Directed by Jim Tyler Anderson, the theatre program’s production of Roald Dahl’s The Big Friendly Giant inspired not only hundreds of children, but the actors as well. Anderson wanted to focus on the child’s imagination while acknowledging the darker side of it. Encompassing the entire space, including the revolving stage, Anderson created a concept highlighting what he says is “the greatest resource: the ability to imagine.” Graduate student, Tracey Wood, says that the show accentuated “the whimsical, playful characters, such as the Queen of England and wildly dancing teachers!” Sarah Hensley, who played the spry and loveable narrator, Sophie, saw a childhood dream come true in getting to play the role—“I read the book as a kid and dreamed of playing Sophie; I get to be a part of something I loved as a kid.” Senior, Ilima Santiago, the props designer (who also acted in the show) created a series of kid-friendly, ethnically correct puppets, including the 10-foot Big Friendly Giant, and a series of masks, inspired by Julie Taymor, for the other giants in which the actors faces could still be seen. “I can’t tell you how much fun it’s been, to get on stage and just have fun and to play a giant of all things! I wanted to stay away from the original and create something new, something realistic in a fantastical world.” The dream-catching Big Friendly Giant, graduate student Casey Norris, in his first leading role, loved getting to live a character he loved as a child in a positive, supportive environment. “Director Jim Anderson just let us get up on stage and really play, just like the kids in the show, and create something really fun.”
To have a great university an hour and a half from Dallas, gave me a very important opportunity.

J. Walter Kutz, an alumnus of East Texas State University and an associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology at UT Southwestern Medical Center, continues to nurture the passion he developed at our university and translates it into his work in medicine. After graduating from Old ET, where he majored in music and chemistry, he went on to Baylor College of Medicine in Houston where he studied otolaryngology, the medical specialty concerning the ear, nose, and throat. Kutz decided to focus on the ear because he was fascinated with the microscopic surgery involved and because he wanted others to be able to share his love of music. He remembers his time at East Texas State University, saying, “from the first day, they welcome you; they support you; they teach you how to be a well-rounded musician, you appreciate all different kinds of music and appreciate being able to hear.”

Kutz says, “I got excellent training with Ed Jones and the whole department at East Texas. And one thing about being in the band program (I played the tuba), you had 900 instant friends! I can’t stress how important that was!” He was very active with Phi Mu Alpha, and “had a great time with them, met some great friends, other students who enjoyed music as much as I did.” Eventually, Kutz took classes in the chemistry department and double-majored. “My chemistry training was outstanding. My test scores were always very high and I attribute that to the training that I got at East Texas. Dr. Lee was very supportive in helping me to get into medical school. The school really opened a lot of doors for me. I had to support myself through college. My parents didn’t have the money to send me to college. Fortunately, East Texas was very helpful with scholarships for both academics and music. I’d go home a lot of weekends to pay for the car and food and things like that. To have a great university an hour and a half from Dallas, gave me a very important opportunity.”

He then had four years of medical school and went to the House Clinic in Los Angeles when his triplets were five months old. “It was worth it and my wife was wonderful taking care of them.” He and his wife met after high school. “She went to Texas A&M in College Station. We grew up in the same city and never met each other till after high school, dated for a long time and got married.”

His face lit up as this led to a conversation about his children—an 11-year old daughter, Sydney, and 7-year old triplets, Audrey, Grant, and Callie. He is very excited that Sydney is already playing the French horn, following in her father’s footsteps and sharing his love for music. “I’m still very active in music. I don’t play as much because of the kids but I hope to pass on the music tradition.” He joked that he sometimes considers starting a band with his four children but after hearing that A&M-Commerce now has a softball program, his three softball-playing daughters may join the team someday.

“The day I found out I was having triplets—I don’t know how to read sonograms that well but I knew enough that looking at it and looking at the tech, who kept flipping her head back and forth looking at the chart…I still remember that day very vividly. At that point I already had my fellowship lined up and I thought seriously about not doing it and just getting a job—medical training doesn’t really pay much so there’s a lot of sacrifice. But there’s no question, you just do what you need to do.”

