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Purchase College Magazine  
Fall/Winter 2023

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**On the Cover:**

Ivan Forde  
*Fall Of Man*,  
2012  
(from the  
*Transformation*  
series)  
17 x 22 inches  
Archival  
inkjet print  
Courtesy of  
the artist

*Transformation* is a series of self-portraits representing the reader of Milton's *Paradise Lost* that the artist created for his senior project. *Fall Of Man* appears in the *Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures* exhibition on view at the Smithsonian National African American Museum of History & Culture in Washington, DC, through March 2024. Ivan Forde '12 (Literature) works across photography, printmaking, collage, sound performance, and installation.

Learn more at [proof.purchase.edu](http://proof.purchase.edu)

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**Editor:** Kristi McKee, Associate Director, C&CS

**Editorial Coordinator:** Nancy Diaz, Office Business Manager, C&CS

**Design:** James Monroe '06, Monroe&Co, [monroeand.co](http://monroeand.co)

**Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities:** [shane.seaman@purchase.edu](mailto:shane.seaman@purchase.edu)



Introducing Proof.

What is an Alumni Magazine? It's proof—of the power of an educational experience. The evidence? The outcomes, good work, and success stories of the amazing people who chose Purchase College.

Proofs are integral to math, science, writing, and art. These pages contain the unceasing legacy of the Purchase experience carried on by you. You are proof of Purchase. And this is *Proof*.

IYKYK

Whenever you run into someone who went to Purchase, after the initial shock and delight, there's an ease and shorthand.

Purchase artists, scholars, scientists, and activists boldly apply creativity across and within disciplines, all within our open-minded and diverse community. With each successive generation, this grows stronger.

After all, Purchase College itself was initially a big experiment—what happens when you put a bunch of arts and liberal arts students together on a brand new 500-acre campus outside New York City?

In This Issue

Side by side, much like the Purchase campus, you'll find artistic drag queens challenging society and entrepreneurial scholars innovating healthcare. You'll find examples of leadership and giving back. It's a shared sandbox, and the experience is richer for it. These pages are meant to reflect past and current Purchase experiences and the cultural ties that persist.

50 Years of Purchase

An alumni magazine is more than a list of accomplishments. It can spur connections, networking, and cross-pollination between generations.

We endeavored to play with format to better reflect the unique and thoughtful experimentation that you undertake as a student and continue after Purchase. One example—Alumni in Action, where submissions are organized topically. For many graduates, the impact of their work shared isn't tied to a year or major.

We hope you are inspired to collaborate and connect with grads outside your year, decade, or millennium.

Kristi McKee, Editor, Associate Director of Communications, Purchase College

James Monroe '06, Design Director, Monroe&Co.

**Provide More Proof**

As they should, each issue can change and grow through reader feedback.

Let us know what you love seeing and what you'd love to see more of.

Alert us to your collaborations with Purchase people.

[proof.purchase.edu](http://proof.purchase.edu)





## General News

### Economics Club Connects Students & Alumni

More than two dozen alumni, students, and faculty gathered in the Student Services Building's Red Room last spring to hear from three inspiring alumni and to celebrate Professor of Economics **Sanford Ikeda**, who retired last May. Organized by Economics Club president **James Panyko '23** and Associate Professor of Economics **Cédric Ceulemans**, the event featured **Devon Donohue '19**, an attorney at the international law firm Debevoise & Plimpton; **Lynn (Qingmao) Lin '14**, who serves on a finance and accounting team supporting leadership of the investment firm Citadel; and **David Settanni, CFA '09**, currently the CFO at Settanni Financial.

### Debut Feature On The Festival Circuit

*Mutt*, the debut feature written and directed by **Vuk Lungulov-Klotz '16** (Film), screened at Sundance, the Berlin Film Festival, and New Directors/New Films 2023, and opened at New York's Film Forum on August 18. The Berlin Festival awarded the film Special Mention for the Generation 14plus International Jury for Best Film, noting its "surprising storytelling." A Chilean-Serbian filmmaker raised between Chile, New York City, and Serbia, Lungulov-Klotz is a transgender storyteller who hopes to expand queer narratives through work that focuses on intimate moments we often miss if we're not looking.

## Choreographing History

Choreographer **Keerati Jinakunwiphat '16** (Dance) made history when the New York City Ballet presented *Fortuitous Ash*, her work set to the music of Pulitzer- and Grammy-winning composer Du Yun, as part of their 21st Century Choreography Program. Jinakunwiphat, a Thai-American, is the first-ever Asian American woman commissioned to create new work at the New York City Ballet. *Dance Magazine* named Jinakunwiphat "25 to Watch in 2021."

## Taking The Bench

**Karen Beltran, Esq. '02** (Anthropology) was sworn in last winter as a Yonkers City Court Judge. Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano swore in Beltran during a ceremony on Sunday, February 5, 2023. Beltran is the vice president of the 9th Judicial District of the New York State Bar Association.

## Song Under Pressure

**Darryl Rahn '15** (Studio Composition) delivered the winning performance on *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon's* recurring segment, "Battle of the Instant Songwriters." Fallon challenges musicians to compose a song in under an hour. Rahn captivated the audience with "It's 2023 (Go to the Gym For Me)" and lines such as "And picking up my clothes technically counts as a squat" and "Why would I get on a treadmill / When I could simply sit still / Just breathing in the steam of mac and cheese." The Utica native released his fifth album, *The Mend*, and can be seen performing in and around New York City regularly.

Images (L to R):  
**Rahn**  
**Patterson**  
**Jinakunwiphat**  
**Beltran**  
**Klercker**



Images:  
**Cave**  
**Lungulov-Klotz**

## The Green Scene

### Native Pollinator Garden Gets New Signage

Ripe for collaboration between the arts and the sciences since its inception in 2019, the Purchase Native Pollinator Garden received new signage when **Allyson Jackson**, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, and **Melissa Forstrom**, Assistant Professor of Arts Management, joined forces to have their students curate and create interpretive sign concepts.

Jackson's Conservation Biology class focused on native plants, the global biodiversity crisis, and best practices for science communication to the public, while those in Forstrom's Exhibition Practice and Management class covered analyzing best practices for exhibition interpretation. Graphic design major **Alex Klercker '23** turned their vision into designs for production. Visit the garden when you're on campus or via Instagram @purchasecollegegarden.

## Paint Remover

Working with GreenSheen, a latex paint retailer that recycles paint and all can components, members of Purchase College's Office of Sustainability and other staff and faculty collected unwanted cans of paint from hundreds of community members at no cost to the consumers. Organized by Sustainability Coordinator **Grace Afflerbach**, the event yielded a collection of 32 cubic-yard boxes filled with 25,754 lbs. of latex-, acrylic-, and water-based paints and 2,550 lbs. of oil-based paints and coatings.

## Awards, Honors & Nominations

Jazz sensation **Samara Joy '21** (Jazz Studies) received two **Grammy Awards**—Best New Artist and Best New Jazz Vocal Album—for her second release, *Linger Awhile*. She's credited with introducing jazz to Gen Z via @samarajoysings, her TikTok with 606.6k followers and counting.

**Lisa Dawn Cave '83** (Dance) received the 2023 **Tony Honors for Excellence in the Theatre**, an award to honor institutions, individuals, and/or organizations that have demonstrated extraordinary achievement in theatre but are not eligible in any of the established Tony Award categories. A seasoned production supervisor and stage manager, Cave is currently the production supervisor for Disney's *The Lion King* and *Frozen* worldwide as well as for the re-imagined *Aida*, which is now playing in the Netherlands.

Lecturer in Theatre Design/Technology **Jan Schriever '04** (Design/Tech) received a **Tony** nomination for Best Lighting of a Play for work on Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Director, actor, writer, designer, and puppeteer **James Ortiz '10** (Acting) received a **Drama Desk** nomination for Outstanding Puppetry for the Milky White cow puppet made for the 2022-23 Broadway revival of *Into the Woods*. He shared the nomination with actor Kennedy Kanagawa, who brought Milky White to life on stage.

Associate Professor of Theatre Design/Technology **Anita Yavich** received a **Drama Desk** nomination for Outstanding Costume Design of a Musical for *Only Gold* at MCC Theater.

Associate Professor of Theatre Design/Technology **David Grill '86** (Design/Tech) received a **Drama Desk** nomination for Outstanding Lighting Design of a Musical for his work on *Bob Fosse's Dancin'*. Grill also earned a **Daytime Emmy** nomination for Best Lighting Direction for work on *The Drew Barrymore Show*. The show's lighting director, **Shawn Kaufman '96** (Design/Tech), is on the team that earned the nomination.

**Jeff Croiter '93** (Design/Tech) also earned a **Drama Desk** nomination for Outstanding Lighting Design of a Musical for work on *Only Gold* at the MCC Theater.

**Nicco Annan '98** (Acting) won the **NAACP Image Award** for Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series for his groundbreaking role of Uncle Clifford on the Starz series *P-Valley*.

**Andrea Patterson '05** (Acting) won an **Obie Award for Sustained Achievement in Performance** for roles in three plays last season: Aimee in *Cullud Wattah* at The Public Theater, Queen Woodville in *Seize the King* at The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and LuAnne/Jade in *Confederates* at the Signature Theatre.

**Mitski '13** (Studio Composition) collaborated with band Son Lux and artist David Byrne on "This Is A Life," the theme song that runs over the closing credits of the film sensation *Everything Everywhere All At Once*. The song received an **Oscar®** nomination for Best Original Song.

**Chris Perfetti '11** (Acting) was nominated for a **Critics' Choice Award** in the category of Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series for his role as Jacob Hill, the slightly awkward history teacher in Quinta Brunson's hit comedy *Abbott Elementary*.

Images (L to R):  
**Joy**  
**Ortiz**  
**Perfetti**  
**Tang**



Images:  
**Annan**  
**Mitski**  
**Paz**

## Big Deals

**Franco Paz '16** (History, Literature minor) is a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University, working toward a PhD in history following MA studies at the University of Vermont. In an unusual move, Penguin Books has signed a deal to publish his yet unfinished PhD dissertation in history. His research centers on "the interconnected histories of race, capitalism, and the environment, with a particular focus on the 18th century Caribbean and Eastern seaboard," according to his Harvard profile.

**Jiaming "Andy" Tang '18** (Literature, Creative Writing) recently sold his debut novel, *Cinema Love*, to Dutton Books (US) and John Murray Press (UK) with publishing slated for 2024. Described by the publisher as "a voice-driven, tender epic, which marks the arrival of a preternaturally gifted new voice in fiction," *Cinema Love* caught the attention of Yassine Belkacemi, editor and publicity director at John Murray Press. "I was blown away by *Cinema Love*," says Belkacemi. "Jiaming Tang has written a propulsive, beautiful, and compelling novel with truly memorable characters. With writing full of tenderness and wisdom, Jiaming is an outstanding talent." Tang is a queer immigrant writer based in Brooklyn and works in editorial at Marysue Rucci Books, an imprint of Scribner.

# NEWS BRIEFS

# NEWS BRIEFS

# Free Flow: Gibney Company & Purchase Dance

**Q+A with Gilbert T. Small II '09,  
Company Director, Gibney Company**

Founded as a socially active dance company in 1991, New York City's Gibney Company has evolved into a cultural leader with "an unrelenting focus on artistic excellence and social integrity." It's no wonder Gibney and Purchase collaborate so naturally.

**Last March, members of the Gibney Company visited campus to work with students in the days leading up to their Saturday performance at The Performing Arts Center. Among them was Gilbert T. Small II '09. Originally from Baltimore, Small was a leading artist with the internationally acclaimed Ballet British Columbia for 10 years. Proof asked Small about returning to Purchase in his new role and more.**

**P:** Gibney Company recently visited campus for two days of classes, workshops, and panel discussions leading up to the Saturday performance at The PAC. How did it feel to return to Purchase as Company Director of Gibney Dance?

**GS:** *Returning to Purchase felt full circle. To share my journey since graduating, to inspire and inform is a part of my practice, and it felt so rewarding to do this in a place that gave me so much opportunity and experience.*

**P:** When you were at Purchase, do you recall a similar experience—where you were given the opportunity to interact with professionals in the field?

If so, who with and what kind of impact did it have?

**GS:** *As an eager young dancer, I participated in as many workshops as possible. Sometimes they were provided in partnership with the Conservatory, and sometimes I wrote the touring companies directly. One of the most memorable experiences was workshops with Batsheva artist Guy Shomroni. The experience of connecting to my body through sensation was very new to me at the beginning of my time at Purchase, and this experience changed me and shifted my practice forever.*

Which instructors had an impact on Small? What other alumni visited campus and will be part of the upcoming Gibney season?



