Welcome to the second issue of Artsphere, HM’s performing arts magazine, now printed in colour!

Inspired by HM’s Black Box Production of Eugene Ionesco’s Rhinoceros, Artsphere presents our readers with a provocative choice.

As our world spins further into a vortex of political, economic, climatic, and social turmoil, will you stake your position in the body of the beast or the mind of the human?

Our two covers, with no designated front and back, are equivalent in weight, size and design. we invite you to consider the choice taken and reflect on the divergent paths ahead – its moral ramifications and its social consequences.

Similarly, the articles in our current issue also grapple with choices and divides. They present the arts as a vibrant way to confront and overcome alienation, be it of technological change, biological breakdown, ideological oppositions or political differences.

On a physical level, this issue seeks to play on a convention. We wish to enliven the reading of printed matters – usually a stationary act – into a movement. We want to literally flip your view on engagement and absorption. You, the reader, can only access the full contents through two 180 degrees rotations of the magazine – or a flip over the horizontal axis. As you take on the magazine, Artsphere becomes a body in dance; it is turned front and back, marking lines and drawing circles in space. Our inaugural issue, in bold and dynamic graphic design, made our pages a stage. Our second issue now seeks to make the magazine itself into an interactive performance – enacted by you.

The German dramatist-director Bertolt Brecht once made his audience conscious of theatre as an artifice through alienating effects. Perhaps Artsphere could make our reader self-conscious in their act of reading the textual plays of this magazine?

With In Dialogue, we have the honor of interviewing Tod Machover, one of the most visionary, innovative and technologically engaged music composers of our time. As Muriel R. Cooper Professor of Music and Director of Opera of the Future Group at MIT Media Lab, Tod has been crossing the divide between music and technology for more than three decades. We publish the first section of our extensive interview with Tod here, centering on how he employs technology in the service of humanity in the field of music. Tod also shares his personal journey in musical explorations from his toddler years, through his rock’n roll youth, to his current projects which have become communal ventures that champion the concept of “active music” on the world stage.

With Portrait of an Artist, we speak with Zhang Zhen Xin, the choreographer of The National Ballet of China. Zhang shares his optimism for dance as diplomacy as he recounts his journey from being a young student of classical Chinese dance to become a principal dancer and now choreographer of China’s national ballet troupe. Artsphere catches Zhang for this exclusive interview right after the debut of “Crane Calling” in “Fall for Dance” festival in New York City.

With Frontiers, we examine the vanguards of the performing arts domain, exploring intersections with fields such as technology, the environment, culture, and politics through research and personal experience. With Creative Minds, we tap into the brains and lives of individual artists at Horace Mann. With Beyond the Curtains, we have the opportunity to showcase the hidden journeys of a production.

A big thank you to all of the artists who contributed to Artsphere in support of our second issue.

My heartfelt thanks to our advisor Mr. Timkó, for inspiring Artsphere to probe deeper the inner workings of creative arts through rigorous inquiries across disciplines. For this issue of Artsphere, his Black Box Production of Rhinoceros by Eugène Ionesco has made all the difference!

Sincerely,

Kyra Mo
Editor-in-Chief
FRONTIERS

VANGUARDS OF THE ARTS
In the technologically-dominated world in which we live in today, this is a topic we struggle with now. Art has been defined as a form of human expression, and a demonstration of the creative skill and imagination humanity has developed and achieved - coming straight from the dictionary. However, we have seemingly crossed those limits today, when the Portrait of Edmond Belamy was sold at an art auction, in October 2018. The work sold for $432,500 on auction at Christie’s, but that is not the most surprising fact - this work was not made by any human, rather a computer. The portrait is part of a batch of works released by a Paris-based group, Obvious Art. Members Hugo Caselles-Dupré, Pierre Fautrel, and Gauthier Vernier created a fictitious Belamy family, to create a total of eleven portraits all done by a machine.

“COMPUTERS ARE USELESS. THEY CAN ONLY GIVE ANSWERS.”
- PABLO PICASSO

Is that really true anymore? Less than fifty years past his death, that famous quote seems to be completely false now. However, more importantly, is that dictionary definition of art as “human expression” valid anymore? If not, what is the new definition? Is there one?

Caselles-Dupré, Fautrel, and Vernier used a machine learning algorithm called a “Generative Adversarial Network” to create this batch of art. Essentially, there are two algorithms working against each other - one to make a work of art, and one to detect if it was made by a human or not. And, as you may have guessed, the detection device, called the “discriminator”, eventually failed to correctly sort some of the works. Of course, this detector is not as good as the human eye, but several of the portraits released seem perfectly reasonable to have been made by a person. Richard Lloyd, an art expert at Christie’s, said that, while this art was not made by a person, “it is exactly the kind of artwork we have been selling for 250 years.”
The algorithm they used was not new - in fact, Obvious themselves said that the code they used to generate the portrait was modified from code borrowed from Robbie Barrat, who wrote it originally a year ago.

In 2015, researchers at Rutgers University, Babak Saleh and Ahmed Elgammal, began to dabble into the crossover between art and artificial intelligence. Over 80,000 images by more than 1,000 artists over 15 centuries were used in an experiment to test if machines could distinguish between artists and styles. 27 different styles were used, each with over 1,500 works included.

The machine could impressively identify the artist in over 60% of the test images and the style in over 45% of the images.

