creative ways as part of the growth we will experience. An advisory committee, the Dean's Circle, is being assembled from among members of the community, including bankers, lawyers, doctors, artists, and other professionals whose fresh perspectives will be invaluable. We are already developing innovative alliances between various artistic disciplines, health-related fields, and (as has always been the case) socially engaged members of the Rio Grande community.

To speak with authority as an emerging research institution, we will be increasing what we do on the graduate level as well as bringing in new, tenure-track faculty. We will continue to recruit the best and brightest students we can from the Valley and from beyond. Forty thousand dollars in grant funds have been set aside to award faculty or faculty groups who develop multi-community projects of benefit to the Rio Grande Valley and that demonstrate UTRGV's commitment to the area. The success of these initial grants can be expected to attract additional creative opportunities.

In summary, we continue to offer a first-rate education for our students. Our programs will continue to provide training in many areas that other universities don't address or

in which they can't specialize. We will continue to provide classical training in all the Arts while expanding the definition of what it means to be a 21st century artist. We will continue to build our research profile as we encourage our research faculty. We will be hiring new faculty to help build graduate programs and establish new paradigms for research in the Arts. It's an exhilarating moment to be at UTRGV!

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Anyone who's experienced a merger knows that it is imperative to create more streamlined and effective ways of doing business and achieving new goals. But our greatest challenge isn't overcoming the newness of our situation. Time will take care of that. And it isn't fundraising, though that will be a perennial concern.

"Our biggest challenge is fighting the preconception that the arts are "mere" entertainment and therefore not of much consequence. However, when one considers how influential even very humble art forms are, one begins to understand that arts aren't peripheral to our society – they shape it: The Arts are fundamental resources through which the world is viewed, meaning is created, and the mind developed. To neglect the contribution of the Arts in education, either through inadequate time, resources, or poorly trained teachers, is to deny children access to one of the most stunning aspects of their culture and one of the most potent means for developing their minds."

- Elliot W. Eisner, Stanford,
Graduate School of Education



three main stage plays or musicals, studio plays, theatre for young audiences, and, in alternating years, summer stock plays.

Other shows and films are produced through Alpha Psi Omega, the theatre student honor society, Director's Cut Film Initiative, a student organization for filmmakers, and the Latino Theatre Initiatives, another active student group, as well as through directing classes and independent projects. Students also participate in shows and films produced at other schools and by several amateur and professional groups.

In theatre, our projects have not only been produced on campus but have toured the country, including the New York, Houston and New Orleans Fringe Festivals. The Latino Theatre Initiatives, or LTI, is one of the most

high-profile college Latino theatre groups in the nation, and has developed an international reputation with ties to educators, social activist groups, and artists in Canada, Mexico, Colombia, and throughout the United States. The group's award-winning work has been discussed in numerous popular and scholarly articles as well as the book, *Theatre of Good Intentions*, by Dani Snyder-Young. LTI students tour Spanish-language plays to local schools, present research at conferences, publish essays, collaborate with outside artists, commission new works, and create and tour original shows, celebrating and engaging in the rich Latino culture of the The Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) program within the department offers students the unique opportunity to work with children – either as a fellow performer or as a director/leader – on theatre productions. The TYA program performances for the public

HISTORY

Now almost 90 years old, UTRGV began as a city junior college in 1927, became a state-supported college in 1965, a university in 1971, a member of The University of Texas System in 1989 as the University of Texas Pan American and, in 2015, merged with the University of Texas at Brownsville to create the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Theatre became part of the curriculum with a few course offerings in 1931 in the original city junior college but didn't become a separate major until 1969 when the Speech and Drama Department was established. In 1977, the Theatre Department (Theatre, Television, and Film) was established, with the addition of Journalism and Communication Disorders. The master's program in theatre was added in 1991, then deleted in 2012. Communication Disorders was moved to another college in 1995.

The theatre unit evolved into the Theatre-Television-Film area within the Department of Communication at UTPA. With the advent of UTRGV, Theatre has been made into its own department within a new College of Fine Arts, which also includes Art, Music, Dance, and Creative Writing. The Theatre Department currently serves between 100 and 200 undergraduate majors and minors, which has been the consistent range since 2010.

AN OVERVIEW:

As part of this new university, Theatre Department (Theatre, Television, and Film) continues to stress studies and projects that merge the three areas into one, with the philosophy that all three disciplines are branches of the same tree. Since films and television are nothing more than photographed theater, an approach that unifies these three crafts is not only convenient and efficient when it comes to the most practical use of faculty and facilities but vitally crucial to the proper education of our students. Actors on stage will inevitably work in film and television and vice versa. The same goes for all the other related artistries – directing, scripting, lighting, design – and the opportunities we provide to our students to explore the challenges of theatre as well as film and television offer them a rich variety of unique professional advantages.

One of the unique aspects of our program is that the students produce a feature film every other summer as a class folded into our curriculum. This course is the only one like it in the country, providing our students with invaluable experience in the production challenges and creative opportunities posed by shooting a feature film. Some of these projects have been listed on IMDB (giving students their first official crew credits), have won national and international awards, and have even been distributed through professional channels. Our theatre season includes

On several occasions since we moved to the Valley, my wife has teased me with the words “You wanted a challenge? You’ve got one!” It is a challenge I relish as the founding Dean of the new College of Fine Arts in the new University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The continued availability and quality of our radio and television programs, of the ballet and the symphony, of the theater and of pioneering therapies, of monuments and architecture and all manner of visual arts depend on the abilities of the students who are graduating from our colleges. They, in turn, depend on the strengths of our administration, faculty, and staff.