**P:** How did your Purchase experience prepare you for life in the dance field?

**GS:** *Purchase taught me how to self-govern my practice, and this understanding of self was incredibly helpful when I joined Ballet BC after graduation.*

**P:** Related to the previous question, what skills did you develop in professional dance training that now translate to holding a position of leadership?

**GS:** *Rigor, organization, care, understanding, patience, tenacity, drive, and dedication.*

**P:** Having worked for many years with myriad dancers from all over the world, what sets Purchase dancers apart? Is there a tie that binds, or some trait they all share?

**GS:** *I've always said that Purchase dancers are self-sufficient. There is a drive to dance no matter what. That fire is present in all of us, and it's what continues to push the legacy of the school forward.*

**P:** What was your favorite place on campus?

**GS:** *The Conservatory of Dance.*

**P:** Describe a moment or experience you witnessed or were a part of that was totally and uniquely Purchase—something that could only happen here.

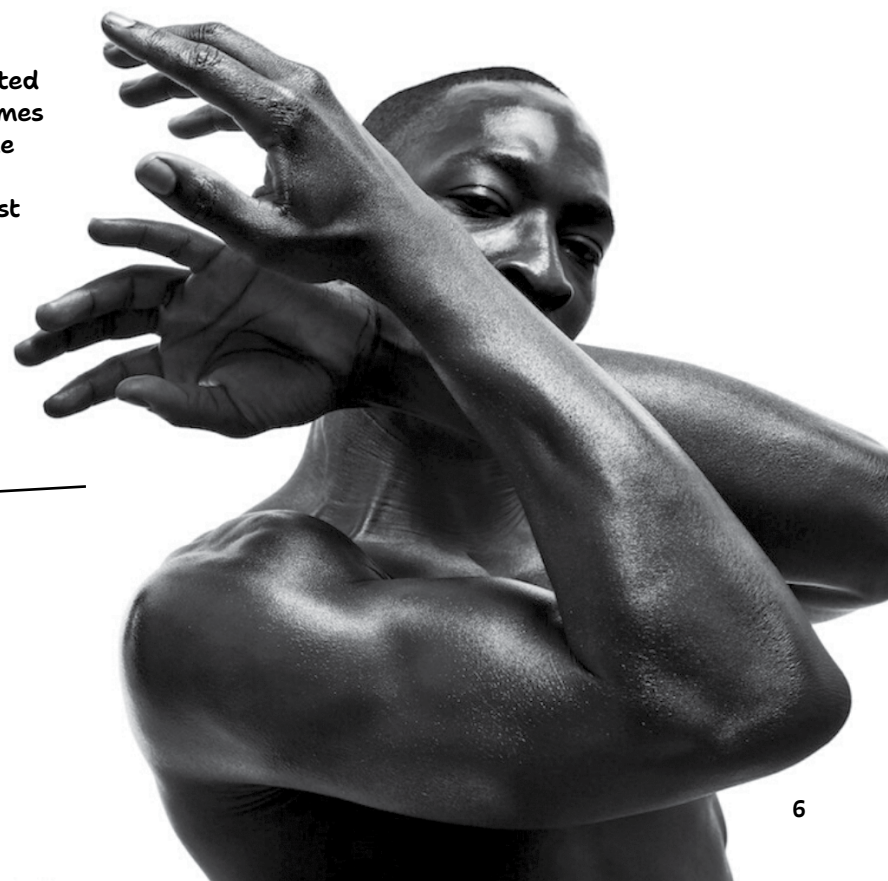
**GS:** *Culture Shock is uniquely Purchase.*

**P:** Back to today. Describe your bliss. What brings you joy?

**GS:** *Integrity in the art form and the spirit of community.*

**P:** Where do you call home?

**GS:** *Home at this moment is where my partner and animals are. My heart is still in the Pacific Northwest, though.*



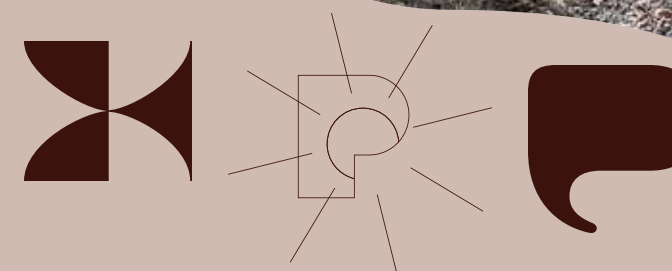
This pocket park once occupied the space beyond the covered walkway near the Visual Arts Building and the Neuberger Museum of Art entrances, circa the mid-1990s. As both pedestrian path and roof to occupied spaces below, the mall required extensive renovations in the early- to mid-2000s to address leaks and crumbling infrastructure. The big difference? The new CMFT—Center for Media, Film, and Theatre—now stands between the old bookstore and the PAC.

# Then & NOW



*Juxtaposing archival photos with current attempts to recreate the moments.*

Photos:  
Then: Unknown  
Now: Kristi McKee





## Music to their Ears

### Frank Wartinger '07 (Studio Production)

grew up surrounded by music. Beginning with piano lessons at age four, he moved on to recording before he was a teenager. Then, playing Nirvana and other grunge bands, the music grew louder. "I was around 13 or 14 when the tinnitus started, at the Battle of the Bands, of all places," says Wartinger, founder of Earmark Hearing Conservation.

What began as a journey into healing himself sparked a career path. "I already hurt my ears, and I was working almost full time at music producing while at school," he says. "I realized I wasn't making the situation better. I couldn't even find audiologists for musicians. I ended up buying used textbooks on audiology in 2005—and got hooked." He decided to pursue a career in audiology.

After Purchase, Wartinger received an AuD from Salus University in 2011. He began practicing pediatric audiology, first at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital from 2011 to 2013, then at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia from 2014 to 2022. But in 2015, he opened a practice that merged his audiology skills with his passion for music. Earmark Hearing Conservation improves the hearing health of musicians and music lovers with an empathy few others could deliver.

Wartinger chose to focus solely on his own practice last year, in part because of the rarity of his specialty. "There are many audiologists," he says, "but I only know of 12 who specialize in music. There was such a demand, and it gave me a chance to connect with people in the music world who felt isolated and really needed someone who understood tinnitus."

# BASED ON EXPERIENCE

While the most commonly known tinnitus symptom is a constant ringing in the ears, the condition is complex, involving not just hearing, but also mental health and outlook. Wartinger offers customized strategies, from hearing-related tools—earplugs, in-ear monitors, and hearing aids—to adjusting music environments.

"A common concern from performers is that earplugs, for example, make it harder to perform due to a lack of perceived connection," he says. "I work with my patients on understanding how earplugs can enhance their work. The loudness of loud settings can actually hinder your listening and creativity. Even in the studio, you can get a great recording while avoiding potential hearing risks."

Wartinger should know. Between production, engineering, and composing, he's had hundreds of music credits. His music has been featured on NPR's *All Songs Considered*, and his film score credits include PBS and the American Film Institute. And he is cofounder of a full-service music production company, Audiodowsing, with songwriter and producer Scott Hallam.

At first, Earmark Hearing Conservation served those in the Philadelphia area. But that changed with telehealth. "I can go beyond the Philadelphia area now to help people all over the world," says Wartinger. Today he offers his services nationally and internationally through the MusiCares program ([www.tunedcare.com](http://www.tunedcare.com)).

Wartinger relishes his chance to contribute to the music industry in multiple ways.

**"I'm still working on music and I'm also able to have the joy of a career in audiology. My patients don't have to explain their passion to me. I share it and I want to be a part of their team. Let's keep the music going."**

Contact Frank Wartinger through his practice [www.earmarkhc.com/contact](http://www.earmarkhc.com/contact).

Facing obstacles head-on is not always easy. But three alumni help others deal with issues similar to their own, building careers by paying it forward.

## An Open Mind

### Dave Thompson '09 (Sociology)

knows all too well that conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia, and issues around sensory processing can make scholastics and career paths difficult.

"I flunked out of community college multiple times," he says. "But I left Purchase on the Dean's list." He discovered his own way of doing things along the way. "After years of perceived or assumed deficits or disabilities to do things, I found that these assumptions were bigger roadblocks for me than my actual challenges."

He now imparts those lessons to uplift others. "When I talk to neurodivergent people, I like to let them know it's the world of work, community life, and education that needs to catch up. There's nothing wrong with us."

As director of strategic programs at Potentia Workforce, a company whose mission relies on showing companies the strengths that neurodivergent people bring to a workforce through training and recruitment, Thompson helps lead neurodiversity hiring initiatives and programs, working closely with companies like Chevron, Microsoft, and more.

But what is neurodiversity?

"Neurodiversity is the idea that differences in the ways our brains are wired occur naturally, and to the benefit of all of us," he says. "It's a way of normalizing conditions that have historically been looked at through a strictly negative lens. That idea could have resulted in better outcomes for so many in the past."

The world of work is beginning to catch up. "Companies have found that the workers we help to recruit are faster, more efficient, productive, and innovative," Thompson says. But everyone is an individual. "It doesn't mean every new hire will give them this result—and this shouldn't be the only driver of hiring the people we bring them. But overall engagement and retention are significantly higher on inclusive teams. It's not just the right thing to do, but the smart thing as well."

What society needs to see is that everyone has different brains, different ways of thinking, and different strengths and challenges, he says.

Thompson's work in this field began at Spectrum Designs Foundation, a custom apparel and promotional products business that provides meaningful employment opportunities for neurodivergent individuals, especially young adults with autism.

He spent eight years helping to construct their programs. "These jobs allow people to grow self-esteem and see a better future," he says. "It's more than making items—it's a chance to turn a corner."

Thompson looks back on his time at Purchase as a turning point; he was given the encouragement, support, and autonomy to find his own way in a world that he says wasn't designed for him. "The school's motto of 'think wide open' was conducive to being who you are and finding who you are," he says. "A different turn in the road here and there, and my life could have turned out very differently and not nearly as good."

Based in Port Washington, NY, Spectrum Designs recently opened a second location in nearby Pleasantville, NY—so close to campus that it feels in some ways full circle for Thompson. "That's a good location not just strategically but sentimentally for me," he says.

**"I can point in the direction of Purchase and say, 'It can happen here. Because that's where it happened for me.'"**



## The Gift of Health

### Colton Gibbons '18 (History)

believes you shouldn't give up on your mission if it means enough to you and you can help others with it. In 2020, CAKE Society was born. Mission accomplished.

CAKE Society Co. is a BIPOC, trans, and gender expansive-led health and fitness organization based in Washington, DC. One of the first nonprofits of its kind, the organization seeks to empower all bodies "to increase the positive mental health impact of our community through access to health, wellness, and fitness."

Like any innovation, the idea emerged from identifying a need. "It came from thinking about what was lacking in the trans community, serving a community I'm a part of," Gibbons says. "I wanted to use my sports management studies for good and this came out of it." The organization runs fitness classes, community empowerment events, and health services such as onsite HIV testing and counseling to help fill the gaps where the community isn't served well.

"Overall, we have put on many events in the DC area and Virginia, from kickball to self-defense, and it's about encouraging health, both physical and mental."

Other organizations have pitched in to host these events, including Georgetown University, host of their boxing program. Gibbons' experience extends to esports (electronic sports) as well. Having served as a Mayors ESports Network Advisor, part of the Tourism Arts Parks Entertainment and Sports Committee run by the United States Conference of Mayors, he helped guide how esports can enrich cities. "Esports is growing and brings together a diverse community," he says.

Gibbons received his master's degree in Sports Industry Management from Georgetown University's School of Continuing Studies in 2020. While there, he served as Vice President of Corporate Partnerships for AIM Sports Conference, run by Georgetown graduate students, focusing on digital campaigns, graphic design, and marketing strategy. This fall Gibbons will finish a PhD in Business Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

It was during his undergraduate studies at Purchase, however, that he found encouragement to pursue any avenue he wished. "They wanted you to be happy and successful," says Gibbons.



## Alumni Profile

**"If Purchase didn't give me that environment, I believe I wouldn't have gone on to the next steps, including starting this nonprofit. I transitioned at Purchase and the school wanted you to be yourself, offering you support in your life both academically and personally."**

Gibbons also points to his role as a teaching assistant at Purchase in developing his leadership skills. "I learned how to listen as a leader and support students in their goals," he says. "I want to support people. I've gotten my share of support as well."

The desire to have a positive impact leads Gibbons in many directions—competing on NBC's *America Ninja Warrior* as a trans athlete; leading diversity, equity, and inclusivity trainings; publishing articles honoring his adopted queer Vietnamese narrative; and speaking at events.