The numbers seem comparatively low; however, after analyzing the machine’s results more carefully, the mistakes are explainable and even humanlike. The algorithm made connections between similar artists/styles, where most people would take a lot of time to differentiate as well - Claude Monet and Childe Hassam, who was influenced by Monet, or expressionism and fauvism, which is a type of expressionism. This algorithm has then proved to become a useful tool for art historians because many of the connections may be new and unexplored for them. Obvious brought this to the next stage, using examples of art to make their own art.

These machine artists and art historians are simply the beginning of this unprecedented new era of art. Many ask if the portraits by Obvious should even be considered as art. If a human didn’t make it, is it even debatable? Art is both defined and perceived as something thoughtfully and intricately created by humans for the enjoyment and critique of humans - is it possible for machines to enter this human conversation dating from millennia ago?
of us take basic movement, such as getting out of bed, walking, and even sitting down, for granted. But people with Parkinson’s disease can’t rely on their bodies to do these basic activities. Parkinson’s disease is a type of movement disorder and it affects the nerve cells in the brain that produce dopamine. As the disease progresses and the levels of dopamine decrease, the symptoms of Parkinson’s such as tremors, rigidity, and slowness of movement will become more apparent. The connection between the mind and the body of a person with Parkinson’s is broken. There are drugs that can help alleviate the symptoms, but they don’t always work.

Exercising can also help recover the mobility of patients and one of the most creative and promising type of physical therapy turns out to be dancing. 

**Dance for PD** is a worldwide program that offers dance classes to patients with Parkinson’s in 24 countries. It was founded 15 years ago in Brooklyn, NY and since then, many universities have been introduced to it. One being Stanford University. On the Stanford Medicine website, they describe the Dance for PD as a group artistic experience rather than a dance class.

“Teachers use elements of classic and social dancing, together with imagery, poetry and live music, to inspire participants to move in creative ways.” These dance sessions not only help build patients’ upper/lower body strength and enhance balance and coordination skills, but they can also uplift a patient’s mood. 20-40 percent of patients with Parkinson’s have depression or anxiety, and dancing can help mitigate these mental illnesses. Sherry Brown, a patient who suffers from Parkinson’s, said that she went through a “grieving period” when she was diagnosed with the disease. She began to miss out on social events because of exhaustion and she “fell into despair”. **Dance for PD** has helped Brown improve herself both physically and mentally and she, along with many patients, think that dancing has helped them overcome challenges that they thought would have never been possible.
IN DIALOGUE

TOD MACHOVER

Music Composer, Innovator, and Educator
Muriel R. Cooper Professor of Music Media, MIT Media Lab

WITH KYRA MO
Can you share with us how you arrived at this concept of “Active Music”?

When I was little, music was a kind of “total activity”. My dad was one of the first people in computer graphics, very involved with technology and creativity. My mom went to Juilliard, was a music teacher, and is still a pianist. I was her oldest son and her guinea pig. She believed always that along with learning to play and learning about music, everyone should create music. When I was two or three, we would have our lessons, and she would have four or five kids stay after lesson, and would say, “Everybody, I give you a few minutes and look through the house and find something that makes an interesting sound.” We would bring back things like pots and pans, books or lamps. She would ask, “What sound does that make, and what is the loudest sound and softest sound you can make with that, and what if you play them at the same time? Let's make a story with this. Which would be a piece, and what comes first. When you go home for the week, make a picture of what we just did, and so when you come back next week, you can remember and play it again.” What a great experience to have grown up with that!

Being creative about music is very important. In a way, traditional performance is always taught by learning how someone else has done or composed or technically performed. My mom taught us that music is not just a system that has been inherited, but that you can make your own music, you can collect things around the house. The way human beings make systems is part of the creative process. I just took that for granted when little. I also took for granted, people learn different ways. I have two daughters. My older daughter learns by all principles and theories first, integration after. My younger daughter will dive right in without all the required knowledge and learn along the way. If you have something you are passionately doing, you can find your own path to learn what you need to learn. That's the way I happen to learn, and I always try to encourage people to do that too.

As a music composer, an inventor, and an educator for more than thirty years, you have been at the forefront of engaging people with music across many ethnicities, cultures, and countries. From your work such as City Symphony and Brain Opera, we see you blurring the traditional lines between the creator and the audience. Can you talk more about how you see the role of the individual composer versus the collective creator in music?

Being involved actively with music makes it more personal, more powerful and more immediate. So much of art in our world has become ritualistic, that our experience of it is too often passive, like wallpaper. We have to change that.
Music is basic, fundamental and natural for human beings, it seems. At the same time, it's also kind of snobby because you do need a certain expertise and training, and that leads to a sense that only special people can do it. It becomes intimidating and we put art on a pedestal even in the coolest environment. It's really important to show that art is part of life; the closer we can feel to it, the bigger the impact.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US HOW AND WHY YOU STARTED INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC MAKING?

When I went to Juilliard, I went there as a composer. I wanted to write instrumental music. I grew up as a cellist, then wired my cello so I could have a rock band in high school. But when I got to Juilliard, I intended to write purely instrumental music. As it happens, I started imagining really crazy stuff, either multi-layered and complex, or timbrally bizarre and impossible to play with traditional instruments. I remember writing a string trio, for example that was basically impossible to play.

But then a light bulb went off in my head and I remembered all the fundamental experiments my dad's companies had been doing with figuring out how to display and manipulate images on cathode ray tube computers. So I found a teacher at Juilliard (no one there was interested in computer music at the time) who connected me with CUNY Graduate Center, where I learned to program in Fortran and started my experiments, making models of my instrumental pieces to convince performers to play them, or creating new sounds that didn't exist in the physical world.