It is a measure of the mettle and quality of the Rio Grande Valley community and how it values its university that UTRGV can confidently respond to these challenges to become one of finest and most original Hispanic Serving Institutions in the nation. At UTRGV, together we will!

Dr. Steven Block

Dean of College of Fine Arts

A LITTLE ABOUT STEVEN BLOCK

I finished 27 years at the University of New Mexico where I was a professor of music composition and theory. The last 17 of those years, I served as the Director of a School of Music that began with about 170 students but grew to over 400. By the time I left, within the faculty of 60 professors there were twelve bright, young junior faculty members prepared to take that music school to the next stages of development in our relatively new century. I have many other interests, of course. First and foremost, I am the father of 7 and a grandfather of 19 (and still counting). I have also spent many years as a church musician, as a professional certified mediator, and as a certified group exercise instructor, as well. As one might expect, given my current position, I have a tremendous appreciation for all artistic forms.

If you are interested in biographical material, my work as a composer, or any other material related to my professional life as an artist, please feel free to go to my website at <http://stevendblock.com>.



Stanley Sherman was born in New York City and raised in Queens. He attended college at what is now known as The State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia, where he met his wife, Evelyn, in the band.

After college, Stanley and Evelyn moved to Long Island. They raised a family and Stanley taught school until his retirement in 1986, when they bought a fifth wheel camper and traveled throughout the U.S., including a brief stay in 1989 in Alamo, TX. After more than a decade of traveling, they returned to Alamo and made the Valley their home.

Stanley and his children are all accomplished musicians. Years ago, he taught recorder to a group of 12 to 15 neighbors in Alamo. Playing soprano, alto tenor and bass recorders, they have performed at local community events.

For several years, Stanley has also played the clarinet in the Rio Grande Valley Concert Band, a nonprofit group made up of volunteers who are primarily Winter Texans. The band annually hosts a Christmas concert and, after

more Winter Texans arrive in the Valley, performs several free concerts every other week throughout the area from January through March.

How did Stanley begin supporting the University?

A few years ago, Stanley began attending recitals at the University. He enjoyed them but not the “old, awful recital hall” in which they were held. When then-president Dr. Robert Nelsen spoke at a breakfast about the music students’ need for a new recital hall, he heartily agreed.

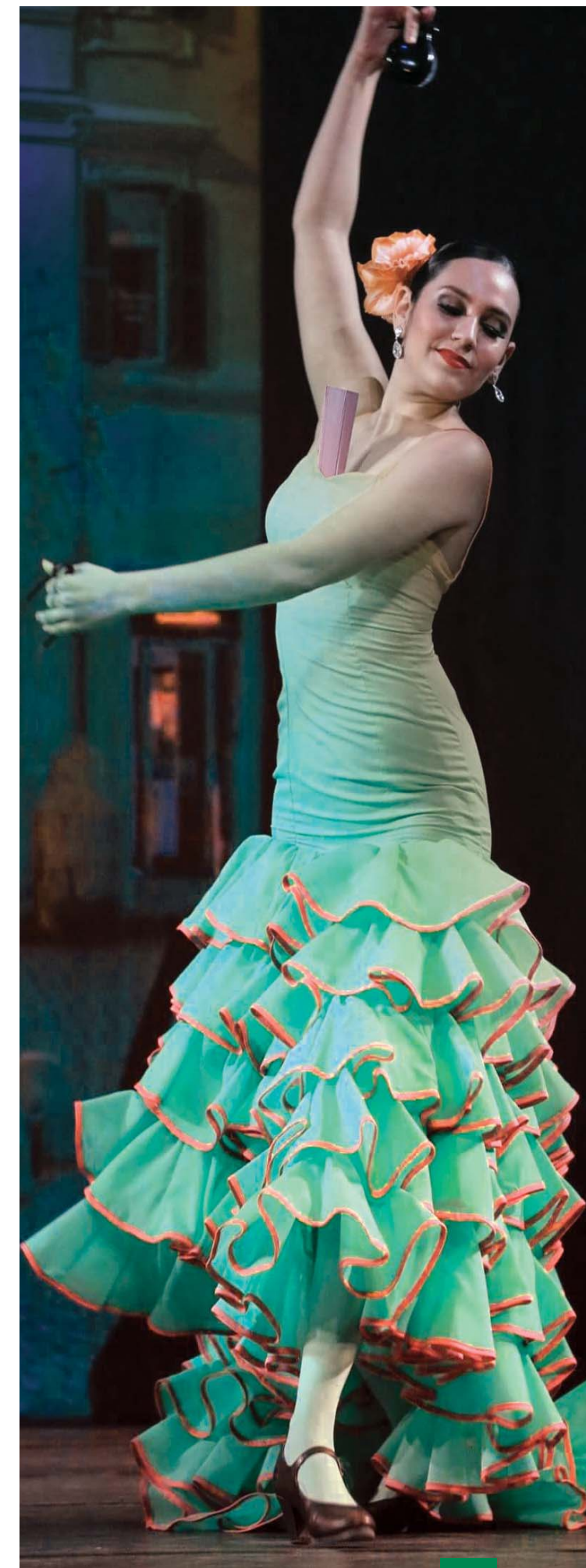
Evelyn died in 2013. Stanley felt one way to honor his wife’s memory was to request donations be made in her name to the UTPA recital hall building fund. His gift led to the naming of the Stanley and Evelyn Sherman Band Rehearsal Room in the new Performing Arts Center, which is on the Edinburg campus of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Stanley continues to attend concerts and recitals held at the Edinburg campus of UTRGV. Some of the concerts are held in the Performing Art Center, which is more readily accessible to