Last April, SUNY selected Gibbons to deliver the keynote address at the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence ceremony in Albany. "Nothing gives a greater sense of self-achievement than learning and growing into one's most authentic self," he told the audience. "The SUNY educational system gave me the support, freedom, and confidence to not only live my truth but to flourish into my brave and evolving kaleidoscope of identity."

Connect with CAKE Society on IG @cakesocietyco and on the web at cakesocietyco.org.

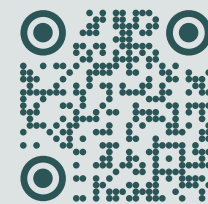


## Dance Students Create New Racial Equity Fund Scholarship

Dance majors **Elinor Kleber Diggs '23** and **Kanon Sugino '23** first created the Racial Equity Group (REG) to cultivate equity and uplift students of diverse backgrounds in the Conservatory of Dance and spent the first two years strengthening an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

In early 2022, the group launched a fundraising campaign to create an endowed scholarship that would provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the financial support needed to become the next generation of professional dancers and choreographers.

Kleber Diggs and Sugino rose to the challenge, raising the \$25,000 minimum to create a scholarship endowment by bringing in \$12,500 by the June 30, 2022 deadline, which secured matching funds through the J2 Scholarship Challenge Grant for Student Success. The Racial Equity Fund is expected to award its first scholarship in 2025.



[purchase.edu/give-to-purchase/give](https://purchase.edu/give-to-purchase/give)

Note: To make a gift, select "The Purchase Fund," and type "Racial Equity Fund Scholarship" in the Gift Reference field.



**"An endowed scholarship ensures that future generations of talented dancers will have the opportunity to pursue their dreams."**

—Kleber Diggs



**"We thank everyone who joined us in this mission to promote equity and diversity in the arts and help us create a brighter future for the next generation of dancers."**

—Kleber Diggs & Sugino

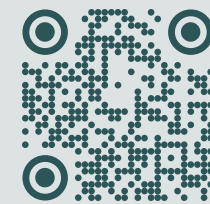


## Miriam Arsham Scholarship

**Miriam Arsham**, award-winning film editor and longtime Professor of Film, passed away on June 23, 2023, a few months shy of 103 years old. Demanding and nurturing, Arsham taught a generation of Purchase film students the art of telling stories through moving images. Her enthusiasm for teaching and love of filmmaking were infectious and inspired all who studied with her. She lived a life filled with music, film, travel, and friends.

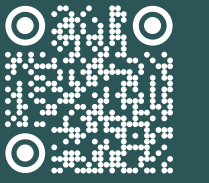
On the occasion of her 100th birthday, Purchase College Founding Film Professor Thomas Gunning, now-retired Professor of Film Iris Cahn '76, and award-winning alumni Chris Wedge '81, Hal Hartley '84, and Tom Cross '93 rallied fellow Purchase alumni to endow The Miriam Arsham Endowed Scholarship Fund to support students in the School of Film and Media Studies who show promise, but come from demanding circumstances and need assistance in completing their senior film projects.

Gifts to the fund in Mimi's honor will endow support for student film projects in perpetuity.



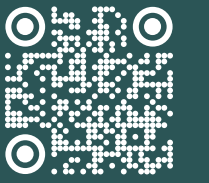
Learn more and make a gift.

[purchase.edu/arshamscholarship](https://purchase.edu/arshamscholarship)



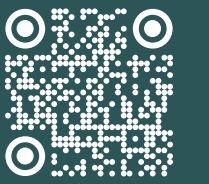
**Alumni Affinity Groups**  
[purchase.edu/affinity](https://purchase.edu/affinity)

Alumni Networks:  
Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, & Women Leadership



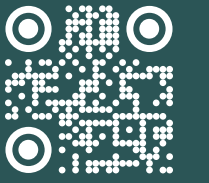
**Alumni Volunteer Opportunities**  
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Admissions Ambassadors, Postcards, Mentor Network, In the Classroom



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Share news or update your contact info.



**Questions/Info**  
[alumni@purchase.edu](mailto:alumni@purchase.edu)

**Alumni Weekend**  
April 26-27, 2024  
Stay tuned!



## Gerry Chillè '90 has spent his career harnessing the power of technology to touch people's lives through music and his work in health innovation.

### Technical Advances

Chillè's gift for technology took off at Purchase. He received his BFA in Studio Composition, enrolling during the program's inaugural year. "Purchase's first recording studio was opening, and some of us helped in areas such as wiring the mixing board and outboard effects, and we were there constantly," he says. "I had the opportunity to learn more about production and many other aspects of music through Purchase. The offerings of the music conservatory pushed you to follow structure, but the studio blew the doors open to experimentation—and helped establish the belief you could go far and wide, professionally."

A founder of Chillout Productions, Chillè found himself producing and engineering for countless artists, especially in the rap genre, at night while composing and recording music for advertisements during the day. Then one day, NYNEX Science & Technology—you would know them today as Verizon—called with a digital audio problem, hoping he could work some magic. Chillè skillfully did so, and the relationship with the company's innovation research labs continued for the next 10 years. His work included some of the very first telemedicine proof-of-concept tests.

# CROSSOVER

## Music to Medical Breakthroughs

### Improving Lives

Today, it's Chillè's work in medical innovation that's getting noticed. He's co-founder and Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer of Newel Health, a digital therapeutics company known for developing health apps that are both clinically validated and beautifully designed. One of the products, Amicomed, helps users control hypertension. Another app, Soturi, will use data from wearable sensors and a custom-designed algorithm to provide personalized treatment plans for those living with Parkinson's disease.

With a recent \$2.5 million grant for Soturi from the Michael J. Fox Foundation, Newel Health hopes this work will bring greater dignity and improved quality of life to people living with Parkinson's.

Chillè explains that Soturi (Finnish for *warrior*) collects motor data from a wearable device along with details about symptoms that the user enters in the app. The app also provides an anxiety support module, a digital exercise program, a speech therapy program, and more. It feeds data into an algorithm to develop a highly personalized Parkinson's drug treatment.

"There is still no cure for this disease and it's progressive, so finding out a personalized treatment plan can help people manage their symptoms for longer periods of time," he says. "At the moment, we're fine-tuning the symptoms detection algorithm and its medication recommendation module. This phase of the project will take another year and a half, after which we'll hold clinical trials to demonstrate the benefit of using our digital solution to optimize the standard drug treatment. I'm very proud of our team doing this amazing work."

### A Degree of Confidence

Chillè's career has been a matter of innovation as well as confidence. He says he was handed that, along with his degree, by Purchase.

"The academic atmosphere at Purchase definitely made a big difference in encouraging you to explore your talents and be open to many outcomes, which helped me find this one," he says.

Graduating from Purchase has been a family tradition. Two of his sisters, Rossana Chillè '91 and Giada Chillè '97, attended, as did his son, Alessandro Chillè '14. "By giving me a well-rounded education and opportunities to pursue my early career interests in a music epicenter like New York City not so far away, the school didn't just say to have dreams—it fully prepared me to pursue them."



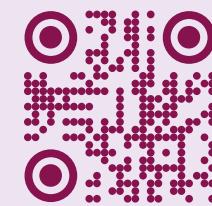
### Neuberger Museum of Art: The Making of the Museum: 50 Years

In 1967, Roy R. Neuberger promised that he would donate 300+ works of art from his private collection to the new museum to be named in his honor at the heart of the new Purchase College, SUNY campus.

By the summer of 1972, the Museum served not only as an art center, but also as a classroom space and the epicenter for student social life. In 1974, the Neuberger Museum of Art opened to the public with its first exhibition, *The Making of a Museum*.

Among the many 50th anniversary festivities in 2024, the NEU will exhibit *The Making of the Museum: 50 Years*, to include key works from its permanent collection and archival materials focusing on its founding, continuously growing collection, and program history.

Watch for more information about the exhibition, public celebrations, and a series of artist talks, lectures, and other events. Admission to the museum is always free.



Information: [neuberger.org](http://neuberger.org)  
 FB/IG: [@neubergermuseumofart](https://www.facebook.com/neubergermuseumofart)  
 X: [@neubergermuseum](https://twitter.com/neubergermuseum)

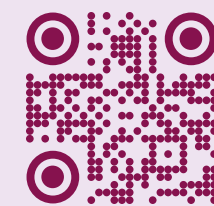


### The Performing Arts Center: The Purchase PAC invites you to Experience Something Real

To experience something real is to expect the unexpected—a musical phrase that ignites your imagination, a dance piece that offers a fresh perspective, an encounter with an old friend in the lobby. The Purchase PAC atmosphere is particularly conducive to creating surprises like these.

The 2023–2024 season centers on the creative journey. This fall, discover the joy of dance with LA-based BODYTRAFFIC and experience a wild, mystical, provocative, and reflective afternoon with world-music superstars The Klezmatics.

In the spring, highlights include the inaugural Purchase Latin Jazz Festival featuring the Purchase Latin Jazz Orchestra in a tribute to Eddie Palmieri and the always inspiring return of two Conservatory of Dance alums—Kyle Abraham and Doug Varone.



Tickets: [artscenter.org](http://artscenter.org)  
 Social media: [@PurchasePAC](https://www.facebook.com/PurchasePAC)

Photo: BODYTRAFFIC ©Tomasz Rossa

#### NOV 29

8:30pm  
 Purchase Jazz Choir  
 Choral Hall, Music Building

#### DEC 1-2, DEC 6-9

7:30pm, 1:30pm\*  
 Machinal  
 Acting Co. 48 (Class of '24) and Design/Tech  
 Center for Media, Film, and Theatre Building

#### DEC 8-9

7:30pm, 1:30pm\*  
 New Plays Now  
 Playwriting majors and Acting Co. 49 (Class of '25)  
 Center for Media, Film, and Theatre Building

#### DEC 9-10

7pm, 1pm  
 Purchase Opera  
 Hansel and Gretel  
 Recital Hall, Music Building

\*time varies by day

[purchase.edu/calendar](http://purchase.edu/calendar) for details & more events.

# OVER AT THE STOOD

The Stood (the Purchase take on "Student Center") became a locus for student life in 2003, when the PSGA proposed converting the Butler Building into an entirely student-run, multipurpose space. IG @the.stood

Heatwave, part of the Stood's opening weekend 2023 featuring a flea market, rave, and performances.



Jumpoff, the first party of the fall 2023 semester sponsored by the PSGA Cultural Clubs, welcomes students back to campus.



Headliner Bobby Shmurda performs at the Stood to cap off Afrodisiac 2023, the two-day music, fun, and food fest that embraces and promotes Black and people of color. IG @purchase\_afrodisiac



Photos:  
Sebastian Bass '21, MFA '24  
IG @sebmadeitt



# The Atavism of ARTIVISM



Gina Belafonte '83 honors the ancestors of the Civil Rights movement through her art and social activism.

On May 12, 2023, Gina Belafonte—the youngest child of Julie and Harry Belafonte—was awarded the Purchase College President's Award for Distinguished Alumni at the 2023 Purchase College Commencement.

"As a Belafonte, I carry the mantle of my family's continuing legacy, which is among one of the many greatest privileges of my life," Belafonte said in her acceptance speech. "But I stand before you today as a woman of privilege because I have a calling. I have a purpose, and that purpose is one of the greatest privileges that any human can experience in a lifetime: an awareness of something greater than myself."

Born and raised in New York City, Belafonte accepted the baton passed to her by her late father, spending her life at the intersection of art and activism—or "artivism," as she calls it—becoming an award-winning producer, director, actress, and social justice advocate in the process.

As an artist, Belafonte has produced several international and critically acclaimed documentaries that have aired on HBO, PBS, and Prime—some of which include *Sing Your Song*, exploring the extraordinary life and legacy of her late father; *A Survivor's Guide To Prison*; and *The March*, a 2013 documentary about the 1964 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

As an activist, Belafonte's work today is mainly channeled through her role as executive director and CEO of Sankofa, the social justice organization she and her father founded following the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin. Sankofa stages a wide range of educational and organizational events, with both contemporary artists and grassroots partners, to center the voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised to promote peace, justice, and equality.

"Directing and producing are my strong suits, but I'm really a cultural organizer," Belafonte says, now speaking from her home in California. "My producing skills come in handy as it relates to cultural organizing: being inventive and creative and innovative in the way we bring people together, using art as a tool to educate and activate and motivate people to action."

Belafonte's main theory of change is that every generation of activists passes on to the next ways to organize new ideas through the structure of powerful, time-tested models to move our collective social consciousness to the next tipping point.