Technology, software in particular, has become the universal language of our time. They allow us to develop things that don’t already exist. These tools allow us to take something directly from our imagination and to make it real. Once I realized this possibility, this power, I never looked back.

DO YOU THINK TECHNOLOGY LIBERATES OR CONFINES MUSIC?

When I talk to young composers, I always warn them that technology has become extremely standardized now, and not always in a good way. Most composers have access to so much software for music production – even apps on a smartphone – that it's much easier to make music on a laptop than on the piano or on paper. The software that exists is not malleable; it's more like a package. Software used to be an open-language, but now it's so powerful but it closed, and does just specific things. It is important to gain the power to shape software to do what you want it to do.

I always try to let my imagination go wherever it needs to go. In fact, it usually goes somewhere bizarre, where the means and materials don't already exist to make things real. So I have to create the whole environment – usually from scratch – for each of my projects. And it turns out that the MIT Media Lab has been the perfect environment for me to do that.

NOWADAYS READILY ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGIES LIKE GARAGEBAND ALLOW US TO DOWNLOAD INTO LAPTOPS AND COMPOSE MUSIC WITHOUT ANY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD SHAPE THE FUTURE OF MUSIC?

That's a big question! I do think that's a funny paradox. Music is part of most people's lives now and we have it playing around us all the time. But we're usually listening with millions of other things going on around us. You talked about the future. I think we all need to cultivate the ability to focus on something. The arts are a powerful way to teach us to truly pay attention, to absorb and assimilate our experiences.

I was out walking early this morning and no one else was out in the woods in western Massachusetts. I could hear a variety of different sounds, little mountains, and water coming in from all over the place. I am usually so busy, I am guilty of this too, and I do a million things at once. Having this one-hour to myself, to listen and turn my head, to hear a different part of the stream at every turn. An overlay of sound...it's so interesting and so beautiful. Listening to a stream is important; truly listening to someone in a conversation – truly hearing that person – is even more important.

John Cage always said that if we could really listen to the world around us, we wouldn't need art or artists. He believed that the arts are a means; they are not the end themselves. The end is to live a full life, to help other people, to be connected to everything and everyone in the world. Perhaps one of the powers of technology will be – paradoxically – to make art a more integrated part of our lives, since technology already is part of everything. If we can make that technology that enhances our sensitivity to – and awareness of – the world around us, rather than numbs or insulates us...now that is really worth doing!

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF AI UPON MUSIC AND IN WHAT WAY DO YOU THINK HUMANS CAN RETAIN THE POWER OF CREATIVITY IN OUR MACHINE-LEARNING AGE?

The most powerful technologies often take us into different directions. AI, of course, has the potential to simulate what it thinks human qualities are or what it thinks our relationships to a particular experience might be. If left to its own devices, however, it could be a terrible thing. Ultimately, we don't want something artificial assuming it knows what we want or what we would like an experience to be. We want smart technology to help us connect with each other, with our world, to enhance something that we care about.

It will be pretty easy for AI to generate music based on existing composition. Spotify has developed a software named the Continuer, for instance. It improves while you're playing by analyzing your prior listening patterns without knowing anything about you or about the music. More and more companies now create music that hasn't been composed by anybody, but instead in the style of an artist or genre. The reason for this development is the elimination of royalty payment to a specific creator.

The only great and interesting thing about art is that it represents somebody, a specific person expressing a personal feeling or an idea about what the world is like. If that connection is missing or is just simulated, it's kind of dangerous. I would rather go out and take a walk to listen to the river, to the sounds of nature, than to listen to something that no one has made.

CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT HOW AND WHY YOU BEGAN DEVELOPING HYPERINSTRUMENTS?

In the 1950s and '60s, people started making sound with computers, thinking that it would be incredible to make any sound in the universe. But when they tried to create a note, it sounded pretty dead. It took a while to understand that there are limits. In one piano note, there are 150 harmonics that vibrate differ-
ently depending on how you play the key. The natural systems are unpredictable, and more much complicated than the technological systems. On physical instruments, there is a vastly rich range in the way you can play a note. Depending on the room temperature, your mouth structure, how much air you put, the physical sound resonates in the physical space in a way that is much more complicated than sounds from loud speakers.

I created Hyperinstruments after being inspired by the complex, layered combination of instrumental and natural sounds in the Sgt. Pepper, Beatles's first album that was made in the studio. It was artificial music, mixed and balanced with all the effects, something that seemed miraculous but paradoxically very direct. It was so complex that you could never actually perform it. But there was something creepy about that. Part of music is having the spontaneity to change what you’re playing, how you feel it, and whom you’re playing with.

Hyperinstruments were my way to put back the spontaneity and the complexity into carefully produced music.

**SO IT’S ADDING ANOTHER DIMENSION OF EXPRESSION ONTO THE TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE. TRANSLATING IT BECOMES ALSO A PROCESS OF TRANSFIGURING MOTION, FEELING AND POWER INTO THE MUSIC.**

Yes! Part of what I try to do is to make it possible for a human being with his or her natural reactions or talents to shape music in the most intuitive way possible, to find the subtlest way to bring out that note. In Toy Symphony, for instance, through touching, squeezing or tapping a ball, we can measure all kinds of gestures and musical behaviors and make the right interface to shape a musical experience, for everyone from children to Yo-Yo Ma. Intelligence is put into the instrument, into the system so we can use our natural ability to shape music to the way we want it. The amount of control you have depends on the amount of experience you have.

