

The York University Magazine

Winter 2018



York's groundbreaking Department of Dance

On Edge

PLUS

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Dressing Meghan Markle
Math to the Rescue



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The
York University
Magazine

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THE PRESIDENT



RHONDA LENTON
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

“MY WORK HERE IS DONE.” With these words, our Chancellor Greg Sorbara (BA ’78, LLB ’81) perfectly captured the spirit of shared accomplishment and exuberance at the official ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension at our Keele campus on Dec. 15, 2017.

When I reflect on that historic day for our community, as we welcomed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier Kathleen Wynne, Toronto Mayor John Tory and a number of other partners to campus, I am reminded that it truly does “take a village” to build something so fundamentally important to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community and to York University as the TTC Line 1 subway extension. York presidents emeriti, Chancellor Sorbara and many others advocated for decades to make this multi-billion-dollar project a reality, and to bring the York University and Pioneer Village subway stations to campus – the first subway to cross the city of Toronto boundary into York Region and the first extension to be completed in 15 years. We are grateful to them and to all of our federal, provincial, regional and municipal partners who collaborated to ensure this project was realized.

The opening of the subway represents an exciting new chapter in the York University story, creating new opportunities for the University and the communities we serve through increased access, connectedness, excellence and impact. Since most of our students, faculty and staff commute to campus, the subway provides a sustainable transportation option that will also reduce our community’s carbon footprint. It means a shorter, more efficient commute for many of our students, who will have more time to learn and innovate in our classrooms and labs, and easier access for community members coming to York.

Of course, it’s possible that no one has waited longer for the subway to open than our alumni, and so I encourage you to come back to campus for a visit, and to see firsthand how these new stations are enhancing our connectedness with the rest of the GTA and beyond. It is incredible to see all the new development in this region, and to realize the opportunities for York to amplify our impact as a destination linking cities in the GTA.

In fact, I see our connectedness as an emerging – and compelling – theme in the York story, one that is central to our vision of providing a diverse student population access to a high-quality, research-intensive university that is committed to the social, economic, cultural and other well-being of the communities we serve.



1. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with York University President and Vice-Chancellor Rhonda L. Lenton
2. City of Toronto Councillor and TTC Chair Josh Colle, Prime Minister Trudeau, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Toronto Mayor John Tory and York Regional Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson
3. Prime Minister Trudeau addresses the crowd gathered for the official opening of the York University Station

Handwritten signature of Rhonda Lenton

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE FORD

Where It’s At

I ARRIVED AT YORK UNIVERSITY IN THE FALL, after decades as a staff journalist at the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, to take the helm as editor of this magazine. I feel like I am back at school. Now don’t get me wrong. I *love* school. Or should I say, I relish any opportunity that would enable me to improve myself through learning about other people and their unique works, deeds and experiences. From investigating First Nations repatriation efforts and fighting for artists’ rights to uncovering the latest trends on the Paris runways and reporting from Ground Zero while the towers burned on 9/11, I have unwaveringly followed the siren call of discovery for the betterment of myself, my readers and, if I did my job right, society. But that noble pursuit has become harder to do in recent years with newsrooms across Canada, and around the world, shrinking from the dominance of the Internet. Those still producing the news tell us that we are in the midst of a global crisis. That journalism is dying. That facts are fake. It’s enough to make you cry – or do something about it. Changing directions, I have chosen the latter, going to where I can continue to practise my craft without external political and economic pressures shaping the story, and where unearthing relevant information and ideas remain

strong as working ideals. York is where it’s at. As I have discovered on exploratory walks on campus, the University is an ever-expanding frontier of innovative research and creative work, a global village of interesting people doing interesting things. Let me count the ways: scientists using mathematical modelling to battle infectious diseases (see page 12); varsity athletes who go on to play with the major leagues (see page 11); historians who make sense of our world (see pages 10 and 43); dancers who invent new ways of moving in a degree program unique in Canada (see page 14). These York stories, and more, are inspirational, engaging, uplifting. They are also the beginning of what I hope will be a broadening learning experience for us all. I, for one, look forward to it.

— DEIRDRE KELLY

EDITOR’S NOTES



The York University Magazine



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ON THE COVER

Evan Winther
photographed by
Mckenzie James

PHOTOGRAPH BY MCKENZIE JAMES



Winter's Dirty Secret

Putting the freeze on the notion that icy air is cleaner than summer smog

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

THE COOLEST SCIENCE in Canada? It's happening at York University in an outdoor lab located on a rooftop high above campus where, on a good day, temperatures plunge well below zero.

"We're studying poor air quality in winter time, and this is a nice space for doing that," says lead researcher Cora Young as she steps over mounds of windswept snow on the way to her purpose-built work station in the sky.

"It's safe, number one. You don't have to worry about falling off the roof. It also has access to power. But the best part is that it gets pollution from two highways, the 407 and the 400, both of which are really close by. Which means we can get some pretty good measurements from up here."

The traffic crawling at a snail's pace on the ribboning roads below emits noxious fumes that take on the appearance of a very fine mist in the cold air, making them seem indistinguishable from the elements. To gauge their corrosive effect on the environment, Young commands a sequence of James Bond-like lasers called spectrometers that cut through the frigidity to serve as real-time gas analyzers. One quantifies the concentration of gases in the atmosphere while the other identifies the different gases by their masses.

