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5TH YEAR CONVOCATION ADDRESS

“Learning to Breathe Again: CFA as Acts of Information, Formation and Transformation”

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Introduction

Good morning. Thank you for joining me on what is now my fifth convocation as Dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts, here at LMU. I want to thank our Dance students again for their engaging performances.

The Dance program has been receiving growing notoriety in the last few years, primarily in part to its rededication to offering our students a critical dance training with professionalizing purposes—a curriculum that synthesizes technique, choreography, performance and theory leading to careers in performance, teaching and social impact with diverse populations from youth at the local YMCA to work with varying US Veteran populations; dance as beautiful aesthetic yes, but also dance as a technology of knowing, showing and a tool for invigorating the mind, body and social action.

This commitment in the Dance Department has been further grounded in established relationships with a variety of dance companies with national and international reputations—including an educational partnership with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, the only such educational partnership of its kind on the west coast. As well as the fact that our students come into contact with a range of the top dancers and choreographers in the region and nation; greatly in-part due to a series of gifts from generous donors initiating a Visiting Artist Series that has brought such artists like Debbie Allen to engage in talks on technique, choreography and career pathways—helping all of our students to “discover their personal truth through Dance” which is very mission centered, mission empowered, and a mission promoting activity. (more on Dance shortly).
I want to structure our time together arrive three divisions of labor: a review of our accomplishments; a meditation on a theme; and a comment on strivings.

Learning to Breathe Again: CFA as Acts of Information, Formation and Transformation

I. Review of Accomplishments

II. Learning to Breathe:
   - Information
   - Formation
   - Transformation

III. Strategies of Engagement and Resistance

This year we are extremely happy to welcome five new tenure-track faculty into CFA and the university.

CFA New Faculty 2016-2017

Shaun Anderson, CMST
Anthony Bodlovic, MFT
Louvenia Jackson, MFT
Allison Soeller, CMST
Amanda Herring, ARHS

Shaun Anderson and Allison Soeller in the Department of Communication Studies
Anthony Bodlovic and Louvenia Jackson both in the Department of Marital and Family Therapy.
And Amanda Herring moves into a tenure track position in Art History, in the Department of Art and Art History. We are also joined by five new staff members:
Pamela Wimberly-Willis, Administrative Specialist in the Dean’s Office; Kate Shirley, Communications Manager; Tom Barette, Associate Director of Academic Budgets and Planning; Laurel Schmolze, Instructional Technologist with a joint apt in SFTV, and Alexander Egger, Technology Support Specialist.

Each year I am completely blown away by the range of events and activities that we offer (http://cfa.lmu.edu)
Nearly 100 formal and informal events that span the gamut from faculty lectures and student presentations, theatre performances, dance concerts, music concerts, senior recitals and exhibitions, symposia and workshops that showcase the talent and intellect of our students and faculty.

Our Von der ahe Chair in Communication and Ethics Larry Wenner continues to bring some of the top scholars to campus in his forums on Media Ethics and Social Responsibility. Along with continuing to be a prolific scholar with international recognition.
Our Presidential Professor of Theatre, Beth Henley is a working playwright, her works continue to be produced around the world and she will be honored with the William Inge Distinguished Achievement in American Theatre Award at the Inge Festival this April.

Our Presidential Professor of Communication Studies, Philip Wander continues to be a stalwart figure in the discipline of Communication Studies. Phil has recently been experiencing some health challenges. So on behalf of the Department of Communication Studies and his wife, our forever colleague, Wenshu Lee—we ask that you keep Phil and Wenshu in your hearts and prayers.
In terms of scholarship our faculty at large continue to be productive. The latest copy of the CFA Faculty Publications and Creative Works booklet is currently available on the college web page, <http://cfa.lmu.edu> 44 pages of accomplishments across the full range of faculty and students.

Key faculty in Theatre, Art History, and Marital and Family Therapy have new book length projects that are recently out—ready for your engagement.
Our faculty continue to present in a college-based series entitled **CFA Talks About Teaching and Scholarship**, organized by Judith Scalin and Paul Humphreys.

In addition to our fine performances, presentations and events that we produce with our students, we also bring in professional and performance artists to engage both the college and community; as well as invited guest directors, choreographers and scholars.

