



23rd Annual

MaTiDa Awards

April 30, 2022 | Varner Studio Theatre

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
School of Music, Theatre and Dance

2022 MaTilDa Award Winners

Kevin Cornwell II	Distinguished Musicianship Award (undergraduate)
Peyton Miller	Distinguished Musicianship Award (undergraduate)
Alexis Dill	Distinguished Musicianship Award (graduate)
Nina Gojcaj	Outstanding Student in Vocal Performance
Carson Arcuri	Outstanding Student in Opera
Deven Mallamo	Outstanding Student in Piano Performance (undergraduate)
Pinlin Liu	Jennifer Scott Memorial Award
Yelena Murray	Jennifer Scott Memorial Award
Yang Yang	Outstanding Collaborative Piano Award
Corrin Kliewer	Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (undergraduate)
Kyle Paoletti	Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (undergraduate)
Tyler Hewett	Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (graduate)
Noah McDonald	Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (graduate)
Ilyssa Brunhild	Outstanding Student in Music Education
Wesley Hutchison	Outstanding Student in Jazz
Braden Macchia	Outstanding Student in World Music
Brant Ford and Peyton Miller	Outstanding Students in Chamber Music
The Ford / Miller DUO	
Iyla Miller	Outstanding Student Service Award (Music)
Christopher Warren	Outstanding Student Service Award (Music)
Noah Canales	Pat and Mercedes Nicosia Meadow Brook Estate
Jalen Wilson-Nelem	Gittlen Achievement in Acting
Liv Kunkle	Gittlen Achievement in Theatre Design and Technology
Stanley Misevich	Gittlen Achievement in Musical Theatre
Olivia Kiefer	Gittlen Theatre Award
Kassie Dunaj	Outstanding Student Service Award (Theatre)
Madeline Parker	Distinguished Dance Student
Riley McClain	Outstanding Dance Performance
Rebecca Otmanowski	Outstanding Choreography Award
Madisyn Boussie	Outstanding Student Service Award (Dance)
Daniel Shiller	SMTD Award <i>for commitment to the interdisciplinary nature of the school</i>
Leah Wilson	Social Justice Award

2022 MaTilDa Awards

Winner Biographies



Carson Arcuri **Outstanding Student in Opera**

Carson Arcuri is a senior vocal performance major at Oakland. Being involved in the Opera and Phi-Mu Alpha, Carson has developed a great passion for performing over the course of the past four years. Carson will be attending the University of Michigan in the fall for a master's degree in vocal performance, where he will foster his love of performing and raise his voice to the next level.

Carson Arcuri's comic and unique portrayal of Reginald Bunthorne was a star turn. His creative, comedic flair, and physical antics were a sight to behold. We will miss his tremendous spirit and unique talent next year as he heads to the University of Michigan to begin his graduate studies in Vocal Performance. Bravo Carson! ~ Drake Dantzler, associate professor of music



Madisyn Boussie **Outstanding Student Service Award (Dance)**

Madisyn Boussie is a graduating senior at Oakland University, where she will be receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance performance and a minor in business. This year, Madisyn served as the student-body president of the Oakland University Department of Dance and was a member of Oakland Dance Repertory Dance Company. In March of 2022, Madisyn was selected by the Oakland University Department of Dance faculty to present her senior group work — *Not Then, Not Now, Not Ever* — at the American College Dance Association East - Central Region, which took place at Ohio University. Not only this, but Madisyn is currently a student intern for Take Root Dance Company and a dance instructor at 2nd Street Studio of Dance. Upon graduating from Oakland University, Madisyn hopes to continue her dancing in the professional realm and one day obtain a Master of Fine Arts degree in dance performance.

As president of the dance department's student organization, DANCERS, Maddy has led and guided our majors flawlessly. Arranging guest teachers and choreographers, organizing student mentors for incoming majors and bringing important information to the faculty, Maddy has gone above and beyond her duties as a leader. While Maddy's service to the dance department has been stellar, the faculty recognizes her abilities as a choreographer and performer as well. She has been an all-around student, the kind you never want to leave. But we are excited for Maddy's future and look forward to seeing her shine in the professional world. ~ Gregory Patterson, associate professor of dance



Ilyssa Brunhild

Outstanding Student in Music Education

Ilyssa Brunhild is a fall 2021 graduate of OU's music education program. She student-taught at Grosse Pointe North High School this past fall, and is currently working as a long term substitute teacher for music at Conant Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Ilyssa is thankful for her family, friends, and professors for helping her reach her goals!

As a music teacher, Ilyssa is poised, confident, and artistic. She is a critical thinker and highly self-reflective, which influenced her growth during student teaching. I enjoyed observing Ilyssa teach in the fall and found our post-observation conversations to be open, energized, and positive. Her improvement was steady. I am really impressed by Ilyssa's maturity and commitment to her craft.

~ Cat Bennett, assistant professor of music



Noah Canales

Pat and Mercedes Nicosia Meadow Brook Estate Award

Noah Canales is newly graduated from Oakland University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in musical theatre. He completed his collegiate career with OU's production of *Pippin* as King Charles, and recently finished a children's tour playing Jasper in *The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* (American Pops Orchestra). He would like to thank his family, faculty, and mentors for the endless love and support they have shown him throughout his college career. He plans to take all that he has learned to New York in the coming months.