"What we discover up here we can apply to all urban areas that have pollution," says Young, a 36-year-old environmental chemist who joined York's Faculty of Science last spring as the newly appointed Guy Warwick Rogers Chair in Chemistry. It's important work.

Air pollution results in 7,700 premature deaths in Canada each year, according to a report released last summer by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, a charitable organization receiving core operating support from the Government of Canada. Worldwide, pollution kills more people than infectious diseases and war, concludes a study published by *The Lancet* medical journal last October.

"Given what we continue to learn about the detrimental effects of air pollution on our health and economy, it is vital to gain a better understanding of the drivers and risks of poor air quality, especially in winter months when pollutants are more likely to be trapped closer to the ground," says Muhannad Malas, toxics program manager with the Canadian environmental advocacy group Environmental Defence.

"With extreme winter temperatures becoming more common and increasing pollution from vehicles and heating in rapidly growing cities like Toronto, studying air quality during the winter becomes even more important for the health of Canadians."

Young is hopeful her study will make a difference in combating air pollution.

"Most studies until now have studied air quality only in summer time, which is why we normally get smog alerts in the warmer months. But we can also have poor air quality in winter time, and if we can understand the underlying chemistry of poor air quality in winter we can develop strategies to improve it." And that's not just cool. It's critical. ●

EXPANDED HORIZONS

York looks to build a new campus



LAST SPRING, the Ontario government gave approval for a new state-of-the-art York University campus to open north of Toronto in Markham, Ont., where an anticipated 4,200 students will have their choice of more than 20 degree programs once the \$253-million project opens its doors in September 2021. York has teamed up with Seneca College as its academic partner on the project, with strong financial support also coming in from the province, the City of Markham and the municipality of York Region. The preliminary design by Diamond Schmitt Architects features a large, landscaped campus commons area, a 10-storey building and a four-storey podium with double-height glazing enhancing a sense of connectedness with the surrounding neighbourhood. “The Markham Centre campus supports our commitment to increase access to a high-quality, research-intensive university education, and to enhancing our connectedness to local and international communities,” says York University President and Vice-Chancellor Rhonda Lenton. “We look forward to getting shovels in the ground on a new campus that will contribute significantly to helping us realize our vision for York.” ●

MICHAEL CHARLES (LLB '94) knows what it is like to be on the outside looking in. “I have the perspective of someone who is not from a dominant culture,” says the graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School. “My experiences as a first-generation Canadian of Caribbean descent – and as a gay man – have informed my passion and curiosity about what an inclusive society might look like.”

Fostering a sense of belonging has been high on his agenda since returning to York University to head up the Centre for Human Rights in the fall of 2016.

Under his watch the renamed Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion (REI), has adopted an expanded mandate that Charles says better reflects the University’s enhanced commitment to social justice.

“The idea is to look not just at compliance and prevention under the Ontario Human Rights Code,” explains Charles, who beforehand ran a successful private legal practice and, later, a management consultancy specializing in diversity and inclusion, “but at how we, at an institutional level, are able to operationalize our mission-critical values within our academic priorities. It’s a proactive approach.”

To ensure everyone at York is on board, Charles and his 11-member team recently spearheaded a new initiative aimed at strengthening the University’s commitment to human rights, inclusion and diversity on campus.

Launched last October and accessible through REI’s landing page, the Inclusion Video Project is intended to use community member experiences to explore and evaluate inclusion-related performance at the University.

Supporting the initiative are participatory workshops and pan-university events like Inclusion Day, presented in collaboration with the Centre for Aboriginal Student Services, Osgoode Hall Law School and the Lassonde School of Engineering, held this year on Jan. 25.