DANCE PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The dance program's Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance is to provide a broad coverage of dance training, including dance technique and performance skills, choreography, historical and cultural dimensions of dance, and principles of teaching. Students will be prepared to teach dance in a public/private school setting, or to continue dance study at the graduate level or in the professional dance context.

NEW FACULTY

Miguel Angel Peña, originally from Reynosa Mexico, is a graduate from The University of Texas-Pan American where he got his bachelor's and master's in Electrical Engineering. Miguel was the first recipient of a full scholarship awarded by the UT-Pan American Dance Department. He completed the coursework for the masters of Fine Arts in Dance in The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. A professional dancer and choreographer, Miguel worked as a dancer with “Espectaculo Jarocho” under the direction of Richard O’Neal, where he was part of the ensemble for more than 5 years. He has worked nationally and internationally setting choreographic works for different dance companies such as BYU folk dance ensemble, Ballet Folklórico Nacional de Milwaukee, and several Rio Grande Valley folklórico groups. Miguel taught a master class at the Southern Region Conference at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi in 2016. He has choreographed special performances throughout the nation for important artists such as Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán and Mariachi Aztlán. Miguel has studied with renowned choreographers such as: Viviana Basanta, Carlos Antunez, Julio Flores, Jairo Heli, Merrina Nuñez, and Ariadna Garcia, among others.



DANCE PROGRAM

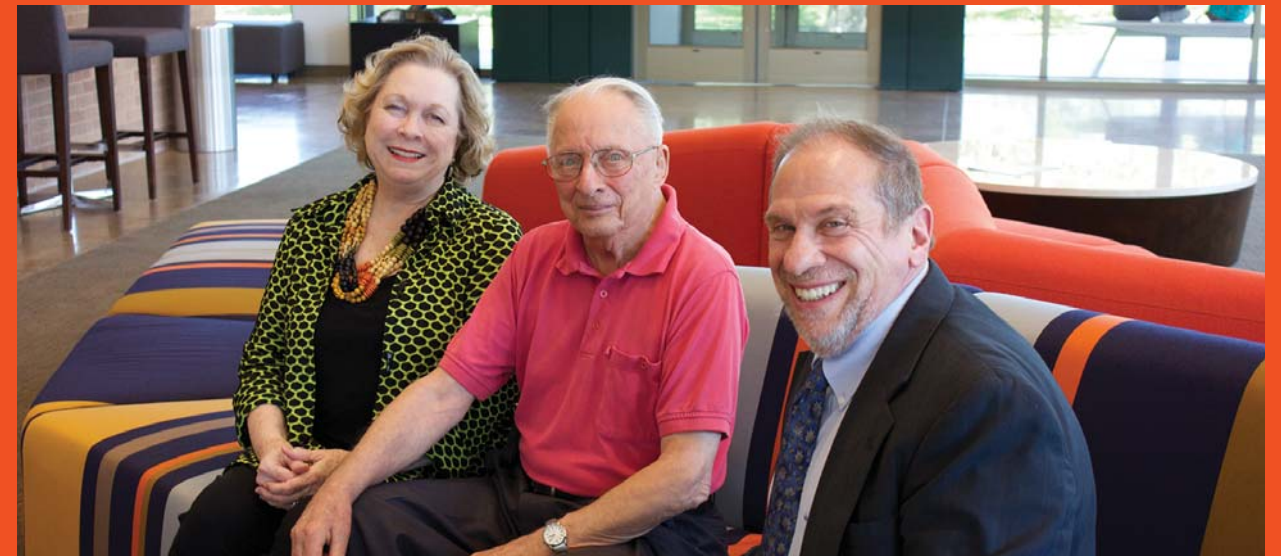
The Dance Program at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is a diverse, exciting and multi-cultural program that offers undergraduate programs leading to a Bachelor of Arts Degree. The multi-cultural program provides a broad coverage of dance training, including dance technique, improvisational and choreographic skills, Music for dancers, historical and cultural dimensions of dance, dance production, dance science, and theories of dance. It also provides students with the opportunity to prepare for a variety of dance careers, offering both a broad base of study and opportunity for more intensive work in areas of specific interest.

The certified teacher preparation program prepares dance educators who are trained in technique, choreography, and instructional methods in a wide array of dance techniques that are aligned with the cultural heritages of the area. The Dance Program currently has approximately 70 declared dance majors and 35 minors.

