

## 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 lifelong learning and growth.

### Goals, Objectives, and Priorities

- Design and fundraising for new Music building
- Working toward a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan
- COVID response

### Accomplishments

- We continued to successfully raise funds for our new music building. The design of the building moved from the development phase to the construction documents phase. Site preparation and excavation began at Kresge parking lot.
- The Voxel Lab—a new makerspace managed by Ian Hattwick at the Innovation Initiative in Kendall Square—focuses on music technology and will serve as a prototype for the new music building's makerspace.
- Theater Arts productions directed by Jay Scheib and Dan Safer occurred online, and multiple technological solutions created by multimedia specialist Cuco Daglio enabled music performance during COVID.

### Administrative Initiatives

Music and Theater arts has three administrative staff and seven support staff.

### New or Changed Procedures and Processes

- Required search committees to complete training for anti-bias in hiring
- Required the use of competency-based questions when interviewing for administrative and support staff positions

- Created new mentoring and evaluation schedule for lecturer/technical instructor ranks
- Changed the title of director to include “lecturer I” and “technical instructor I” ranks, instead of exclusively “lecturer II,” to allow for new hires to be appropriately mentored and evaluated
- Clarified explicit policies on replacement teaching and hiring of temporary lecturers
- Clarified expectations of service requirements for different ranks documented
- Clarified budgets of Music and Theater Arts programs
- Updated procedure for hiring temporary lecturers
- Redesigned committee and service assignments to better capture instructors’ contributions to the section

### Reorganization of Administrative Structure

- The section created “associate head” positions for the music and theater arts programs. The head of MTA promotes and facilitates the faculty research enterprise and reports to the dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; the associate head of Music and the associate head of Theater Arts oversee the teaching enterprise of music or theater arts and report to the head of the section.
- The former position “assistant to the head” was changed to “senior administrative assistant,” and we hired Shannon Cardillo. The same change occurred with the position of “theater arts assistant,” and we hired Jennifer Tu as senior administrative assistant.

### Finances and Funding

New gifts and pledges for the Music Building in fiscal year 2021 totaled \$10,193,155.  
New gifts and pledges for MTA totaled \$361,004.

Proceeds from the CAMIT McDermott Gala of \$52,800 were distributed to all assistant and associate professors as discretionary funds for their research.

### Personnel Information

The Music program is comprised of 10 professors and 14 other academic teaching staff.  
The Theater Arts program is comprised of 5 professors and 7 other academic teaching staff.

Sara Brown, assistant professor and Class of 1957 Career Development Professor, served as set designer for the Wilma Theater’s Wilma Globe with designers Misha Kachman and Matthew Saunders, and was highlighted as production designer for *Fat Ham*, a film produced for streaming by the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia.

Peter Child, Class of 1949 Professor, was commissioned to perform *Tell Everyone: Fragments of Sappho*. The show premiered at the Bergen International Festival (*Festspillene*

*i Bergen*) by the vocal ensemble Tabula Rasa. Child wrote two other works for streamed performances on YouTube during the Covid-19 pandemic. *The Year of the Rat* (2020) was commissioned by the Cantata Singers and Ensemble and premiered online by soloists from the group; it featured four new poems especially written by Fiona Sze-Lorrain. *Stella celi* (2021), a Masked Music commission from the Association for the Promotion of New Music for composer/performer pairs, was premiered by cellist Jan Müller-Szeraws.

Claire Conceison, Quanta Professor for Chinese Culture, authored the introduction to a Chinese version of the 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun* (阳光下的葡萄干) by Lorraine Hansberry (translation by Wu Shiliang, 1963). The play was published in book format by People's Literature Publishing House (September 2020), and Conceison was later interviewed on NPR's *Morning Edition* in their coverage of the production. Conceison presented "American Blackness on the Chinese Stage" as part of an online three-scholar panel titled "Representations of Blackness in Chinese Popular Culture," which was sponsored by the Poster House Museum in New York City. Additionally, Conceison worked with Chinese student theater groups at Columbia University's Blue Glaze Theater and presented Meng Jinghui's *Rhinoceros in Love* and *Two Dogs' Opinions on Life* online in both the United States and China.

Michael Scott Cuthbert, associate professor, was on leave during the spring semester.

David Deveau, senior lecturer, was on leave during the fall semester and retired from MIT during the spring semester.

Natalie Lin Douglas was appointed as an assistant professor in the Music section.

Eran Egozy, professor of the practice, spent time helping the section move classes online and with real-time low-latency audio over the internet.

