

FIRST FRIDAY NEWS

A Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of Bower School of Music & the Arts,

The month of April is usually filled with dozens of concerts, art exhibitions, theater performances and end of semester juries and recitals. Entering empty buildings and seeing our beautiful campus completely deserted is a very strange reality. Not even a month ago none of us could imagine a world where all events are cancelled, travel is suspended and the entire planet braces for the unprecedented challenge of a new pandemic requiring a global lock down.

As our collective society battles this enormous challenge, I hope we continue to stay inspired, create art, play music and read extraordinary literature. All of those things are essential needs for our human experience. A world without art, music or theater is a world without spirit. Our response to this global crisis should be a celebration of the human spirit through the power of its collective creativity. As we are all working online, let's find creative ways of being that much more committed to our artistic disciplines.

As we enter our fourth week of remote instruction and social distancing, I want to thank our faculty, staff and students for their commitment to this challenging situation. I know these circumstances affect everyone in profound and far reaching ways. I sincerely hope that we learn from this situation and eventually come out of this experiment stronger and better prepared for unforeseen challenges in the future.

I would like to make a full commitment to our patrons and donors who have generously supported us over the years. As with everything in life, this too shall pass... I promise you that we will reopen our doors soon enough with a full season of concerts, art exhibitions and theater performances featuring outstanding artists, excellent student ensembles and world-class faculty members.

I hope to see you at Bower School of Music & the Arts after this crisis is over. Please take care of one another, stay healthy, and keep your creativity alive!

Go Eagles!

Dr. Krzysztof Biernacki
Director, Bower School of Music & the Arts

Student News

The 22nd Annual Juried Student Art Exhibition would have opened to the public on March 20, but the Galleries, which was not able to hold the usual opening reception and awards ceremony, nor an exhibition open to the public, came up with a very creative way to showcase the works that had been chosen by a jury of 3 outside art professionals. Gallery Director, **John Loscuito** and Assistant Curator/Graphic Designer, **Anica Sturdivant** created an online catalogue of photographs of the pieces that had been chosen by outside jurors Julie Gerhard, director of the Cape Coral Art Center; Renee Ray, a painter and mixed media artist from New York and SWFL; and Melissa Minds VandeBurgt, Head of Archives, Special Collections & Digital Initiatives at FGCU. Congratulations to this year's award winners:

College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Scholarship Award

GENEVIV IRIARTE

"Cave Wall"

Method & Concept Scholarship Award

FARRAH ALKHADRA

"Coelom"

TANNER YURCHUCK

"Dreaming with Eyes Wide Open"

Carl E. Schwartz Award for Artistic Endeavor Scholarship

FRANCHESKA CASTANO

Sanibel - Captiva Rotary Club Award of Excellence

ALYSSA PAYNE

"Time Traveler"

Robert Rauschenberg Residency Award of Excellence

MEGAN SHINHAM

Southwest Florida Fine Craft Guild Award of Excellence

MARTHA GRATTAN

"Anthropocene: Quagga"

GENEVIV IRIARTE

"The Cave"

TANNER YURCHUCK

"Dreaming with Eyes Wide Open"

ADAM CLAGGETT

"Rejoice in Motion"

FGCU Art Galleries T-Shirt Award

CODY DENO

"Tracks"

Student News (continued)

FGCU Art Galleries Sketchbook Award
HALEY KELLER
"Gator"

[The catalogue for the exhibition can be found here.](#)

Congratulations to pianist **Jair Zacarias** (freshman, Music) who won \$5,000 in the BIG ARTS Music Competition in March. Six pianists from FGCU were admitted to the finals – far more than any other university including Florida State, University of Miami and several others.

Piano Major students of **Michael Baron** (Music) performed in Naples on March 8th. Pianists **Miguel Montalvan** (sophomore, Music), **Michelle Wijaya** (freshman, Music), **Natalia Mondragon** (sophomore, Music), **Victoria Paulino** (freshman, Music), **Fernando Lopez** (sophomore, Music), **Mallory Hornberger** (sophomore, Music), and **Arturo Fernandez** (sophomore, Music) also gave a recital for the Steinway Society at the Steinway Piano Gallery on March 11th.



(left to right) Jair Zacarias; Pianists and Dr. Baron after Steinway Piano Gallery recital

The newly formed Naples Design district has approached FGCU's Digital Media Design students tasking them with a design challenge. Select students will create a visual identity for the new Naples Design District and their work will be realized in the form of on-street lamp post banners advertising the area to visitors in Naples. The students: **Skyanna Billman** (junior, DMD), **Kaitlin Connor** (senior, DMD), **Aracelly Peralta** (senior, DMD), **Alyx Gonzalez** (junior, DMD) and **Jazmin Gonzalez Vera** (junior, DMD) are competing against each other to have their designed selected by the committee later this summer. Once a design is selected the banners will go up in the district celebrating the diverse range of businesses, galleries and creative communities of the Naples Design District. In late February the students and their professor, **Mike Salmund** (Art) met with Chad Jensen, director of the Method and concept gallery, to tour the district and get a sense of what the committee are looking for in making a visual statement for the new district. This is a similar project to last year's design students creating a visual identity for the multi-million dollar centerpiece of the Naples Design District The Collective building.