The multi-cultural emphasis of the program makes it unique among most dance programs offering a curriculum of technique classes in Ballet, Modern, Mexican Folklorico, Flamenco and classical Spanish Dance. It is essential to recognize that UTRGV is the only major institution in the US to offer a major concentration of folklorico dance technique within a dance program. Highly visible aspects of dance at UTRGV are the dance performance companies.

The nationally and internationally recognized Ballet Folklórico is one of the most active and distinguished organizations on the UTRGV campus. The Ballet Folklórico Company has advanced to the National College Dance Festival the last three consecutive years (2012, 2014, and 2016) and has showcased their talents at the prestigious John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. Along with the Ballet Folklórico; the Dance Ensemble, the Ballet Company, and the Cuadro Flamenco, provide live dance concerts, performances, lecture demonstrations, workshops, and expertise to the community-at-large, the state, and the nation.

Min Kim, dance faculty was awarded tenure and promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor by the UT System Board.



visitors, Stanley observes. He points out that the performances held in the Library auditorium have no nearby parking and, therefore, many of his neighbors cannot attend because the walking distance is too far for them.

Several months ago, Stanley learned that the music students at the university on the Edinburg campus needed more pianos for the practice rooms so he contributed funds for purchasing them. He also donated a piano for one of the practice rooms.

Stanley believes many of the young people in the Valley are extremely talented musicians. He gave the example of a young violinist in the Valley Symphony Orchestra's youth symphony whom he has watched grow up over the years. At first his feet couldn't touch the floor when he played his violin and would swing back and forth. As a senior in high school, he became the youth symphony concertmaster. "For a school not known as a music school, our [UTRGV] students have dedication, [they] work hard, [and] with the guidance of a superior faculty, they are presenting excellent music," Stanley observed. He recalled still yet another student's

recent euphonium solo that had impressed him greatly.

What would Stanley like to see happen next? "I think it's critical to teach all people to understand and appreciate music. The performers need an educated audience."





“The School of Art is re-imagining itself.”

By Susan Fitzsimmons

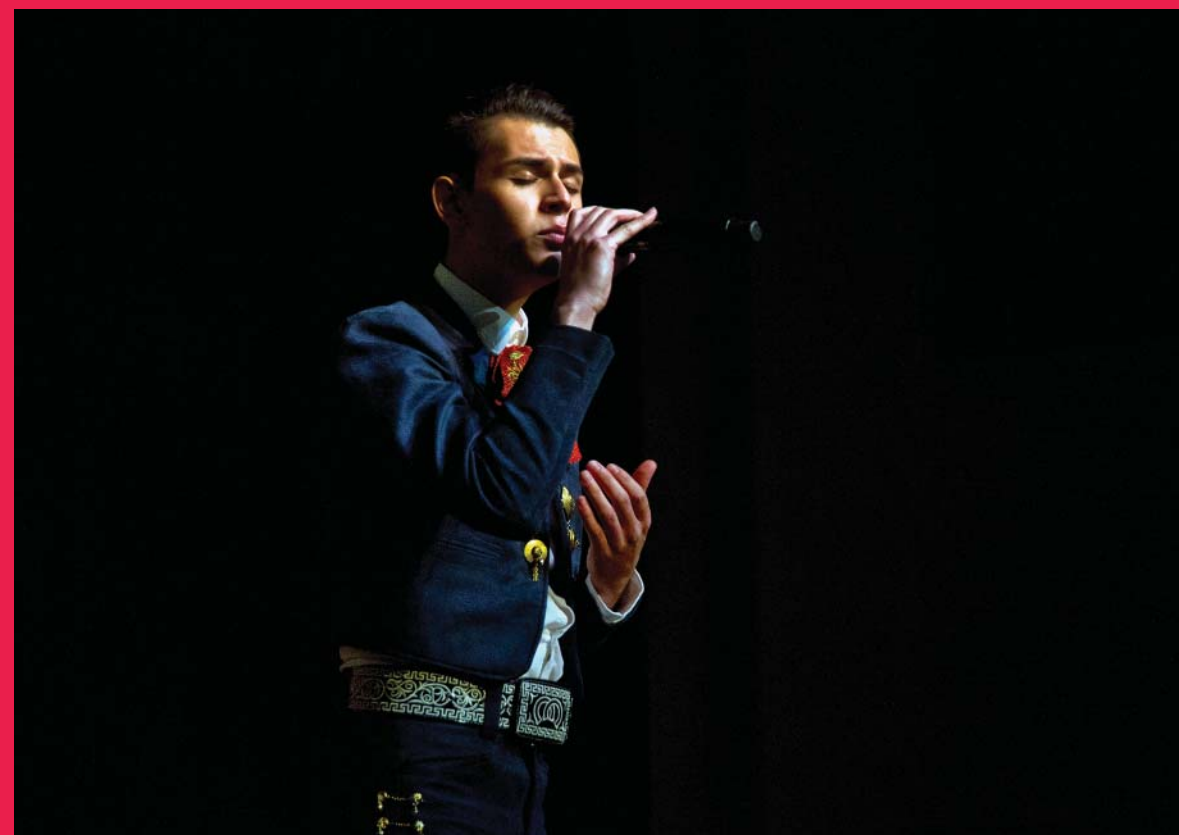
We have five new tenure track faculty that add to our multicultural perspective. Dr. Riccardo Pizzinato is an art historian from Venice, Italy. Dr. Jing Zhang earned her Ph.D. degree in Creative Media and MFA degree in Media Design and Technology from City University of Hong Kong. Ping Xu was born and raised in Shanghai. Raheleh Filsoofeh investigates clay, the ancient medium of her Persian ancestry. Dr. Katherine McAllen is from Texas.