**IN YOUR ROBOTIC OPERA, DEATH AND THE POWERS, YOU DEAL WITH DOWNLOADING A HUMAN LEGACY ONTO A MACHINE. HOW DO YOU GRAPPLE WITH THIS IDEA OF HUMAN AUTHENTICITY IN OUR AGE OF THE MACHINES?**

Technology can’t replace people. We want technology to be at our service, to stay out of the way so people can do better. Maybe it’s my age; life is what it is and there are certain things about the human condition that I must accept. It’s a folly and an obsession to desire immortality. How poignant that each of our lives are so textured and detailed. There’s a limit to how much we can convey ourselves to anybody, whether it is to the person we are closest to, let alone across generations.

There’s a movement in California for people to capture everything 24-7 about themselves and archive them for posterity. My question is what if we can do that, who would want that? Do our kids really want to go around and have everything about our ancestors accessible all the time? I think not, actually.

The interesting question for all of us moving forward is what are art and technology for. What is the core of our human experience, what is the core of what we want to share, preserve, and what we would want to let go.

You said so yourself before; music combines so many things, physical movements, motions, and experience. Music is not information. We are trying to get to what we do when we prac-
tice, how we learn to simplify and how we get to the essence of all these details that is at the core of something authentic. We're not accurately approximating 100,000 things at once – like AI algorithms do – but instead, 10-20 things. We figure out how these more essential elements relate to each other.

What do you think is unique about music as opposed to other forms of artistic expression?

Music can be verbal but it's not really story telling. It's closer to poetry, setting off one word for many associations. Wordless music engages our emotions and also our intelligence. I agree with what the AI pioneer Marvin Minsky, one of my big heroes, once said, "Music involves more aspects of your brain than any other phenomenon." Music is a way to practice and rehearse your real life, without danger, without exposing yourself. You can play a piece that is the most personal and deepest thing about yourself, without [uttering] a word. It's just distant enough. Just to follow, without thinking, you're making proportions in your mind. You're remembering something you're comparing. You're not doing it consciously. They are just natural mental processes, just like expressing something emotionally without words.

If you think through music, you'll never have the wrong answer. No one can tell you that you listened to it the wrong way. Music can compress a whole feeling, a whole lifetime, a whole experience. To experience it fully, your emotions are given a workout.

But music could be so attractive that it becomes dangerous. With headphones on all day, you can have all these experiences without any relationship to the real world. This is why we are trying to shake people out of what music has become. It's important to take the qualities of what we appreciate about music and put them back in our real life. Right now, most people don't have the habit to allow others to say a complete thought, absorbing it before we turn to another person. Having a conversation is rare and rarer. We need to use music responsibly.

FOR OUR HORACE MANN READERS, CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DAYS IN FIELDSTON. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAD STARTED A ROCK BAND? WHAT WAS GOING ON IN YOUR MIND AT THAT AGE?

You know, I was choosing between Horace Mann and Fieldston. But Horace Mann wasn't co-ed back then…

AHA, SO YOU WERE LIKE, NOPE, I'M HEADING OVER TO FIELDSTON...

Yes, plus it definitely was slightly more conservative those days! Rock music is remarkable as it's the most immediate, direct way to talk to people. It's a powerful, visceral and immediate communication. Back in those days, I formed this rock band with my best friend in high school, Wesley Strick. He's this absolutely brilliant guy who is now a very successful screenwriter in Hollywood. We were both very lucky to have each other. We were actually good, but not experimental. My dad was a visual guy from the mid-West with his whole family involved in popular culture. My mom, on the other hand, came from upstate New York, with all the European high art. As a teen, I was reading, thinking and interested in all kinds of ideas that were not very popular, things that were still useful and important and which can touch anybody. To combine all that's great about rock bands but create an experience that's extremely subtle was my quest. I was grappling with how difficult it is to combine those worlds. In a way, I still am doing the same today.

Those days, we also had this division between Uptown and Downtown music. Uptown was Milton Babbitt, Elliot Carter, Columbia University and Lincoln Center. That style of music had no traditional harmony, no real melody or musical narrative. Interesting but difficult to listen to. No repetitions. Downtown music was John Cage with his silences, his piano, his "Four Minutes and Thirty Three Seconds." There was a huge divide about what music was for. Was it The Beatles or was it this intellectual thing that made your mind work, a tool to experience the world? I realized in high school that music was all those things, and it had to be all those things, so I wanted to figure out how they can exist in one form. I knew I didn't want to be a rock musician nor a performer. It didn't feel intellectually or creatively stimulating or sophisticated enough.

But the second I got into college I knew I was going to be a composer. It just clicked. I knew in an instant that composing combined everything I loved to do – think, create, feel, interact, isolate, analyze, dream, inspire – and I knew that it would be an activity that was so hard that I would never totally master it in a lifetime. I was sure right about that!!
TOD WITH HIS CELLO DURING THE FIELDSTON DAYS.
What Music are you listening to now?

Every morning when I get up and exercise, I always listen to English vocal music from the 15th and 16th century. It's music from before Henry VIII, through Queen Elizabeth. A lot of it is still not very well known. I have a huge collection of this music on my iPhone, and then just go to iTunes when I need to find something new. England being an island really influenced its culture at that moment. It received all the latest trends from Europe but always a bit late so it developed its perverse way of interpreting and assimilating ideas from the continent. Kind of like Shakespeare who knew a lot of French and Italian literature from a century before him, but he re-interpreted it in a very fresh way. Musically, it was very powerful. It was a period when Europe was abandoning polyphonic music very abruptly, trying to simplify chords and textures mostly so that words could be heard and musical stories could be told. But England allowed both tendencies to exist simultaneously, with gorgeous melodies and innovative harmonies co-existing with crazy, complex textures with strange tangles and surprises at nearly every turn.