**"We've seen that with different protests, where the models of protesting haven't really changed, but we just kept applying pressure," Belafonte says. "Younger people kept seeing what the elders were doing and moved the agenda even more forward."**

In Belafonte's mind, organizations like the NAACP, Black Lives Matter, and the Movement For Black Lives—and, of course, Sankofa—are cut from the same mold as the trailblazing NGOs of the 1960s Civil Rights movement, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

"It's just newer generations taking what the elders and ancestors have left," Belafonte says, "using it to not only reinterpret, perhaps, but also reclaim, and move forward."

While there have been many key moments across her artistic and activist career that Belafonte has been proud of, there are two that are particularly meaningful for her.

"I'm really very excited about Sankofa and carrying that legacy forward," Belafonte says, "and I'm proud that my father publicly endorsed me as the person to do that. But," she adds, "I'm most proud of my daughter, who has come on board at Sandoval as our creative director. I'm proud that the work I've continued to do throughout my career has inspired her to do the same."

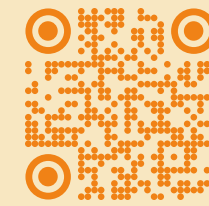


Kayla Uzoma Dike '25 (Studio Production) started the SUNY Purchase Fashion Instagram account soon after arriving at Purchase in the fall of 2021, inspired by the fashion sense so different than high school in Jamaica, Queens.

Dike serves as an RA, President of SOCA (Students of Caribbean Ancestry), and a CREAR Futuros Mentor, a peer-mentor based initiative designed to improve student success at Purchase.

"Straight out of quarantine people were really using their creative mind to dress and I really loved that, and it's part of what I love most about Purchase. The ability to be freakish and strange and out of the ordinary! I love featuring outfits that I've never worn and may not be my style but perfectly show who that person is!"

**SUNY Purchase Fashion**  
IG @sunypurchase\_fashion



Following

# Sherry Poppins

# Chriśc az Nigłty



Photo: Sherry Poppins

by Jamie Kenney '05

# Drag @ Purchase

In some ways, writing about the history of drag at Purchase is impossible.

The bewigged men in stockings and frock coats who founded the idea of "America" were just men, yes, but prescient of their legacies, they meticulously preserved thousands of letters, records, and diaries for posterity. But the bewigged, stockinged, and frocked folks who established Purchase's robust drag culture did no such thing.

Drag has theatrical, religious, and folkloric traditions that go back thousands of years. Our modern conceptions of drag in America are generally traced back to the 1800s. Annie Hindle, America's first famous "male impersonator," began performing in the 1860s. William Dorsey Swann, a formerly enslaved man, is the first self-identified "queen of drag" that we know of. Their groundbreaking conventions and aesthetics have changed from "female impersonators" of vaudeville to *RuPaul's Drag Race*. As with so much of queer history, the history of drag at Purchase is deeply personal and far from monolithic.

It's a point repeated during a talk with **Shaka McClotten**, professor of Media Studies and Anthropology at Purchase and Chair of the Gender Studies and Global Black Studies Programs. McClotten recently remounted their popular "Drag Theory and Practice" course, and their 2021 book *Dragging: Or, in the Drag of a Queer Life* is an ethnography of a diverse group of artists and activists.

"Purchase has this incredibly dynamic rich history of drag," they say in an on-campus interview. "Like any community, it is not homogenous. It really runs the gamut from sculptural art installation to over-the-top lip-syncing to traditional glamor. I think that if you were to look at the people who do drag at Purchase and how they do drag, you would see it representing the vast diversity of what drag is historically and contemporaneously."

McClotten suspects there are several factors contributing to Purchase's long history of fostering drag communities and experimentation: proximity to New York City, a major hub of American drag culture; the institution's welcoming atmosphere for queer students; and its long-standing ability to attract a diverse array of artists and creatives across all majors. And Purchase's founding in the late '60s, at the height of so many social protest movements and cultural revolutions, may also have something to do with it.

"The fundamental ethos of Purchase—and the fact that it was founded in this mix of the arts and the liberal arts—meant it was always going to be this very fertile place for questioning norms and creating things that hadn't been created before," they say.

But for all the diversity within various drag communities and performers on campus, one thing brings them—and pretty much everyone else—together: Fall Ball. The long-running "extravaganza eleganza drag competition" crowns an annual campus King, Queen, and in recent years Quing, for those who don't tidily fit into other categories.

*Proof* could find no record of Fall Ball in student newspapers prior to 1986. But Jeffrey Putman '96, President Emeritus of the Purchase College Alumni Association, says he recalls the event existing when he arrived on campus in 1994. Archived issues of *The Load*, a student-run paper, hint at the campus culture from which Fall Ball was formed.

Fall of 1981 saw more than a dozen screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* with attendees often dressing up as their favorite gender-bending characters. In the spring of that same year, the Gay Union, an earlier name for what is now the LGBTQU, hosted the college's first Pride event. References can be found as early as 1982 about Purchase's "large gay population" in an interview with professor Esther Newton, a founder of Purchase College, who herself has written extensively on drag and queer communities.

While we haven't yet established the precise origins of Fall Ball, the beloved event is a large, raucous affair usually held in November before Thanksgiving break. For many Purchase students who go on to perform drag beyond the campus' brick walls, Fall Ball is not only their first time performing, but their first exposure to a live drag show.

But Fall Ball hasn't been the sole opportunity for drag at Purchase. One-off shows in the student center, Humanities Theatre, and apartments were common in the early 2000s.

# Thorgy Thor



Photo: Santiago Felipe

# Miz Wade



Photo: Travis Magee



Thorgy Thor

**Thorgy Thor '06 (Music)**, who appeared on *RuPaul's Drag Race* in 2016 and 2017, first did drag in a student production of *Psycho Beach Party*. Probably the best-known drag queen to come from Purchase, Thorgy (then known as "Shananigans") "makes it a point to show up at every party and event with a brand new outfit, many of which are hand-made," according to a 2006 issue of *The Purchase Independent*. She also greeted new students during freshman orientation in full "fashion clown" regalia, starting a short-lived tradition in and of itself.

**"Nobody told me to do it," she says of that now famous first Drag Welcome. I woke up at five o'clock in the morning because check-in started at 7:30 and I literally walked all the way from the dorms in drag to the [campus entrance]."**

Response from the new students and their families was enthusiastic and effusive. Incoming freshmen waved, parents stopped on the way out to thank her for making their nervous child feel at home. While there was initially pushback from some members of the administration, orientation staff leaders were delighted. "They came out and said, 'We heard what you were doing and we had to see it ourselves,'" she recalls. "If you want to work with us as the welcoming committee next year, we'd love you."

Thorgy's drag presence on campus was not limited to orientations. Her weekly themed parties became a mainstay of queer life on campus and a touchstone for Purchase drag culture thereafter. Everyone was welcome. "It didn't matter back then—gay or straight—everyone was just weird at Purchase," she recalls. "And it was so fun. We would give little shows in the middle of the party. We met a lot of drag queens, like Miz Jade, who would come there and say, 'I feel really comfortable here.' And I'm like, 'Well, you're always welcome here.' I'm still friends with some of them today."



**Sherry Poppins '16 (Photography)** would eventually take up the mantle of drag parties on campus. By the time she graduated, she was well known not only for her skilled performances but for her "Pussy Land" drag shows held in campus apartments.

"They would be packed every month," Sherry says. "The one time they did get shut down," she recalls fondly, "a second location was already waiting for them."

**"It was the very last one before I graduated. I led this parade of queers across campus from The Olde to Alumni. It was so punk."**

Sherry had never been especially interested in drag prior to Purchase. But her orientation leader, Miz Jade '12 (Dance), the drag daughter of Thorgy Thor, suggested Sherry perform as a backup dancer in one of her performances.

"So I did that. We became friends and then she's like, 'I have this show on PTV called *Hot Mess Express*. I want to do a drag makeup tutorial episode. Can we do makeup on your face?'" Sherry agreed, and the transformation, it seems, was as much internal as external. "I went back to my eight-person suite and I was feeling the fantasy."

Because she came to drag at Purchase, Poppins says, she didn't take it too seriously. "Everyone's just playing with makeup, playing with silly outfits. Purchase is that perfect haven for all the high school outcasts, the weirdos and the geeks, so you can imagine that drag is going to be very much aligned with that kind of person."

Now a full-time queen, she believes that the "bubble" of Purchase provided her with a rich training ground to prepare for her current career. "When you're actually out doing drag in the real world, it's competitive," she observes.



Sherry Poppins



Ohrist Almighty

**Ohrist Almighty '16 (Visual Arts)**, who performs alongside both Poppins and Maxxx Pleasure, was initially skeptical of the thriving drag scene at Purchase. "I saw Sherry Poppins and Miz Jade doing more traditional drag at the time," they recall. "I was like, 'I don't want to do what they're doing; I want to do my own thing. I'm different. I'm making art here.'" But when they saw Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter, comedian, and performance artist Macy Rodman perform at Fall Ball 2013, they were mesmerized by the artsy, unusual performance.

They were on stage at the next Fall Ball.

Ohrist says they were heavily influenced by the wide diversity of campus life. Serving on the boards of multiple student organizations, they were engaged in art and music scenes and found themselves going back and forth between various social circles. "I feel like I had a nice group of people who were supporting me," they explain. "Hanging out all over the place all the time helped me be confident enough to do drag for the first time."

The strong "DIY culture" of Purchase also influenced Ohrist's growth as a performer. "It was always students throwing shows and making projects with and for each other, just making weird art," they say.

**"That's why Sherry and I started doing our own show together after graduation—we thought instead of trying to get booked by people, let's just throw a show ourselves. And here we are, seven years later, still doing it."**



**Miz Jade '12 (Dance/Arts Management)**, describes her childhood in Yonkers as "religious and naive." In those days, she viewed gender as binary and drag as nebulously but distinctly negative, and she certainly wasn't the only one. "Now it's kind of like, 'Oh my God, you're a drag queen?!" she says. "But before it would prevent people from making connections. It would prevent people from wanting to date you. It would make you totally ostracized even within the queer community for some people."

But at Purchase, she was able to move beyond her early assumptions and fears. Thorgy "held space" for her to explore and play with drag and urged her to compete in (and win) Fall Ball. Ultimately, performing nurtured a strength within herself to embrace her own gender, and drag itself, as far more expansive than she's ever considered. It wasn't always easy, even at Purchase. Black drag queens, she explains, are often pigeon-holed (high energy, glamorous, ultra femme) and held to a different standard than their white counterparts. It's not that Miz Jade can't deliver—she does—but she also takes a certain pleasure in bucking expectation, as when she performed at an on-campus Drag BINGO event as a little old lady. "People really expected me to uphold that expectation of drag; instead I made people laugh," she smiles.

**"I gave myself permission, because of drag, to just be, unapologetically," she explains. "I said, 'Whoever you would've been if you didn't have society or your family bombarding you with how you're supposed to perform, how would you be? Do that for yourself. Give yourself permission to do that.'"**



Miz Jade





# Maxxx Pleasure

**Maxxx Pleasure '15 (New Media)**, a drag king who performs with Sherry and other drag artists he met at Purchase, had a similar trajectory but a somewhat different experience. When "a friend of a friend" was looking for backup dancers for a drag king performance, he was eager to join in. "I wanna be on stage and be sexy!" he recalls brightly. It was a positive experience. After performing backup a few times, Maxxx decided in the spring of his junior year that he would take center stage as a king.

For Maxxx, drag was less about gender transformation; it was the opportunity to be on stage. He'd done musical theater with his triplet sisters as a child, but drag, he says, was the only thing he'd ever done independently from them. It would, indeed, be a very independent experience.

**"I was kind of the only drag king. Who knows how much of this is projection and how much is true, but I felt very much like I had to ask to be included."**

His voice then immediately becomes more resolute, almost as if interrupting himself. "That's a fact. I *did* have to ask to be included. Like, 'Do you mind? Can I join? I want to perform at your party.' I also had this feeling like if I didn't knock it out of the park that I wouldn't be invited back."

While Maxxx (and pretty much everyone else interviewed for this piece) agrees there was "drama with everything," many of the friendships formed within drag communities at Purchase persist to this day.

## Outside the Bubble...

**Qhrst Almighty, Sherry Poppins, Maxxx Pleasure, Miz Jade, and Thorgy Thor**, among others not mentioned in this article, continue to perform, mostly in Brooklyn but also internationally. *Str8 To DVD* is a monthly Drag Party in Brooklyn that Qhrst and Sherry have been organizing since 2016. Maxxx was named Drag King of the Year by Brooklyn Nightlife Awards in 2018 and was recently profiled in *Vogue*. Thorgy often performs with her "Thorchestra," combining her Purchase conservatory training with drag by joining with orchestras throughout North America as a truly unique guest performer.