“When they were born I was a chief resident in Houston, so I was either operating at night or feeding the triplets. When they were very young, especially living in Los Angeles, we had a tandem stroller, and, of course, in LA everything’s a spectacle so people would gather around them, because you could tell that they were triplets. It was sort of frustrating at the time but kind of funny. Now that they’re older, they don’t look as similar so it’s not quite as novel but they’re all great friends. It was hard—to come up with three names, so there’s a lot of sacrifice. But there’s no question, you just do what you need to do.”

Kutz said that he works for one of the best cochlear implant programs in the country. “Hopefully people read this and get an awareness for cochlear implants. I will see patients that are 4-7 years old and at that age, the benefits are minimal. I want to increase awareness so that children can have the procedure early, not just for patients but also for pediatricians. They’ve been out for 30 years or so but they just keep getting better and better. The FDA approves them for children as young as one. It’s a developing field and the indications are broadening almost yearly. It’s all really rewarding.”

Dr. Kutz keeps up with the music department at A&M-Commerce, watching it grow. “I went to the university concert this past spring; it was excellent, fantastic, really good.” He smiled as he remembered his years in the department and expressed immense gratitude for the professors. “It was a lot of fun seeing my professors at the concert, seeing those people again, high quality, great people. As you get older, you get a little wiser, I’m not there yet, but it makes you look back and appreciate your professors. These guys care about their students a lot, you look back 20 years later, it was a really great place.”
Linguistics Students Create Online Journal

Alumna Dr. Laura Di Ferrante (left) and current PhD student Elisa Gironzetti (right) have created an online applied linguistics journal. This is a ground-breaking publication as it is one of the few open-access journals that are available for free. Readers can download the journal’s content as many times as they want. Additionally, contributing authors keep their copyrights so that they can continue to share their research with others in other media which, according to Gironzetti, is main goal of any academic publication. Focusing on the teaching and learning of English, Italian and Spanish, they work with and accept papers from writers worldwide. The journal focuses on language teaching methods, practices and humor in the language classroom. In order to make the journal internationally accessible, the biographies and abstracts for each paper will be translated into English, Spanish and Italian. The first issue came out in October 2014 at www.e-journall.org.

Welcome Dr. Hurley!

Dr. Martha Hurley joins Texas A&M University-Commerce from The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina as the new department head and professor of sociology and criminal justice. With a master’s degree in sociology and a PhD in criminal justice, Dr. Hurley can’t wait to expand the curriculum to encompass the changing times. “I believe in the three pillars: theory, research, and practice; they inform each other,” Hurley said, “and by applying these, I believe we can change with times and appeal to a wider student body.” She wants to show students that there are countless career paths that can stem from these degrees including working with youth in after-school programs. Hurley loves Commerce and the chance to work with a diverse student body, hoping to implement community involvement into her program. “One side informs the other,” she said in describing her hopes to start community involvement, more student organizations, after-school programs, and volunteer work in the department. “I see the potential for these students to see what to do with these degrees, the field has expanded and so will we!”

My Mother’s Head on a Plate

Texas A&M University-Commerce welcomed a visit from author, Dr. Wendy Rawlings. Rawlings brought with her a biting wit and two published books, Come Back, Irish and The Agnostics. The university community got to hear a new work entitled “My Mother’s Head on a Plate” — a hilarious and poignant look at a daughter’s relationship with her mother. Rawlings also made visits to several of the classes in the Department of Literature and Languages. Rawlings said, “I’m grateful for your community’s interest in and support of the arts, especially creative writing. I had a great time.” Rawlings received her PhD in creative writing from the University of Utah and a MFA in creative writing from Colorado State University. She currently teaches and serves as the MFA director at the University of Alabama.

One Exciting Night!

The Alumni Center was alive with eager, excited students networking with an eclectic group of local businesses including museums, police departments, media firms and community-based businesses. “It’s great that my university cares about my career, not just my education,” said one graduate student. The center buzzed with energy thanks to the creative efforts of the humanities and Career Development. “The inaugural Humanities Networking night was a wonderful event,” said Employer Relations Coordinator Bethany Ferrall. “Events like this are one of the best ways to learn about career opportunities and develop your professional network.”
The American Craftsman

Alumnus Tadd Myers has a new book out entitled Portraits of the American Craftsman. It is a beautiful collection of photographs documenting small business owners, those who put a piece of themselves in their products and highlighting the meticulous, loving details that most take for granted.