I am especially fond of English unaccompanied vocal music of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods, especially William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, two of the greatest composers who ever lived. I listen to this music every morning, since it combines calm and craziness in a very powerful, moving way.

For other listening at the moment, I recently got the remix re-release of The White Album by the Beatles, an album they made when they were breaking apart in 1967. This restored version brings out the raw power of the original, and shows it to have extraordinary music range and a kind of shocking revolutionary energy that feels very modern, very relevant. I'm also listening to some Korean music now since I will be heading over to Korea for a City Symphony project soon. Korea took a lot from China and Japan so it's a bit like England about Europe. Lastly, I've been listening to Mitski's latest album, "Be The Cowboy." Mitski is a very talented singer/songwriter in her mid-20's. She's awesome! She plays fantastic guitar and does most of the electronics and production herself. Her music is direct and simple, but also unusual and strange.

I guess this mixture of simple and complex, calming and crazy, brawny and brainy, is pretty central to everything I truly care about.
10.31.2018

REHEARSALS
RHINO NOIR
As the blocking comes in from the director, the very introduced to a new, often even more intense member of stage crew. The Stage Manager for Rhinoceros, Sarah Sun, was the best stage manager one could ask for. With her thoughtful recommendations and sarcastic quips always at the ready, I and others on stage crew have, much to Sarah's chagrin, become close friends with her, both because of her passion for perfection and dedication to the best possible show. But don't be fooled: no matter how good the stage manager is, you as the lighting designer are the one that has to figure out how to actually execute the vision.

Once I have put up the special lights, lights that are used for very specific scenarios made clear by the show, I move on and meet a new giant in the stage crew world, the Lighting Board Operator. Reena Ye, our lighting board operator, was new at her job, but that didn't stop her from learning quickly and, despite my protests, correcting me in a way I couldn't have survived without. I could not have asked for a closer friend to have helped guide me through this. Now is about the time that the lighting designer chooses color for their lights, a process that takes hours and even then, most of the time, they are redone. As recalled from those in the TPDB class, my original color choices from the front lights rather than inspiring made people look sickly and dying. I, instead of a saturated yellow, used a saturated red, to which the Director commented that the result looked hellish. I got this right on the third try by adding a mild tint of red instead. After all this feedback though the cues still have to be made. This is the hardest part, where I actually say what lights turn on when to create a magical flurry of beauty while the scene moves on before it. And once that is all done, the play is ready. The scene moves on before it, and I hope that the director is pleased with what we've created. She's the one that has to sell the story to the audience, and it's her job to make it all happen. And so, after all these hours, the play is ready. I move on, and we're ready to go.

By Bernard von Simson

Honorable mention in this article goes to:

Sophia Reiss
Ming Hawkins

Despite the tremendous impact they had on me and this experience, I couldn't fit them in the article with out having it run eleven pages long.

Going about designing a lighting plot is not an easy task, to start a deep knowledge and understanding of the play is necessary in order to set the proper lighting highlights. Without this knowledge, a lighting designer has no chance of surviving the cutthroat world of questioning by the technical directors, Joel Sherry, Maya Dubno, perhaps the most intimidating yet kind person at HM, and Naomi Kenyatta, or as I know her, Steoffani. After this, standard knowledge of the world of lighting itself is necessary, mine came from many years of Theatre Production and Design A and then B again (yes, I repeated a class because I liked it so much). Fresnels, zooms, junior zooms, pars, strips, and scoops are just some of the types of lights that are used by lighting designers in order to set mood, tone and highlight a specific character. Added to that is the knowledge of the actual anatomy of each lighting instrument. In a standard light, the source four ellipsoidal, there is a C-clamp, a yolk, or the arm of the instrument, which has the actual light attached. Feel cramped yet? Well that is about a one hundredth of the information a lighting designer has in their brain at any given time to be considered to bring about the vision of playwright or director. And be afraid if you miss the mark or don't set the proper mood, for if you get any wrong at any time, those who know the right answer are there making sure you learn from your mistake *ahem, Ashley Dai*.

Once all that information has been mastered, the lighting designer can actually get to creating what the writer has described in their vision. The first thing the designer must figure out is exactly how to illuminate the space without worrying about the actors and their stance, or blocking at any given time. This is the most critical stage in the lighting process. Having a bad preliminary plot risks having to reset the design entirely. A preliminary plot should have lights coming from all angles, creating the ability to have any light from any angle hit the actor later on. In my order of importance, the lighting angles to consider are: front light, top light, side light, diagonal light, back light, and more. (This is debatable, and may ruffle some feathers in the lighting department...) Each of these directions will create a different feel for the audience, and it is boring to give only one type of light to a scene. After the preliminary plot has been finished, the timeline to completion quickens. Now is not the time of snap decisions and choices; this is the time for well-thought out plans which once made will move the plot forward. I remember the time I stepped on a cue, and the entire lighting plot was reversed. It was a disaster, and I learned a valuable lesson.

Coming about designing a lighting plot is not an easy task, and it requires a deep understanding of the world of theater. But with the right knowledge and dedication, anyone can achieve their dreams.
Lighting a production is one of the pillars of guiding the audience through a play. This subtle manipulation of light connects deeply with mood and drama, creating a world beyond the set. If manipulated effectively, the lighting can be an actor’s best friend.