Noah has brought his enormous amount of charm and charisma outside the walls of Varner perhaps more than any other student in recent memory. He has parlayed his education beautifully into his one-man show, "Feeling Good" in a way that is both touching and hilarious. The Pat and Mercedes Nicosia Meadowbrook Estate Award is given to a student who has shown excellence in both their endeavors outside of the department and one-person shows. We are confident that Noah will continue to excel in the professional world of theatre and cabaret.

~ Josh Young, assistant professor of theatre



Kevin Cornwell II

Distinguished Musicianship Award

Kevin Cornwell II is a fourth-year vocal music education major at Oakland University. Kevin is the president of the Oakland Chorale and is involved with the Opera, Phi-Mu Alpha, Jazz Department, and the Music Composition program. After graduating from Oakland University, Kevin plans to further his studies in Choral Conducting, with an emphasis on Film Score and Music Production.

Kevin Cornwell II has transformed in four years from a freshman with a nice voice into a true artist. He has distinguished himself in vocal competitions, in opera, in choral conducting, and in composition. He was a 1st place winner at the State and Regional levels of the NATS Voice Competition where he was named the Jessye Norman Award winner, and went on to be a national semi-finalist in that competition.. He has portrayed Archibald Grosvenor in OU's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's Patience and soon will be heard as Polyphemus in Handel's Acis and Galatea. His composition for the film Pharmocosm won best score at the Hollywood Horror Festival, Los Angeles 2021, and he was awarded Honorable Mention by the Lift-Off Global Network filmmaker showcase which achieved international recognition in 14 countries. Kevin is also president of the Oakland Chorale and was music director of the Sigma Nu Chapter of Phi-Mu Alpha from 2019-2021. Beyond his distinguished musicianship, he is an exceptional young man who is humble and gracious, and a student we will continue to be proud of in the future.

~ John-Paul White, distinguished professor of music

Kevin Cornwell II is as fine an undergraduate conductor as I have seen in over 30 years teaching. He has a maturity as a musical leader that is exceptional. Even from within an ensemble, Kevin's ear is always pointed outward, and his mind is always on how every musical situation can be made better. He is a natural born leader whose peers universally look up to and trust him, yet he is humble and self-deprecating. Kevin is an award-winning composer, an award-winning singer, a church musician, an opera lead, and an example to us all. Kevin is the first African-American president of the Oakland Chorale in its history. This year, he has led that organization in preparing for a two-week European concert tour, which necessitated the raising of over \$100,000. He's an inspiration to his fellow students and to the faculty. We love you, Kevin!

~ Michael A. Mitchell, professor of music



Alexis Dill

Distinguished Musicianship Award (graduate)

Alexis Dill began playing cornet at the Salvation Army church, Yorkminster Citadel, in Toronto, Canada. She graduated from the University of Toronto with a bachelor's degree in music performance, and earned her Master of Music in instrumental music at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. Alexis currently instructs at Accent Pontiac, an El Sistema non-profit. She is also member of the Chromatic Brass Collective, which celebrates female and non-binary brass musicians of colour.

During her time at OU, Alexis has certainly distinguished herself both within SMTD and beyond. A quintessential leader, her influence within the brass area has been transformative in many ways. Her joyful spirit, impeccably high standards and constant desire to serve the greater good combine to propel Alexis into the highest echelon of students with whom I have worked in 30 years of teaching. She is an exceptional trumpet and cornet player, having earned multiple national/international accolades/awards. I am ever-so thankful to have had the opportunity to work with such an amazing musician and person! ~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music

Alexis' contributions to the brass area have been outstanding and significant. Her kind and inquisitive nature have allowed her to blossom and flourish as a musician this year. She was named outstanding cornet player at the Dublin Festival of Brass, earned a spot performing in the Chromatic Brass Collective, and will be performing in a featured ensemble at the International Women's Brass Conference in May of this year. She has shown immense maturity and leadership in the trumpet studio and has contributed to the current culture of support and positivity. We are overwhelmingly proud of her work over the past two years and are thrilled to support her in the future. Congratulations Alexis!

~ Jennifer Oliverio, assistant professor of music



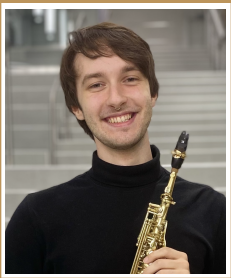
Kassie Dunaj

Outstanding Student Service Award (Theatre)

Kassie Dunaj is a double-major graduating with a BFA in acting, as well as in screenwriting. She has enjoyed being a part of this department for the last four years and is so grateful to be the recipient of the Outstanding Student Service Award. Kassie will be making her directorial debut on May 14 with *Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons!* You may have seen her in *Sense and Sensibility* (2022), *The Servant of Two Masters* (2021), or *Macbeth* (2020). She plans on staying in Michigan for the summer to create a New Play Festival! She's excited to go out into the world and make some theatre!

Throughout her career at Oakland University, Kassie Dunaj has exemplified a spirit of service to the community of the Department of Theatre. Kassie has been an assistant to the theatre department chair for four years — a position she has held longer than either of the chairs she worked with held the office. She has also been on the A&T student organization board for three years, and is currently serving as its president. Kassie has been a liaison between students and faculty and a mentor to her peers. But these official titles and recognized responsibilities are only part of what Kassie does in service to her peers. She once said of herself, "I like to be there when people need me," which is something of an understatement when one reflects on how often she can be found helping her classmates in their creative endeavors. By being so open and available in her spirit of collaboration and service, it is no exaggeration to say that in her four years at OU, Kassie has made a positive impact on everyone in the theatre department.