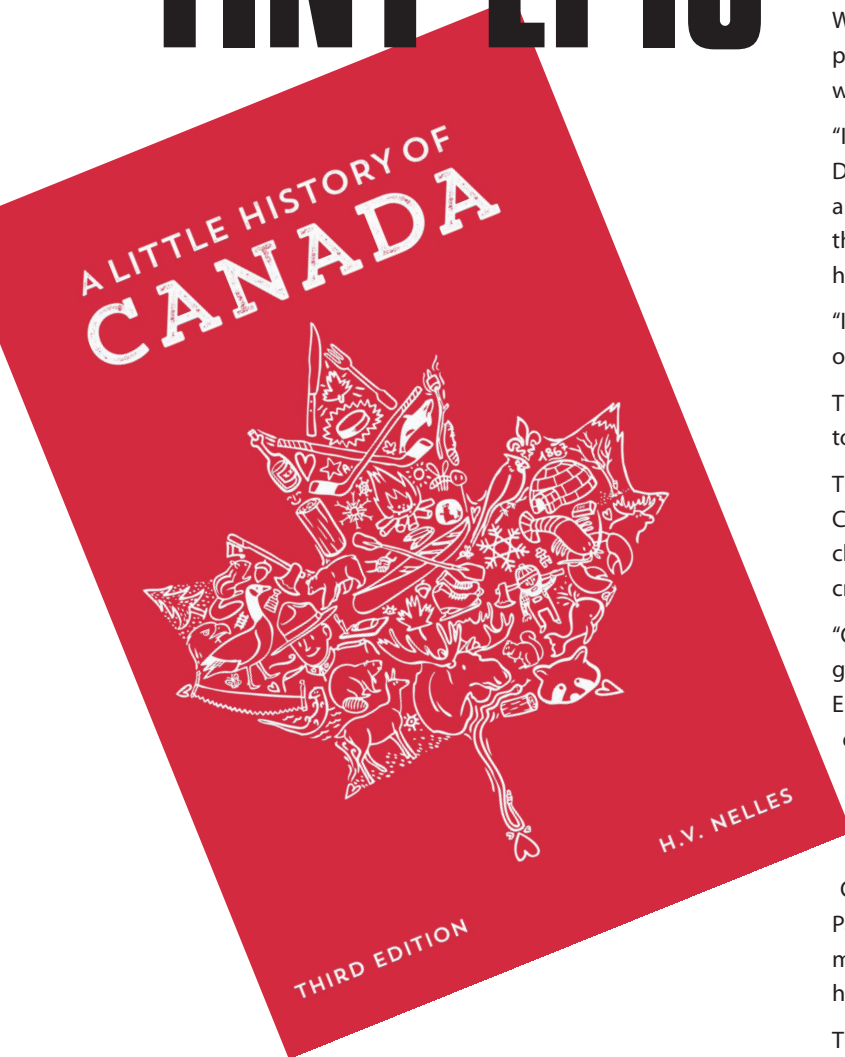
“Each one of us has an important role to play to make sure that our differences and commonalities are brought to bear in the process of making our campuses more creative,” Charles says. “I’m just doing my share to make sure we have the resources to make it happen.” ●

How a lawyer with a background in inclusion and diversity is driving change at York

The Rights Stuff

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

TINY EPIC



It's called A Little History of Canada. But the sweep of the story makes it feel as luxuriantly voluminous as a Prairie wheat field

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 2004, *A Little History of Canada* (Oxford University Press) sold 15,000 copies during its first print run, justifying a second print in 2011. A third paperback edition came out this past July, at the peak of the year-long Canada 150 celebrations, becoming an instant bestseller.

There's a reason the book has legs.

With more than 14,000 years crammed into just over 200 pages, it is a concise and compact read. It's also exceedingly well-written, and even – *gasp!* – entertaining.

"It's not an academic book," says H.V. (a.k.a. Viv) Nelles, a Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at York University and two-time recipient of the Sir John A. Macdonald Prize of the Canadian Historical Association, a prestigious peer award honouring the best book on Canadian history.

"It is structured differently from other books that are already out there."

That structure is not unlike like Niagara Falls – surging forward to make a big splash.

The narrative flows from Nelles' central thesis, which is that Canada is a country in a constant state of flux. With every change the past is not obliterated, but more built upon to create a new identity composed of many and diverse parts.

"Canada is a story of transitions," says Nelles, whose name graces the annual Melville-Nelles-Hoffmann Lecture in Environmental History, whose next instalment takes place on campus in March. "It's always a different Canada from the one that came before." Changing, adapting, realigning in response to new and developing realities.

Serving as a metaphor for this fluid interpretation of Canadian history is the transformation mask of Canada's Pacific coast Indigenous peoples, a carved artifact with movable slats revealing the sun, the moon, a killer whale or a human face, depending on the pull on hidden strings.

The images melt into each other, with fragments of one face sometimes featuring in the face of another. Like the mask, "Canadian history is thus a composite, the latest in a series of metamorphoses, but it carries forward living attributes of its previous incarnations," Nelles writes.

Accordingly, you read it in sections before pronouncing the whole thing extraordinary – all of Canada, in the palm of your hand. ●

THE 2026 WORLD CUP is coming to the Americas, with Toronto on a FIFA-approved list of cities to host one of the world's biggest sporting events as part of a three-country tournament to be split among Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. York will offer up its athletic facilities for training purposes to visiting teams.

Carmine Isaaco, the master coach behind the University's award-winning men's and women's soccer teams, says it's a natural fit.

"Soccer has always been a vibrant element of the cultural mosaic and that mosaic at York is strongly representative of the game," observes the former professional goalkeeper who coached pro team Toronto FC (winners of the 2017 MLS Cup) before coming to York 11 years ago.

"Talk to York students, and more than 90 per cent of them are familiar with soccer. They've either played it themselves or watched from the stands, cheering it on. Soccer is a participatory sport, and it's quickly becoming a component of the expanding sporting mentality in Canada beyond just baseball and hockey."

York's invigorated athletics program has contributed to that shift in thinking.