Is there a lull when actors are simply moving to their next position? A lighting change’s sudden distraction causes the audience to see beyond the concreteness of actors standing before them. Yet the beauty they saw but one scene before. The world of colors and brightness and angles does more than just show them what the actors are; it helps the audience see exactly what they can be.
1. Read the play.

2. No. Read the play again. Think about the tone of the piece. Think about the characters and the roles they play. Think about the setting, time period, and the practicality of the costumes. Pick up on an obscure song lyric in one of the characters' lines and obsess over finding the perfect band shirt.

3. Begin sitting in on rehearsals and taking notes.

4. Write a basic concept statement about the overall design of each play. Make sure to include reasoning for your concept—yes, the characters can be dressed this way, but WHY are they dressed this way? How are the characters connected? Make moodboards for each character.

5. Panic. Meet with Joel and Stew about what to do next. Discuss necessities for costumes regarding blocking and movement.

6. Create a list of costume pieces for each character in lieu of design sketches and begin to pull pieces based on actors' measurements.

7. Fabric and hangouts. Look over your list of choices. Take the largest measure at the costume shop and where other pieces may be needed. Some pieces, however, will need to be scrapped and rethought. Save this list and use it for reference.

8. First round of fittings. See what works and what doesn’t fit on the actors. hemmed down here, a waist taken in there. Some pieces, however, will need to be scrapped and rethought.


10. Second round of fittings. See what works and what doesn’t fit on the actors. hemmed down here, a waist taken in there. Some pieces, however, will need to be scrapped and rethought. Save this list and use it for reference.
During the 2017-2018 HMTC season, I was given the opportunity to design the costumes for two of the Student Written One-Acts.

Working with STEWART LEE (guest artist and costume design mentor), JOEL SHERRY (faculty technical director), and ALEXIS DAHL (director extraordinaire), I developed concepts and costumes for CHARYBDIS and IN A BLINK.
The most demanding week as the schedules were tight and to fit an entire movie in one day required total concentration and cooperation on the part of the different groups. My shooting day was on a Friday and as it was set in my high school's girls' bathroom of Tillinghast, it was a particularly long eight-hour day. My crew consisted of Maggie Brill on both lighting and sound and Julia Roth as my main (and only) actor. Although some directors chose to have actors come in from outside the class, I felt that Julia was really perfect for the role I had written. In addition to my shooting day, I also acted in three other films, one of which included around an hour in the 66th Street subway in 90-degree weather. Now that is not to say that these were not incredibly interesting, fun and bonding experiences. In my opinion, this third week served to give everyone the best idea of what being on a set is really like.

The final week of the program was for editing our footage. This was also a stressful week because we only had a week to cut the scenes together and add sound, but Ms. Rathus really guided us through it and broke it up in a way which was manageable. That Thursday was the Film Festival where friends and family came to see the finished products. After showing the films there was a short Q and A and after this we were officially finished with our programs. Then I came into Ms. Rathus' classroom the first thing I noticed was that I knew no one there, and not one person was even from my grade. Although at first this was definitely concerning, in the end this was one of my favorite parts of the program because it facilitated connections across grades with people I might have otherwise never met. The next four weeks I got to know a lot of my future teachers and I made friends that I still keep in touch with today.

For anyone thinking about participating in HMSFI, I would say that it is definitely worth your time. I had a great time making new friends and learning about film from the wonderful and talented Ms. Rathus. If you can get over the idea of returning to Horace Mann during June and are interested in movies, this program is for you.
This summer I returned to Horace Mann for four weeks to be part of the Summer Film Institute. Usually, the first question I get when I tell people this is “Why would you want to go back to school over the summer?” I understand that reaction completely. A few years ago I probably would have asked the same thing but at this point I have two answers. First, school is really a different place during the summer. Deserted and quiet, the atmosphere of stress, competition and work is lifted and one is able to see another side to HM. The first time I spent time here over the summer was in between Freshman and Sophomore year when I enrolled in Comp Sci 1 and I decided that summer I genuinely enjoyed seeing this other side of Horace Mann. My second answer, and perhaps the more relevant for this article, is that I really enjoy films. Watching them, writing them, directing them are all pastimes that have fascinated me since I was much younger. I guess this may have more significance for me especially because my mother is in the film industry, but I do think that a love of film is something that connects many people. So, on June 18th I found myself back at school hoping to learn even more about film and production.
Curtains
behind
the
curtains
Comedy is based in contrast. The reason why comedy even works is because of how a joke can shift away from someone’s expectations. Unexpected things are funny, that’s why we laugh at a friend who trips on their own shoelaces, for example. Without contrast, without unpredictability, comedy fundamentally can’t exist.

This is why political humor works, because it is born out of contrast. Differing opinions are the basis of our democracy, and the reason why there are so many Trump jokes is because of how divisive of a figure he is. There are more opportunities to make fun of our government these days because of how partisan it’s become. Shows like the Late Show with Stephen Colbert and Last Week Tonight with John Oliver are successful in this environment because of how much left-leaning opinions, and because the people they are “punching-up” are on the opposite side of the spectrum. They naturally have a lot of things to say, and it’s this very reason why people view these shows as repetitive and boring, it seems like it’s just the same thing being said over and over again. In reality, that’s the very thing that political comedy is.