This Fall we brought in poet Mary Weems with her show “Black Notes” based on her collection of plays and monologues, *Blackeyed*----and just a week ago we brought in actor and Executive Director of Townstreet Theatre, Nancy Cheryl Davis with her one-woman show, “Passing Solo.” Each show focused on varying aspects of the African American experience.

And now some brief highlights of our departments---beginning with the Department of Art and Art History.
The combined department continues to host KaliedoLA, a lecture series dedicated to bringing in working artists, scholars and recent alums to engage students in art and art history, this is a public event so all interested guests are welcome—often held on Fridays during the noon hour in Murphy Recital Hall.
Students in Studio Arts continue to design and brand the Undergraduate Research Symposium as a vast array of CFA students also participate in both the Arts Showcase and the scholarly presentations during the formal symposium.

Catherine Damman (ARHS’11)
Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at Columbia University
2016-2018 Chester Dale Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA)

Catherine’s research focuses on performance and the history of art, including experimental dance, theater, film, and music. Her writing has been commissioned by institutions such as the Walker Art Center, the ICA London, and MoMA PS1 and publications such as Art Journal, Women & Performance, Art in America, and Artforum online. Her article, “Dance, Sound, Word: The ‘Hundred-Jointed Body’ in Zurich Dada Performance,” is forthcoming in The Germanic Review. Catherine is completing her dissertation—on the entanglements of narrative, media, and performance in American art of the 1970s—as the 2016–2018 Chester Dale Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA).

The department takes great pride in the successes of all their graduates, we forefront the success of Catherin Damman, a 2011 alum who is experiencing great success as a doctoral candidate in Art History at Columbia University.
I am sure that such success will also be awaiting the five young women, who working with Professor Melody-Rodari curated the current “(Re)Imagining Each Other” exhibit running in the Special Collections Section, Third Floor of Hannon Library. Our continued collaboration with the Hannon Library, Dean Kristine Brancolini and Cynthia Becht Head of Archives and Special Collections is important to the growth and development of our students and programs.

Our department of Communication Studies is a dynamic unit with a set of faculty that represent a diversity of ideas and interests. One of the two departments in CFA to recently move to a 4 unit model this year (along with ARHS), the department also has a new curriculum that continues to deepen its commitment to critical ways of producing and evaluating communication messages, the role of communication in shaping performance of identity and community, processes & technologies by which people relate to and collaborate, and the importance of principled advocacy across, personal/professional public lives.
To that end the department offers a series of lectures and symposiums around differing issues including the relationship between freedom of speech, censorship and digital culture.

Through faculty research, lectures and invited guests, the department is exploring issues of “Communication, Social Justice, and Prison Pedagogies in the Age of Ferguson”—(in the age of Trump), as well as the important work on femicide of the murdered and disappeared women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico being conducted by Professor Nina Reich.
The debate team under the direction of **Thomas Dowd** continues to excel in state, district, national and international competition. Along with the efforts of **Professor Jason Jarvis** who works with the Urban Debate league to bring the power of debate as a critical intellectual and democratic skill to underrepresented populations. The successes of the LMU debate team are included in the online version of our Faculty Publications and Creative Works booklet.

As Director of Communications and founding member of Women SPEAK, **Anna Sugiura '16** (Communication Major, English Minor in Journalism) knows how to open the floor for productive conversation.

At this year’s summit of the Clinton Global Initiative University, Sugiura not only introduced a keynote speaker, she also created an exhibit space which encouraged dialogue about SPEAK’s dearest issues: fighting gender inequality, sexist stereotypes and sexual assault on college campuses. Even more recently, Sugiura and SPEAK have commanded the attention of Chelsea Clinton, Jessica Alba, and the considerable notice of USA Today, which ran a feature of about their work.

The department of Communication Studies also takes great pride in the success of their graduates including Anna Sugiura class of 2016, Director of Communications and founding member of Women Speak, a nonprofit organization that helps young women to begin the opportunity to spark change in themselves and their communities.
As previously noted Dance continues with providing students a range of performance experiences, training and professional opportunities.

