

ComMuniTy

Department of Communication, Media and Theatre

I L L I N O I S U N I V E R S I T Y

Welcome to the ninth issue of **ComMuniTy**, the official newsletter of the Department of Communication, Media and Theatre (CMT) at NEIU. **ComMuniTy** maintains contact with CMT alumni, informs current students about the program, and celebrates our successes. Unfortunately due to COVID-19, we will not be releasing a print version at our yearly CMT Day celebration. We will shift our publication schedule this year, and our CMTM 370: Public Relations class will take the lead in producing this newsletter. You can expect the 2019-2020 edition to be released in December 2020.

CMT continues to excel with student and faculty research and creative activities. **Edie Rubinowitz** produced “DACamentation: Humanizing Our Story” on *Spanish Public Radio*, and appeared in the *Solutions Journalism Network* video presentation on “Non-traditional Approaches to Teaching Solutions Journalism.” **Sarah J. Fabian** completed two professional scenic designs at A Red Orchid Theatre and Filament Theatre, and presented at the 9th Annual NEIU Faculty Symposium. **Adam Goldstein** directed two professional productions, six collegiate productions, executed the dialects design and coaching for nine professional productions throughout Chicago, and presented at the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. **Seung-Hwan Mun** moderated and participated in the 2019 Spring Forum of the Hansa Institute at the Korean Cultural Center of Chicago.

The CMT department had several faculty members recognized with NEIU awards during the 2018-19 year. **Shayne Pepper** was awarded an Administrative Educational Leave, and **John Ross**, **Nancy McVittie**, and **Max Maxin IV** all earned Instructor Excellence Awards. **Max Maxin IV** was also honored by the Joseph Jefferson Committee, the Chicago awarding body for professional theatre excellence for his work as a Projections Designer on the American Blues Theatre production of the *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey*.

There have been noteworthy changes to CMT faculty lately. **Rodney Higginbotham** earned Professor Emeritus at the May 2019 Commencement ceremony, and retired after 25 incredible years at NEIU in December 2019. In Fall 2019, we welcomed **Maura Cherney** as our new Assistant Professor in Communication. We have plans to hire a new Communication faculty member in the upcoming year.

Thanks to **Edie Rubinowitz**, NEIU and the CMT Department received a \$35,000 grant from the Online News Association to produce the “DACamentation Project,” a series of podcast episodes on Dreamers. This was produced by DACA students and recent alumni, and the episodes aired on Spanish Public Radio (an international online radio station with headquarters in Chicago).

Our successful partnership with the **Chicago Film Society** continues. We celebrated our fourteenth season of screening 35mm prints of classic and rare films in the NEIU Auditorium. We have also created a new course, CMTM 390: NEIU Cinémathèque, where students attend these film screenings and learn about the materiality of analog film archives, preservation, and restoration.

Sarah J. Fabian secured NEIU as the host of the 4th Annual Chicago Youth TheatreFest where over 150 middle and high school CPS students came to campus on February 16, 2019 to compete, attend workshops facilitated by **Adam Goldstein's** “Acting the Song,” **Leslie Hull's** “Accents and Dialects,” and **Sommer Austin's** “The Business of Acting,” and network with collegiate and professional theatre programs.

On April 25th, 2019, Stage Center Theatre, CMT student **Josue Silva**, and The Angelina Pedrosa Center partnered to present the first annual Theta Pi Sigma drag show, “Bring It To The Runway,” at Stage Center. CMT student **Joesph Harris** served as lighting designer for the event which aimed to bring visibility and awareness to the drag community on and off campus. Theta Pi Sigma is a gender neutral Greek organization dedicated to inclusion and support of all gender identities.

On April 20, 2019, **Sarah J. Fabian** took her American Musical Theatre and Set Design students to see *Hamilton* downtown at the CIBC Theatre with **Shayne Pepper**. After the production concluded, the entire group had an exclusive talk-back session with Resident Director Jess McLeod and many principle actors from the matinee.



Sarah Fabian and her American Musical Theatre and Set Design students attended *Hamilton* at CIBC Theatre on April 20, 2019, accompanied by **Shayne Pepper**.

CMT Welcomes Dr. Maura Cherney Assistant Professor in Communication

The CMT Department welcomed new tenure-track hire, **Dr. Maura Cherney** in Fall 2019. Dr. Cherney earned her Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2018 where her dissertation “Continuing to Advance Warranting Theory: Weight, Time, and Testing the Warranting Value Scale” won the top Dissertation Award at NCA in the Human Communication and Technology Division. She earned her M.A. in Communication from Illinois State University in 2014 with her thesis, “Surf’s Up: Communicative Aspects of Online Trust-Building Via Reducing Uncertainty in Couchsurfing,” and her B.A. in Communication from St. Norbert College in 2011. Before arriving at NEIU, she held a Visiting Assistant Professor position at Eureka College.

Dr. Cherney’s research explores the role of communication technologies in our interactions, especially interpersonal and instructional contexts. Her most recent work focuses on how people form impressions of other people based on information found about that person online. We are excited to have Dr. Cherney as a part of our esteemed faculty!