Dr. **Katherine McAllen** received her Ph.D. from Harvard University and Master of Arts degree at the University of Texas Austin. As a Fulbright-Hays fellow and visiting scholar at the American Academy in Rome, Dr. McAllen’s research examines the cultural exchange between artists in viceregal Peru, New Spain, and Early Modern Europe. She is also pursuing publication projects on the mission art and architecture of Northern New Spain and colonial Texas.

Dr. **Riccardo Pizzinato** is Assistant Professor of Medieval Art History at UTRGV. He received his B.A. and his M.A. from the Catholic University in Milan, Italy. Advised by Professor

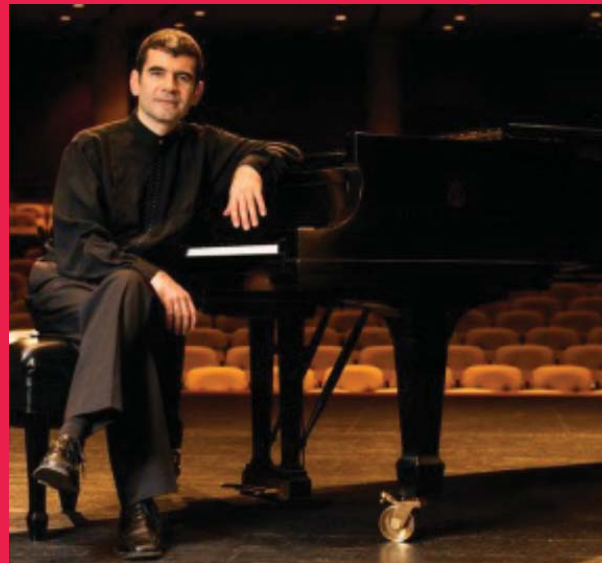
Herbert Kessler, he earned his Ph.D. in 2012 from The Johns Hopkins University. Before joining the faculty at UTGV, Dr. Pizzinato served as the Zanvyl Krieger Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Manuscript and Rare Books at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore from 2009 to 2013. From 2013 to 2015, he taught as Visiting Assistant Professor of Medieval Art at the University of Minnesota, Morris. His research interests focus on Pictorial Arts in the West from 800 to 1300 and Museum Studies with a primary interest in early medieval manuscripts. His research gives particular emphasis to the study of medieval image theory, artifacts material, and the relationship between art, theology, philosophy and aesthetics. Having served as Cultural Mediator and Interpreter for the 31st Medical Group at the United States Air Force Base in Aviano, Italy, Dr. Pizzinato is moreover trained in medical language and translation.

In her work, **Raheleh Filsoofi** synthesizes issues regarding society and the human condition from a personal perspective. She utilizes ancient and contemporary art media –



repertoire. The second phase of the Institute took place in picturesque Falmouth, on the southern coast of England's Cornish peninsula. There, students continued studies with coaching and applied lessons and attended master-classes with visiting faculty, including Grammy Award-winning collaborative pianist Roger Vignoles. Additionally, students participated in master classes or attended lectures with John Traill, Director of Music, St. Anne's College, Oxford, Robert Saxton, Director of Music, Worcester College, Oxford, and expert lecturers from other Oxford colleges.

Dr. **Kenneth Saxon** served as faculty at the Bassi Brugnatelli International Singing and Conducting Symposium in Robbiate, Italy July 3-14, 2016. Students attending the symposium came from the United States, Mexico, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany, and Bolivia as well as students and alumni of The UTRGV School of Music. Singers and conductors participated in master classes, coaching sessions on character analysis, subtexting, role preparation, aria preparation, as well as a singers and conductors round table discussion. Performances by faculty during the symposium included a variety of repertoire ranging from opera scenes and choruses, arias and art songs with piano, and chamber ensembles.



ceramics, poetry, ambient sound and video – to make fundamental statements about perception and memory through a holistic sensory experience. Clay, the ancient medium of her Persian ancestry, is a source of pride and an outlet for metaphorical expression and visual poetry. Her initial academic training began in Iran, where she also completed several public and private commissions. She moved to the United States in 2003 and worked with several renowned, American ceramic artists on public art projects in Coral Springs and Miami. She received her MFA in ceramics from Florida Atlantic University in 2014. She is an active participant in juried art exhibitions both in Iran and the United States, including recently, The International Fair Festival in Tehran, a solo exhibition at The Cultural Council of Palm Beach in Lake Worth, Florida, and 'Artistically Speaking,' a group exhibition of South Florida female artists at the Cornell Museum in Delray Beach, Florida.

She has received several awards including a Presidential Fellowship during her graduate studies at Florida Atlantic University. She also pursues a project to document traditional and contemporary clay artists in Iran, supported in part by a Chastain-Johnston Middle East Grant from the FAU Peace Studies program, which she has presented to several international academic conventions and symposia.