~ Jeremy Barnett, associate professor of theatre



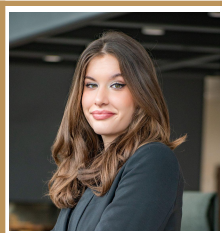
Brant Ford

Outstanding Student in Chamber Music (The Ford / Miller DUO)

Brant Ford is a bright young saxophonist from Henderson, Kentucky. He is currently in his fifth year studying music performance and technology with Dr. Jeffrey Heisler at Oakland University. Brant has received many awards as a soloist, including first prize in the 2018 American Single Reed Summit Saxophone Competition, a winner of the 2018 YoungArts National Competition, and winner of the 2017 and 2019 Oakland Symphony Orchestra Concerto competitions. Brant has performed in masterclasses with numerous world-renowned musicians, including Nikita Zimin, Timothy McAllister, Otis Murphy, and Lara St. John. Brant will be continuing his studies at Indiana University in the fall of 2022.

Award-winning saxophonist Brant Ford has been a transformational student for our instrumental music program at Oakland University. A once-in-a-generation talent, Brant is highly motivated, excels in the interpretation of both traditional and contemporary music, and a model citizen in every respect. He is a tenacious worker and has grown to become one of the finest undergraduate saxophonists in the country. Brant's performing shows a maturity well beyond his years and displays phenomenal technical and tonal prowess along with deep musical sensitivity. Brant Ford is a prize-winner in classical saxophone at the YoungArts Competition in New York City, a win that garnered him national acclaim and this year won the Tuesday Musicales of Detroit "Mary Levack Quick Scholarship" for woodwind performance. In addition, Brant has won first prize at the 2018 American Single Reed Summit Young Artist Competition, won the Oakland Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition twice (in 2018 and 2020), won the Oakland University Chamber Music Competition twice (in 2019 and 2022), won the OU Band Concerto Competition, and was a semi-finalist in the most recent North American Saxophone Alliance Biennial Competition along with winning other prizes in several local competitions. Brant Ford is a model learner and leader in every respect. He is held in the highest regard among his teachers and peers. It has been my

honor to serve as his mentor — next year, Brant will pursue a master's degree in saxophone performance at Indiana University on a Graduate Fellowship Award. ~ Jeffrey Heisler, associate professor of music



Nina Gojcaj

Outstanding Student in Vocal Performance

Nina Gojcaj is a graduating senior in vocal performance at Oakland University. She is actively involved in the Oakland Chorale, the operas, the women's music fraternity Sigma Alpha Iota, and the vocal jazz program. When not in Varner Hall, Nina is passionate about teaching voice and music directing young students. She plans to pursue her goals in opera and further her music career after graduation.

Nina Gojcaj was lured to music by her heart, but her brain and work ethic as well as her incredibly gorgeous voice have all joined together to let her talents blossom and shine. Nina definitely has all of the ingredients to be a successful professional singer!

~ Edith Diggory, adjunct assistant professor of voice

Nina Gojcaj has a warm and thrilling mezzo-soprano instrument which moves well and communicates musically and dramatically. Her growth as a performer over the four years of her study has been tremendous. For those of us who had the pleasure of seeing her perform Madame Lidoine in Dialogues of the Carmelites, it was like watching an artist being born. She plunged the depths of chronic illness, took us through a deeply moving transformation from faithfulness, to doubt, to fear. Her death scene was one of the most memorable operatic performances in the history of OU Opera. She is a kind, engaging and inspirational citizen to her colleagues, and we all wish her the very best as she pursues a career as a performer.

~ Alta Boover, assistant professor of music



Tyler Hewett

Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (graduate)

Tyler Hewett is a first-year graduate student at Oakland University pursuing his master's degree in saxophone performance. In 2021, he graduated with honors at the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in music education. A few performance highlights from those years include touring Europe with the Mississippians Jazz Ensemble and winning the 2019 Orchestra Concerto Competition. He was inducted into both the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society and the Pi Kappa Lambda Honor Society in 2020. At OU, Tyler is an active member of the Wind Symphony as well as the Disassembly Saxophone Quartet. He is also a graduate assistant for the Golden Grizzlies Athletic Band, where he conducts the ensemble during the basketball season. A few notable achievements from Tyler's first year include winning the 2022 Band Concerto Competition and being honored with a MaTiLda award in graduate performance. In addition to a focus in performance, Tyler is active in music educational outreach, providing lessons, sectionals, and masterclasses.

Since arriving at OU only one year ago, Tyler's level of artistry as a chamber musician, large ensemble member and solo artist has dramatically matured. The 2022 winner of the Oakland University Band Concerto Competition, his recent performance of the Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Orchestra by Ingolf Dahl stands at the top of student performances of that work in my 25 years at OU. Not only outstanding as a performer, Tyler is also outstanding as a leader, demonstrating to those around him that hard work, humility and a desire to support others are integral in the life of a musician. ~Gregory Cunningham, professor of music



Wesley Hutchison

Outstanding Student in Jazz

Wes Hutchison is a senior music technology major with a minor in jazz studies. He participates in a wide variety of musical ensembles at OU including Oakland Chorale, Jazz Singers, Jazz Combos, and Jazz Band. Wes has a passion for writing and arranging music and has taken a particular interest in choral, jazz, and popular music. Wes has also served for two years as music director of Gold Vibrations, OU's student-led a cappella ensemble.