Miz Jade works with Drag Story Hour, where she enjoys encouraging kids to "play more without shame," but has unfortunately faced traumatizing anti-queer and anti-Black protest and hate speech. "These people are not protesting story hour. They're protesting my existence."

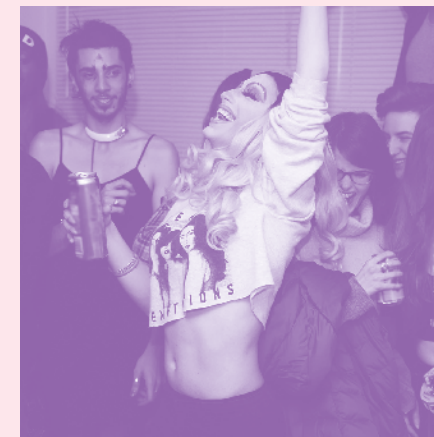
Performing in drag at any point in the past 150 years has always carried risk. Today, as some state and local laws take aim at queer people—including trans folks and drag performers—there can sometimes be a sense of demoralization and fear, even in liberal cities.

"It's scary," Qhrst observes, "because it feels like we're already a marginalized group doing marginalized art, just barely clawing at the edges of the mainstream. Now whatever sort of sense of progress we had feels like it's unraveling."

"These laws—anti-drag laws, laws denying gender-affirming care—are really an attempt to erase trans people and queerness," McGlotten says. They note that while Purchase remains "the bubble" that has long fostered drag culture on campus, outside forces contribute to a sense of demoralization. In recent years, the QPOC (Queer People of Color) Club has taken ownership of Fall Ball to focus on the importance of BIPOC in the history of drag balls and vogue culture.

**"I'm looking forward to a resurgence," says McGlotten. "National conversations are trying to reinscribe traditional gender roles and roll back the clock on forms of creative expression ... but one of the things to think about in terms of Purchase drag culture is that it represents the wide diversity of what drag is and can be."**

**📧** If you have any information on drag culture at Purchase or the origins of Fall Ball, please contact [alumni@purchase.edu](mailto:alumni@purchase.edu) so that we may collect this information for the posterity it deserves.



Images provided by Sherry Poppins, Thorgy Thor, Miz Jade, James Monroe.



**Jade Green '16** snapped a photo of **Pixel '13** during a drag show on campus. Intrigued, **Mitksi '13** asked to use it on her 2nd album cover, *Retired From Sad, New Career in Business* (2013), released while a student in the Studio Composition program. **Emily Grigsby '15** designed the cover. Info credit: X @mitskithoughts IG: @byjadegreen / @thedragjester / @em.grigsby



Photo: Ebru Yildiz

## Breathing Fire

The Dragon Sisters slay—from professional dance to modeling, hip-hop, LGBTQ+ advocacy—and now educating the next gen of dancers at Purchase.

Observing a class taught by The Dragon Sisters, the energy, positivity, and sense of camaraderie flow through the studio and grow more evident as the class ends. No one wants to leave. Students continue to practice the steps. They change the music. They swarm the instructors, who share statuesque builds so alike it's hard to miss. But the clear draw is their appealingly authentic dispositions.

**Issa (Perez) Dragon '13 and Odessa (Cain Coleman) Dragon '09 – '15** have returned to the Conservatory of Dance this fall to teach Special Modern Technique, and on a Thursday in late September, it indeed felt pretty special.

An award-winning multidisciplinary performance art duo, The Dragon Sisters' concept developed over time as Issa and Odessa honed their professional dance careers.

Odessa danced for the Martha Graham Dance Company, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, and The Metropolitan Opera, among others, while Issa joined Gallim Dance right from Purchase, then Punchdrunk's Sleep No More.

### Love The Nightlife

A dip into the world of private event nightlife, where "you're basically a statue demonstrating the wardrobe, the headpiece, the costume," says Odessa, drew attention and landed them commercial work in campaigns for brands like Adidas, Absolut Vodka, Bombas, and Frederick Anderson.

A turning point came when award-winning producer Spencer Ludwig showed interest in collaborating and pushed them to write and perform their own music. But the sisters were not confident there would be space. "We're queer dancers and Black, and we just weren't seeing that in the music industry," says Odessa. But they dove in and their first EP, *The Fine Print*, had write-ups in *Vogue* and *Billboard*, who called it "a slinky six-track vibe fest that's relaxed yet impassioned, chill but fierce."

They've since won three Glam Awards, honoring the best in NYC Nightlife, including 2021's Breakthrough Artists of the Year and the Best Duo/Group for 2021 and 2022, and they earned a featured spot in the 2022 NYC Pride Campaign, "Unapologetically Us."

### On a Mission

A Dragon Sisters' show is "equal parts dynamic synchronous movement, lyric incantations, skin, glitter, and hip-hop vibrations that reach audiences in their viscera," according to their website. But more importantly, they aspire to spread messages of love and acceptance "on a mission to radicalize and make space while facilitating joy and inspiring inner expansion." Positive audience feedback buoys them as they face negativity that increases as their platform and visibility grows. "There's still hate in the world, and disrespect, and people not understanding, and all those things," says Issa. "What keeps us from dwelling on that is all the other light, all the positivity, all the lives that we're now a part of or that we've changed or the circles that we've entered."

### Purchase Bound

As Issa and Odessa return to Purchase 10 years later, they're excited by the next generation's potential and by what the pair are bound to receive in return. They're teaching the same Special Modern Technique class next semester while also creating new work for the Purchase Dance Company's spring 2024 concert. "It's like food in a way. We're fueling each other, we're learning from each other. And it's kind of like an opportunity for us to go back to school in a different way," says Issa.

As Open Call resident artists at NYC's arts space The Shed, Issa and Odessa hope to include Purchase in the program. "We're trying to find a way to incorporate the students or the work that we make in spring concert into the piece at The Shed," says Odessa. A summer 2024 performance is planned.

**"This is the beginning for [students]. People we met in school, we still know. We're still connected with people we looked up to. Now we work with them in the real world,"** says Issa. **"Welcome to the group chat."**

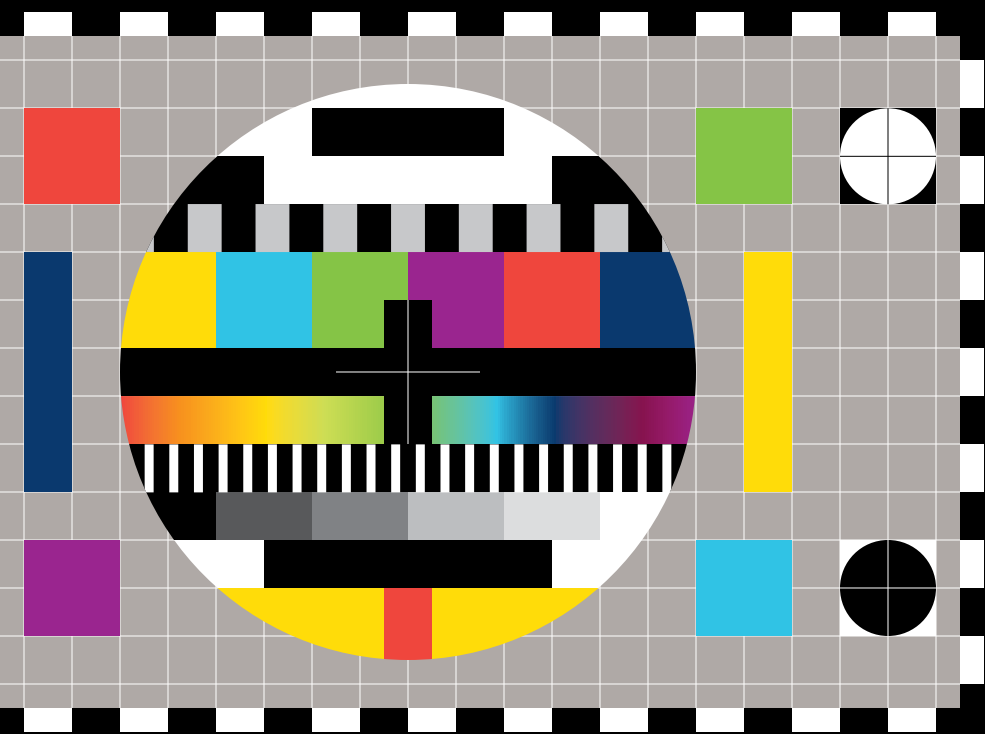
# The ART of the POSSIBLE



Three Conservatory of the Arts alumni excel in careers in late-night TV, thanks in part to a combination of their Purchase education and networking connections.

Set designs on stage and off site from *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*  
Photos courtesy of Kat DeNeve and Heather Wolenksy





## Theatre Design/Technology alumni Heather Wolensky '05, Kat DeNeve '12, and Melissa Shakun '08 all work in one of the most creative fields, that of late-night TV variety shows.

While Wolensky and DeNeve work in production design and art direction, respectively, on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, Shakun is the art director for *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*.

All three agree that, in addition to the technical skills needed to design sets, the main takeaway of their Purchase College education has been learning the art of the possible—the flexibility to get quality work done amidst a cacophony of competing demands, all at a head-spinning pace.

That kind of pragmatism entails knowing what *isn't* possible, of course.

"They always ask for a car for some skit," Wolensky says. "I'm like, 'Guys, we work on the sixth floor, I promise you I cannot put a car in the elevator.' But every month or so we get a new request for something like that."

While those kinds of requests are relatively rare, they're much easier to handle than the day-to-day production schedule of a topical daily show.

"We move at a pace that is pretty unheard of," Wolensky says. "We get no time to design anything—it's all about the art, but we also do a show every single night, so there's a lot of problem-solving: How are we going to make this look good on camera tonight—and then do it all over again tomorrow?"

**Wolensky** can trace her route to the late-night TV world back to her time at Purchase, when she did an internship for the legendary Broadway set designer Tony Walton. One of the people working with Walton was Kelly Hanson, who now co-heads the art department for *The Tonight Show* with Wolensky. The two clicked, and soon started a company together called Wonder Works Design, LLC that allowed them to take on a variety of projects including television, digital shoots, interiors, and corporate events.

When Hanson was offered the position of art director for the 2008 launch of Fallon's show, she recruited Wolensky to assist her. "I was hired to build a model of the set for *The Tonight Show*," Wolensky says. "I was so excited to get my foot in the door at NBC." Ever since getting her foot in the door, Wolensky's feet have barely touched the ground. "The creative juices are constantly flowing and you just have to go with the flow, and I like that about it," Wolensky says. "The pace is very addicting."

Wolensky acknowledges that the frenetic pace of a daily show would be much harder without talented and industrious collaborators. That's why she recruited Kat DeNeve. "I met Kat at a Purchase alumni event," Wolensky says. "I had been talking to Dan Hanessian, who was the dean of the program at the time, about how I needed some fresh blood. He suggested I talk to Kat."

As a Purchase grad, Wolensky trusted DeNeve's background, knowing she had the core values she'd need to succeed in the daily show environment.

**"I hired Kat and she's been with us ever since," Wolensky says. "It would be hard to do a project without her. I knew she had the drafting skills, and I knew she'd be punctual because you're never late to class at Purchase!"**



**DeNeve** was an assistant designer at Youmans Designs, owned by James Youmans '86 at the time she met Wolensky.

**"I [became a production assistant] on *The Tonight Show* for what was supposed to be a week nine years ago, and then I never left," DeNeve says.**

Today, while Wolensky primarily works on sketches that take place outside of the studio, DeNeve largely works with Hanson on anything that takes place in the studio.

"I'm focused on the everyday show," DeNeve says. "My job is heavily about drafting and renderings and seeing that through to reality. The designers usually give me a sketch or an idea for a design, and I then translate that to drafting and editing with the writers."

Most sketches for the show are planned ahead of time—DeNeve usually gets about a week's notice—but there are also topical bits that take place during Fallon's monologue. DeNeve says she spends about half her time drafting and the other half dealing with the monologue sketches.

"The quantity of stuff that you get is really exciting," DeNeve says. "That's both the bad thing and the good thing about it—because even though you're inundated with everything, once the show's over, the next day is a clean slate."

One of the more fun, and more challenging, projects for DeNeve came during the height of the COVID pandemic when she, Wolensky, and Hanson teamed up to build out an Airstream camper as a remote set in Fallon's backyard in the Hamptons. "That was a heavy lift for us, and one of the most complicated pieces that we've done," DeNeve says. "Heather and Kelly designed it, and I drafted it and worked over every little detail with the shop, and it turned out beautiful."