The annual concerts are showcases of student talents and choreographic excellence.
Students with particular interests in teaching have opportunities to engage in certificate programs both within and outside the university.

And through a donor funded Visiting Artist Program, the department brings in some of the top choreographers in the nation. In fact, this week students are engaged in a weeklong workshop with a diverse array of choreographers which will culminate in a public showing of the week’s efforts. This is usually a standing room event, but all are invited here in Murphy Recital Hall on Friday evening.
Our unit in Interdisciplinary and Applied Programs (IDAP) spearheaded by Professor Dean Schiebel, continues to offer students opportunities for applied studies, currently moving towards a joint minor in Public Relations with the Department of Communication Studies.

The Laband Art Gallery continues to provide a range of programming for the college, campus and community.
Just recently completing a successful collaborative run of the curated exhibition “Woody Woodpecker & the AvantGarde” in conjunction with SFTV, the gallery is now showing the exhibition, “Psychopomp” curated by Professor Anthony Bodlovic and graduate students in the Department of Marital and Family Therapy.

As a department, Marital and Family therapy continues to distinguish itself as one of the top MFT and Clinical Art Therapy programs in the nation:
Our faculty and students continue to receive national recognition and awards.

In addition, first year student Zoe Cavnar-Lewandowski received the 2016 Rowley Silver Award for Excellence. This is a scholarship award given to a full-time student member of the American Art Therapy currently enrolled in a masters program.

Our graduate students continue to garner highly coveted stipends from the State of California and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health designed to recruit linguistically and culturally competent therapists who are committed to working with diverse population served in public mental health.
The Music department continues to offer a range of performance opportunities for students including the ever popular, Sinatra Opera Workshop and the Children’s Concerts.

The perineal favor of the LMU Choruses under the direction of Dr. Mary Breden continues, and the emergence of the LMU Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Professor Tania Fleischer has made an impact to the department offerings.
Our two Resident Artists and Clinical Faculty, Wojciech Kocyan and Martha Masters continue to amaze us with their virtuosity and vigor as working concert artists and teachers. This year Martha Masters takes over the Annual Guitar Festival, which attracts hundreds of classical guitar enthusiasts to campus each year.

The Music Department also takes great pride in the diverse musical and performance pathways that its students follow, like Ana Villafane class of 2012, who plays Gloria Estefan in a traveling musical that has made it to Broadway.
The Theatre department offers a diverse range of productions that challenge students across issues of genre and period,
social and political issues, race and body image, classic and contemporary pieces,

always helping our students to encounter classic and challenging materials, and coming into contact with a range of professional actors who engage them both in performance, and in discussion about career pathways. Today we actually have a host of students who are competing, through qualification and nomination, at the Kennedy Center American Colleague Theatre Festival District Competition in Mesa, Arizona—we wish them the best.
Theatre is also another touch point in our collaborative relationship with the Hannon Library. This is one example with Professor Leon Weibers, but each year I am also tickled and intrigued with the Haunting of Hannon Halloween Event—in which classic and new fairy tales, and tales of horror are performed in the stacks by theatre students with guided haunted tours in the library.

CFA Enters it fourth year in a relationship with the Rotary District 5280 hosting the Pageant of the Arts, an event with talented high school students competing in art, dance, music performance and public speaking. Along with Rotary we host an ethics conference each year—and in March we will be hosting their Forum on Human Trafficking.

CFA continues its commitment to career and professional development on a broader scale. This year offered and expanded version of our “Conversations With” series into an event called “Career Connections” - cosponsored with the Office of Career and Professional Development,
Branden Grimmet’s team, in which a host of young alums at varying stages of their careers spoke to a crowded group of current students in Roski Cafeteria. The event was a great success;

all of which leads us to the ultimate questions of what do our CFA graduates do and where they go after graduation. Our students are getting jobs and work in both the public and private sectors, with an increasing number entering graduate programs.
These students are working for a range of companies and organizations around the Los Angeles area and the nation.

Governance in CFA

- Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC)
- Instructional and Student Affairs Committee (ISAC)
- Communication and Technology Committee (CTC)
- Senior Administrative Coordinators Committee

Over the last five years CFA has deepened its commitment to governance by establishing a series of college-based committees.
And just recently we added a CFA Student Council. A diverse group of students who bring their experiences and critical perspective to bear upon the state and nature of the college, serving as direct advisors to the Dean.

