Music Faculty Member Awarded Grammy for a New American Opera

Herschel Garfein, an adjunct instructor of music composition in Steinhardt’s Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions, won a Grammy Award for his opera, Elmer Gantry. He shared the award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition with his collaborator, composer Robert Aldridge.

In accepting the award Garfein called Elmer Gantry an “indie” opera. The team struggled for 17 years to get the opera produced with “no money, no commission, and no fancy opera companies supporting us,” Garfein said. The Naxos recording of the opera won best engineered classical recording.

Steinhardt Education Policy Breakfast Looks at the Complexity of Measuring Teacher Effectiveness

Teachers are essential to student learning, yet studies show that teachers vary widely in effectiveness as measured by their students’ improvement on standardized tests.

What makes an effective teacher and how to measure teacher quality was the topic of Steinhardt’s Education Policy Breakfast on February 24th. Mary Diez, dean of the School of Education, Alverno College, and Andrew Porter, dean of the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, were guest speakers. Robert Tobias, clinical professor in Steinhardt’s Department of Teaching and Learning, served as moderator.

In her presentation titled, “Developing Teacher Quality and Effectiveness in New Teachers,” Diez noted that there is a difference between evaluating teachers and assessing the system that trains and supports them. “If we’ve conflated learning with standardized test scores, we’re in real trouble,” she said.

Porter shared findings from The National Research Council’s report, “Preparing Evidence for Sound Policy.” Reflecting on the difficulty of gathering scientific data on education, Porter said, “You don’t need scientific proof to know that teachers need content knowledge and good pedagogical strategy.”

To stay up to date with issues in school reform, subscribe to NYU Steinhardt’s educational policy podcast: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policy
Speech on LGBT Equality Wins Award for Doctoral Student

Michael J. McCutcheon, a doctoral student in counseling psychology, was the winner of the 2012 MLK Oratorical Event in February. The annual university-wide event, sponsored by Steinhardt’s Graduate Student Organization, honors King’s life and legacy through students’ original speeches.

McCutcheon’s oration, “Speak Out, Speak Up!”, asked the NYU community to make freedom and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people a personal issue. Using King as an example of a leader whose “manner, words, and actions served as a beacon of hope for his peers and young people,” McCutcheon also urged members of the LGBT community to become role models by speaking up, being visible, and fighting for equal rights.

in The New York Times

Mary McRae, associate professor of applied psychology, took part in the Room for Debate question, ‘Can people live alone without being lonely?’ McRae’s opinion: Singles can now have the best of both worlds. “The identity of being single has changed, and it has to do with social media, more affordable and accessible social activities, different meanings of family, and accepting the fact that we are creatures with different needs,” she wrote.

Danah Boyd, an assistant professor of media, culture, and communication, was the subject of the profile, ‘Cracking Teenagers Online Codes.’ “Teenagers are not some alien population. When we see new technologies, we think they make everything different for young people. But they really don’t. Teenagers are the same as they always were,” she told reporter Pamela Paul.

Faculty Honored for Conveying Ideals of Dr. King to Students

In February Joe Salvatore and Pedro Noguera received NYU’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Faculty Award. The award is presented annually to five faculty members who exemplify King’s spirit through their teaching, public service, leadership, and community-building activities.

Salvatore, a clinical assistant professor of educational theatre in Steinhardt’s Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions, was recognized for creating a safe space for LGBT students in NYU’s 3rd North Residence Hall, where he serves as a faculty fellow in residence, and for challenging the community to fight against discrimination. Among the programs Salvatore has instituted for residential students: HIV/AIDs education, bullying awareness, and ‘Pay Attention,’ a campaign that challenges residents to take action against hate speech.

Noguera, Steinhardt’s Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education, was recognized for advocating for educational equity on behalf of the urban poor and for conveying his passion for educational reform to his students. A professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, Noguera has engaged in collaborative research with several large urban school districts throughout the United States. “If it could be mandatory for every student of every race to take Pedro Noguera’s class, the schools would be better for it,” wrote an NYU student in his nomination letter.

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. Faculty Award is sponsored by NYU’s Office of the Provost in partnership with the Assistant Vice President for Diversity.

Deconstructing High Heel Shoe Pain

In the paper, “Pretty Pathways to Pain: Muscle Activation in High-Heeled Shoes,” Assistant Professor Smita Rao and students in the Department of Physical Therapy looked at muscle activity and joint loads in women wearing high heeled shoes.