Along with the challenge of creative work for a mercurial daily show, DeNeve is also energized by the personal and professional connections she's made along the way. "We're mainly a women-driven team, which is pretty remarkable for the industry," DeNeve says. "I had only worked for men up until I came to *The Tonight Show*, so that's something I'm pretty proud of."

**Shakun** designs scenery and art directs live sketches for *SNL* each week, and her route to late-night TV was similar to Wolensky's and DeNeve's in that it can be attributed to a Purchase College connection. "I had a professor named Charles McCarry, who was a great set designer, and one of our class projects was to design a set for *SNL*." At the time, Shakun thought she wanted to be a set designer for Broadway musicals; she didn't want to design for TV.

"Flash forward 15 years and here I am," Shakun says. "I've been designing on this show for 90-something episodes now and I love it. It's really the best of both worlds—it's like working in theater and television at the same time."

Because *SNL* is a live show filmed in front of a studio audience, it's necessarily fast-paced. It's always challenging, Shakun says, and it's also always exciting.

"The only constant at *SNL* is change," Shakun says. "Inevitably, the writers are going to write something new, and it's going to be hard or challenging. You have to be really smart about thinking on your toes. It never seems to get easier, but I think you get better at handling how hard it is."

Shakun says she feels prepared for that kind of work because the Design/Technology program at Purchase was a conservatory program; every aspiring designer also had to be a prop master for one show, the paint charge for another show, and so on.

**"In order to be a good set designer, you really need to know how all of the departments working under you do their jobs," Shakun says. "So you learn how all the different teams and departments collaborate together to create a set design, and I think that is the most valuable [Purchase] experience."**



# Dear Alumni,

This issue's article about Purchase drag culture is a flashback to Fall Ball! It's also a reminder that we have an opportunity to share memories that connect us with current students. These connections can put them on the path to success.

We've made it our goal to foster community among our alumni and empower Purchase students and graduates with the resources they need to become leaders in their fields.

## The Alumni Association's four pillars for the year are:

### Communication

**Purchase College** is enhancing and promoting the mentoring platform that connects experienced alumni with students and recent graduates. The Neuberger Museum and The PAC are keeping interested alumni informed about upcoming events and performances. [purchase.edu/calendar](https://purchase.edu/calendar)

### Experiences

**Alumni Weekend 2024:** We're excited to reconnect with all of you April 26 & 27 so we can align our time on campus with many of the exciting end-of-year student showcases and symposiums. [purchase.edu/alumni](https://purchase.edu/alumni)

### Volunteerism

**PCAA Affinity Groups** are organizing a year-long series of personal and professional development events. In October, the Purchase LatinX Alumni Network (PLXN) with Latine Unidos hosted a conversation to explore the importance of mentorships for first-generation LatinX students. [purchase.edu/affinity](https://purchase.edu/affinity)

### Philanthropy

**Pay it forward** by giving of your time, talent, or treasure. Whatever contribution is possible for you will benefit the campus, the student experience, and the alumni population. We pave the way for the classes that come next. [purchase.edu/getinvolved](https://purchase.edu/getinvolved)



#ForeverPurchase!  
Stephanie Blum '13,  
President,  
Purchase College  
Alumni Association

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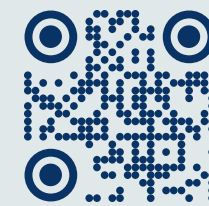
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## Receiving Honors+ Awards

**Laura Von Rosk '86** (Visual Arts: Painting) was awarded an artist residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA) in December 2022 and was the recipient of a 2023 Individual Artist Support Grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Since retiring this past May from her position as Gallery Director at the Lake George Arts Project in Lake George, NY after 23 years, she plans to have more studio time.

**Symara Johnson '19** (Dance) is the Outstanding Breakout Choreographer for 2023, according to the New York Dance and Performance Awards, known as the Bessies. The award, announced on August 4, recognizes an artist who has made an exceptional leap in their career in the past year.

**Mason Martinez '22** (Creative Writing) is a finalist and recipient of the Fall '23 Sundress Academy of the Arts Writing Residency in Knoxville, TN, allowing him to connect with emerging writers and volunteer on the residency's farm. These interactions aid in the completion of their short collection focusing on the effects of climate change on children in poverty.

**Shannon Marshall '22** (Arts Management) is a 2023 Fellow at the Black Boy Writes/Black Girl Writes Mentorship Initiative. The year-long initiative provides pre-WGA Black writers with a pathway to becoming established screenwriters in entertainment.

## Having An Impact

**Moza M. (Asad) Mendes '22** (Sociology) successfully lobbied for a New York State law that was signed by Governor Hochul in May. The Birth Control Access Act provides over-the-counter access to birth control. Mendes became an advocate for the bill while interning with the New York Birth Control Access Project (NYBCAP) as a Purchase student.

## Producing+Presenting

**Tony Castrigno '78** (Acting) co-founded MTTM Theatrics last summer with producing partner Mark Rubinsky. They are currently co-producing the off-Broadway musical *Rock and Roll Man*, and are executive producers, producers, and co-producers on a range of new works.

**Doug Varone '78** (Dance) will present the world premiere of *To My Arms / Restore* at The Performing Arts Center at Purchase College on March 16, 2024. The evening-long two-part work from Doug Varone and Dancers embodies Varone's choreographic fascination with the interplay of the deeply emotional and the immensely physical. Tickets for the 8 p.m. performance are discounted by 10% for Purchase College alumni.

**Kyle Abraham '00** (Dance) and his contemporary dance company, A.I.M, return to The Performing Arts Center on April 6, 2024, with a repertory program showcasing his signature "postmodern gumbo"—a blend of modern dance styles ranging from ballet to hip hop, seasoned with human stories and social commentary. A.I.M is widely recognized as one of the most consistently excellent troupes in the field today. Tickets for the 8 p.m. performance are discounted by 10% for Purchase College alumni.

**Jane A. DiBartolo '16** (Theater Design/Technology) is a stage manager and recent member of the Director's Guild of America (DGA). She was an assistant stage manager on *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* when an episode was nominated for a DGA Award for daily programming, and was excited to attend the awards ceremony with her team this past February.



Images:  
**Martinez**  
**Castrigno**  
**Mendes**  
**DiBartolo**



## Publishing

**David McGlynn '79** (Visual Arts: Photography) had two images from his *Nulland* series chosen to appear in the *American Photography Annual Book* (AP39). One of his *Light Painting* images also appears in *American Illustration* online (AI42). Both are from his yearlong project, *12 in 21*, a series of 12 separate month-long art projects from 2021. This is his fifth consecutive year having works selected for the annuals.

**Amy L. Smiley '80** (Literature) published her first novel, *Hiking Underground* (Atmosphere Press), in January. With creativity and motherhood as its central themes, the work is written in an unconventional narrative style that has received praise from fellow authors and positive feedback from reviewers.

**Peter Compo '81** (Chemistry) launched his book *The Emergent Approach to Strategy: Adaptive Design and Execution* (Business Expert Press) in the summer of 2022, shortly after the launch in late 2021 of *Films*, an album of hybrid acoustic electronica (Tower by the Sea Records).

**Gary Golio '81** (Visual Arts) has a new book, *Everywhere Beauty is Harlem: The Vision of Photographer Roy DeCarava* (Calkins Creek/ Astra Publishing), available for pre-order before its publication in early 2024. The book explores DeCarava's portrayal of the people of his Harlem hometown as dignified, remarkable human beings, whether they were jazz luminaries or passersby on the street.

**Karen Veder Peck '82** (Psychology) has a new novel, *The Memories Between Us* (5310 Publishing), that was published in May. This time travel romance, set in contemporary New York City, is a work of speculative fiction about love across parallel universes, crossing the line between perception and reality, and holding onto faith in the transcendence of love.

**Laura Goldsmith VonDracek '85** (Literature) began her career in children's book publishing before transitioning to law and becoming an attorney for New York State. She then became a professional ceramist, creating dinnerware for the famed Nobu Restaurants. Most recently, she self-published her book *Jemma and the Mermaid's Call*, featuring a spunky mermaid who, along with her marine friends, clean up the oceans.

**Richard Mirabella '02** (Creative Writing) published his debut novel, *Brother & Sister Enter the Forest* (Catapult) in March 2023. The story of a sudden reunion of estranged siblings that led to an overdue reckoning with past trauma was featured in a *New York Times* book review.

**Andrea Janov '05** (Creative Writing) has published her second poetry collection, *Short Skirts and Whiskey Shots* (Earth Island Books). This collection is deeply rooted in the people of New York City. Celebrating the dirty streets, the beer-soaked nights, and those who sweat liquor, it explores the idiosyncrasies, the innocence, and the excesses of the city—on the streets, in the subway, in the tenements, and in the bars and clubs.

**Elizabeth R. Hyman '11** (History & Journalism) has a new book deal with HarperCollins to produce a work of narrative history titled *The Girl Bandits of the Warsaw Ghetto: a Female Military History of the Warsaw Ghetto and its Uprising*.

**Emily Ruth Verona '12** (Creative Writing & Cinema Studies) has a debut thriller, *Midnight on Beacon*, that will be published by Harper Perennial in winter 2024. The novel is about a babysitter who loves horror movies and must overcome her own anxiety to protect the two children she's babysitting when strangers come knocking at the door. Pre-orders are available on major platforms. Staying on theme, Emily has also launched a horror book website called *Frightful*.

## Reporting

**TJ Raphael '11** (Journalism) is a seasoned audio journalist whose critically acclaimed programs have reached millions of listeners. Her latest podcast, *Cover Up: The Pill Plot*, explores the fascinating and frightening true story behind bringing the abortion pill to the U.S. in the 90s. The podcast recently hit #42 in the coveted Apple Podcast Top 200 True Crime chart.



Images:  
**Smiley  
Peck  
Mirabella  
Janov  
Hyman  
Verona**



Images:  
**Beckhorn  
Morales  
Hebert-  
Faergolzia  
Weinbren  
Gilson**

## Educating

**Debra Whitman '91** (Music) is a private piano teacher, professional harpist, and teaching artist. She created the *Classical Kids Music* series to introduce children to the joys of music appreciation. Her coloring book, *Composer Celebration*, accompanies the program and is available online and at independent bookstores throughout the Westchester area.

**Gretchen Beckhorn '96** (Media Studies) continues her continuing professional development and search for a role in media and digital literacy. For now, she is in her 25th year teaching ENL (English as a New Language) and working with refugees and at a public library.

## Practicing Law

**Crismelly Morales '15** (Legal Studies) started her own law practice in Rockland County, NY, focusing on immigration law. She became an adjunct professor for the Legal Studies Department at Rockland Community College in January 2023.

## Making

**Alix Pearlstein '88** (Visual Arts) debuted a commissioned work in the Neuberger Museum of Art's performance art exhibition, *Hard Return*, in February. Her work, *Inventory*, blurred the lines between then and now, self and other, and live and recorded by using improvisational exercises to examine a personal archive of objects from previous artworks—props, structures, gestures—with a group of student actors.

**Abigail Doan McEnroe '89** (Visual Arts) is an environmental artist whose performative arts and installation project, *Walking Libraries AD*, was featured in the exhibition *Incantatio Mundi* during Romanian Creative Week 2022. Her ongoing work in environmental outreach and preservation includes projects in rural communities in the U.S. as well as in Italy and Eastern Europe.

**Melissa Rodriguez '13** (Cinema Studies) wrote and directed the short film *Helado*, which premiered earlier this month at the Festival of Cinema NYC and took home the Audience Choice Award. The film will next appear in Mexico City at *Shorts México*, the largest international short film festival in Latin America. It has been invited to screen at the TCL Chinese Theatre in L.A. as part of the *HollyShorts* festival.

## Composing+Recording

**Seth Hebert-Faergolzia '98** (Music) is a songwriter, producer, manager, booking agent, and DIY musician. In 2022, he revisited the late 90s/early 2000s while also working on present-day music to create and release a 12-album series entitled *12 for 22*, with solo works and unreleased tracks from his Purchase project, *Dufus*. In addition, he continues to work on his puppet-opera-film, *Moon Shaped Head*, plus promotional solo tours and new music videos while living in Rochester, NY.

**Oren Neiman '04** (Music Performance) released his new trio album, *Serenity Now*, in July 2023 on all major streaming services. It features Neiman on guitar with fellow Purchase alumnus **Nadav Snir-Zelniker '02** (Music) on drums and Daniel Ori on bass. The album is Neiman's 3rd as a bandleader.