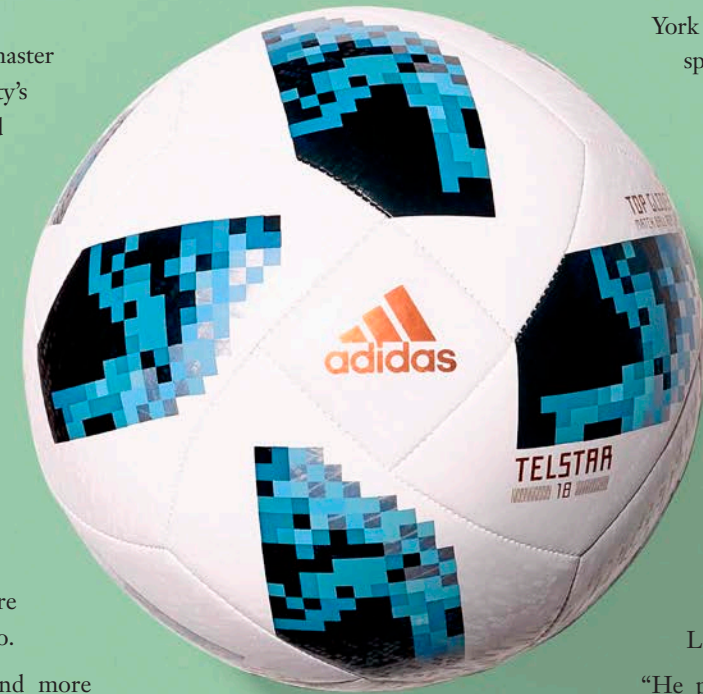
The training as exemplified by Isaaco, a two-time recipient of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport coach of the year award, has pushed the Lions to win four national and five Ontario University Athletics championships over the past eight years.

York soccer has also served as a springboard for players at both the Major League Soccer (MLS) and United Soccer League (USL) levels, among them Jamaal Smith, Michael Cox, Charlie Trafford and Mark-Anthony Kaye.

"Carmine has done an excellent job at putting Canadian soccer on the map," says Kaye, an on-the-rise midfielder who in January signed a fresh contract with Los Angeles FC in the MLS after two seasons playing for Louisville City FC in the USL.

"He put me on the right path for achieving the goals I set for myself when I played soccer at York in 2012 and 2013."

While too early to say whether any York soccer alum will play in the 2026 World Cup, "Canada will be a participant, for sure," predicts Isaaco, wearing a grey York Lions tee that instantly telegraphs where his allegiances lie. ●



Big Goals

When the FIFA World Cup comes to Toronto in 2026, York will be ready to kick

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

*How using
mathematic modelling
to combat infectious
disease adds up*

VIRAL MATH

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SOFIE KIRK

I F YOU LIVED IN TORONTO in 2003, you will remember the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) crisis, which practically turned the city into something of an international pariah.

As the virulent virus raged across Toronto, overloading the health system and shuttering businesses along the way, tourists stayed away in droves when the city was put on a do-not-visit list by the World Health Organization. The epidemic affected even those who never succumbed to symptoms of the illness, driving down the local economy and frightening the citizenry.

But while others panicked, a small group of York mathematicians worked busily and quietly behind the scenes to figure out the biological structure of the disease. Using specialized software, they developed a mathematical representation of the complex structure of the virus in a 3D form.

The thought was that by visualizing the disease, scientists and health workers could understand better what it was they were fighting, expediting their assessment of an already urgent situation. It turned out to be a brilliant idea.

York's small-scale modelling and simulations project eventually evolved into a major interdisciplinary program with more than 20 researchers from universities, hospitals, research labs and government agencies signing on to add their expertise.

Out of devastation, the Centre for Disease Modelling (CDM) was born with a mission to developing and sustaining a national capacity for disease modelling to inform public health decision makers on potential risks to Canadians.

"Although CDM is more than 10 years old, this is just the beginning for us," says CDM founding director Jianhong Wu. "In the next few years, you'll be seeing more high-level scientific outputs from us that should have significant impacts on public health policies and programs."

Mathematical models can now project how infectious diseases progress, and predict the likely outcome of an epidemic, information useful for shaping public health interventions in the future.

Led by Professor Jane Heffernan, a York Research Chair, CDM builds on the success of a research team with broad

experience in epidemiology, virology, statistics, public health policy, geographic information systems, mathematics and scientific computation.

Core members come from York's Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and include Professors Heffernan (CDM's current director), Neal Madras, Seyed Moghadas and Huaiping Zhu. All of them have collective expertise in dynamical systems, stochastic analysis and simulations, viral dynamics, agent-based simulations, data analysis and parallel computing.

Their work covers a diverse range of diseases, including HIV-AIDS, avian influenza and vector-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease, West Nile virus and dengue fever. CDM also plays a significant role in multiple national projects, including ones focusing on antimicrobial drug resistance in Canadian hospitals, disease prevention and control in aboriginal communities, and the economic impact of vaccine and immunization programs.

As well, CDM works with other Canadian institutions and international organizations to build Canadian capacity for interdisciplinary research on disease modelling using cutting-edge mathematical and statistical techniques.

During the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, for instance, CDM helped develop templates of models and simulations to enable rapid response and mitigation measures. That work led to changes in the national pandemic influenza risk management policy to include strategic and adaptive use of antivirals.

While protecting the general population through research efforts is the centre's main objective, CDM is also committed to educating and training the next generation of mathematical modellers in hopes of impacting public health policies well into the future.

"We have offered summer schools almost biennially since 2002," says Heffernan. "These schools have trained students in mathematics, computer science and health, including individuals from public health organizations."

Students work in interdisciplinary teams, "so that they get a taste of what it is like to do research at the frontiers of disease modelling," adds Neal Madras, chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics in the Faculty of Science.