John Harbison, Institute Professor, spent the summer teaching online for Tanglewood and Songfest. He prepared and narrated the weekly online programs for the Token Creek Festival. Harbison's live teaching of Emerson Jazz resumed in the fall and continued throughout spring. With additional time, Harbison completed "Piano Sonata III"; two song cycles, "After Long Silence" and "In the Early Evening"; and a short prelude for organ. Harbison continued serving on the boards of the Bogliasco Foundation and the Lili Boulanger Foundation and served on a faculty committee for diversity in the arts. Harbison completed his initial travel for the jury for the Naumburg International Vocal Competition.

Frederick Harris, director in music, led a summer musicianship seminar for the Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association. Harris was appointed acting director of *Sounding* for MIT's Center for Arts, Science & Technology. He created and led a virtual visiting artist program and *It Must Be Now!*, a music project highlighting issues of systemic racism. Harris oversaw over two dozen online events for both programs—involving six virtual visiting artists—for students and the general public. Harris oversaw the production of 10 MTA livestream virtual concerts, which received over 80,000 views worldwide. As music director of the MIT Wind Ensemble and the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble, Harris oversaw and rehearsed over 130 pieces performed by more than 100 students, including MIT's annual Family Weekend concert

and MIT's annual Campus Preview Weekend concert. Harris was lead committee member of Larry Gallagher's Retirement Celebration, hosted by President Reif. Harris served as the coordinator and music director of *Diary of a Pandemic Year*, an original work commissioned for the opening of MIT's second virtual Commencement, including over 200 students from almost every MTA ensemble and involving multiple recording sessions and a complex filming schedule. Harris was appointed conductor for the Massachusetts Music Educators Symphonic Wind Ensemble summer 2021 performance and continued his research and writing work on Herb Pomeroy's biography.

Senior Lecturer Mark Harvey retired in fall 2020. Harvey released "Faces of Souls," a CD inspired by the Saint-Gaudens Shaw Memorial on Boston Common. This live concert recording of original works by Harvey was performed by the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra in Kresge Auditorium (Leo Records). The album was selected as being among the best recordings of 2020 by the New York City Jazz Record.

Lecturer Nathan Lam published an article in the *Journal of Music Theory* that bridges tonal and atonal music theory. Lam also spoke at the Analytical Approaches to World Music international conference on the mathematical structure of Chinese melodic transformations.

Keeril Makan, Michael (1949) and Sonja Koerner Music Composition Professor, was composer-in-residence at the Rivers School Conservatory's annual Seminar on Contemporary Music for the Young, where his composition *Abandon Fear: Part I* was premiered.

Martin Marks, senior lecturer in music, was interviewed by Claus Tieber and Anna Windish for *The Soundtrack* and featured in the article "A Highly Creative Endeavour: Interview with Musicologist and Silent Film Pianist Martin Marks." This publication contains a distillation of Marks' esthetic and practical ideas about silent film accompaniment. Marks wrote "The Judy Garland Song-Story: Voice and Body Indomitable," a paper written for and presented via Zoom at the annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Narrative. The paper is the first of several Marks is planning to complete about songs and how they are used in films.

Emily Richmond Pollock, associate professor, was awarded tenure as of July 1, 2020. Pollock served as co-organizer of the virtually held international conference on music festival studies and was invited to a virtual talk for musicology students in Graz, Austria.

Lecturer Jean Rife joined colleagues around the country in teaching performance at a distance, auditioning and performing concerts remotely, and exploring available methods for keeping woodwind and brass players safe. Rife participated in a harpsichord voicing and regulation class taught by builder Allan Winkler.

Matthew Schumaker, lecturer and former Martin Luther King Scholar, departed MIT and moved onto a new role as assistant professor in music at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Senior Lecturer Charles Shadle completed "String Quartet No.4," and "Prayer" for organ, as well as revisions of his fourth symphony (scheduled for performance in

2022). “Prayer” received its first performance in fall 2020 by James Busby, who also offered Shadle’s “Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree” as part of the Lessons and Carols at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Providence, RI. In late summer 2020, Shadle applied to the Sound on Mystic installation project, and his “Catkin” for solo oboe received a grant that allowed it to be recorded by Jennifer Montbach. This piece was covered by the *Boston Globe* (May 13, 2021) and the *Boston Art Review* (interview with Ashira Morris; May 15, 2021). In addition, Shadle was interviewed by Rita Pyrillis for the spring 2021 article “Native Sounds” in *Symphony* magazine. Shadle worked with MIT’s School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences to make available the score and recording of “Choctaw Animals.” He recorded the pieces in Killian Hall in November, and the accompanying article was released online.