Wes Hutchison typifies excellence in our SMTD. A triple threat, he will be the first OU vocalist to graduate with a jazz minor, has participated in ensembles as a jazz pianist, and is a promising young jazz composer and arranger. For two years, Wes has led the award-winning a cappella group, Gold Vibrations. Wes has been a key member of the Golden Grizzly Jazz Singers for four years and is currently finishing his degree as a music technology major. In both jazz arranging and orchestration, his work has been some of the most inspiring that I have seen out of a student in my career. Wes Hutchison has a bright future. ~ Scott Gwinnell, special lecturer of music



Olivia Kiefer

Gittlen Theatre Award

Olivia Kiefer is a BFA acting student interested in pursuing multiple areas of the theatrical profession. Her latest credits include assistant director/dramaturg for *Pippin* and her performance as Anne Steele in *Sense and Sensibility*. Olivia would like to thank all of her professors and peers at Oakland University's Theatre Department for all they have done for her over the past three years. Also, she wishes to thank her family for always being there for her!

*A multi-faceted theatre artist, Olivia is not only talented but the type of student, collaborator and colleague you eagerly welcome into the room. An actor, director, dramaturg and playwright, she is a selfless ensemble member ready to take risks, has a keen eye and ear for storytelling and will never be satisfied with the easy artistic choice. In addition to creating memorable characters in our mainstage production of *Sense and Sensibility* and our children's musical *How I Became a Pirate*, Olivia is a mainstay in our student produced work, whether it's directing for our evening of 10-Minute plays, collaborating on the script for our recent Company Class production of *Nowhere*, or helping to co-design the art installation in our Studio Theatre. She will be appearing in the student directed play *Lemons, Lemons, Lemons, Lemons* this coming May. Olivia is a mature, well-rounded theatre practitioner who approaches her work with a gleeful sense of play and a hint of mischief. As she enters her senior year, I look forward to her upcoming projects. ~ Assistant Professor David Gram*



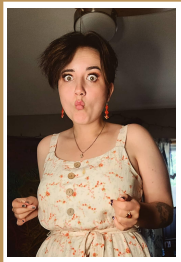
Corrin Kliever

Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (undergraduate)

Corrin Kliever is a fourth year student at Oakland University pursuing a bachelor's degree in flute performance with a music theory minor. An active performer, she has served as acting co-principal and second flute of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra

and associate principal of the Oakland University Wind Symphony. She has participated in Flute Ensemble and Steel Band. As a current undergraduate student at OU, she has taken on leadership roles as administrator for the Oakland University Cooperative Orchestra Library and has CRLA Level 1 certification as a tutor for music theory and music history. She is dedicated to building community ties through her work in the Nu Zeta chapter of Sigma Alpha Iota and is a driving and engaging educator who teaches piano and flute with Red Piano Music Studio. She is proud to study with Sharon Sparrow and Jeffery Zook of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. After her projected graduation from OU in spring of 2022, Corrin plans to pursue a master's degree in flute performance at Boston University.

Corrin's quiet, yet authoritative leadership as a flutist is extraordinary in every way. Her work as acting principal flute on the Oakland Symphony this past year was amongst the best undergraduate work I have ever witnessed in that ensemble for the past 25 years. Additionally, her steadfast leadership over the past four years in the Oakland University Wind Symphony as principal / associate principal flute, not to mention her positive and supportive influence on everyone in the flute studio has made Corrin truly deserving of this award. I am looking forward to hearing about her upcoming work as an MM student in flute performance at Boston University! ~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music



Liv Kunkle

Gittlen Achievement in Theatre Design and Technology

Liv Kunkle is a junior theatre design and technology major. Their focus is costumes and they have gotten the opportunity to costume design for multiple shows at OU such as *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *Passage* as well as Oakland Dance Theatre performances. If you are trying to find them you should check the Costume Shop since that is where they spend most of their time. Liv is looking forward to their upcoming costume design work on the theatre department's production of *The Trojan Women*, which will be touring in Greece this summer. They are grateful for all the love and support they have received this year from friends and colleagues and would like to give a special thanks to their partner for keeping them company through all the late nights spent working on shows.

Liv Kunkle has demonstrated excellence in several design disciplines throughout their college career as a design and technology student. Their work is smart and creative, with a strong point of view. It's been a pleasure to have them in class, and they have come so far in their artistic development just in the two years I've known them. I look forward to seeing what they create in their senior year.

~ Whitney Locher, assistant professor of theatre



Pinlin Liu

Jennifer Scott Memorial Award

Pinlin Liu is graduating this month with a Master of Music in piano. She began musical training at age six with her mother. Originally from China, she received a bachelor's degree of piano performance from Harbin Normal University and later completed a master's degree in musicology from Qingdao University. While studying at Oakland University, three of Pinlin's students were selected for the Honors Recital of the Bach Festival in Livonia, Michigan, in November 2022, and one student was named to perform on the Schoolcraft Honors Recital in Livonia, Michigan, in April 2021. Three students were also selected for the Bach Festival in December 2021. Additionally, Pinlin received the James and Teresa Evola Piano Programs Scholarship

in 2020 and attended the Crescendo International Competition in Michigan, receiving a “Certificate of Excellence” in 2019.

Pinlin is one of the most passionate and thoughtful teachers I have met over the years. For one, she returned to school to enhance her skills and knowledge in order to teach better. Since her time at OU, Pinlin has actively participated in every event, took all pedagogy courses as well as additional theory classes to strengthen her background. We have met constantly to study pieces her students are learning so she can help them improve. In addition, Pinlin has become a confident pianist as she now can analyze pieces at a deeper level and understands how physical movement can affect sound. As she continues her studies at MSU this fall, I am certain she will continue to thrive as a performer and teacher.