“We found that wearing high heels preferentially increases the workload of certain muscles, and that some individuals seem to adapt to high heels more effectively than others,” Rao says. The study, funded by the American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation, appears online in the Lower Extremity Review. Rao, a physical therapist, studies how and why movement can lead to foot pain.
Findings

Not all Small Schools are Created Equal

IN A RECENT STUDY SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, researchers from NYU’s Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP) looked at two sets of New York City small high schools—those created before 2002 and after—and found that small high schools established in the most recent wave of New York City school reform had more students taking Regents exams and higher graduation rates.

While New York City’s old and new small schools differ in a variety of ways, the most important differences may lie in their higher expenditures per pupil and in the New York City Department of Education institutional policies that govern their creation and practices, noted Leanna Stiefel, professor of economics and education policy, who co-authored the study with IESP affiliates Amy Ellen Schwartz and Matthew Wiswall.

“Evidence from New York City suggests that the success of small school reform efforts will depend significantly on how these new schools are created and supported,” Stiefel said.

Drawing on interviews and focus groups in both sets of schools, the researchers found that certain conditions and strategies were critical to the turnaround schools’ ability to improve performance. Essential to improving a school’s performance: a principal who could articulate goals and direct resources and energy toward achieving them, a safe and orderly school building, and a positive work environment for teachers.

Helen Nissenbaum on Online Privacy

In February, the White House unveiled a blueprint for a “Privacy Bill of Rights” to protect consumers online. Helen Nissenbaum, a professor in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication, discusses the new privacy bill and the thinking that helped shape it.

What is the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights?
The Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights is a set of seven privacy principles developed by the Obama Administration articulating clear expectations regarding the way companies handle the collection and use of personal information.

Can you explain the role that you played in shaping the privacy plan?
Last year (with NYU postdoctoral research fellows Kenneth Farrall and Finn Brunton), I submitted a public comment in response to the Administration’s request. In our comments, we referenced the theory of privacy as contextual integrity, which I had advanced in my book, Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy and the Integrity of Social Life. According to this theory, at the heart of privacy is the expectation that personal information will flow appropriately, which, in turn, is determined by the social context, type of information, who is receiving it, and the constraints under which it is shared. Many of the companies that the Privacy Bill of Rights addresses are using information technologies and digital media in ways that are so complex that the companies are hardly able to understand them, let alone those of us directly affected by these practices. I have argued that transparency alone will not safeguard consumer privacy and I urge policy makers to support constraints on the flow of personal information both online and off.

Why should consumers care about online privacy rights?
There are many reasons to care about privacy: individuals can be harmed by inappropriate collection and distribution of information; our freedom and autonomy may be abridged; we may suffer unfair discrimination; and many social institutions, as fundamental as democracy, may be threatened if norms of privacy are not respected.
Obesity Cancer Link is Subject of Nutrition and Public Health Study

Niyati Parekh, an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, has received a $720,000 Research Scholar Grant from the American Cancer Society to study the role of insulin in obesity-related cancers.

The number of obese individuals has increased dramatically in the United States. More than one third of adults in the United States are obese according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cancer rates are increasing in parallel with obesity, and recent evidence suggests that obesity may be responsible for about half of all cancers in the U.S.

Parekh’s study aims to better understand the connection between obesity and cancer, which may center on the body’s insulin.

“It has been theorized that insulin acts as a growth factor for cancer cells and produces an overall environment that is conducive to cancer development,” explained Parekh. “Obese persons commonly have higher blood levels of insulin, which may enhance their risk of cancer.”

Parekh’s study, “Cancer, Insulin Resistance, and Lifestyle,” will look at the impact of blood markers, genetic factors, and diet related to insulin and glucose metabolism in the development of obesity-related cancers.

Nutrition Student Receives Grant To Study Diet and Body Fat

Maya Vadiveloo, a graduate student in nutrition and dietetics, has been awarded an American Heart Association (AHA) FDA Summer 2011 Predoctoral Fellowship. The $44,000 AHA award is for a project titled, “Associations Between Dietary Variety and Body Adiposity Using a Novel Scoring Method.” Under the supervision of Niyati Parekh, Vadiveloo will design and test a new dietary variety scoring method that seeks to measure the healthfulness of diet, as well as the relationship between dietary variety and body fat in adults.