Student News (continued)

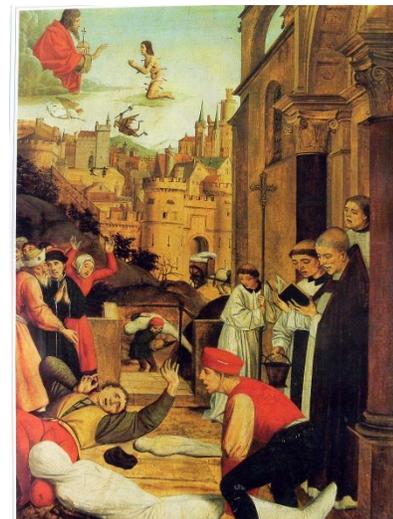


Digital Media Design students meet with Chad Jensen

Faculty News

Over a portion of FGCU's Spring break, **Tom Cimarusti** (Music) presented five lectures on a 5-day "Opera at Sea" Royal Caribbean Cruise with ports in Cozumel and Grand Cayman. The lectures, which attracted some 29 participants, concerned a range of topics from the origins of opera to late 19th-century verismo. Following the lectures, participants watched videos of select masterpieces including Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Menotti's *The Medium*, and others. Dr. Cimarusti will be offering another "Opera at Sea" next year focusing on American opera.

In addition to his online teaching, **Dr. Cimarusti** has provided online video lectures for residents at Shell Point. The videos are recorded in the Shell Point television studios and are shown to residents on the Shell Point television network. His first lecture, *Music in the Age of a Pandemic*, featured the music written in the 14th century in response to the bubonic plague, especially the motet *O sancte Sebastiane* by Guillaume Dufay. Dufay's motet was a musical plea to Saint Sebastian to stop the spread of the deadly plague nearing Bologna, Italy in 1423. The image below concerns Saint Sabastiane pleading for the life of a gravedigger afflicted with the plague.



Focus On...

Just before Spring Break, the FGCU Chamber Choir left for what promised to be the trip of a lifetime to perform in venues throughout Italy. After less than a week, and when it became clear that Italy was becoming the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in Europe, the group was flown back to the United States and asked to self-quarantine for 14 days. None of the participants, both students and faculty, showed any symptoms and have since entered into the next phase of this outbreak with more experience at staying at home than many of the rest of us. The following is a portion of a letter that **Trent Brown** (Music) sent to the people that supported the trip...

"I hope and pray that this email finds you healthy and in good spirits. I want to update you on the Chamber Choir students, the experiences they had in Italy, and alert you to the rest of our season.

First, and most importantly, every student and faculty on the trip was sent to a 14-day home quarantine after returning to the States, and no one has any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

The choir had a life-changing experience. Seeing historical sites (Pompeii, Colosseum, Vatican) and the region's natural beauty (Capri, Amalfi Coast) created constant choruses of "ooohhhhh!" and "aaahhhhh!" and "woooooooowwwwww!!!" But the performances together probably impacted us the most. Their faces glowed, and many eyes filled with tears as they heard their sound echo in churches. Our last day we had but 3 hours to see all of Rome. Quick stops for photos across the city left us slightly winded, but with enough time to change and sing Mass at St. Peter's. It was very meaningful, especially a sermon the priest gave to the choir in English to calm their unease about the state of affairs. Below are a couple links to performances.

While quarantined the students shared lots of photos and videos, and had group FaceTime chats regularly. From the safety of their homes they watched the US condition deteriorate quickly, and saw FGCU go entirely online for the rest of the year. This means no more performances. For the Chamber Choir, their last was in St. Peter's Basilica. Not a bad end to the semester! But they still wished they could have shared their music once more in SWFL.

Now our campus will struggle, along with our community, to determine when and how we get back to "normal." Many have concerns about finishing classes, or lessons. Several are concerned about losing hours at their jobs and still needing to pay bills. These are concerns all Americans are sharing now. Together I am confident our community will be compassionate, and our humanity will overcome this.

In the midst of the current struggle, I hope the report about the Chamber Choir gives you a moment away from the news to see what a beautiful experience you helped create in the lives of these individuals. It is safe to say, they will

Focus On... (continued)

never be the same.

In appreciation,

Trent"

A video of the [Chamber Choir at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City can be found here](#). A video of the [Chamber Choir performing in Naples, Italy can be found here](#).



(top to bottom) Chamber Choir performing at Chiesa del Gesu Nuovo in Naples, Italy; In front of the Colosseum; After performing at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in Rome