**Cas Weinbren '10** (Music: Studio Composition), an award-winning, multi-million streamed keyboardist, composer, and multi-genre music producer, recently scored two songs for *Zombies 3* on Disney+: *I'm Finally Me* and *Utopia*. Cas has collaborated with Statik Selektah, Action Bronson, Joey Bada\$\$, 2 Chainz, Black Thought, ASCAP Award winner Kari Kimmel, and more.

## Performing

**Jon Glenn Berger '83** (Music) is a drummer who has played on 23 Broadway shows; his work off-Broadway with *Romeo and Bernadette* led to a *New York Times* Critic's Pick. He also worked with Aretha Franklin, Michelle Shocked, Gloria Gaynor, and Petula Clark, and toured the U.S. with the Roy Orbison & Buddy Holly Hologram Tour. He recently performed in music and dance festivals in New York City; Raleigh, NC; and in Yerevan, Armenia with the Armenian State Symphony.

**Emily Gilson '12** (Drama Studies & History) joined the Screen Actors' Guild in 2022 and makes her feature film debut this fall in *Rustin* for Netflix. Directed by six-time Tony winner George C. Wolfe, the film stars Colman Domingo, Audra McDonald, Chris Rock, and an all-star Hollywood lineup.

## Making Moves

**Bobby (Robert) Score '77** (Acting) recently retired as the Recording-Corresponding Secretary of IATSE Local-1 after serving for 18 years, and as a member of the stage crew at the New York State Theater for 27 years. He continues to serve on the Entertainment Community Fund Human Services Committee and the Emerald Diamond International Baseball Executive Board. He has had two short stories published in the *MSKCC Visible Ink Journal*. Bobby is married to **Haviland Morris '82** (Theatre Arts).

**Matt Bessell '82** (History) retired from the Veterans Administration after more than three decades as a clinical social worker. Matt says that he and his artist husband of 41+ years, Peter, are "rocking retirement."

**Charles E. Shuler '94** (Sociology) has devoted 25 years of service to the State of New York and plans to retire in another five years. He says, "If it was not for the great education I got from one of the best colleges in America, SUNY Purchase, this march to retirement would not be possible."

**Tovah O'Rourke Olson '00** (History) is now Vice President of Strategy and News Analytics at Gannett/USA Today Network. At the nation's largest newspaper company, Tovah leads a team of talented news analytics experts whose prescriptive guidance drives decision-making on everything from new beats to new products and hiring across hundreds of newspapers.

**Adam McHeffey '10** (Liberal Studies) was named Chief Marketing Officer at Artiphon, a music technology company that makes hardware and software instruments allowing anyone to make music; he manages a team of 12. Adam is married to **Kari Spieler '10** (Music Production). They live in the Hudson Valley with two children.

**Caitlin Christian-Lamb '09** (History) has begun a new position as an Assistant Professor of Professional Practice in Archival Studies at Louisiana State University. She teaches graduate courses in LSU's School of Information Studies and advises master's students while continuing her PhD program at the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies.

**Natalia Yepes-Lutchman '11** (Dance) is the new owner and director of Astoria Dance Center, where she grew up dancing. After graduating from Purchase, Natalia found her passion for teaching and spent many years as an instructor at the Center. As successor to founder Maureen Gelchion, she hopes to continue the legacy of the place where she discovered her passion for dance.

**Lauren Doty Brown '12** (Political Science) was recently appointed commissioner to the Massachusetts State Commission on LGBTQ Youth. The Commission advises others in state government on effective policies, programs, and resources for LGBTQ youth; issues annual recommendations; and holds community events and listening sessions.

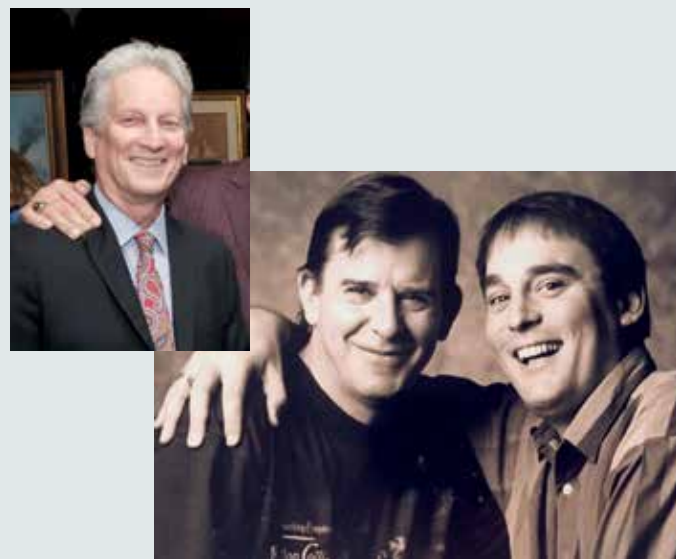
**Cheyenne A. Hutchinson Myrie '17** (Arts Management) is now Director of Individual Giving and Special Events at Signature Theatre.

## Helping Heal

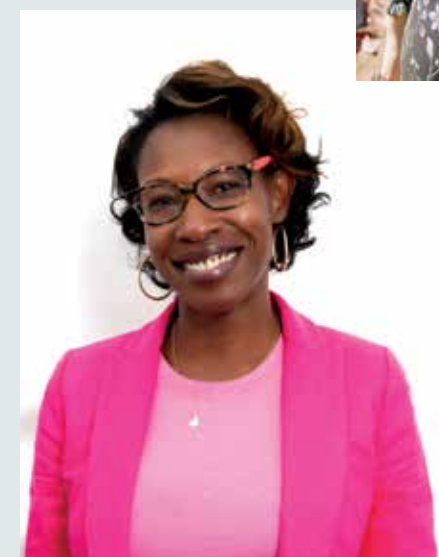
**Robert A. Herman, MD '79** (Chemistry) is a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of severe mental illness, including bipolar disorder, depression, and PTSD. He is active in the profession, testifying before the Maryland State Legislature about bills that affect mental health. He has three grown daughters and 11 grandchildren and is the bass section leader of the Baltimore Bach Choir.

**Natasha Atkins '02, MSW, MA** (Liberal Arts) is an award-winning social worker committed to transforming mental health care for K-12 students. She is the pioneer of neuro-trauma-informed social work and founder of Projekt 48, an organization that is transforming mental health care for K-12 students in the South Bronx through programs such as The Hunts Point Alliance for Children's *Ballet in the Bronx*.

**Marissa Joseph Schaeffer '11** (Dance), PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS, opened FlySpace, a physical therapy and strength and conditioning clinic on the Upper West Side of Manhattan that caters to performing artists from Broadway to ballet, both in-clinic and in-studio. FlySpace is the official provider for the Steps on Broadway Conservatory Dancers and HopeBoykinDance, and has provided therapy services for Roundabout Theatre Company, Saint Ann's Warehouse, and countless dance companies.



Images:  
**Score**  
**Bessell**  
**Shuler**  
**O'Rourke Olson**  
**McHeffey**  
**Christian-Lamb**



Images:  
**Yepes-Lutchman**  
**Doty Brown**  
**Atkins**  
**Schaeffer**  
**Fitzsimmons**

## In Memoriam

**Thomas William Kish '74** (Philosophy) passed away peacefully with his beloved family at his side on March 31, 2023, following a long, hard-fought battle against cancer. He was 72. A kind and generous soul, Tom joined the Marine Corps at 17 and was deployed to Vietnam. After graduating from Purchase College, he embarked on a successful 30-year career in sales and engineering at Exxon-Mobil. He was a faithful servant of God and an avid reader of history and philosophy, having collected thousands of books in his lifetime.

**Jay Schulkin '77** (Philosophy) passed away on March 17, 2023, at age 70 of hepatic cancer. According to his wife, April Oliver, "He had a smile on his face and a tear in his eye—completely at peace." He was a behavioral neuroscientist, a philosopher, and a public policy commentator. At the time of his death, he was finishing his 40th book. After Purchase, Jay went on to graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania, first entering its PhD program in philosophy and later finishing with a PhD in anatomy and neuroscience, with a special focus on brain mechanisms of sodium appetite.

**Stephen E. To '85** (Biology) died on July 15, 2023, after a six-year battle with cancer. In Stephen's own words, "You can say I gave it a good fight and kept my humor up." He worked 11 years as a lab technician at Cornell University Medical College and The Rockefeller University in New York City before returning to school for an MBA at Fordham University. Later, he switched careers to medical writing and advertising, working directly for the pharmaceutical industry on new medical therapies for cancer.

**Judith Babson Werben '83** (Language and Culture) passed away on July 25, 2023. She was 89. A longtime resident of Greenwich, CT, and Rye, NY, Judy had a gift for languages and was fluent in Italian, Spanish, and French. She also spoke some Dutch and was learning Portuguese. She was a creative writer and avid reader and loved to garden and do genealogy research on her family.

**Kathryn M. Mullins '89** (Literature) passed away peacefully on July 18, 2023. She was 62. After graduating from Purchase, she began her career at the White Plains Library. Unfortunately, her career was cut short due to her illness. She was a kind-spirited soul who had many passions including photography, being out in nature, and literature.

**Lauren Michelle Fitzsimmons '04** (Theatre Design Technology) died suddenly from glioblastoma on Feb. 21, 2023. She was 42. The loving partner of Andris Kasparovics '96 (Theatre Design Technology), Lauren had a 19-year career as a freelance art director and production designer for TV and film in New York City and Los Angeles. She was a member of USA Local-829 IATSE and the Art Directors Guild.

# Faculty & Staff Pursuits

## A

**Joel Neville Anderson**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies and Film, received the Purchase College Student Engagement Award for 2022. His essay, *Tracing Pre-Histories of Nuclear Disaster Between Japan and Unceded Territories of North America: On Takeuchi Kota's Blind Bombing*, Filmed by a Bat (2020), was published in the exhibition catalog for **TAKEUCHI Kota: Tokyo Contemporary Art Award: 2021-2023**, edited by Ryohei Koya. The exhibition was presented in 2023 by Tokyo Arts and Space at the Museum of Contemporary Art, operated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture. For the return of JAPAN CUTS: Festival of New Japanese Film, Anderson moderated the Q&A for the centerpiece presentation, *Under the Turquoise Sky*, with director Kentaro and actor Yuya Yagira on August 4, 2023. Anderson also provided introductions and led post-screening discussions in the Japan Foundation-supported Summer 2023 Japanese Film Series at KinoSaito, an arts center in Verplanck, NY, rooted in the creation and practice of abstract art committed to nurturing experimentation in every form and medium.

## B

**Christian Bailey**, Associate Professor of History, recently published *German Jews in Love: A History*. The book was featured on the *Conversations in World History* podcast and in an essay for the Jewish Book Council, "Love Stories from German Archives." Events in conjunction were held at the CUNY Graduate Center and the UC San Diego Library.

**Beanie Barnes**, Visiting Professor of Film, was part of a legal team, courtesy of Northeastern University's Civil Rights & Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) and Northwestern University's Center for Wrongful Convictions. The team presented a petition to the State of Illinois' Pardon and Parole Board seeking a posthumous pardon for Joe James, a young Black man convicted and hanged following an unjust trial in Springfield, IL, in 1908. The arrest of James led to a destructive anti-Black race riot that re-shaped the state of Illinois and

which was omitted from state and national history books. In 2018, Barnes, a screenwriter with an MBA from Yale University, unearthed what happened to Jones and spent months writing, contextualizing, and building the current Wikipedia page on the events that led to the young man's death. After her research, she built a case proving James' unjust demise. She approached the CRRJ, which brought on Northwestern in 2021. Governor Pritzker will make his determination this fall. Barnes also was a keynote speaker at Yale University. She spoke at the School of Management as part of its Council on Anti-Racism and Equity's Ogilvie Colloquium about breaking barriers, what it means to be a leader for business and society, and the dehumanizing history and nature of the word "productivity."

## C

**Darrah Carr**, Assistant Professor and Interim Director of Dance, was commissioned by the Irish Arts Center to create a new work for the opening season of its new \$60 million venue in Manhattan. Carr collaborated with choreographer Seán Curran and Irish musicians Dana Lyn and Kyle Sanna on *Céili*. Their September 2022 run was sold out, and they toured to Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in July 2023. *Céili* will enjoy a return engagement at the Irish Arts Center in December 2023. In October 2022, Carr presented her research at the Dance Studies Association conference in Vancouver and the National Dance Education Organization conference in Atlanta.