The Department of Art hosted a showing of some of the photographs in the book, inspiring young artists to find the beauty in anything. A senior photography student complimented Myers, saying that he wanted to learn the stories behind every photo, and he is inspired to do the same kind of work.

The book is available on his website AmericanCraftsmanProject.com or through his website taddmyers.com

One World-One Week-One Festival

The MANHATTAN SHORT Film Festival found its way to Commerce this year, bringing with it selected short films from all over the world in an exciting evening full of suspense, romance, and familiar faces as actors from television series such as Dr. Who and The Blacklist appeared on the screen. This is a yearly competition uniting close to 300 cinemas across 18 countries and 6 continents in which audience members vote for Best Actor and Best Film from a set of 10 short films. Dr. Hayes, Head of the English Department, said, “We are fortunate to be able to participate in the festival, in part because the festival so vividly encompasses the spirit of global awareness that the university strives so diligently to endorse, and we plan to continue serving as a host for this annual event.”

Graduate Student, Susie Nickerson-Warley, exclaimed, “MANHATTAN SHORT is an extraordinary movie-viewing experience! What struck me as remarkable was the creativity and depth of meaning packed into these brief cinematic gems from around the world.” From pieces utilizing stop-motion animation to dizzying camera angles and incredible special effects, the festival included something for everyone! “This was Hollywood-grade entertainment and some of the special effects were just amazing,” Dr. Salvatore Attardo commented.

Advancement Welcomes New Associate

Devin Girod has joined Texas A&M University-Commerce as the new associate director of development for CHSSA. Hailing from Columbia, Louisiana, Girod earned his BA in Mass Communication and MA in Communication at the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

Paying his bills by playing the drums in a band, he started college to study construction and management when he realized he didn’t care much for concrete. He then switched majors to work in communications and public relations.

Girod said he loves working in higher education, and he believes that it is the way of tomorrow. He loves being at A&M-Commerce and looks forward to continuing his work with the alumni and the departments in the college.
NEVER APPEAR TALLER THAN YOUR DATE. YOU'RE FAT. DO WHAT YOU CAN TO KEEP YOUR HUSBAND HAPPY.

These were just a few of the visceral statements artist Libby Rowe used in her performance piece, Pearls of Wisdom. As part of her Pink exhibit, it takes an important look at gender identity, feminism, and what really defines being female. Some of her work is autobiographical, like the piece made up of photos of Rowe taken each time someone called her “sir”. Rowe said she wants to make the autobiography universal and to “encourage reflection on and reconstruction of accepted social definitions of ‘feminine,’ ‘womanhood,’ and ‘equality.’”

“It was interesting to watch Rowe place herself in that past place, reflect, and influence but let it go,” said a graduate photography student. Check out Libby Rowe’s website libbyrowe.com to see this piece and many others.

Downtown Dallas buzzed with excitement as the glittering “alum-inatti” of East Texas State University and Texas A&M University-Commerce gathered together to celebrate the university’s 125th anniversary at Union Station. Experience stations showed alumni the exciting new clubs, activities and advances the university is making. Featured stations were the Mayo Review, the student-run literary journal, and the University Playhouse Puppeteers, a budding organization focusing on puppetry in theatre.

The evening included a touching tribute to the present and past presidents of the university spanning all the way back to William Mayo. An exciting list of donors was also recognized as they were inducted into the various honor societies: Presidents Circle, Cornerstone, Legacy, Rayburn, Heritage, Founders, Traditions, and the Society of 1889. Guests participated in a silent auction with over 30 prizes, including a basket from A&M-Commerce’s own Twin Oaks Blueberry Farm. To capture the spirit and excitement of The Royal Roar, guests were able to enjoy a live band and a photo booth. Photos from the event are now available at tamuc.edu/RoyalRoarPhotos.

Great Roar!
At this year’s Royal Roar, Ms. Yvonne Clements was inducted into the Rayburn Society, an honor reserved for donors who have contributed over $100,000 to the university. “My goal is to help whenever and however I can, and I definitely feel the need to give back to a university that gave so much to me. I found my career and my husband and my closest friends, so I still owe a lot,” said Clements.