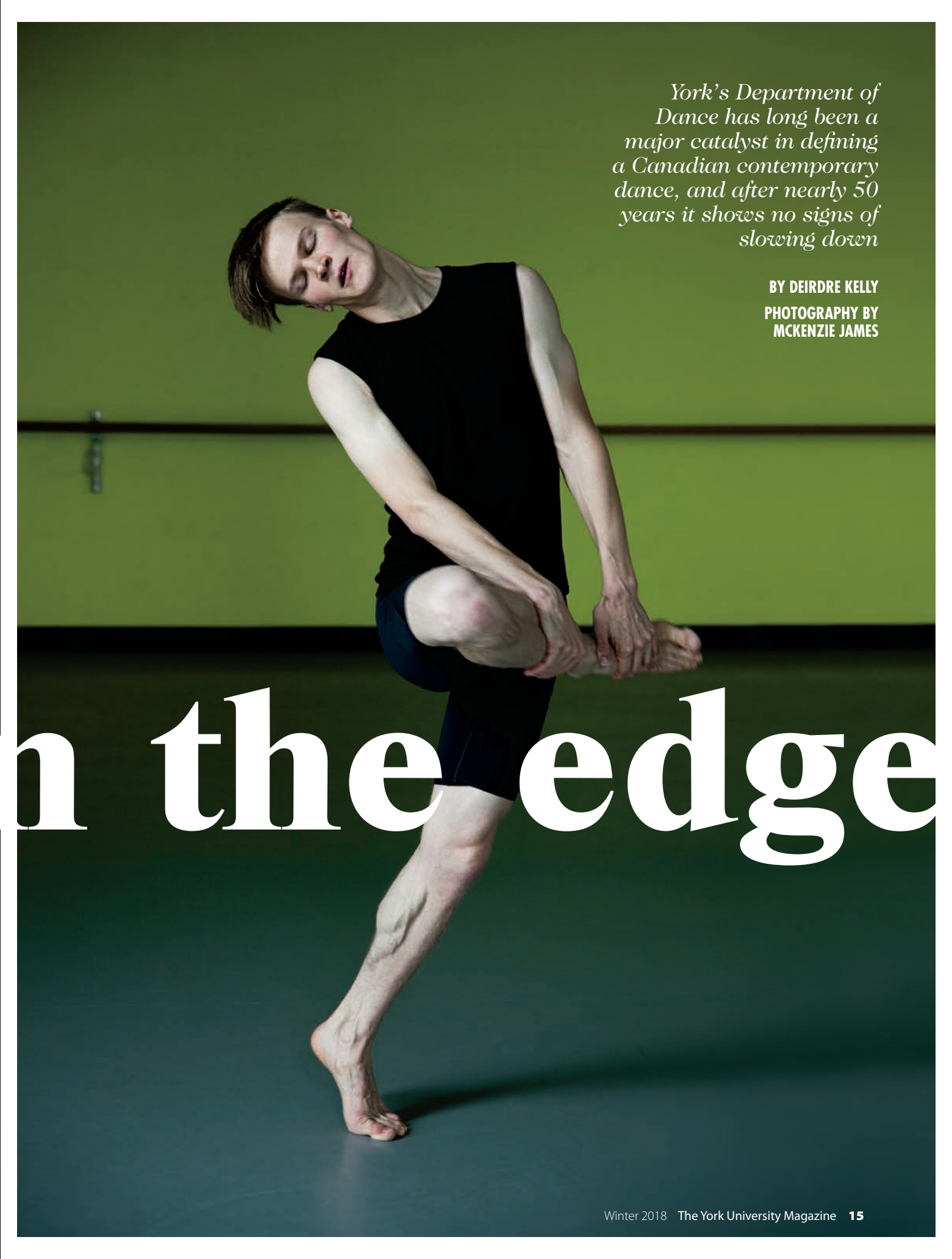
The hope is that awareness of the role mathematical modelling can play in understanding the transmission of diseases will spread faster than the viruses. The race is on. ●

JANE HEFFERNAN:

Sizing up illnesses that cause pandemics



dancing on the edge



*York's Department of
Dance has long been a
major catalyst in defining
a Canadian contemporary
dance, and after nearly 50
years it shows no signs of
slowing down*

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MCKENZIE JAMES

W

HEN THE CURTAIN opened on DanceWorks' 40th anniversary presentation at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre last November, York University threatened to steal the spotlight. The Department of Dance that Grant Strate, a charter member of the National Ballet of Canada, founded at the Keele campus in 1970 had nurtured most of the artists on the program that night, as well as the event itself. "It definitely was one of the incubators," says DanceWorks curator Mimi Beck.

Her own link to York stretches back to 1976, when she first relocated from her native U.S. to participate in the department's annual summer intensive. Even back then, York had a reputation for artistic exploration and innovation that went beyond Canada's borders. Beck recalls a fertile period when the dance department occupied the vanguard of new artistic expression and contributed to the formation of a Canadian contemporary dance identity that DanceWorks, co-founded by a York grad, has consistently looked to celebrate.

"Where I was coming from," says Beck, thinking back on the department's formative years, "it was the end of the Vietnam War and we were doing performance events with political activism and an anti-establishment feeling built into them. That was a big theme in the 1970s, and while York wasn't the only place in Toronto where some of these ideas were being explored – 15 Dance Lab and the Pavlychenko Studios also come to mind – it is where that spirit of experimentation has continued until today."

