

## Music and Theater Arts Section

The [Music and Theater Arts Section \(MTA\)](#) offers students at MIT the opportunity to experience the unique language and process of the performing arts. Faculty and teaching staff, informed by their ongoing professional activities, help students understand art's demand for rigor and discipline and its nonquantitative standards of excellence and beauty. The section's strong, comprehensive program in music—encompassing history and culture, composition and theory, music technology and performance—features a professional faculty and teaching staff of the highest caliber that currently includes two Institute Professors. Interdisciplinary in its philosophy and humanist at its core, the program in theater arts is committed to a rigorous and innovative course of study across a diverse spectrum of creative forms taught by theater arts professionals. The academic programs continue to produce alumni with the talent and desire to extend their education in music or theater beyond the undergraduate level, including those who pursue professional studies at the best graduate programs and others for whom exposure and participation in the arts is part of their life-long learning and growth.

### Personnel

Adam Boyles, lecturer, was on leave during fall 2019 and spring 2020.

Charlotte Brathwaite, associate professor without tenure, was on leave during fall 2019.

Sara Brown was promoted from senior lecturer to assistant professor in fall 2019. Brown was the set designer for several productions:

- *The Day*. World premiere: July 31, 2019 at Jacob's Pillow in the Doris Duke Theatre, Beckett, MA.
- *The Prince of Providence*, produced by The Trinity Repertory Theater. World Premiere: September 12, 2019, in the Sarah and Joseph Dowling, Jr. Theater, Providence, RI
- *Der Freischütz*, produced by Heartbeat Opera. Premiere: December 4, 2019, in the Rose Nagelberg Theatre at the Baruch Performing Arts Center, New York City. Named a critic's pick by the *New York Times* on December 5, 2019.
- *The Mother of Us All*, produced by MetLiveArts, the New York Philharmonic and the Juilliard School. Premiere: February 8, 2020, in the Charles Engelhard Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Named one of the top ten classical music events of 2020 by the *New York Times* on December 2, 2020.

Peter Child, Class of 1949 Professor, was on sabbatical during fall 2019. Child completed *Six Dances of Death* (2020), commissioned by Boston Musica Viva. This is a large chamber work based upon music by *Henry VIII* and woodcuts by Hans Holbein the Younger. The April premiere was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Claire Conceison, Quanta Professor for Chinese Culture, translated Meng Jinghui's radical adaptation of Lao She's 1957 play *Teahouse* from Chinese into English (July 2019).

Conceison served as a panelist for public discussion “Contemporary Chinese Theater Aesthetics” at the Wuzhen Theater Festival in Wuzhen, China (October 26 to November 3, 2019). In January 2020, Conceison presented the lecture “Intercultural and Bilingual Theater” at the Shanghai Theater Academy Winter Institute. Conceison contributed a chapter titled “Miller in China” to the edited volume *Arthur Miller for the 21st Century: Contemporary Views of his Writings and Ideas* (David Palmer and Stephen Marino, eds., Palgrave, 2020).

Eran Egozy, professor of the practice, led a team of MIT faculty, students, and staff to develop and release *Comusica*—a 5-minute animated musical celebration for the MIT graduates of 2020 where approximately 800 members of the MIT community each contributed a sung musical note to the final work.

Christian Frederickson, technical instructor, was awarded a 2020 d’Arbeloff Fund for the “Writing and Producing Narrative Podcasts” course.

Institute Professor John Harbison conducted at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he taught composer seminars. Harbison continued to teach and attend performances of *Sonata for Viola and Piano* (a new piece) until the Covid-19 pandemic shut down performances in March. Harbison taught and conducted Bach Cantatas at Emmanuel Church, which functioned without interruption due to the church’s unusual ventilation features.

Frederick Harris, instructor and music director, was on leave during spring 2020. Harris led MIT’s annual Family Weekend concert, which had 10,000 streaming views. He was an advisor, music director, and performer during the naming event of Hockfield Court and conducted the Herb Pomeroy Memorial Concert with vibraphonist-composer Warren Wolf, which had 14,000 streaming views. Harris received an MIT Center for Arts, Science and Technology grant for his Brazilian project *Hearing Amazônia—The Responsibility of Existence*. He led eight world premiere performances composed for the MIT Wind Ensemble and the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble. During his spring 2020 sabbatical, he conducted 42 interviews for the Herb Pomeroy biography and voluntarily left his sabbatical in mid-March to hold weekly meetings with his MIT students. As co-founder and leader of MusicEdConnect—a virtual support and advocacy organization for Massachusetts music teachers—he held weekly events from March through June, coordinating guest speakers and musical performances. In addition, he conducted and produced the opening music for MIT’s first-ever virtual Commencement.

Mark Harvey, senior lecturer, released a CD “A Rite for All Souls,” an archival recording of the Mark Harvey Group from 1971, a live performance recording of improvisational free jazz at the Old West Church in Boston.

Nathan Lam, lecturer, organized a piano concert, “Continuum 88,” at MIT.

Martin Marks, senior lecturer in music, served as a consultant for a new Tanglewood silent film scoring project, working together with Michael Gandolfi who is head of the composition program. Marks chose excerpts for the students to score and led a seminar

to help get them started. In August 2019, he emceed and lectured during a concert of their scores, playing live with the clips before a full house. In January 2020, Marks played his own piano scores for five films in the “Silent Hitchcock” series at the Harvard Film Archive.