~ Tian Tian, associate professor of music



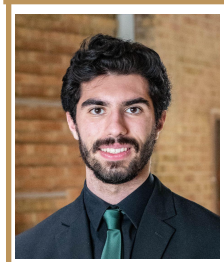
Braden Macchia

Outstanding Student in World Music

Braden Macchia is a drummer/percussionist with a deep passion for the endless variety of music that can be found across the globe. His love for percussion started in Bridgeport, Connecticut at the Jim Royle Drum Studio where he took private lessons and performed in their percussion ensembles. His studies with Jim Royle led Braden toward pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in integrative and contemporary performance at West Virginia University. Throughout his time there, Braden was a member of WVU's Percussion Ensemble, Steel Band, African Drum and Dance Ensemble, Jazz combos, Wind Symphony, Orchestra, Taiko Ensemble, and the Javanese/Balinese Gamelan Ensemble. After making a connection with WVU alumni and OU faculty member Mark Stone, Braden moved to Michigan to pursue a master's degree in world percussion performance at Oakland University. Alongside his studies, Braden worked as the world music graduate assistant where he was responsible for co-teaching the OU Steel Band, the OU African Drum and Dance ensemble, the World Percussion Ensemble, and various Music in World Cultures classes. Braden currently teaches at Orion Music Studio where he gives private lessons to students K-12.

Braden Macchia has done outstanding work over the past two years while pursuing a master's of music degree in world percussion performance and while serving as graduate assistant for Oakland University's world music program. Braden is a stand out steel pan performer, having learned to play every instrument of the Caribbean steel pan orchestra and excelling as a tenor pan soloist. During his time at OU, he dug deeply into music of the Dagara gyl xylophone, both mastering virtuosic repertoire and creating several original compositions for this West African instrument. He has also pursued a thorough study of the unique Namaddu tuned drum tradition of Uganda. Finally, in addition to his world percussion studies with Mark Stone and Patrick Fitzgibbon, Braden pursued extensive drum set studies with Gayelynn McKinney and has participated in several of OU's jazz ensembles. As an incredibly well-rounded percussionist with a sincere passion for both teaching and performing, Braden has a bright future ahead.

~ Mark Stone, associate professor of music



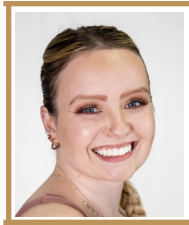
Deven Mallamo

Outstanding Student in Piano Performance (undergraduate)

Deven Mallamo is currently studying piano performance and computer science at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He began playing piano at the age of 10, and began studying under Stephen Vaglica at 15. Currently, he studies under Tian Tian and Rebecca Happel at Oakland University. He has also explored other genres outside of classical piano, such as playing jazz

piano and vibraphone with a big band and trio, and also played the alto saxophone in a wind ensemble. He hopes to spread his passion for music to other people through performing and teaching piano, as well as continue to explore other genres of music further.

Deven Mallamo is equally at home in classical and jazz genres. Deven has managed to excel in the SMTD, winning the concerto competition with the first movement of Prokofiev's third piano concerto, performing with the jazz band, and improvising in both genres as well as blues, while majoring in both computer science and piano performance. Uniquely, no matter what he plays — be it a short improvisation on a cadential pattern, open score sight-reading, or substantial work from the piano repertoire — Deven always treats every piece of music with respect and great musical expression. As a sophomore under the primary tutelage of Dr. Tian Tian, Deven has already successfully tackled some of the more daunting piano repertoire, from Liszt to Ligeti, and loves to share his gifts with an audience through performance. ~ Rebecca Happel, applied instructor of piano



Riley McClain

Outstanding Dance Performance

Riley McClain will graduate in December 2022 with her BFA in dance performance. In her four years at Oakland University she has had the opportunity to not only work with the dance department faculty but several guest artists as well, including Take Root, Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Diavolo LA, Sandra Torijano, Bailey Allshouse, and more. Riley was a member of Oakland Dance Theater for three years and is currently a member of Oakland's Repertory Dance Company. She is also an intern for Take Root's Dance for Parkinson's Disease program. Riley debuted her choreography in April 2021 with her piece titled *SpaceWalker* for ODT's Young Choreographers Forum. Her work, *The Number of Tomorrow's Lost*, was chosen to perform at ACDA in March of 2022. At the end of this year, Riley plans to audition for local modern dance-based companies while she finishes her degree. Riley's future plans include traveling and dancing for a modern dance company and eventually obtaining an MFA so she can teach in a college setting.

Riley was quite a seasoned performer upon entering the OU dance department. The faculty knew that with additional training, hard work, and a desire to succeed in the field, Riley would become an exceptional performer. She surpassed our expectations. Riley exhibits a strong and unique quality when onstage that is rarely seen in undergraduate dance majors. Dancing in many lead roles, Riley has what it takes to succeed in this business and the faculty is anxious to see how far she goes. ~ Gregory Patterson, associate professor of dance



Noah McDonald

Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance (graduate)

Noah McDonald is a first-year graduate student under Dr. Kenneth Kroesche studying tuba performance. He graduated from Penn State University in 2019. At OU, Noah participates in many of the ensembles, including the OU Jazz Band, OU Brass Band, Symphonic Band, Wind Symphony, and the Oakland Symphony Orchestra. He is also a graduate assistant for the Golden Grizzlies Athletic Band.

