School of Visual, Performing, and Communication Arts Newsletter Fall 2026

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

It is my pleasure to welcome you to

Dean's Corner

the fourth annual edition of the School of Visual, Performing, and Communication Arts Newsletter.

SVPCA remains a vibrant and culturally rich pillar of WestConn, and I am honored to have just completed my 10-year anniversary as Dean of the School.

As I look back on the past decade, I am struck by the many milestones we have achieved and celebrated during my tenure. Among them are:

- New BFAs in Theatre and Musical Theatre were launched
- A new BFA in Art was launched
- A MM in Music was launched
- A BA in Popular Music was launched
- The Department of Art received initial accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)
- The Department of Theatre received initial accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST)
- An annual statewide high school Art Competition was launched
- A new faculty line for Theatre/Musical Theatre was added
- A new Scene Shop supervisor for Theatre was added
- Media Arts is now Film and Broadcasting

This newsletter offers a snapshot of the extraordinary work happening across our disciplines—on our stages, in our gallery, in our studios, and behind the cameras.

Thank you for being part of the SVPCA community. I hope to see you at one of our hundreds of events that we produce each year, featuring our talented students.

Happy Fall, and Happy Holidays,

Brian T. Vernon

Brian T. Vernon, Dean

Recent Student Accomplishments

Antonio Porciello (Class of 2024): Playing Hanschen in upcoming Off-Broadway revival of *Spring Awakening*

Ashia Collins (Class of 2020): Principal role in Broadway National Tour of *Boop! The Musical*

Ian Foss (Class of 2016): Director of Media Arts and Production at Prospector Theater in Ridgefield, CT

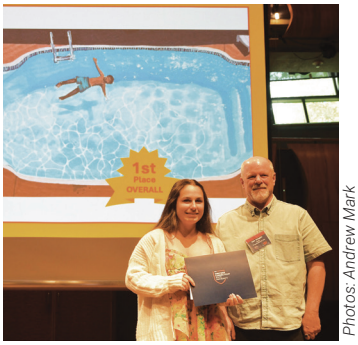
Ben Poirot (Class of 2021): Member of The U.S. Army Field Band brass quintet. Previously: Rockford Symphony Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Nowshin Tabassum (Class of 2020): Graphic Design Marketing Specialist at The Governor's Prevention Partnership in Connecticut. The Governor's Prevention Partnership is dedicated to reducing youth substance use and promoting healthy communities.

WCSU 2026 High School Student Art Showcase







Photos: Andrew Mark

On Sunday, May 31, 2026, students, families, educators, and members of the community gathered for an opening reception and awards ceremony to honor the artists in grades 9-12 whose artwork was selected to appear in the 2026 juried student exhibition in The Gallery at the WCSU Visual and Performing Arts Center. Of the more than 100 submissions, 55 were selected for the show.

Presented by Western Connecticut State University in partnership with the Danbury Cultural Commission and Jerry's of Norwalk, the annual High School Student Art Showcase offers a unique opportunity for young artists from across the region to show their artwork, and for their art to be seen by the arts community. The next showcase will be on view in The Gallery from May 23 through June 6, 2027.

WCSU is proud to provide a platform that recognizes student achievement, encourages artistic exploration, and inspires future study in the arts. By bringing young artists into a collegiate exhibition environment, this showcase affirms the vital role of the arts in communication, community-building, and creative growth.

SVPCA Faculty Spotlight

Art: Ella Geida (Adjunct Professor) is an accomplished illustrator and educator who teaches illustration to both undergraduate students and students in WCSU's MFA program. Her professional illustration practice spans movie posters, publishing, and design, with her work receiving recognition from multiple organizations.

Communication & Media Arts: Dr. Max Chen (Assistant Professor) a new member of the WCSU faculty whose work explores the intersection of interactive media, game development, human-computer interaction, and computational creativity. Chen earned a PhD in Computational Media at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Music: John Bellemer (Adjunct Professor) is an accomplished American tenor and Adjunct Instructor of Music in Applied Voice whose distinguished career has taken him to opera houses, concert halls, and music festivals throughout North America and Europe.

Theatre Arts: Stephanie Osin (Assistant Professor) is a new member of the WCSU faculty and a multidisciplinary designer whose professional work spans theatre, film, television, animation, and visual design. Osin has designed productions for leading theaters throughout the United States.

SVPCA Dean's Circle

The SVPCA Dean's Circle is a premier leadership society for annual giving towards the SVPCA at WCSU. The members of the Dean's Circle provide vital contributions towards the Dean's support funds, used to sustain and grow the school's wide-ranging and ever-expanding educational opportunities. Supporters receive recognition in SVPCA programs and on the SVPCA website.

Dean's support funds are used for:

- Supporting SVPCA students in financial need
- Sponsoring student trips to supplement student's education
- Enhancing technology in our educational and performance spaces, allowing students the ability to explore emerging technologies and expand industry knowledge
- Funding renowned guest artists of diverse backgrounds and offering masterclasses and workshops to enrich our students' education.

The Three Tiers of the Dean's Circle are:

Supporter Level $500+

Soloist Level $1,000+

Principal Level $2,500+

For Dean's Circle information visit wcsu.edu/svpca/circle/ or scan this QR Code



Dean's Choice Award: "Face to Face" by Paige Tarpey

Thank you to our active members of the Dean's Circle:

Kelly Mangold
Supporter Level

In Memory of Playwright August Wilson and Poet Derek Walcott
Soloist Level

Upcoming Events

Music | Holiday Pops
December 5 - 6, at 3:00 p.m.
A joyously festive event to get you and your loved ones in the holiday spirit! Join the WCSU Department of Music for an afternoon of holiday music, featuring performances by the Percussion Ensemble, University Choir, Chamber Ensembles, Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, and more. Proceeds from the event benefit the Ana Grace Marquez Greene and Dave Smith Scholarships. Afterwards, join us for some holiday treats.

Theatre Arts | Lerner & Loewe's *Brigadoon* | February 19 - 28
Set during NYC's post-WWII industrial boom, New Yorkers Tommy Albright and Jeff Douglas unexpectedly arrive at the mysterious village of Brigadoon while backpacking through the Scottish Highlands. After a day filled with magic and wonder, they find themselves having to choose between the fast-paced world they left behind and a life in Brigadoon — forever. This play features beloved standards "Almost Like Being in Love," "Come to Me, Bend To Me," "Heather on the Hill."

Art | MFA Thesis Exhibition
On view March 25 - April 11
Opening reception Thursday, March 25
The Master of Fine Arts is the terminal degree for practicing professional artists. The MFA Thesis Exhibition showcases the culminating works of graduate students concentrating in Painting, Illustration, and Interdisciplinary Visual Art. The exhibition will also be on display at Blue Mountain Gallery in New York City from June 15 through July 3.

Scan this QR Code to view upcoming SVPCA events

Congratulations

to these students whose artwork was chosen by Dean Vernon to be on view in the Dean's Suite Student Exhibition Gallery until 12/7/26

Natalie Peragine, Senior, BA Studio, Art: "Catching Light"
Mariana Zepeda Serrano, Senior, BA Studio Art: "A Place to Rest"
Melanie Redline, Junior, BA Studio Art: "Torii Gate;" "The Home"
Paige Tarpey, Sophomore, BA Studio Art: "Face to Face"