Referring back to Ancient Greece earlier, it’s theorized that much of the public opinion was formed around the comedies of the day. It’s possible that the public comedy under attack. We need comedy to serve two very specific purposes; the means to speak against those in power, and to make it more relatable to those who may not understand what’s going on. In order for us to have a successful democracy in the future, we need to keep making Trump jokes now.
One of the first things I learned when doing stand-up was that political humor is under attack. Many political leaders, once impartial to these jokes, have started to publicly condemn those making fun of them. This is some kind of controversial idea in 2018. Many comedians base their material on those with power and direct our jokes at those at the top. In fact, this same idea is still prevalent in our society today. Many jokes are still directed at the government, which is why political satire has been so important in Greek history. Since the beginning of comedy in Ancient Greece, political satire has been the fundamental idea behind jokes. I never thought it was funny anyway."
I don’t think anyone should be entirely like Romeo. He is far too rash and arrogant. But the one person who meant absolutely everything to me, the one person Romeo simply could not bear to be without, I needed to show the audience I felt it too, but that was mostly taken care of through Shakespeare’s perfect text. I only needed to give it life. The Juliet I was partnered with was not anyone too special to me, so in order to actually feel the emotions Romeo felt in real time, I envisioned someone of much greater importance to my heart. When I portrayed him, I pictured her instead, and acted upon the emotions that accompanied him. I was lucky in that I can have someone to picture who is as key to me as Juliet is to Romeo, and I am certain that that is the aspect that helped me the most in playing my character.

What can go wrong with a bit of good old fashioned love?

I’ve always said that I was part Romeo myself, and after portraying him, I can now say that the truth is yes and no. I lead a few times in the past, but never to the extent of Romeo. I had to channel deep and pure devotion to this one person who meant absolutely everything to me, the one person Romeo simply could not bear to be without. Beyond feeling it, I needed to show it too. But that was mostly taken care of through Shakespeare’s perfect text. I only needed to give it life. The Juliet I was partnered with was not anyone too special to me, so in order to actually feel the emotions Romeo felt in real time, I envisioned someone of much greater importance to my heart. When I portrayed him, I pictured her instead, and acted upon the emotions that accompanied him. I was lucky in that I can have someone to picture who is as key to me as Juliet is to Romeo, and I am certain that that is the aspect that helped me the most in playing my character.

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But he does it all for the sake of love. He is blind to the harshness of reality because of his pure love, and he does everything he does for Juliet. He opens himself up completely to her, literally giving her his heart in the end. I think that the world could use a bit more naiveté for pure love nowadays. As a society, we’ve lost the touch for the romantic and pure love. Ask most people our age and we won’t believe in long romantic speeches professing our undying dedication, or writing poetry and performing it for our betrothed. The pureness of true love should be something that we hold onto from Romeo, something that we preserve that makes us human. This doesn’t mean take romantic advice from Romeo, by no means should you kill yourself on top of their non-dead body by drinking poison, but perhaps everyone can use a bit of his sentiment.

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This summer I was blessed with the opportunity to play the character Romeo from what might be the most well-known Shakespearean story of all time, Romeo and Juliet; but if you’ve had a conversation with me for ten minutes in the last 5 months you probably already know that. I’m not just bragging for the sake of bragging. Romeo is one of the characters that every actor aspires to play at least once in their lifetime, and rightly so. Romeo is the original hopeless romantic, his entire plot arc centered on his relationship with Juliet. His infatuation with Juliet is referenced so often in songs, movies, shows, and simply in day-to-day conversation that it has become almost a cliché.

Getting to play him is like being chosen to embody romance itself, and I am so grateful to have been able to do just that.

Romeo doesn’t work if you just read the lines and expect the romance to exist on its own. One has to take care to let the nuance of his character shine. Romeo is very young, sixteen at most, which is partly why he is a character that actors so desperately want to play before they get too old. In Romeo’s youth also comes his naivety, impatience, and haste.

The entire play is made of quick 180 degree turns in not only events but also emotion. Characters swing from elated to depressed and back again in the span of minutes, chief among them being Romeo. He has no time to wait for Juliet, and he has to have her instantly as he says, or he knows that he will “swear that I will die” when he hears that she “died.” Romeo’s spirit is captured in the lines of his final soliloquy: “This hath indeed my ills supply’d, my hurts all heal’d.”

Romeo doesn’t work if you just read the lines and expect the romance to exist on its own. One must not just play Romeo, but have been able to do just that, and I am so grateful to have been chosen to embody him. If I have become something of a cliché, it is because someone has managed to play such a role in the past. Romeo is a character that every actor aspires to play at least once in their lifetime, and rightly so. Romeo is one of the greatest romantic leads in the entire canon. He has no time to wait for Juliet, and he has to have her instantly as he says, or he knows that he will “swear that I will die” when he hears that she “died.” Romeo’s spirit is captured in the lines of his final soliloquy: “This hath indeed my ills supply’d, my hurts all heal’d.”

Romeo and Juliet

BY DYLAN JACOB CHIN
KM: Can you share with us the process of developing Crane Calling?

ZX: Our first inspiration for this piece really started as far back as 2008. In 2014, our company of dancers conducted multiple fieldwork observations and immersions throughout different crane habitats and conservatory parks throughout China, north and south, particularly in Heilongjiang and Jiangsu. We studied in detail the postures, habits, and motions of the cranes, and learned much from the crane specialists and workers who nursed and took care of the birds at the parks. In 2015, we began the choreography. We are most fortunate to have former National Ballet of China alumni such as the choreographer Ma Cong and Shen Yiwen, who is now a graduate of Juilliard. All of us were born after the 80s, so we have a common vocabulary and seem to share similar ideas about composition and script.