Ping Xu began his professional career as an Art Director in the Shanghai advertising industry. He received his BFA in Visual Communications from The Illinois Institute of Art at Chicago, and MFA in Visual Communications from Kansas State University. Ping's expertise includes logo design, poster design, advertising design, interactive design, digital photography, and typography. Ping has been teaching visual communication courses at all levels in the U.S. academic domain since 2005. His

research interest is to create visual concepts through practical experiment and contemporary media and deliver ideas that inspire, inform, or captivate consumers and target audiences. He has received ten American Advertising Awards from 2007 to 2017. Ping also curates an international graphic design show, Cross Connections, every four years, and in 2018 he is collaborating with the International Museum of Art and Science (IMAS), to showcase approximately 100 international faculty and students from each of the following schools: The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV); The University of Texas Arlington (UTA); Central Academy of Fine Arts, China (CAFA); Luxun Academy of Fine Arts, China (LAFA); Shanghai University, China (SHU); LUCA School of Arts, Belgium (LUCA); Chugye University, Korea (CUFA); School of Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC); Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos Mexico (UAEM), Ming Chuan University, Taiwan (MCU), and National Design Institute in Moscow, Russia (NDI). The purpose of this exhibit is to give a cosmopolitan view of the most exciting new work in graphic media. All participating institutions will exhibit the work for at least one month in their galleries or museums.

Dr. **Jing Zhang's** work in Creative Media and in Media Design and Technology demonstrates the breadth and quality of her expertise in design, film and animation. She became an Adobe China Certificated Designer and Macromedia (now Adobe) Qualified Web Designer in 2001. Her scholarly interests are most broadly directed at discovering new ways to express the rich art and culture of China, and integrate them into the lives of the Sino-Western community. She teaches both graduate and undergraduate level courses on computer-aided art design, digital multimedia production, and animation.

After several years of successful teaching for us part-time, and last year as one year appointments, **Erika Balogh** and **Marilyn Carren** are now three-year appointments. Erika Balogh's research interests include social and economic disparity and exploring alternatives to capitalism, and trademarks and symbols as social signifiers. Marilyn Carren's research includes studying alternative photographic processes and hybridizing them with contemporary imaging processes, including alternative printing processes. She recently had a fascinating solo show at the Gallery in the School of Art that explored the evolution of technology as a communication tool. She also is involved in research about BioArt. She gave a paper at the Western Medical Humanities conference in Kalamazoo entitled "The Medical, Moral and Research Implications of Bio Art." This past October she gave a workshop for the Society of Photographic Educators regional conference, titled, "The not so Traditional Van Dyke Print."

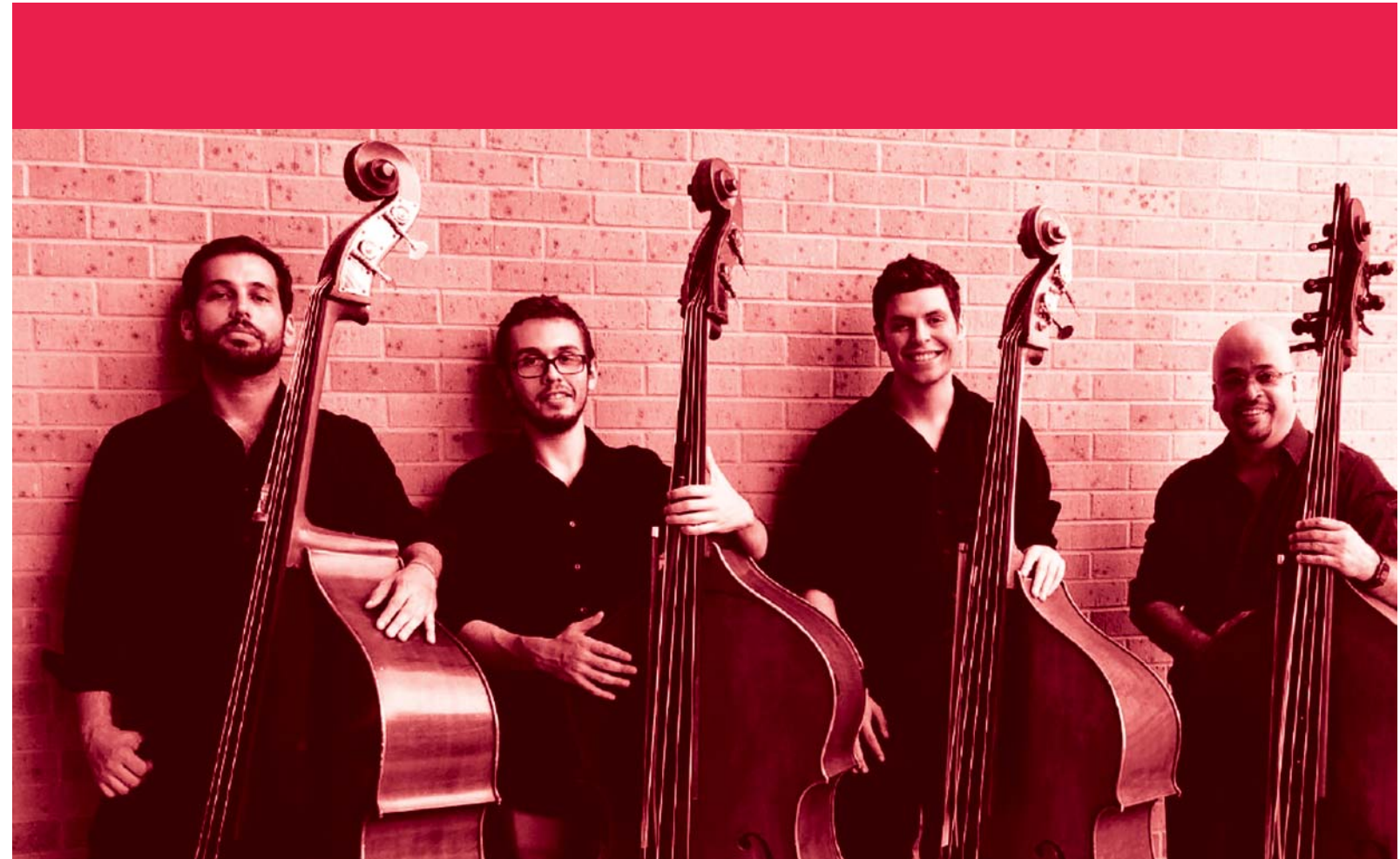
Our new one year appointments include **Carl Vestweber**, **Carolina Felix-Etheridge**, **Alex Comminos** and **Melissa Terry**. Melissa completed her Undergraduate degree at Minnesota State University – Mankato in 2009 where she received a double BA in Art History and Studio Art (Fibers and Drawing). After interning briefly at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, she earned her MA at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in Art History. She is currently working on finishing her Ph.D. in Art History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She was awarded the 2013-2015 INTERSECT Learning to See Systems Fellowship at UIUC and in 2015 received the Mellon Foundation Humanities Without Walls Fellowship in Chicago, Illinois. Melissa's research interests are rooted in contemporary non-traditional art forms where she explores the visual politics of socially engaged art. She is interested in