Clements graduated from East Texas State College in 1960 with a degree in music. No one in her family played a musical instrument but thanks to an untouched piano sitting in her aunt’s house, Clements discovered her love for the instrument. “I wanted to teach music; that’s what I always wanted to do. I got an all-level music certificate so I taught first grade through high school,” said Clements.

While attending East Texas State College, she was active in the social club, Marpessa, later known as Chi Omega Fraternity. It was one of her sorority sisters who introduced her to her future husband. “I met my husband on a blind date, Clements and her husband Robert were married for 53 years. After marrying, they moved to Atlanta, Texas where they founded Clements Oil Corporation.

When Robert Clements passed away in 2010, his wife decided to honor his life with a memorial scholarship endowment for agricultural students at A&M-Commerce. “When my husband died, I was trying to think of a way to honor his memory and Robert loved Old ET, and his degree was in agriculture so I decided the best way to honor him was with an agricultural scholarship program,” said Clements. “I knew he would approve of giving young agriculture students the opportunity to pursue their dreams in ag, like he did. He loved his farm. The scholarship is based on need so I think Robert would be pleased with that and pleased that it’s helping young people.”

Her daughter, Carol, a graduate of SMU, takes care of their farm from her home in Dallas. She recently took a new position as an IT executive. “And my daughter’s also a Chi Omega, so I am happy about that!” said Clements.

Her philanthropy didn’t stop there. Clements said after she set up her husband’s scholarship, she decided to set one up for herself. As the recipient of scholarships when she was an undergraduate, Clements said they were crucial to her ability to complete her degree. “They were so helpful and enabled me to fulfill my lifetime goal of teaching music,” said Clements. “I thought it would be a good thing to provide the same opportunities to other music students, to be able to study and finish their degrees. I hope it will help them fulfill their dreams.”

If you walk through the music building, you’ll find a plaque commemorating a donation from Clements. She donated a practice room in the state-of-the-art building. She said she finds the changes wonderful and the building beautiful. Clements also does what she can to help with recruitment within the music department. The Steinway Initiative is of great importance to her. In order for a school to qualify as a “Steinway School”, 90% of the pianos must be Steinway products. Currently, with help from benefactors like Clements, the university owns 28 Steinways, bringing the school up to 55% and growing!

“The Steinway designation is a very prestigious thing for a school,” said Clements. “A lot of prospective students would look for that designation. If the school would strive to have the best pianos, they would strive to have the best instructors and programs.”
Former Professor Earns Honorary Ph.D.

Former East Texas State University professor, Rob Lawton, was presented with an honorary Ph.D. in recognition of his achievements in advertising and education. In 2012, Lawton was inducted as the inaugural member of The One Club Educators Hall of Fame. While he has spent many years in design studios throughout his career, his passion remained education. After joining Portfolio Center in Atlanta, Georgia, he co-founded The Creative Circus in 1995, which is now renowned for its advertising and design programs. Because of his teaching techniques, many budding artists have had amazing careers and each one has cited Rob Lawton as an inspiration. “Good isn’t good enough,” Lawton says. His work with The Creative Circus and his students’ work are the product of that devotion to excellence.

Music Faculty in Concert

This fall, the Department of Music continued its reputation for excellence by showcasing faculty in concert. The performance included an eclectic array of performances from instrumentalists and singers. Voice teacher, Dr. Jennifer Glidden, said that the faculty loves performing together and “getting to see each other perform. We love that the students get to see their teachers in action. We hope it gives them a sense of pride and a goal—to see what they can achieve!”

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 24-March 1
The Rabbit Hole
Performing Arts Center

This drama by David Lindsey-Abaire will be directed by Dr. Carrie Klypchak.

February 27-28
Texas Clarinet Colloquium
Finney Concert Hall
Music Building A&M-Commerce

The Colloquium will include classes, lectures, and rehearsals for clarinetists and is open to the public.

April 23
Mayo Review Launch Party
7 p.m., Rayburn Student Center

The launch party for the new issue of The Mayo Review will be held in the Traditions Room of the Sam Rayburn Student Center at 7:00pm. The event is free and open to the public.

Check out tamuc.edu/theseason for more exciting events!