Emily Richmond Pollock, associate professor, published a book, *Opera after the Zero Hour: The Problem of Tradition and the Possibility of Renewal in Postwar West Germany* (Oxford University Press), September 2019. Pollock was awarded the Kurt Weill Prize—which biannually recognizes distinguished scholarship in music theater since 1900, including opera and dance—for her article “Opera by the Book” in the *Journal of Musicology*, November 2019. In May 2020, Pollock was awarded the MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences’ Levitan Teaching Award.

Jay Scheib, Class of 1949 Professor, was on leave during spring 2020.

Charles Shadle, senior lecturer, composed two large-scale piano works during fall 2019, *A Tale of My Native Land No. 2*, and *A Tale of My Native Land No. 3*, as well as the four short and simple pieces of “Choctaw Animals.” In spring 2020, he composed a piece for solo oboe, “Catkin,” inspired by long pandemic walks along the Mystic River in Medford, MA.

Patricia Tang, associate professor, wrote an article, “Twenty-first Century Sabar Drums: Innovations in Organology and Performance Practice in Senegal and the Diaspora,” that was published in the journal *African Music* in December 2019. In January 2020, Tang co-organized and co-directed a two-week study tour in Senegal for 25 students in Rambax, MIT’s Senegalese drum ensemble. The tour included two major performances in Kaolack and in Dakar at the Ndaje Festival.

Marcus Thompson, Institute Professor, performed the following:

- Vivaldi, *Viola d’Amore Concerto* at Aston Magna Festival, Great Barrington, MA, August 8 2019
- Boston Chamber Music Society Series, Sanders Theatre, Harvard University. Boston Premiere of John Harbison *Sonata for Viola and Piano* (with Judith Gordon, piano) October 20, 2019
- Recital, Masters Series, Boston Conservatory of Music, Second Boston performance of John Harbison *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, October 27, 2019
- Recital and masterclass, Masters Series, University of Maryland, March 3, 2020
- Boston Chamber Music Society, Sanibel Island Music Festival, Florida, March 10, 2020

Leslie Tilley, associate professor and Class of 1958 Career Development Professor, published her first book with University of Chicago Press: *Making It Up Together: The Art of Collective Improvisation in Balinese Music and Beyond* (2019). The book proposes broad analytical models for improvisation and collective creativity and demonstrates their applicability through music-analytic case studies. Tilley also published the chapter

“‘The *Lanang* is the Bus Driver’: Intersections of Ethnography and Music Analysis in a Study of Balinese *Arja* Drumming” in *Computational Phonogram Archiving*, edited by Rolf Bader with Springer (2019). She began as guest editor for the forthcoming *Engaging Students Journal*, “Beyond Western Musicalities” (2019–2020), a volume dedicated to diversifying and decolonizing efforts in music theory pedagogy. Tilley gave an invited talk at the University of California, Berkeley’s Synthesis: Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Computational Music Research conference (2019) and was an invited panelist at the *Analytical Approaches to World Music* conference. Finally, she designed and recorded lectures for new edX class *World Music: Global Rhythms*, a cross-cultural examination of rhythmic principles and their incarnations around the world.

Ken Urban, senior lecturer, was awarded an EST/Alfred P. Sloan Science and Technology Project Commission for his new play *The Moderate*, about the world of internet content moderators. Urban was awarded a 2020 d’Arbeloff Fund for his “Writing and Producing Narrative Podcasts” course and a CAMIT Grant and DeFlorez Fund Grant for his play *Vapor Trail*. Urban was named one of three playwrights selected for the 2020 Keen Company Playwrights Lab.

### **Teaching and Curriculum**

Enrollments in Music and Theater Arts were 1,798 and 951, respectively, for a total of 2,749 students. This is a decrease in enrollments from last year by 141 students. AY2019 saw the highest enrollments that either Music or Theater Arts has seen since they became a combined section in 1988 at a total of 2,890 students.

### **Majors**

Music and Theater Arts had 35 student majors from fall 2019 through summer 2020: 25 enrolled in Music and 10 in Theater Arts.

### **Minors**

Music and Theater Arts had 66 student minors from fall 2019 through summer 2020: 49 in Music and 17 in Theater Arts.

### **Concentrators**

From spring 2020 through summer 2020, MTA had 413 concentrators: 310 in Music and 103 in Theater Arts.

### **Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program**

Music and Theater Arts had 77 students in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program from fall 2019 through summer 2020: 70 in Music and seven in Theater Arts.

### **New Courses for Academic Year 2020**

#### **Music**

21M.053 Rhythms of the World

21M.128/129 Music for Animated Films

21M.138/139 Moments in Music: Composition

21M.151 Fundamentals of Music

21M.370 Digital Instrument Design

21M.383 Computational Music Theory and Analysis

21M.470 MIT Laptop Ensemble

***Theater***

21M.607 Playwriting Methods

21M.623 Physical Improvisation: Bodies in Motion

21M.702 Live Solo Performance

21M.712 Choreography: Making dances

**Keeril Makan**

**Head, Music and Theater Arts Section**

**Michael (1949) and Sonja Koerner Music Composition Professor**