Clive Robbins

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, Robbins, a special educator, worked with developmentally disabled children using a music therapy technique he created with American composer Paul Nordoff in 1958.

“Dr. Robbins was internationally recognized for his teaching, his research into the process of music therapy, and his commitment to higher standards of clinical practice, creativity, and musicianship in music therapy,” said Alan Turry, managing director of the Nordoff-Robbins Center. Robbins co-authored Music Therapy for Handicapped Children, Music Therapy in Special Education.

Therapists throughout the world practice the Nordoff-Robbins approach.

Dinu Ghezzo

In a 32-year career at NYU, Ghezzo, a professor emeritus, served as a professor of music and director of the music composition program. A composer, conductor, lecturer, and performer, Ghezzo was a recipient of many awards, prizes, and commissions, and led international ensembles.

Ghezzo’s compositions have been performed in concert halls throughout the world, and are published by Editions Salabert of Paris, Musica Scritta, the AIM Press (Italy), and Seesaw Music Corporation, New York.

He is remembered as a friend with a gift for bringing people together, and an educator whose classes were infused with his passion for music.

PIN US

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In Salvador, Brazil, Learning about Children’s Health In Situ

During January intersession, a select group of undergraduate honors students joined Steinhardt Vice Dean Beth Weitzman and Mitchell Rubin, medical director of Graham Windham, on a visit to Salvador, Brazil. The trip was the culminating segment of a semester-long study, Healthy Children, Healthy Families: A Comparison of U.S. and Brazilian Approaches to Improving the Health of Children in Poverty. In Brazil, students met with leaders of higher education, health care, and social service organizations to gain understanding of the kinds of services that are available to underserved populations. “Brazil provides an interesting case study because recent reforms and economic growth have allowed Brazilians to effectively raise the standard of living and child outcomes for the poorest citizens,” said Weitzman, who has done extensive research on the needs of poor children in U.S. cities.

Photos (l. to r.), Steinhardt students assemble in central Salvador at the Unesco World Heritage site; visiting with children from Salvador at Project Axé.

Creating Knowledge, Community, and the Resources for Change, Steinhardt’s external funding report looks at how the school and its faculty use academic resources to address the needs of our global society. The 325 projects in the report represent nearly $100 million in active awards during the last three years. “The generosity and support of our community has helped propel a diversity of ideas into action,” says Mary Brabeck, Gale and Ira Drukier Dean.

Visit steinhardt.nyu.edu/funding.

MABINGO ALFDANIELS

A Fulbright Fellow Finds a Home in Dance Education

“The dance education program at NYU encompasses artistry, education, scholarship, and research and these four strands of academia are very important if we are to make dance claim a place in society,” says master’s student Mabingo Alfdaniels.

Alfdaniels, a Fulbright fellow who hails from Uganda, East Africa, says he is “motivated by the immense potential that dance has to transform communities.” He witnessed the power of transformation at Makerere Univeristy, where he studied the therapeutic value of dance for HIV/AIDS clients and worked on dance projects for special needs children, child soldiers, and urban youth refugees in Rwanda, Southern Sudan, and Uganda. “The power of dance lies in how it bonds people together,” Alfdaniels says. “The knowledge and skills that are offered in my program are what the dance industry is yearning for in Uganda.”
THE HISTORY OF HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

"As handwriting gives way to keyboards, keyboards to touch screens and touch screens to still more ethereal interfaces, we would expect the practice of graphology to be on its way out. Not quite," says Ben Kafka, an assistant professor in Steinhardt’s Department of Media, Culture, and Communication. Kafka has been awarded a Charles A. Ryskamp Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies to complete a manuscript under contract with Yale University Press on graphology, the study of personality through handwriting analysis.

Kafka, who is interested in the place where psychoanalysis and writing meet, is embarking on what might be the first scholarly history of handwriting analysis. Pulling from four centuries of graphological treatises, manuals, and journals, he sees his book as “an archive of popular, academic, and esoteric knowledge about writing, media, and communication.”

Ben Kafka is author of The Demon of Writing: Powers and Failures of Paperwork (Zone Books). A candidate at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR), he practices psychotherapy at IPTAR Clinical Center and the NYC Free Clinic at NYU Langone Medical Center.