Interested in learning more about our Master’s degree program in CMT?
Email Dr. Seung-Hwan Mun (s-mun@neiu.edu) for more information.

RECENT ALUMNI UPDATES

Katie Anderson (B.A. 2014) completed an MSc degree in Project Management from the University of Limerick in Ireland.

Nicole Anderson (B.A. 2019) is a reporter for the Journal and Topics Media Group.

Chris Churchill (B.A. 2014; M.A. 2017) was accepted into the M.F.A. program in Documentary Media at Northwestern University.

Mary Kroeck (M.A. 2016) now works as a content strategist in the Division of Marketing and Communications at Northeastern Illinois University.

Thomas Krettler (M.A. 2019) was hired for the Fall 2019 term at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn to teach Fundamentals of Speech Communication.

James McNeil (B.A. 2012) completed an M.A. in Communication at the University of Colorado Denver where he is now employed as an instructor in the Communication Department. James also teaches communication courses at Regis University in Denver.

Toreana Meeky (B.A. 2017) was accepted into the M.F.A. program in Creative Producing at DePaul University.

Devin Pickell (B.A. 2017) joined the Jerry Thomas PR firm after graduation, and then he moved into technology marketing as a Content Specialist at G2 Crowd.

Max Plumpton (B.A. 2012) earned an M.A. in Communication from the University of South Florida and is now a Ph.D. student in Communication Studies (with a focus in Rhetorical Studies and Cultural Studies) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Rico Self (M.A. 2012) is now a Ph.D. student in Communication Studies (with a focus on Rhetorical Studies) at Louisiana State University.

Lara Stache (M.A. 2009) earned a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and is now an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Governors State University.

Razan Suleiman (B.A. 2010) was accepted to the M.A. program in Strategic Brand Communication at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Alyssa Vincent (M.A. 2017) is now a Knowledge Manager for Perkins and Will, a global architecture and design firm.

Calling All CMT Alumni!

If you would like to be included in our next newsletter and on our website, or if you need to update your contact info, please email us at cmt@neiu.edu

THEATRE PARTNERSHIPS

2019 marked four major partnerships for CMT and Stage Center Theatre. We proudly welcomed **The Miracle Center, Black Ensemble Theatre, Filament Theatre, and Albany Park Community Center** as collaborators on a number of a key initiatives in our department.

The Miracle Center is headed by NEIU alum, **Mary Santana**, and serves as a critical artistic gathering point for Chicago's LatinX community. The center is heavily endorsed and attended by theatre and film star Lin Manuel-Miranda and offers theatre and arts programming for a huge constituency. Several of our students have participated in their youth programming and several serve as current, former, and future interns. The partnership looks to generate consistent internship opportunities in all theatre areas and we share a mutual future goal of co-hosting a LatinX Arts Administration Conference.

Our partnership with **Filament Theatre** began with the play *how to hero, or the subway play*, which premiered in Children's Theatre Workshop class in the spring of 2019 and shifted to the Stage Center mainstage in fall 2019. These productions offered a remarkable experience on campus to examine the same new work through two vastly different narrative lenses. The CTW production played to audiences of 70-100 CPS students in Stage Center Theatre. The fall production, directed by Filament Artistic Director Julie Ritchey and Managing Director Christian Libonatti, and designed by Assistant Professor **Sarah Fabian**, took us into an immersive production that offered our audience the unique experience of moving through multiple spaces and traveling with the play's narrative. In the final stages of this collaboration, Filament will produce a professional production of the play in 2020 in which we will engage NEIU students in a variety of capacities from cast and understudy roles to design and production staff.

NEIU and **Black Ensemble Theater (BET)** partnered to present the Jackie Taylor Anti-Racism Drama Series beginning in January with "National Anthem" in the NEIU Auditorium, February's "In the Shadow of Justice" at CCICS, and March's "The Plea" in Stage Center Theatre. **Sarah J. Fabian** and Jackie Taylor arranged for the directors and designers from BET's company and staff to teach eight master classes on a variety of topics within the theatre discipline.



Sharon Bethea, Tim Libretti, Katrina Bell-Jordan, Andrea Evans, Wamucii Njogu, Darrell Brooks, Sarah J. Fabian, Shayne Pepper, President Gloria J. Gibson and BET CEO and Founder Jackie Taylor (Photo credit: Todd Crawford)

CMT Faculty member, **Adam Goldstein**, worked alongside Victor Dufour of **Albany Park Community Center (APCC)** to craft a potent community partnership between CMT, Stage Center, and the APCC which is located just south of the Main Campus. This partnership began as an extension of SCT's mainstage production of *how to hero, or the subway play*, and has bloomed into a wonderful and extensive community collaboration. Working with Victor and APCC's Youth Development Program, our two organizations have planned and partnered on a new after school theatre program, the NEIU/APCC Community Arts Program, that has never before been offered as part of APCC's after-care offerings. The center serves Albany Park's Hibbard Elementary School and provides after school activities for students aged 7-12. This program will place Stage Center Theatre veteran students at APCC in a dynamic internship setting.