the ways in which capitalism, globalization, and neoliberal paradigms inform visual culture. Within this frame, she studies the aesthetics of handmade material objects, including the signs created by homeless folks and social movement activists, as they function in varying real and digital spaces.

We hired **Timothy Gonchoroff** fresh off his Fulbright Research Fellowship in Tromso, Norway. He claims he is now thawed out here in the Valley. On his move here from his family home in Virginia he dropped off his large juried piece at the Art Prize city wide show in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It was a catalog of natural dyes extracted from materials found in a landfill in upstate New York.

Rigoberto Gonzalez has taught for us as a part-timer at night after finishing his day job as a high school art teacher. This year we were able to hire him full-time to teach for us as a One Year Appointment. Rigoberto's exquisitely rendered narrative paintings show his research and investigation of the contemporary social and political concerns along the U.S.- Mexico border. Immigration, human trafficking, the drug war and environmental exploitation inform the iconography of his canvases. His work has been exhibited in major museums in the US and Europe, and although he received his MFA at one of the premier educational institutions in New York, we proudly claim him as an alumni of our BFA program, mentored by Professor Philip Field.

Dr. **Lorenzo Pace's** work has been included in a new text entitled *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* by Lisa Farrington, published by Oxford University Press. **Susan Fitzsimmons'** exhibit in Clark Gallery was reviewed in January-February 2016 in international *Sculpture* magazine. She is exhibiting both sculpture and prints in the PAC for 2016-2017.



Conservatory of Music in Guangzhou, China, where he presented master classes for pre-college, undergraduate, and graduate pianists, also fostering future student/faculty exchanges between UTRGV and other universities in China. During the summer, he returned to the Maccagno Piano Days Festival taught an international class of students from China, Hong Kong, Germany, Italy, and students of the UTRGV School of Music.

Dr. **Juan Pablo Andrade**, Associate Professor of Piano, has performed throughout Canada, Costa Rica, Italy, Germany and Greece. Most recently, Juan Pablo performed a recital of Latin American piano music at the Forum Altenberg, Germany, Bern, Switzerland, and at the Semper Music International Festival in Italy, where he has served as faculty since the summer of 2014. At the University of Costa Rica, Juan Pablo performed

alongside UTRGV School of Music faculty Dr. **Jonathan Guist**, Associate Professor of Clarinet, and Dr. **Daniel Hunter-Holly**, Associate Professor of Voice. Future engagements include performances with the National Symphony, the Cartago Symphony and the University of CR Symphony in 2017 and 2018.

Dr. **David Sadlier**, Assistant Professor of Voice, serves as the Executive Director of The Cornish-American Song Institute that hosts a three-week intensive study of Art-Song for vocalists, pianists, and composers in two of England's most picturesque locales, Cornwall and Oxford. In addition to the seventeen participants from varying parts of the United States and the United Kingdom, seven students from the UTRGV School of Music participated as well. The group spent one week in Oxford, England, where the focus was on the history, genesis and source material for assigned

Dr. **George Amorin**, Associate Professor of Double Bass, and students of the UTRGV Double Bass studio have had an exciting and incredibly productive 2016 with participating at the 5th Bi-annual European Double Bass Congress in Prague, Czech Republic, Aruba at 15th edition of the Nuevo Mundo Festival and Academy, and the 1st Campamento de Cuerdas de Puerto Rico. Part of the UTRGV Double Bass Quartet trip to Prague included a collaboration between George and Dr. **Justin Writer**, UTRGV Associate Professor of Theory and Composition.