York's past, present and future streams of influence flowed seamlessly together at the recent DanceWorks show, where former Toronto Dance Theatre dancer Learie McNichols and Toronto Independent Dance Enterprise (a.k.a. T.I.D.E.) co-founder Denise Fujiwara, both former York dance students, shared the stage with flamenco artist Esmeralda Enrique and Kathak performer Joanna de Souza, all presenting world premieres. For her part, Holly Small, another York dance alum, who went on to become a dance professor emerita at the University, contributed *Cheap Sunglasses*, a revival of a work she had originally presented through

OPENING PAGES: York dance student Evan Winther balances his final year at York with dreams of a future dancing career

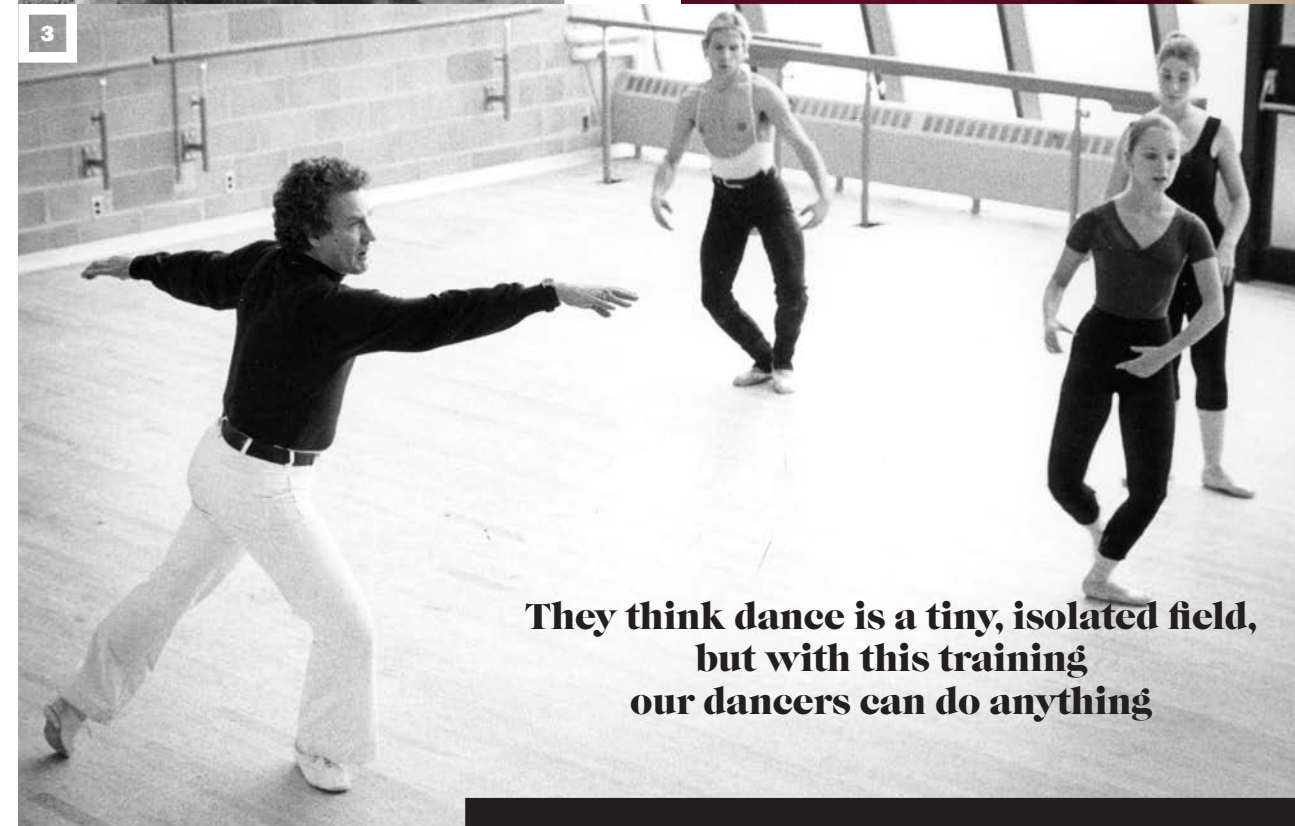
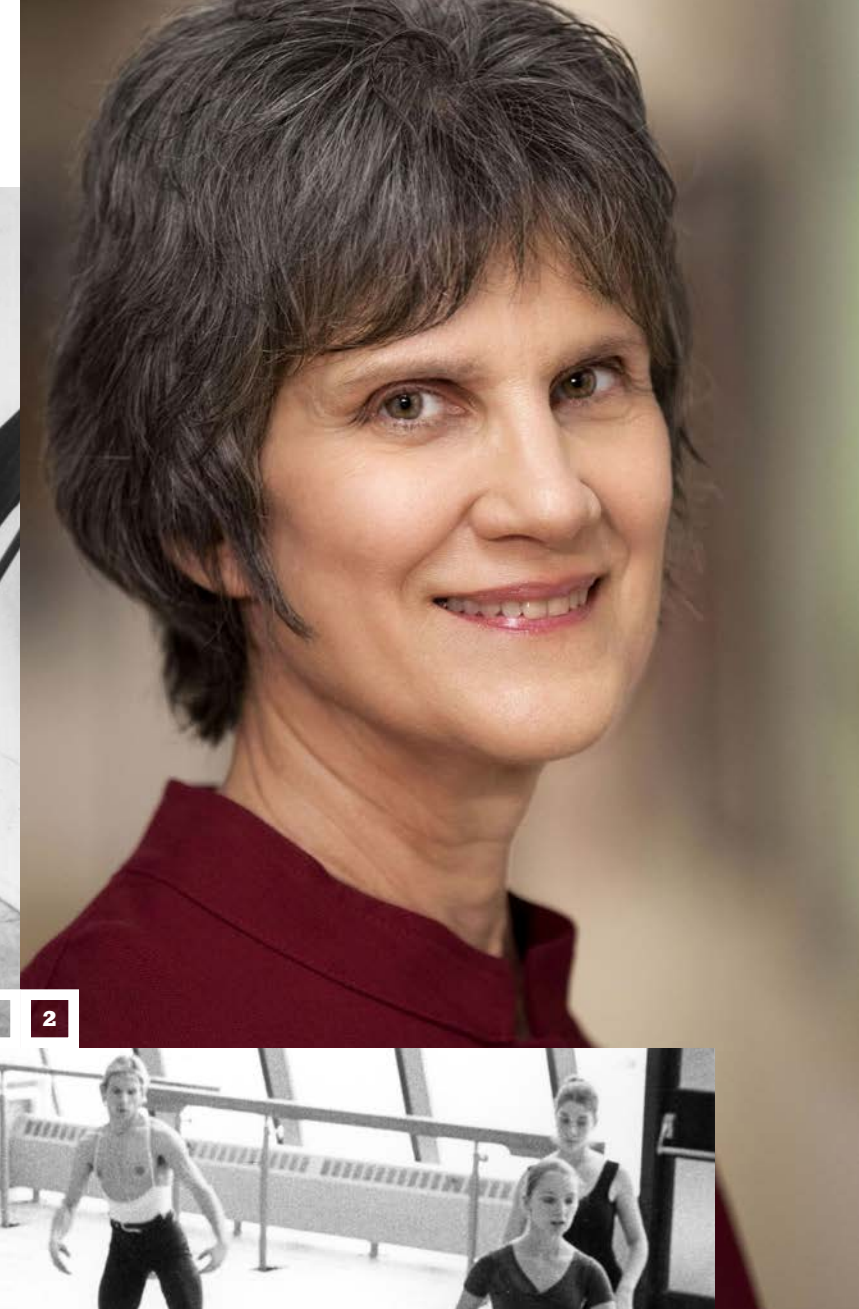
- RIGHT:**
- 1. York dance department founder Grant Strate with his dog, Kirby, 1955
 - 2. DanceWorks curator Mimi Beck, who studied dance at York
 - 3. Strate teaching at York, 1974