In many ways, Crane Calling remains a work in progress as we still don’t think it’s that perfect. We continue to revise and refresh with every performance. For our company, I would like to continue more overseas collaborations and bring something unique to our overseas audiences. I also love to promote mutual understanding and seem to share similar common vocabulary and seem to share similar sentiments across cultures and nationalities.

KM: What is next for you and the National Ballet of China?

ZX: For our company, I would like to continue more overseas collaborations and bring something unique to our overseas audiences. I also love to promote mutual understanding and seem to share similar common vocabulary and seem to share similar sentiments across cultures and nationalities. It is so important to have overseas collaborations. If I were to continue, I would simply like to just keep going and never stop in pursuing my life in dance. I would simply like to just keep going and never stop in pursuing my life in dance. For me personally, I would simply like to just keep going and never stop in pursuing my life in dance.
KM: What have been the forces that helped you or challenged you on your path?

ZX: All dancers in the world encounter difficulties and challenges as they train and learn. But I truly believe that if you have a passion for a particular art form, you have to give it all that you've got even if it may not be the most financially rewarding. I have been fortunate, as my passion for dance has become a kind of professional pursuit as well. There were adjustments in the earlier years of my career as the footwork and forms between classical Chinese dance and ballet are different. But I have overcome these challenges. I have been on this path for twenty years, pursuing an art form that I love. It is extremely difficult, but I keep going. I have no regrets. And because I enjoy dance fully, I keep moving forward. I have been taking every opportunity presented to me.

KM: What do you think distinguishes Chinese ballet from dance companies of other countries?

ZX: On the global stage of dance, Chinese ballet is unique. National Ballet of China has inherited the artistic legacy of our older generation of artists. Our path of development has been quite multi-faceted in that our historical lineage comes from classical, modern and contemporary ballet and dance. We have also developed our own unique style. When touring, we have found that our own creations, such as Raise the Red Lantern, The White-Hair Girl, The Peony Pavilion, and our Dunhuang piece, seem to receive lots of international appreciation and acclaim.

KM: Do you feel a distinction between your domestic and overseas audience?

ZX: Our Chinese audience seems to share the same love for our Chinese-inspired pieces or those with Chinese characteristics in choreography or aesthetics. But they are particularly interested in narratives or realist forms, probably because they have been more used to this mode of reception. But they are also very open and accepting of other traditions. Our Chinese audience seems to share the same love for our Chinese-inspired pieces or those with Chinese characteristics in choreography or aesthetics. But they are particularly interested in narratives or realist forms.

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KM: Why did you choose Crane Calling as the work to present to the New York Audience at Lincoln Center and Fall For Dance Festival this year?

ZX: We chose Crane Calling for the NY audience because it expresses homage to youth and life. This ballet piece embodies the harmony between man and the environment. We hope this work would convey our sentiments about the importance of environmental conservation and the protection of nature. Crane is also an animal that signifies the East. It is a bird that has a very rich tradition clouded in mystery and spirituality. In many ways, Crane Calling is an expression of Chinese collective spirit and philosophy. We have been focusing on this path for twenty years, pursuing an art form that I love. It is extremely difficult, but I keep going. I have no regrets. And because I enjoy dance fully, I keep moving forward. I have been taking every opportunity presented to me.

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How did you first become a ballet dancer?

As a child, I learned classical Chinese dance. In fact, for both high school and college, I had specialized in classical Chinese dance. When I graduated, National Ballet of China was recruiting male dancers so I auditioned. I had no prior experience in ballet but I wanted to engage my specialized training in classical Chinese dance with a completely new disciplinary practice.
Welcome to the second issue of Artsphere, HM's performing arts magazine, now printed in colour!

Inspired by HM’s Black Box Production of Eugene Ionesco’s Rhinoceros, Artsphere presents our readers with a provocative choice.

As our world spins further into a vortex of political, economic, climactic, and social turmoil, will you stake your position in the body of the beast or the mind of the human?

Our two covers, with no designated front and back, are equivalent in weight, size and design.

On a physical level, this issue seeks to play on a convention. We wish to enliven the reading of printed matters – usually a stationary act – into a movement. We want to literally flip your view on engagement and absorption. You, the reader, can only access the full contents through two 180 degrees rotations of the magazine – or a flip over the horizontal axis. As you take on the magazine, Artsphere becomes a body in dance; it is turned front and back, marking lines and drawing circles in space. Our inaugural issue, in bold and dynamic graphic design, made our pages a stage. Our second issue now seeks to make the magazine itself into an interactive performance – enacted by you.

The German dramatist-director Bertolt Brecht once made his audience conscious of theatre as an artifice through alienating effects. Perhaps Artsphere could make our reader self-conscious in their act of reading the textual plays of this magazine?

With Portrait of an Artist, Zhang Zhen Xin, the choreographer of The National Ballet of China. Zhang shares his optimism for dance as diplomacy as he recounts his journey from being a young student of classical Chinese dance to becoming a principal dancer and now choreographer of China’s national ballet company.

Artsphere also explores the vanguards of the performing arts domain, exploring intersections with fields such as technology, the environment, culture, and politics through research and personal experience. Frontiers examines the technical and creative innovations in the performing arts domain, exploring intersections with technology.

With Creative Minds, we tap into the brains and lives of individual artists at Horace Mann. With Beyond the Curtains, we have the opportunity to showcase the hidden journeys of a production.

A big thank you to all of the artists who contributed to articles in support of our second issue.

Sincerely,

Kyra Mo
Editor-in-Chief