The group premiered a clever adaptation of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf arranged by Justin Writer. Justin accompanied the quartet on the trip and narrated the work for a discerning and enthusiastic audience. The Quartet has several performances and residencies lined up for the current year and is set to perform at the International Society of Bassists Convention in June 2017 in Ithaca, NY.

Dr. **Joel Pagan**, Professor of Viola, is Artistic Director of the Campamento de Cuerdas de Puerto Rico. The Campamento was a very successful collaboration between Dr. Pagan and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico. Thirty-eight students participated, including students from UTRGV, Michigan, New Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Over the course of two weeks, students performed in multiple concerts and participated in master classes hosted by renowned Artists-in-Residence including Joel Pagan, Artistic Director, viola and George Amorin, Associate Professor of double bass at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Carmelo de Los Santos, violin The University of New Mexico, Carla Trynchuk,

violin Andrews University, Solimar Soto, cello of the Puerto Rico Symphony and Fermin Segarra, conductor of the Puerto Rico Symphony and Escuela Libre de Música de San Juan.

Dr. **Mark Joseph Ramírez**, Associate Professor of Percussion, was the recipient of the Kerspit Foundation (X, Y)-honor Artist in Residency Fellowship for 2015. Mark's three-month residency in Gent, Belgium was profoundly transformative and has been seminal in creating collaborations as well as future projects with the Royal Conservatory of Music in Gent, the Kunstencentrum Vooruit Gent, the Academie de Kunstbrug Gent, The Camargo Foundation Cassis, France and The University of Aberdeen, Scotland. During this time, he created and gave international premiere performances of five new compositions entitled: Ganda, Tabula Rasa, Versplinteren Verhalen, Binnen du Tuin, and Klokken van Begijnhof. The Summer of 2016 found Mark in Aberdeen, Scotland serving as Executive Director of the International Percussion Institute, a non-profit organization. IPI Summer Seminar took place at the University of Aberdeen where students, from Scotland, England, and the Pacific Northwest of the United States studied, collaborated and performed alongside renowned faculty, Dr. **Lisa Nicol**, Visiting Tutor, at The University of Aberdeen, Dr. Chris Whyte of Western Oregon University, and Dr. Mark Ramirez, Associate Director of The UTRGV School of Music.

Dr. **Brendan Kinsella's**, Associate Professor of Piano, recent national and international performances and teaching activities have taken him to China, Singapore, and Italy. In December 2015, Brendan was invited to engage in a teaching residency at the Xinghai

Douglas Clark and his class are hard at work on a 15 foot bronze statue of Jesus for a local church as well as a statue of the legendary UTPA baseball coach Al Ogletree.

Maria Elena Macias has been appointed Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts. She is continuing as Director of the Galleries and Collections for UTRGV.

Dr. **Carlos Roberto de Souza** is Associate Director of Art at the Brownsville campus. With the help of Robert Axtell, Richard Costello and administration, we greatly improved the safety and cleanliness of the Brownsville Art Department.



Art Galleries

Edinburg Campus - The Charles & Dorothy Clark Gallery, the Visual Arts Gallery, and Performing Arts Center Gallery.

Brownsville Campus - The Rusteberg Hall Art Gallery.

The UTRGV art galleries provide high-quality visual art exhibitions and programming to enhance the educational mission of the university, to enrich the aesthetic environment of the university community, and serve as a cultural resource for the Rio Grande Valley public. Through the presentation of exhibits, lectures, special events, and the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of the permanent art collection, the galleries provide a wide variety of artistic and educational experiences to stimulate an understanding and appreciation of art.



Our Study Abroad programs in China, Italy and Peru continue to grow and attract students from all over the University. You can see the China Study Abroad through the students lens. **Ping Xu** who took the students to China, also curated a show at the UTRGV Library of student photographic work. This show was exhibited in the UTRGV library from October 6 to November 16, and it was also be exhibited in Hengyang Normal University's College of Fine Arts' Visual Art Gallery from October 26 to November 6, 2016 in China.

Dr. **Robert Bradley** takes students to Peru on Study Abroad. This course is now the longest continuously running study abroad program at UTRGV. The Peru course was featured in The Monitor in June 2016 and was recognized in the UT System's study abroad offerings by Chancellor McRaven in July.



Peru study abroad ventures conform well to UTRGV's overall strategic plan of increasing good health, wellness and fitness in the Rio Grande Valley and because the class takes place in Latin America it also complements UTRGV's focus as an Hispanic serving institution. Last year ten UTRGV students acclimatized and then hiked the Inca Trail up to an altitude of 15,200 feet above sea level. This trip not only helped the students understand health as related to peak conditioning, it also



instilled a sense of confidence and purpose into each and every traveler.



Donna Sweigart is planning a Study Abroad experience for students in Italy. This year they will stay in Florence and travel to Venice for the Venice Biennale 2017, one of the most exciting art world events.