DanceWorks in 1981. Beck, who had remembered the work from the first time around, had asked Small to remount it for the anniversary show. More than 35 years later, it still packs a punch.

A dance that conceals and reveals the personality posing and pirouetting behind a pair of plastic shades, *Cheap Sunglasses* is set to composer Robert W. Stevenson's virtuosic score for four vocalists combining a line from ZZ Top with the Fibonacci number sequence in mathematics for rhythmic complexity. Small created it for herself, originally, dancing it many times throughout the 1980s. But for this recent remount, she chose one of her students, Evan Winther, a tall and lanky Albertan in his final year of a BFA honours degree, to fill her enormous shoes. Born into a hockey family fourteen years after *Cheap Sunglasses* first saw the light of day, Winther initially learned the solo as part of an independent studies program that Small supervised at York in the fall. By the time he came to perform it for the capacity audience gathered for the Nov. 16 DanceWorks opening, he had mastered the sly ironies lurking beneath the surface of Small's strut-and-swirl choreography. The house erupted with applause. A star was born.

"I felt a lasso on my body and a feeling of ecstasy on my face," says Winther a few days later, during a lunch break in a student lounge, and referencing imagery suggested by Small during one of their many rehearsal periods. "It's not just the movement," he adds, raising his voice above the din, but choosing his words carefully. "It's about discovering what makes the piece original, how it goes from one point to another. There's always a logic to it."

That logic extends to the dance department where rational inquiry is built into the study of artistically expressive movement. It's one of the reasons why Winther crossed the Prairies to attend York, choosing it over Juilliard in New York. "I was surprised to discover how much research goes on at York and when I considered it I decided that this was the program I wanted to take," he says. "A student in dance at York invests in his education outside the dance studio. And that ended



**They think dance is a tiny, isolated field,
but with this training
our dancers can do anything**

STRATE PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DANCE COLLECTION DANSE

up being a big attraction. Yes, we are doing dance five days a week. But there is also an academic side to the training that is very inspiring.”

