CLASS ACTS: BEST PRACTICES IN ARTS EDUCATION

Three UNCSA Faculty To Be Recognized as Outstanding Teachers

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (June 13, 2012) - The Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts and the Office of Academic Affairs at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) will recognize three UNCSA faculty members in the fall as outstanding teachers who employ best practices in arts education.

Robert Francesconi, Assistant Dean of the School of Drama, was selected for Innovative Pedagogy. Susan Ruskin, Interim Dean of the School of Filmmaking, was selected for Student Engagement. And Paul Sharpe, artist-faculty of the School of Music, was selected for Creative Development.

“We are very pleased to have the opportunity to highlight some of the excellent faculty at UNCSA through this special project with the Kenan Institute for the Arts,” said UNCSA Provost David Nelson. “These outstanding faculty members, nominated by students, staff and faculty at UNCSA, are exemplary in their teaching methods and interaction with students.

“We look forward to sharing their stories in print and honoring them publicly later this year,” Nelson added.

In the fall of 2011, the UNCSA community was invited to nominate teachers for this special honor. The project involves creation of faculty profiles that are designed to foster dialogue about teaching practices that contribute to the development of the community of learners at UNCSA and beyond. The three winners will be featured in print pieces and online and will be honored at a reception on campus in the fall.

More about the three winners:

Robert Francesconi has taught acting, movement and masks at UNCSA since 1978. He is a consultant and master teacher in creative drama, improvisation, mime, mask, and clowning. He was a guest teacher and artist at the International Mime Festival and Institute, 1974 and 1978.
He was also a featured master teacher at the 1990 International Movement Symposium in Moscow, Russia.

Mr. Francesconi has served as a consultant in gifted and talented arts education programs for the South Carolina Arts Commission and the South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities. He has taught master classes in mask and movement at the Nemirovich-Danchenko School-Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre; Lunacharsky State University of Theatre Arts, Moscow; the Shchepkin Theatre School of Maly Dramatic Academy, Moscow, Russia; the Institute del Teatre, Barcelona, Spain; and the Singapore American School, Singapore.

Mr. Francesconi received his BA and MA from Humboldt State University, Arcata, Calif., where he trained with Yass Hakoshima, Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, Philip Mann and Richard Rothrock.

Susan Ruskin has taught producing at UNCSA since 2009. She is an award-winning producer who began her career as a development executive for George Lucas’ LucasFilm. She was head of development for Robert Stigwood at RSO before she went on to associate produce Woman in Red for Orion and Gene Wilder. She then became president of production for Pal-Mel Productions. She also produced Haunted Honeymoon with Gilda Radner, Gene Wilder and Jonathan Pryce. As head of production, Ms. Ruskin worked on the Richard Pryor/Gene Wilder movie See No Evil, Hear No Evil; Funny About Love; and Another You among others.

Ms. Ruskin went on to become president of production for Middle Fork where she was the executive producer of Anaconda for Columbia Pictures starring Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Owen Wilson and Jon Voight. She produced Vacuums -- a movie directed by Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas (creators of the hit show STOMP) -- starring Kip Pardue, Lee Evans and Rose McGowan. Ms. Ruskin was also involved in the production for the documentary, Good Rockin’ Tonight with Middle Fork Productions and The Shooting Gallery for American Masters. She was also the executive producer of the comedy Who’s Your Daddy.

Paul Sharpe has taught double bass at UNCSA since 2007. He maintains an international profile and career in a variety of roles as a soloist, chamber, and orchestral double bassist. As a student of Jeff Bradetich he received the B.M. in Performance from Northwestern University, and he obtained an M.A. in Music from the University of Iowa, studying with Diana Gannett.

Recent performances and engagements include recitals and master classes at the University of Iowa, Cleveland Institute of Music, World Bass Convention (Wroclaw, Poland), University of North Texas, University of Michigan, Interlochen Arts Academy, and Brazil’s Sixth International Double Bass Encounter in Pirenopolis, Brazil. Performances with orchestra have included Paul Ramsier’s Divertimento Concertante for Solo Double Bass and Orchestra with the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra; the premiere of Stuart Hinds’ Concertino for Double Bass and Orchestra with the Dallas Chamber Orchestra; and a performance with the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival Orchestra (where he is a regular guest artist) of Bottesini’s Grand Duo Concertante with Peter Marsh (USC).
The Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts (www.uncsa.edu/kenan) is a privately funded program of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts that incubates projects that sustain artists at every point in their creative development through strategic partnerships that capitalize on visionary thinking in the arts.

As America’s first state-supported arts school, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts is a unique stand-alone public university of arts conservatories. With a high school component, UNCSA is a degree-granting institution that trains young people of talent in music, dance, drama, filmmaking, and design and production. Established by the N.C. General Assembly in 1963, the School of the Arts opened in Winston-Salem (“The City of Arts and Innovation”) in 1965 and became part of the University of North Carolina system in 1972. For more information, visit www.uncsa.edu.

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