In terms of development, working with Tara Frates, the CFA Development Officer, I am proud that CFA has been highly successful through my five-year period as Dean, contributing $5.6 million dollars to the overall university scholarship initiative, raising $7.3 million in the last five years, $1.2 million up to date in this current fiscal year.

In that process we have exponentially increased the number of scholarships and fellowships to support students than ever before in the college. With Tara Frates, we take great pride in the ability to provide an increase number of scholarships to some of our most deserving students (when and as possible.)
The title of my talk today invokes the notion of “Learning to Breathe Again” in relation to the notions of Information, Formation and Transformation – as acts of CFA. In many ways, this title is a constructed thing that allows me to speak to aspects of the university mission that I believe is most embodied in CFA - in some ways this is another defense of who we are and what we do.

I use and maybe even abuse that explication of “The Education of the Whole Person” that is understood as the simultaneous process of information, formation, and transformation. That thus encourages personal integration of the student’s thinking, feeling, choosing, evolving self - which for me speaks so clearly to the expressive and critical arts, in which students are invited:

- to think into,
- to feel into,
- to embody

and to express their deep understanding in critical ways, and then to display that knowledge through rhetoric, debate, art and action.

The LMU mission states that this is a deeply critical and reflexive process in which students place their literal and figurative bodies on the line. It does this by fostering not only academic and professional development but also physical, social, psychological, moral, cultural, and spiritual growth.

The Education of the Whole Person-- promotes formation of character and values, meaning and purpose. It seeks to develop men and women for others. LMU encourages students, faculty, and
staff to identify with those living on the margins of society so that the intellectual inquiry and moral reflection endemic to university life will lead to meaningful work for transformative social change.

That sounds very much like what we do in CFA as an intentional, daily and embodied practice - so to sometimes deny or devalue that contribution, to not support the flourishing of these disciplines - is in fact to limit the degrees to which many of our students, across the campus - come to think not only with their heads, but to feel through their bodies, as to act towards change, as a valued pedagogical trinity of learning.

The notion of breathing in this title also works as an opportunity to briefly reflect on the climate of our times in which the disciplines of CFA, though often thought of as “not as critical” or “not a rigorous” as some other disciplines - and often made secondary in progressive initiatives of advancement or in discussions of market value and salaries - our disciplines actually undergird the joint purposes of the university and a liberal arts education; the disciplines in CFA use the power of rhetoric and art to seek to actually change the world; the good man or woman speaking and acting well to for liberatory purposes:

art as activism,
action as speech,
rhetoric as persuasion,
embodiment as positionality,

placing the disciplines of CFA at the heart of transforming the world; and in that sense the title also references the change of social/political/cultural climate in which we are living (in this nation) that requires use to desperately learn new strategies of breathing; sustaining our faith in the possible, and sustaining our bodies in relation to the relentless attacks:

on our rights,
on our mobility,
on our religion,
on our re-productivity,
on our race and ethnicity,
on our resiliency,
on our sexuality,
on our humanity.

When we talk about performed resistance, activism, and protest as a response to this current climate - whether Black Lives Matter or the new leadership in the White House - we are talking about the most core skills drawn from the academic and political economy of CFA disciplines - rhetoric, the crafted staging of responses as in Aristotle’s creed of finding in any given situation all the available means of persuasion, the use of artistic expression that penetrates the sensibilities of the other in ways that touch the mind, heart and spirit; helping others to deepen their commitment to belief, and being critical and responsive citizens of the world.
When we talk about being critical consumers of news, analyzing fake news, and engaging in critical media analysis - we are talking about skills sets that are core to Communication Studies; when we talk about acting up and acting out, in the political sense; when we talk about being the change that you seek to see in the world - we are talking about the forms of embodiment that is at the core of CFA disciplines - putting bodies on the line in a sophistication of performativity - not simply to communicate - in the powerful nature of what that means, as in to penetrate the understanding and sensibilities of others, to share human understanding towards emancipatory ends, but a performativity that commits an acts; that does something; that consummate an action, or to construct a platform for diverse identities to be made fully manifest in the doing\(^2\); not the reductive sense of performativity - as a banal acting out to draw attention to the self, or even performativity in the Butler’s sense of a stylized repetition of acts that simulates the natural, but a performance and performativity that intentionally and reflexively mirrors the hilarious and horrid of everyday life\(^3\); to place it up to be examined more closely, as a case study in humanity and human expression;