## D

**Alexandra Dos Santos**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of College Writing and a Purchase alumna, will have her personal essay published in *Lithub* in early October. The essay, "Whatever Walked There, Walked Alone: How *The Haunting of Hill House* Helped Me Understand My Grief," is a tribute to her mother, who passed away in 2022. In July 2023, Dos Santos' short horror story about familial trauma, "The Living Room Monster," was published in *The Latino Book Review's* 2023 issue. This is Dos Santos's first semester teaching at Purchase and she hopes for many more to come.



Top: **Handley-Byrne**

Middle: **Lin**, *VenusBhtOnth Sprng*, 2019, oil paint and acrylic on mylar, 55.5 x 64 inches.

Bottom: **Dunn**



Top: **Anderson** Essay

Bottom: **Anderson** moderating Q&A for *Under the Turquoise Sky* with director Kentaro, actor Yuya Yagira, and interpreter Tomoko Takedani Sater. Photo by Daphne Youree.



**James Dunn**, Lecturer of Acting and Lecturer of Theatre and Performance, recently premiered as an actor in his latest horror feature, *The Harbinger*, written and directed by Andy Mitton. He just closed the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *Die Zauberflöte* ("The Magic Flute") by Simon McBurney, Artistic Director of Complicité. He is currently co-writing, co-producing, and acting in the first iteration of a new project on immigration and displacement, which had its first development period upstate at the North American Cultural Laboratory's Deep Space Residency in the summer of 2023. Follow Jay's work at JayDunn.co.

## G

**Roni Gross**, Lecturer of Graphic Design, is the recipient of the 2023 Isaac Anolik Jewish Book Arts Award. She will be working on a Letterpress printed edition entitled *As Much as My Daughter*, a new version of the Book of Ruth, which gives primacy to the voices of Ruth and Naomi.

**Elizabeth Guffey**, Professor of Art History, was honored with the Bard Graduate Center's Iris Foundation Outstanding Mid-Career Scholar award on April 26, 2023.

## H

**Keavy Handley-Byrne**, Adjunct Lecturer in Foundations, Art+Design, brings together found images of women with their eyes closed—accidental photographs tossed aside before there was a delete button—in their photo book, *Paper Lighthouse*. "But accident always plays a role in photography," writes Margaret Sartor in her included essay. "It is precisely in the unpredictable and unintentional details of a photograph that the magic of the medium flourishes." *Paper Lighthouse* departs on a wayfinding journey towards Handley-Byrne's grandmother through the interior world behind these women's eyes—a world, as Sartor writes, "as large and unfathomable as the Milky Way."

## J

**David H. Jameson**, Lecturer of Computer Science, continues to tour with multiple bands and just released a major new update of his product, *Gig Performer*, aimed directly towards live performing musicians. [gigperformer.com](http://gigperformer.com)

**Liam Joynt**, Lecturer and Co-Chair of Acting, is the author of a chapter in the March 2023 First-Edition Routledge publication *Vocal Traditions: Training in the Performing Arts*. He is a master teacher, co-creator of the Teacher Certification Program, and contributor to the Miller Voice Method, which is highlighted in the book. *Vocal Traditions: Training in the Performing Arts* explores the 18 most influential voice training techniques and methodologies of the past 100 years. This extensive international collection highlights historically important voice teachers, contemporary leaders in the field, and rising schools of thought. Edited by Rockford Sansom, copyright 2023, published March 21, 2023 by Routledge.

## L

**Elise Lemire**, Professor of Literature, was one of three finalists for the New England Society Book Award in historical nonfiction for her 2021 book *Battle Green, Vietnam: The 1971 March on Concord, Lexington, and Boston* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). Lemire published "The Violence of the Vietnam War in the Memorialized American Landscape" in *The Public History Landscape of Violence and Public Memory*, edited by Martin Blatt (Routledge, chapter 13, June 2023). Her op-ed "What Russian Soldiers and Vietnam Veterans Share" was published by History News Network on November 6, 2022. Lemire also published a review of *Relative Races: Genealogies of Interracial Kinship in Nineteenth-Century America*, by Brigitte Felder, in *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 39.2 (2022): 139-141.

**Cynthia Lin**, Associate Professor of Painting, was featured in the group show *Satellite and Sediment*, which included a catalog and artist's talk, at the Feigenbaum Center for Visual Arts at Union College in Schenectady, NY, January 3-March 10, 2023. She also contributed an image to *Luis Camnitzer: Monuments to Unknown Heroes*, on view at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH, April 28-September 24, 2023.

## M

**Jeanine Meyer**, Professor Emerita of Mathematics/Computer Science, recently had two books updated: *Programming 101: Learn to Code with the Processing Language Using a Visual Approach*, second edition, in 2022; and *The Essential Guide to HTML5, Using Games to Learn HTML5*, third edition, in 2023 (Apress). Meyers also gave a series of origami workshops at the New Castle Senior Center in Chappaqua, NY in February and March 2023. This followed a series offered on Zoom in 2022. She will give a short set of origami sessions using Zoom as a continuing education course for Riderwood, a senior living facility in Maryland, in January 2024.

**Phil Moffa '02, MM '10**, Lecturer of Music, released *Second Foundation* on Love Injection Records in May. The EP features remixes of his works by four former students: **Zianni Orange '23**, **Alexander Dell '21**, **Adrian Mojica '15**, and **Evan Shornstein '15**. This summer, Moffa performed at the Glastonbury Festival in the U.K. and Kappa Futur Festival in Turin, Italy with Lost Souls of Saturn, his collaborative multimedia project with Seth Troxler. This fall, Moffa will perform with retired professor **Joel Thome** (Composition) on November 11 at FiveMyles Gallery in Brooklyn; the premiere coincides with the release of their album *Event Horizon*.

## N

**Djordje Nesic**, Lecturer in Opera, conducted the opera *Svadba* by the Serbian-Canadian composer Ana Sokolović in April 2023 at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM). In May, he coached and performed the world premiere reading of the opera *She Who Dared* by Jasmine Barnes (music) and Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton (libretto) at MSM, organized by the American Lyric Theater. In June and July, he taught, coached, and performed at the Opera Saratoga summer festival for his ninth season, working on Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*.

## P

**Lenka Pichlíková-Burke**, Theatre and Performance, has contracted with Routledge, the British publisher of professional and academic books, to publish a two-volume work on the pedagogy of Michael Chekhov. Chekhov was a Russian actor, theatre director, and teacher who brought a revised version of Stanislavsky's acting method to England and America. Chekhov's psycho-physical acting technique has inspired three generations of actors on stage and in films. Excerpts from Pichlíková's dissertation on the same subject are currently in the press in a Czech translation. Pichlíková also took 10 students from the Theatre and Performance, Conservatory BFA Acting, Playwriting and Screenwriting, Journalism, English and Global Literatures, Communication, and History programs to Prague for three weeks in July as part of a six-credit study abroad course entitled Political Theatre in Prague. The course focused on East Central European countries in the Communist bloc from the 1940s to 1989, especially the political writings and plays of Václav Havel. The group performed two one-act plays and one act of a full-length play by Havel, in part using techniques they learned from Pichlíková in the Michael Chekhov method. The students were **Nolan Cleary**, **Fernando Coronado**, **Milly Garcia Arias**, **Alexa Gialleonardo**, **Arthur Goady**, **Roxanne Guyton-Von Eck**, **Benjamin Lind**, **Em Stern**, **Katarina Tobits**, and **Wren Woodward-Aviles**.

**Jason Pine**, Professor of Media Studies and Anthropology, had his research and plans to build an ecological-focused, multidisciplinary residency in Vaðlaheiði, in northern Iceland, profiled in the Sunday edition of Iceland's most popular daily newspaper, *Morgunblaðið*.

**Nicolette Polek**, Lecturer of Creative Writing, published a poem in *The Atlantic* titled "Outdoor Day" and a short essay in *The Paris Review*. She also completed an MA in religion and literature at Yale Divinity School.

**Edward Pomerantz**, Associate Professor of Screenwriting, was winner of Best Feature Script or Screenplay (main category) for *The Girl With The Blue Guitar* at the Beyond the Curve International Film Festival in Paris in June 2023.



Top: **Pichlíková-Burke's** students backstage and on the stage of the Theatre on the Balustrade in Prague, 2023.

Middle: **Moffa, Second Foundation** (album artwork by Hisham Akira Bharoocha).

Bottom: **Pine** feature article published on August 20, 2023.



Top: Booth design by Bryan Ellingson.

Middle: **Wharmby's** artwork *No Cool*, 2023, acrylic paint on paper, 3 x 2.5 x 3 inches.

Bottom: **Stafford**. Amanda Centeno in the Tank's *Behind the Attic Wall* at Vassar College's Powerhouse Theater. Photo by Buck Lewis.

## S

**Susan Shopmaker**, Lecturer of Acting, is a casting director in New York City and teaches 4th year The Business of Acting. Recent work includes casting Alexander Payne's *The Holdovers*, with Paul Giamatti and newcomer Dominic Sessa, opening November 2023; Michel Franco's *Memory*, with Jessica Chastain and Peter Sarsgaard, premiering at the Venice Film Festival in 2023; and Sean Durkin's *The Iron Claw*, with Zac Efron, Jeremy Allen White, and Harris Dickinson, opening December 2023. She cast John Slattery's film *Maggie Moore(s)*, starring Purchase grads **Micah Stock** and **Oona Roche**, which was released in summer of 2023. Television work includes the Amazon series *Dead Ringers* with Rachel Weisz, Britne Oldford, Poppy Liu, and Purchase alumni **Cici Koueth**, **Diata Coleman**, and **MacKenzie Greer**; and Terence Nance's *Random Acts of Flyness* for HBO, starring Purchase graduates **Alicia Pilgrim**, **Ta'Neesha Murphy**, **Jason Ralph**, **Claudia Logan**, and **Aja Dier**. Shopmaker was recently invited to be a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences.

**Paul Siegel**, Professor of Psychology, was awarded a SUNY Research Seed Grant to develop a potential new intervention for U.S. combat veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder. The intervention involves repeated subliminal exposure to trauma-related imagery, based on the paradigm that Paul has developed in his lab with senior psychology majors and recent graduates since 2007. SUNY Research Seed Grants provide funding to support SUNY faculty pursuing extramural grants that are a strategic priority. Awards are made annually through a competitive request for proposals process. Siegel also recently published a commentary article in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, one of the most high-impact journals across the sciences. The article is about the maladaptive scripts that people unconsciously live by.

**Bettijane Sills**, Professor, Conservatory of Dance, had two performances of her ballet *Masquerade*, originally choreographed in 2009 and staged for the Purchase Dance Company in 2011, performed by the New Jersey Ballet. The first was presented on May 15, 2022, at the Mitchell and Ann Sieminski Theater in Basking Ridge, NJ, followed by a performance at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown on May 22, 2022. In this graceful neoclassical ballet danced to Khachaturian's *Masquerade*, dancers glide across the stage where masks inject a hint of mystery.

**Peggy Stafford**, Assistant Professor of Playwriting, wrote *Behind the Attic Wall*, adapted from the novel by Sylvia Cassedy and performed at the Powerhouse Theater at Vassar College on July 28 - July 30, 2023. Play description: When orphaned 12-year-old Maggie Turner is sent to live with her two great-aunts in an old, empty boarding school, she is bereft and alone. Soon she is called to the attic by two china dolls, building a world that is at once intricate and theatrical—a place where she finds friendship and a sense of home.

## W

**Gregory Wharmby**, Lecturer of Visual Arts, has work included in the 2023 SPRING/BREAK Art Show in curator Bryan Ellingson's *Doomsday Clock in a Box*. The work, a selection from his "Former Smoker" series, will be shown along with work by Bryan Ellingson, Milly Skellington, Agony Starlight, and Jennifer Blaine. SPRING/BREAK Art Show is an internationally recognized exhibition platform using underused, atypical, and historic New York City exhibition spaces to activate and challenge the traditional cultural landscape of the art market, typically but not exclusively during Armory Arts Week. Wharmby, a Purchase graduate (MFA/MA/M+), is primary instructor of AOA 1000 Discovering the Arts and Curatorial Manager for the School of Art+Design at Purchase College.

## Z

**J.D. Zeik '82**, Assistant Professor of Screenwriting and Film, did the production draft for *Shadow Land*, a film that shot in May of this year, produced by SP Media, and filmed at Nu Boyana Studios in Bulgaria. It stars Academy Award winner Jon Voight, Martin Csokas (*The Equalizer*, *The Lord of the Rings*), and Rhona Mitra (*The Last Ship*).



**Purchase College**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

735 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577-1400  
914.251.6054  
alumni@purchase.edu  
proof.purchase.edu

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