

The logo for UNCSA, consisting of the letters "UNCSA" in a white, serif font, centered within a solid black rectangular background.

THE ASSOCIATES

Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*

Richard Wagner famously advocated the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, meaning a total artistic synthesis for the stage. Operas had, of course, incorporated elements of stagecraft, lighting, costume, often dancing, and (one hoped) acting since the time of Monteverdi. But Wagner was declaring his intention of elevating all of these elements under a unified vision – his own.

As fans of UNCSA we get plenty of opportunities to see what the individual schools can do each season, but every few years they stage a major collaboration - the most recent being *Guys and Dolls*, in 2015 – that takes their process to the next level. This year's *Gesamtkunstwerk* will be Leonard Bernstein's *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers*, staged on Sept. 29th and 30th at the Stevens Center.

UNCSA Music Dean Brian Cole visited the Associates' board meeting this month to promote the Bernstein *Mass* project. This is a collaborative production, not only between the various schools of UNCSA, but between the arts school, Winston-Salem State University, and the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus. Cole declared that the goal for this project is to provide the student performers with an opportunity to have a “transformative experience [that] transcends what they thought was possible... It’s not just about performing a ‘big’ piece, it’s about challenging what music and art mean to them.”

The meaning of this project is surely embodied in the word Diversity, with regard to the technical resources and performers deployed and to *Mass*, itself. Leonard Bernstein had incorporated disparate elements of

various popular cultures in his own compositions throughout his career. When commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy to create a purely American theatrical piece for the opening of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington in 1971 Bernstein's response was a work for symphony orchestra, three choruses, theatrical players, and dancers, with a solo Celebrant, or priest. The score embraces folk, gospel, blues, jazz, Broadway, rock, and even Middle-Eastern dances. To undertake such a work, the question immediately arises: who should direct it? UNCSA turned to those who have direct and indirect ties to Bernstein, himself.

Karin Hendrickson has served as assistant conductor to Baltimore Symphony Music Director Marin Alsop. Alsop, at a similar point in her distinguished career, was taken under the wing of Leonard Bernstein. Her subsequent advocacy of her mentor's music has included a production of Bernstein's *Mass* – experience and insight which she has been able to pass on to Hendrickson.

Douglas Webster was chosen to perform the key role of the Celebrant during Bernstein's 70th birthday gala at the Tanglewood Music Festival. He has directed a number of acclaimed productions of *Mass* in the thirty years since. Webster began his collaboration with UNCSA for this production with a visit last January, and did the casting for the show in June.

Brian Cole brought Webster to tell us about this work-in-progress: “*Mass* is about a journey of faith. The Celebrant's demonstration, exploration, and resolution of his personal—as opposed to institutional—faith. His understanding of himself and his place within the world.”

Webster emphasized that every element in *Mass* was intentional on Bernstein's part and that he, as director, has made it clear to each of the two dozen stage players that their contribution on stage must be equally intentional. He also pointed out the parallels that can be drawn between political and social divisions of the sixties and seventies and those of

today. Cole added “*Mass* is about what happens when a community experiences a crisis of faith and the disillusionment that takes place when our systems fail us.” The work's message is that facing challenges of this sort is both necessary and uplifting – perhaps even transformative.

Summer Board Retreat

The Associates board retreat serves as a reminder that the summer is winding down and that it's time to start gearing up for the new UNCOSA academic year, anticipating the wonderful performance events the school has scheduled, and planning how the Associates can be of support and service.

Our guest in July, in what has become an annual retreat tradition, was UNCOSA Provost David English. For those who are not entirely clear on exactly what a provost does, English explains that, as the Chief Academic Officer of the institution, he works “to support all aspects of teaching and learning on the campus, overseeing the work of the five arts schools, two academic divisions, and various other departments and centers.” As daunting as that array of responsibilities sounds, he manages to provide us with a succinct overview of the year's developments and to answer any questions we may have about them.

At the top of the Provost's list of significant developments since last year's report is a new Masters in Management program, arranged in partnership with Wake Forest University. This program will provide an opportunity for new UNCOSA graduates to combine their creativity with entrepreneurial and technical training to address the rapidly-changing needs of the multi-billion-dollar arts and entertainment industry.

For the first time in several years, there are no changes for 2018-19 among the deans of the school's seven disciplinary areas, providing welcome continuity.

New members of the UNCSA administrative team include University Librarian Sarah E. Falls, with a strong design background to complement her extensive administrative experience at university libraries; Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Michael J. Smith, who has served as Chief Financial Officer of the Marine Corps Community Services at Camp Lejeune; and Interim Associate Vice Chancellor For Facilities Management Michael J. O'Connor, from Appalachian State University, who is now overseeing the UNCSA Master Plan.