The comprehensiveness of Noah's musicianship and abilities as a low brass performer, combined with his desire to participate in almost every instrumental performance offering we have at Oakland University, certainly makes him one of SMTD's most outstanding students. From bass trombone in the OU Jazz Band and Symphonic Band, to leadership roles as a tubist in the OU Brass Band and Wind Symphony, to principal tuba of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra, Noah certainly exemplifies the true meaning of a 21st century comprehensive performer. I find Noah to be a

truly inspiring musician and person. I am grateful that I have had an opportunity to work with him this past year, and look forward to more work next year. ~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music



Iyla Miller

Outstanding Student Service Award (Music)

Iyla Miller is a fifth-year student of Dr. Kenneth Kroesche completing her bachelor's degree in euphonium performance and music education with a minor in music theory at Oakland University. Currently, she is the principal euphonium of the Wind Symphony and the Brass Band. Additionally, Iyla has played trombone in the Jazz Band, Symphonic Band, and Wind Symphony. On top of being involved with SMTD as a musician, Iyla has shown her dedication by taking on various leadership roles. She is the equipment manager and music librarian for the Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, Brass Band, and Golden Grizzlies Band, and has worked with the OU Community Music Program. Iyla also serves as the president of the International Tuba Euphonium Association Oakland University Chapter and as the sergeant-at-arms of the Sigma Alpha Iota Nu Zeta Chapter. On top of her service to the SMTD program, Iyla has also dedicated herself to working with the Dodworth Saxhorn Band and as the low brass instructor at Red Piano Music Studio.

Iyla's service to SMTD is nothing short of exceptional. Her ability to identify issues of concern before they occur is truly uncanny, and matched only by her willingness to step in at any moment to do the work if necessary for the greater good. Whether as a librarian, head equipment manager for Wind Symphony, or as band manager with the OU Brass Band and Golden Grizzlies Band, Iyla's desire to serve is extraordinary and has made a real difference for all of us in the instrumental area. ~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music



Peyton Miller

Distinguished Musicianship Award (undergraduate) **and Outstanding Student in Chamber Music** **(The Ford / Miller DUO)**

Peyton Miller is a senior undergraduate studying piano, composition, and conducting. His honors include being a finalist in the SIMM New International New Music for Harpsichord Competition, receiving first place in the Junior Open Division of the international chamber music competition M-Prize, and performances at venues ranging from Orchestra Hall to the Detroit Jazz Festival.

An accomplished percussionist, pianist, composer and conductor, Peyton Miller has certainly personified the term "distinguished" during his time as an undergraduate student at Oakland University. Peyton's superb work ethic and outward-facing world view, coupled with an insatiable desire to constantly hone his musicianship in myriad ways has served as a model for all of us in SMTD. Peyton is very well positioned to achieve truly great things in the next chapter of his professional life and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him over these past four years. ~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music

The term "done it all" really applies to Peyton Miller. While at OU he has covered a multitude of disciplines: playing at the most prestigious jazz clubs, winning international playing and composition contests, being awarded a grant to conduct the Stravinsky Octet and winning concerto competitions, whether on percussion or piano. Peyton will go to Paris this summer for the European American Musical Alliance. Being a mentor for

Peyton has been an extreme pleasure. I see great things happening for him, and look forward to the day when I can say "I knew him when...."

~ Dan Maslanka, applied instructor of percussion



Stanley Misevich

Gittlen Achievement in Musical Theatre

Stanley Misevich is a graduating senior in the BFA musical theatre program here at Oakland University. He is extremely grateful to be receiving this award and he cannot wait to apply what he's learned at this school moving forward. After graduation, Stanley will be performing in three productions at a summer stock theatre, so stay tuned for more information!

Over the course of his four years, Stanley has demonstrated a versatility and commitment to the craft of performance that has regularly seen him cast in both musicals and plays. Equally at home in comedies and dramas, you may have seen him in our mainstage productions of Pippin, Urinetown, The Who's Tommy and Passage. He was also set to appear as Cliff Bradshaw in our 2020 production of Cabaret before it was sadly canceled due to COVID. A thoughtful and incisive actor, he exudes presence, charm and is not afraid to take risks. Complementing a beautiful singing voice and a strong work ethic, Stanley has an active interest and proclivity for stage combat. He also has a penchant for performing "you won't believe your eyes" feats of magic! This work only augments the talented performer Stanley has grown into during his time at OU. Awaiting him is a bright future on stage and screen. We will watch with pride as Stanley takes on the profession. Finally, if he offers you to "pick a card, any card" — do it. You'll be amazed! ~ Assistant Professor David Gram



Yelena Murray

Jennifer Scott Memorial Award

Yelena Murray has been teaching music, dance, and piano in various communities for over 20 years. After working as an elementary and music teacher in Russia from 1996 to 1998, she moved to Rochester Hills, Michigan where she started teaching Russian language and music as a private instructor. She has organized childrens' musical performances, plays, and festivals in that role. Yelena worked as Latin dance instructor at Argentine Tango Detroit dance studio from 2010 to 2020. Her primary focus for the past 15 years has been teaching piano.

Yelena Murray brings a unique perspective to piano pedagogy. Having had her early musical training in Russia but having lived much of her adult life in the U.S., having started her OU career after raising a family, and having a background in dance, she brings many diverse experiences to the table as a student as well as a teacher of piano. At OU she has always been a conscientious student who brings a single-mindedness of purpose to every task regardless of whether that is learning repertoire, excelling at all assignments in piano literature, or choosing a project topic in pedagogy she is passionate about. She has made tremendous strides as a pianist and in overall musicianship since she first started at OU, and her piano students are devoted to her, surely a winning combination for success in her chosen field.