That is what I see when I attend a theatre performance, or a dance concert; that is what I see when I go to an art exhibition, I see the pixilation of humanity:

to be studied,
to be examined,
to be commented upon to help to inform others;
to help others deepen their commitment to faith or belief or politics, or reality or non-realities.

That is what I think of when I think of art therapy - using art-making as a methodology of helping to make the unconscious/conscious thereby discernable and maybe transformable.

I believe that is what we do in CFA and it is aspects of these qualities that all students who take our courses, majors who know - and non-majors who come to understand knowing differently; an experienced epistemological shift that ontologically changes their sense of being in the world - as they begin to process the substantive content of their disciplines with new eyes and ears, feeling into their knowing, embodying their disorientation; using this paradigmatic experience to know and engage the world differently; and potentially to help make the world anew. To individually breath again, and then to help breath life and hope back into the world.

I have intentionally left the now notorious message, statement and cry, “I Can’t Breathe” posted above me; white letters on a black t-shirt or on the forever reimagined hoodie of Trayvon Martin - as emblematic of the construction of restrictive mobilities, unquestioned intentions, and denied possibilities not as an indictment, but as an opportunity to meditate on the realities of breathing and the potential consequences of not breathing;

The notion of learning to breathe again - is a charge in the face of stupefying acts that have taken our breath away -

    from that emblematic hoodie of and the happening to Trayvon Martin,
to the extent and extant of the Black Lives Matter movement;

a resurgence of protest and unrest on university campuses around the country,

to the reality of a Donald Trump presidency that threatens border crossings and mobility,

while threatening a host of civil rights that we have long taken for granted—

and the ways in which all of these acts in a short period of time (five year or less), have

taken our breath away.

How do we begin to breathe again? How we do learn to harness our vast skills and talents to give voice to truth, use art to articulate a vision of hope, and activate the passions in our students to be informed, to deepen their commitment, and works toward change.

Breathing again is a way to also resuscitate a commitment to the democratic ideals that we hold so dear. I believe that we in CFA have a significant role to play.

As a college, we are in the process of producing a booklet that documents the range of our community engagement and social justice work inclusive but not limited to:
Our Art Smart Program and partnerships with local schools and the work of Helen B. Landgarten Art Therapy Clinic and departmental outreach

Our community partnerships in dance and dance education, our continued fundraising and issue raising activities on HIV-AIDS
Our social justice coursework across all departments and the work on critical prison outreach, and the important work that we do in the Voices of Justice series and our consistent collaboration in the amazing work of the CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice - just to list a few.

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In CFA, we are consistently looking for strategies of engagement and resistance to those forces, new and emerging, that challenge a “justice for all” - to which we are all committed as a college and as a university. Strategies to help people breathe, then engage and enact their discontent in
constructed and meaningful ways: the notion of information, formation and transformation made manifest.

So, allow me to make two simple offering for you here today.

When you arrived, you had the opportunity to receive two handouts. One is a simple page, a press release from the National Communication Association that reaffirms the importance of preserving free and responsible communication - these are also the principles that undergird and guide our own department of Communication Studies and indeed the college.

The other is a document that outlines 26 ways to be in the struggle beyond the streets: A list designed to celebrate ways that our communities can engage in liberation - so that we might all breathe better in knowing what is possible and in assisting others.
Before ending I would like to give a special thanks to my colleagues and staff in the Dean’s office who make it a joy to do the work. To Judy Scalin, Elaine Walker, Rachel Van Houten, Judy Delavigne, Pam Willis and Kate Shirley. To all the Senior Administrative Coordinators and staff throughout the college - your work is important and you matter to me.

With that said and done, I invite you to join me for a light lunch in the George A.V. Dunning Courtyard. Thank You.

Notes:

2. Here is an orientation to the performativity in public valence/parlance:
   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performativity