UNCSA has created a new Division of Strategic Communications, which combines the departments of Marketing & Communications and Digital Media and will be dedicated to the development of creative promotions, strategic partnerships, and integrated strategies across multiple platforms. To direct this new organization Chief Technology Officer Claire Machamer has been appointed as Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications.

As UNCSA and its administration evolves, so must the physical campus, to keep pace. With the successful completion of UNCSA's sparkling new library, which came in a bit under budget, some surplus funds are now being used to improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow in the area around the library.

As for the old library, it is being refurbished to provide a variety of multi-purpose student spaces for the ever-increasing number and variety of collaborative student projects that need space, as well as classes, rehearsals, and board meetings.

The thorough renovation and reconfiguration of Performance Place is now underway, scheduled to be completed by the beginning of the 2019-20 academic year.

With typical efficiency of planning the school has worked out schedules and logistics for the upcoming drama season without Performance Place as a venue. A number of performances will take place in Hanesbrands Theatre, 209 N. Spruce Street, Winston-Salem, affording the school an opportunity to increase its visibility downtown.

Fall Kick-Off

On the evening of September 5th, the UNCSA School of Drama once again provided the outstanding program for The Associates' annual Fall Kick-Off, featuring members of the freshman Drama class, performing the monologues and songs with which they auditioned for this prestigious program. This event kicks off the UNCSA Associates' annual membership drive, inviting members of our community to join us in supporting the school, as well as in meeting these gifted young actors and savoring the panoply of treats prepared by the Associates' Hospitality Team.

The host for the evening was Scott Zigler, who has begun his first full season as Dean of the UNCSA School of Drama, after serving for the past twenty years as Director and Head of Actor Training at Harvard University. Zigler was trained at the Practical Aesthetics Workshop, where he studied with David Mamet and William H. Macy. He is the co-author of *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, currently in its fifth printing and translated into six languages.

After graciously expressing appreciation for The Associates' work on behalf of UNCSA, Dean Zigler noted with enthusiasm that this is the first class recruited entirely by himself and the drama school's Director of Recruitment, Quin Gordon. This event's ten performers, members of a new class of thirty-four selected from over seven hundred auditionees, were already seated on stage. Without further ado they proceeded in

quick succession to give us a glimpse of the talent that brought them here.

The young artists hail from Winston-Salem, to Sheboygan, to Peru. Three of the ten are graduates of the UNCSCA high school program. The talents they bring to UNCSCA, by no means confined to acting, include gymnastics, dance, choreography, playing multiple instruments, and musical composition.

As might be expected, young would-be actors select monologues aimed at maximum dramatic impact for their one-shot audition. At Kick-Off Shakespeare and August Wilson were well represented; confrontations with abusive parents predominated.

As for the required singing, the new drama students' vocal talent is also remarkable. Zigler pointed out after the performances that, while this is not a musical theatre program, many of its graduates have done well in musical theatre, because of the strength of the singing component in training here, describing UNCSCA's formula as "a bit less dance, a bit more acting."

He also explained that for auditions many programs just ask for two, one-minute monologues and then you're through, unless you get a call-back. Zigler and Gordon prefer to spend more time with each auditionee in the first place, making an opportunity to assess each person's intelligence, character, and personality, in addition to their talent.

In conclusion, Zigler emphasized "I believe passionately in the importance of diversity and bringing to the stage the voices and experiences of underrepresented populations." That commitment was certainly manifest onstage.

To us non-actors these gifted young people may appear to be nearly fully-developed artists, but they are just beginning to undergo two years of strenuous training before most of them will stand in front of an audience on a UNCSCA stage, by which time they will have dismantled

and reconstructed every component of their technique until it is ready to meet the challenges of live theatre.

Fall Semester Associates Calendar

Thursday, September 27, 11-1 Pickle Pantry Drop-off, Welcome Center
Breakfast foods suggested

Tuesday, October 2, 11:30 Associates Board Meeting. Fourth Floor
Conference Room, Library

Wednesday, October 17, 7:00 Behind the Scenes, School of Drama

Thursday, October 25, 11-1 Pickle Pantry Drop-off, Welcome Center

Tuesday, November 6, 11:30 Associates Board Meeting. Fourth Floor
Conference Room, Library

Thursday, November 29, 11-1 Pickle Pantry Drop-off, Welcome Center

Tuesday, December 4, 11:30 Associates Board Meeting. Fourth Floor
Conference Room, Library

General Information—Important Links

The Associates Website: <http://www.uncsa.edu/Associates> At our website, you will find the Board members listed, the calendar of Associates events and Associates-sponsored events, and other general information. You will also find the form to renew your membership.

Email Address: uncsaassociates@gmail.com

The Performance Calendar Website:

<http://www.uncsa.edu/performances/>

Our Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/uncsaassociates>

Newsletter: uncsaassociates.news@gmail.com