Marcus Thompson, Institute Professor, presented two online viola master classes, one at USC Thornton School of Music and the other at Roosevelt University. Thompson also performed in monthly chamber concerts in a new virtual series throughout the season with members of the Boston Chamber Music Society. Thompson completed the Mendelssohn Octet Recording for Young Concert Artists 60th Anniversary Gala in New York City and the Aston Magna Virtual Concert of Mozart String Trios, recorded in Great Barrington, MA.

Leslie Tilley, associate professor and Class of 1958 Career Development Professor, wrote a chapter titled “The Draw of Balinese Rhythm” for *The Cambridge Companion to Rhythm*, edited by Russell Hartenberger and Ryan McClelland (Cambridge University Press, 2020). The chapter examines the influences of Balinese rhythmic principles on 20th-century Western art music composers while highlighting the ethics of these encounters and the fundamental features of Balinese music these composers missed. Tilley’s review on Sonja Downing’s book *Gamelan Girls: Gender, Childhood, and Politics in Balinese Music Ensembles* was published in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Music Studies*. Tilley gave an invited talk in a special session on music and evolution at the *Analytical Approaches to World Music* conference and presented on collective improvisation at the annual national conference for the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Senior Lecturer Ken Urban completed the short play *Intro to Fiction*, which was produced virtually across the country, including at Stage West Theatre in Fort Worth, TX; New Antiquities Theatre Company in Hobbs, NM; and Firebrand Theatre Company in Little Rock, AR, and was directed by Tiffany Nichole Greene in October and November 2020; the play was published in the anthology *Technical Difficulties: Plays for an Online Theatre*, published by Dramatists Play Service. Urban’s audio drama *Vapor Trail* was given a virtual workshop at the Playwrights’ Center in Minneapolis, MN, in December 2020 as part of the In the Lab series, directed by Knud Adams. The play was then recorded in January and February 2021 and was completed in June 2021. Urban developed three other new plays—*The Moderate*, *The Tenure Itch*, and *Danger and Opportunity*—at New Dramatists in New York City, Kane Repertory Theatre’s New Play Lab in Chicago, and the Civilians’ R&D Group in New York City; *The Tenure Itch* was awarded a Jerry A. Tishman Playwrights Creativity Fund at New Dramatists.

Evan Ziporyn, Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor, was on leave during the fall semester.

## Teaching and Curriculum

Enrollments in Music and Theater Arts were 1,447 and 791, respectively, for a total of 2,238 students. Since last year's enrollments, this is a decrease of 511. This drop in enrollments is likely due to budget cuts, the coronavirus pandemic, and the difficult nature of teaching performance subjects online.

## Majors

Music and Theater Arts had 35 student majors from fall 2020 through summer 2021. Of the 35 students, 26 majored in music and nine majored in theater.

## Minors

MTA had 52 student minors from fall 2020 through summer 2021. Of the 52 students, 43 minored in music and nine minored in theater.

## Concentrators

MTA had 322 concentrators from fall 2020 through summer 2021. Of the 322 students, 221 concentrated in music and 101 concentrated in theater.

## Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

MTA had 23 students in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) from fall 2020 through summer 2021. Of the 23 students, 18 participated in UROPs in music and five participated in UROPs in theater.

## New Courses for Academic Year 2021

Lecturer Dan Safer taught 21M.622 Physical Improvisation: Scores and Structures in fall 2020 and spring 2021. The course explores physical improvisation in dance and theater from a variety of task-based, conceptual vantage points; it further focuses on conceptual frameworks for generating intensely physical dramatic actions and dances that unlock students' creativity.

Claire Conceison taught 21M.716 Play Translation and Cultural Transmission in fall 2020 and spring 2021. Through reading texts about translation and by doing an independent project, students developed significant skills in translation theory and practice. The course culminates in a public staged reading of students' translations. Readings included topics such as globalization, adaptation, gender in translation, and postcolonial approaches to translation.

Technical Instructor Christian Frederickson taught 22M.731 Sound Design for Theater and Dance in fall 2020 and spring 2021. This course introduces the elements of a sound designer's work, ranging from music and sound effects that inform and make stage action plausible to sound system design and the placement and use of microphones.

## Keeril Makan

Head, Music and Theater Arts Section

Michael (1949) and Sonja Koerner Music Composition Professor