~ Rebecca Happel, applied instructor of piano



Rebecca Otmanowski

Outstanding Choreography Award

Rebecca Otmanowski will be graduating in December 2022 with a BFA in dance performance and a BA in psychology. Throughout her four years she has had the pleasure of working with many talented dance faculty and guest artists such as Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Take Root, Sandra Torijano, Russell Tanenbaum, and more. She was a member of Oakland Dance Theater for her first three years, and was a member of Oakland's Repertory Dance Company under Thayer Jonutz during her fourth year. Rebecca's work, *The Rise & Ruin*, was chosen to be performed at the American College Dance Association Central-Eastern conference in March of this year. Her dance on film, *Morning Coffee*, was selected to be included in the Midwest Regional Alternative Dance Festival, also in March of this year. She currently teaches and choreographs at Rochester Avon Recreation Authority. After graduation, Rebecca plans to continue dancing and creating. She would love to dance for a modern-based company while still choreographing, exploring movement, and anything else that comes her way.

To become a successful choreographer, composer, or playwright often requires unique talent that one is born with. That is how the faculty describes Rebecca. She exudes natural talent and an eye for moving dancers across the stage in ways that we haven't seen in quite some time. Dance after dance, Rebecca has created works that make us wonder, "why haven't I thought of that?" It is truly amazing when students like Rebecca are so gifted that the faculty takes notice of their skills and learns. We are very proud of Rebecca and are confident we'll see an awesome professional dance company in the near future. ~ Gregory Patterson, associate professor of dance



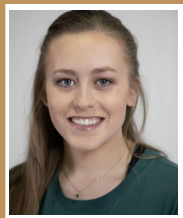
Kyle Paoletti

Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance(undergraduate)

Kyle Paoletti is an award winning percussionist studying percussion performance and music education at Oakland University. His achievements include multiple solo awards such as the Dora Dawson scholarship and performing in a PASIC showcase, as well as partaking in multiple community tours with duet partner Kylie Bedard. Kyle is also a music educator, having worked with multiple community ensembles such as the Dearborn Youth Symphony, the Oakland Youth Orchestra, and the Motor City Academy Brass Band. Kyle is a drumline tech and is currently working with Rochester Adams High School as the drumline instructor. He also teaches private lessons and classes at Red Piano Music Studio. Outside of teaching, Kyle serves as the president of the Oakland University Percussion Studio and is currently a member of The Magnificent 7, a percussion septet that is currently touring the country. He would like to thank his professor, Dan Maslanka, for being a compassionate and supportive figure whose dedication to his students and support on all fronts has helped Kyle get closer to achieving his dreams. Kyle is planning to pursue a master's degree in either melodic timpani with Diana Loomer at Appalachian State in North Carolina or percussion performance at the Eastman School of Music in New York.

Kyle's work ethic is amongst the most remarkable of any student with whom I have worked over the past 32 years of teaching. His most recent world premiere performance as a David Daniels Young Artists Concerto Competition winner in February 2022 was truly astonishing and an inspiration to both student and faculty alike. However, while outstanding as a performer, Kyle is also outstanding in terms of perseverance, fortitude and leadership. His influence on the Percussion Studio these past two years have forever changed that venerable aspect of the instrumental area for the better. Kyle is well-positioned to make a mark in the next phase of his professional life. ~Gregory Cunningham, professor of music

To say Kyle Paoletti is the best student leader I have encountered is an understatement. His leadership both on and off the stage is immeasurable. While winning the orchestral concerto competition was probably Kyle's crowning achievement, the Mag 7 group he spearheaded gives him the most pride. He has motivated the entire percussion studio with his tireless work ethic. I believe "success" will become Kyles's middle name in either the education or performing fields. Congrats Kyle! Well deserved! ~ Dan Maslanka, applied instructor of percussion



Madeline Parker

Distinguished Dance Student

Maddie Parker is graduating with her BFA in dance and has spent the past year as an apprentice with Eisenhower Dance Detroit. She plans to keep dancing after college and to eventually pursue an MFA in dance. She is also interested in getting certified in Countertechnique. When she's not dancing, Maddie can be found teaching dance, choreographing, or spending time with her dog, Rory.

From the day that Maddie Parker auditioned for our program, the faculty was amazed by her skill level and potential as a dancer. Throughout her years in the dance program, Maddie continued to make incredible strides, maturing as an artist and carving her niche in the field. Maddie is the perfect example of a model student. Organized, disciplined, motivated and smart. As a member of the pre-professional student company, OU Repertory Dance Company, and a recent apprentice with Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Maddie is poised to be one of our most successful graduates.

~ Gregory Patterson, associate professor of dance



Dan Shiller

SMTD Award *(for commitment to the interdisciplinary nature of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance)*

Dan Shiller is currently finishing a Master of Music degree in world percussion performance at Oakland University, doing in depth study on Ghanaian Gyl and Drum traditions. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Akron. While in school, Dan has worked with dancers, actors, and filmmakers. He often performs works for actor-percussionist, and loves playing for dance classes. Dan currently works for Artsparks, a community dance school in Akron as an accompanist, as well as a music teacher for SMARTS in Youngstown, Ohio.

Dan Shiller is one of the most passionate, talented, and artistically expressive students I have had in many years of teaching at the university level. His master's recital demonstrated both excellence and innovation and he is highly worthy of the SMTD award.