Representatives from Albany Park Community Center's Youth Development program alongside CMT Assistant Professor Adam Goldstein, and CMT students Yessica Velazquez and Vanessa Campos at APCC Night at SCT!

2018-2019 Student Award Winners

Brommel-Adams-Bell-Jordan Scholarship
Samantha Foster

Brommel-Denson-Everson-Snell Scholarship
Yessica Velazquez

Brommel-Hanson-Ijams-Hayward Scholarship
Tiara Stovall

Brommel-Kramer-Barnitz Scholarship
Elizabeth Varmecy

Brommel Levy Staniec Scholarship
Daniela Artega

CMT Distinguished Student Award
Nic Anderson, Ronibe Ekhatior, Madeline Reynolds, Sitwat Salman, and Charles Sipps

Anna Antaramian Excellence in Theatre Award
Isaac Arias, Catherine Perez, and Ata Younan

Communicating Sexualities Scholarship
Raeghn Draper

Our CMTM 370: Public Relations class will take the lead producing the next issue. Expect to read the 2019-2020 issue in December.



STAGE CENTER THEATRE

Stage Center Theatre is NEIU's resident producing theatre and provides a vital entertainment, enrichment, and social forum to the University and the Chicagoland community. Each season, Stage Center Theatre produces a new play festival and contest, three full mainstage productions for all audiences, and two Children's Theatre Workshop productions for the Chicago Public School audiences ranging from elementary to high school students. Stage Center Theatre's participants range from NEIU students, faculty, and staff in roles such as actors, stage managers, directors, designers, playwrights and technical production staff. Since 1967, Stage Center Theatre has produced more than 250 plays on campus. Beginning July 1, Stage Center Theatre implemented a two-prong leadership structure to better serve the needs of its students, faculty and staff — **Adam Goldstein** serves as the Artistic Director and **Sarah J. Fabian** serves as the Managing Director.

The 2018-2019 academic year had great performances. There were two fall semester main stage productions: Sophocles' *Antigone*, directed by **John Bliss**, and Stage Center Theatre's first musical in over a decade, *High Fidelity* with book by David Lindsay-Abaire, music by Tom Kitt, and lyrics by Amanda Green, directed by **Adam**

Goldstein. In the spring semester we produced *Nuevas Voces: A 10-Minute Play Festival and Contest*, founded by **Jim Blair** and directed by **Adam Goldstein**, a workshop production of *Offended!*, a new work created in CMT's Experimental Theatre course, and directed by **Dan Wirth**, and a mainstage production of Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* directed by **Leslie Hull**.

Our Children's Theatre Workshop also had an exciting 2018-2019 with **Adam Goldstein** directing two shows for local elementary, middle, and high schools. In fall 2017 it was *Anon(ymous)* written by Naomi Ilzuka, and spring 2018 was *how to hero, or the subway play* by Georgette Kelly. Over 600 CPS students attended the plays!

The 2019-2020 season kicked off in the fall with the 3rd *Nuevas Voces: A 10-Minute Play Festival and Contest*, founded by **Jim Blair** and directed by **Adam Goldstein**, followed by the mainstage production of *how to hero, or the subway play* by Georgette Kelly and guest directed by Filament Theatre's Artistic Director Julie Ritchey and Managing Director Christian Libonati as a part of our two-year partnership. Our Children's Theatre Workshop produced Laura Jacqmin's *We'll Be Better Later*. In spring 2020, we staged a production of Karen Zacarias' *Native Gardens* directed by **Leslie Hull**. Due to COVID-19, we were unable to stage Laura Jacqmin's *Residence* directed by **John Bliss** or the CTW production of Lila Rose Kaplan's *Magic Fish* directed by **Adam Goldstein**.

Stage Center Theatre Productions (2018-2019)

Antigone

Directed by John Bliss

High Fidelity

Directed by Adam Goldstein

Nuevas Voces: 10-Minute Play Festival

Directed by Nathon Santana

Offended! or: The Strange Case of Dr. Franken and the Frankensone Monster

Directed by Dan Wirth

The Pillowman

Directed by Leslie Hull

Children's Theatre Workshop

Anon(ymous) (Fall 2018)

how to hero, or the subway play (Spring 2019)

Directed by Adam Goldstein

Stage Center Theatre Productions (2019-2020)

Nuevas Voces: 10-Minute Play Festival

Directed by Adam Goldstein

how to hero, or the subway play

Directed by Julie Ritchey
Artistic Director of Filament Theatre

Native Gardens

Directed by Leslie Hull

Residence

Directed by John Bliss

Children's Theatre Workshop

We'll Be Better Later (Fall 2019)

Magic Fish (Spring 2020)

Directed by Adam Goldstein

If you value your experience with the CMT community, please consider a financial contribution to the Department. We appreciate ANY size donation, whether it is \$4, \$40, or \$400! For more information, visit www.neiu.edu/cmt