~ Enrique Rios-Ellis, visiting assistant professor of music

Dan Shiller truly embodies the interrelated nature of the performing arts. In addition to excelling in his Master of Music degree in world percussion performance, Dan has made dance and theatre an essential part of his studies at Oakland University. He was the first OU student to hold an assistantship focused on dance accompaniment and worked closely with Ali Woerner to develop his skills accompanying a wide range of modern dance classes. As an extension of this work, Dan participated last summer in the prestigious Mark Morris Dance Accompaniment Program in New York. He also played a leading role in A Documentary of Collaboration, a film with Take Root and Regina Carter. In addition to his in-depth exploration of the creative processes in world percussion traditions, Dan has made theatrical percussion a central part of his practice. This was seen in his recent master's recital, where Dan presented a powerful performance of Stuart Saunders Smith Songs I- IX in collaboration with Professor Kerro Knox. ~ Mark Stone, associate professor of music



Chris Warren

Outstanding Student Service Award (Music)

Christopher Warren is a senior student of Kenneth Kroesche completing his bachelor's degree in euphonium performance and music education. He currently serves as the principal baritone in the brass band, as well as playing euphonium in the Wind Symphony and Symphonic Band. On top of contributing musically to the SMTD program, Christopher has taken on a variety of leadership roles at Oakland. He is currently a librarian for the wind bands at Oakland, as well as an equipment manager for the Brass Band and Golden Grizzly Band. He is currently the vice president of the International Tuba Euphonium Chapter at Oakland. Outside of Oakland, Christopher is a private teacher for euphonium and works with local high school marching bands.

I can think of few students with whom I have worked who demonstrate such a thorough understanding of what a "service mindset" means than Chris Warren. His multi-year desire to assist, calm and mature demeanor in handling issues that may occur with others, and affable approach to service makes him a true stand-out in my 32 year teaching career. We are all fortunate in the instrumental area to have Chris working behind the scenes on our behalf as a band manager for the Golden Grizzlies Band and Brass Band, as well as serving as a librarian for the concert bands.

~ Gregory Cunningham, professor of music

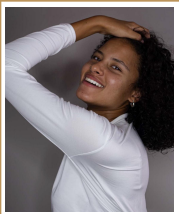


Jalen Wilson-Nelem

Gittlen Achievement in Acting

Jalen Wilson-Nelem has enjoyed a fulfilling career in theatre at OU and is excited to take his teachings into the open world. He hopes to use his art to tell stories that need to be told and create bonds with other artists who have the same goal. He would like to thank his loving family, supporting friends, and engaging mentors for their constant and motivating affection.

Jalen always brings a keen interest and a point of view to his roles. From Fleance to Claudio; Truffaldino to Col. Brandon and Trayvon Martin, Jalen is memorable and his words linger. We will miss his energy and off-balanced, deadpan sense of humor, but look forward to seeing him play Romeo this summer at Royal Oak Shakespeare. ~ Karen Sheridan, professor of theatre



Leah Wilson

Social Justice Award

Leah Wilson is from Southfield, Michigan and just completed her junior year at Oakland University, majoring in musical theatre with a minor in psychology. She has been a part of multiple productions at OU, and most recently was thrilled to be the Leading Player in the spring production of *Pippin!* For the past three years, she has served as the chair of our Region 3 KCACTF Student Board. Leah values diversity and is passionate about creating an inclusive and compassionate world.

What can I say about the future Professor Leah Wilson? She is a thought-provoking, talented, caring, and skilled artistic activist. The future Dr. Wilson is an assertive, collaborative, and wonderfully strategic leader who was gifted with the ability to make everyone feel welcomed, seen, and heard in every space she occupies. Leah brings a genuine sincerity, joy and authenticity to every role she performs. And the moment she graduates, I look forward to calling her my friend and colleague. Congratulations Leah. ~ Kelli Crump, director of OU's 2009 production *Facing Our Truth*; Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) Region 3 Representation, Equity and Diversity (RED) Chair



Yang Yang

Outstanding Collaborative Piano Award

Yang Yang graduated from the Wuhan Conservatory of Music in China and entered the piano area of Oakland University in 2021 under the supervision of Dr. Tian Tian, and is currently studying as a teaching assistant.

Yang Yang is a first-year piano performance graduate student from China. She served as the collaborative pianist for the strings and flute studios this year. Yang is an intelligent, highly motivated, responsible, and personable student. She is an outstanding musician with deep musical sensitivity. Yang is a model student in every aspect. It was my great pleasure to work with her this year and no one is more deserving than her to receive this award.

~ I-Chen Yeh, Applied Instructor of Piano

About the MaTilDa Awards

Every spring, the Oakland University School of Music, Theatre and Dance invites friends and family to gather and celebrate the hard work and achievements of the students receiving each department's most prestigious MaTilDa awards. The awards are named after Matilda Dodge Wilson. She donated the land and the seed money to establish Michigan State University-Oakland which became Oakland University. With these awards, SMTD is proud to honor her strength, spirit, her importance to the university, and her contribution to education and the arts.

About Oakland University's School of Music, Theatre and Dance (SMTD)

Oakland University's School of Music, Theatre and Dance (SMTD) is a leading center of performing arts education in southeast Michigan, offering outstanding educational and performance opportunities to undergraduate, graduate students, and community members. SMTD students learn and grow as musicians, actors, dancers, designers, arts educators and researchers in a collaborative and supportive environment. Learn more at oakland.edu/smtd.