Besides Small, Winter’s professors include the former indie artists Darcey Callison and Terrill Maguire, as well as the classically trained John Ottmann, a choreographer who has worked with Pro-ArteDanza, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and La La La Human Steps in Montreal. Regardless of their past achievements, teachers within the dance department take a collaborative approach in encouraging students to find their own voice as the next generation of dance artists. It’s an important distinction, and it traces back to Strate, a Mormon from Cardston, Alta., who established Canada’s first degree program in dance as the founding chair of the University’s Department of Dance. A master’s degree program followed six years later, another first for Canada.

Strate had been a practising lawyer before turning to dance full-time in 1951 at the request of Celia Franca, then the National Ballet’s artistic director, who had seen some of the modern dance choreography he used to do on the side of his legal career. Strate was then 24, a relatively late age for beginning a life in dance. But his maturity made him approach the art form differently from his peers. What Strate might have lacked in technique he more than made up for in brain power. His early dance pieces, created for the National Ballet, evolved from a careful reading of literature and classical mythology. He wanted to go deeper, really change the way people studied dance in this country, and when he left the National in 1970 to come to York, his stated goal was the creation of “a thinking dancer,” one versed in letters as much as Limón technique, a style of modern dance. Strate’s brains-with-brawn methodology attracted the likes of Small, who thrilled to the idea of applying her intellect to the body in motion. “He was a visionary,” she says, sitting



HOLLY SMALL: A big impact, one intense gesture at a time

in her office on the third floor of York’s Accolade East Building. “His legacy here is remarkable.”

Small’s own dance trajectory started in Kingston, Ont., where she was born 64 years ago, a descendant of dairy farmers on her mother’s side. Growing up she took ballet and tap, lessons that gave her a leg

up, so to speak, when she became an Ottawa Rough Riders majorette performing at Grey Cup football games between the ages of 14 and 17. Her main goal was to become a writer. But while studying journalism at Carleton University she had an epiphany that would lead her into a full-time dance career. “I had enrolled in a women’s studies course and one day we learned about [modern dance pioneers] Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey, and suddenly it hit me that dancers could be artists. Beforehand I had thought of dance as an activity and as an entertainment,” Small says. “But that it could also be an art on some level convinced me to stop focusing on journalism. I realized I wasn’t cut out for it, anyway. I wasn’t tough enough.”

Shifting gears, Small looked to York to deepen her dance education. She arrived at the Keele campus in 1974, feeling lost and confused. “I auditioned one hot summer day for Grant Strate, took the interminable Keele bus up there in the sweltering weather and was so late I missed the official audition. I was completely distraught and mortified,” she recalls. “But Grant was so kind. He put me in Douglas Dunn’s summer class and sat at the front and watched me and, based on that, he accepted me. I started the program that fall.”

At York, Small enrolled in the dance therapy program, another Strate initiative, that was then helping to put York University on the international map. Her teachers included the German-born Julianna Lau, an acclaimed dance therapist who had trained under legendary movement theorist Rudolf Laban in England after escaping Nazi Germany in



I auditioned one hot summer day for Grant Strate ... and was so late I missed the official audition. I was completely distraught and mortified



1



2

1. *Moving Parts*, choreographer (and York grad) Denise Fujiwara's ensemble piece created for DanceWorks40 in 2017

2. *Sporting Life*, ex Dancemakers dancer turned York dance Course Director Julia Sasso's dance from 2007

the 1940s. The Julianna Lau Award in Dance Therapy, given annually to a graduate or undergraduate student studying or conducting research in dance therapy at York, recognizes her important contributions to what is today a growing discipline. "She exerted a powerful influence on so many of us studying with her in the '70s," Small says of her former teacher. "She didn't care if we were crying, only that we gave her 100 per cent."

A great many other world-class dance artists and pedagogues came to York during the Strate years, among them Frau Til Thiele (a former Bertolt Brecht associate), Robert Cohan (founding director of London Contemporary Dance Theatre in England), Antony Tudor (then choreographer-in-residence at American Ballet Theatre in New York) and Paul Taylor Dance Company dancer Danny Grossman (who loved York so much he relocated permanently to Toronto from Manhattan to start his own eponymous company).

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DANCEWORKS



3

3. *Cheap Sunglasses*, a reprise of York Professor Emeritus Holly Small's 1981 solo, *Cheap Sunglasses*, as danced by her student Evan Winther at DanceWorks40

They were there to bolster Strate's belief that dance was not only worthy of intellectual study but of great worth to society. Until his death in Vancouver in 2015, the Order of Canada recipient never stopped advocating for the art form. "People continually ask me what we are training all these young dancers for. They think dance is a tiny, isolated field," said Strate in a 1971 interview. "But with this training our dancers can do anything." And how.

Since its founding, the Department of Dance has produced an impressive roster of dance and other professionals. Graduates include DanceWorks co-founder and performance artist Johanna Householder, Cirque du Soleil and Madonna choreographer Debra Brown, Toronto Dance Theatre artistic director and choreographer Christopher House, DreamWalker Dance artistic director Andrea Nann and Dancemakers founders Marcy Radler and Andréa Ciel Smith, whose 1974 company, incubated at the dance department, consisted of York grads such as Carol Anderson (today a dance historian, writer and York professor) and later Julia Sasso (now artistic director of Dance Innovations, a choreographic showcase spotlighting new work by York faculty and students in their fourth year).

WINTHER PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID HOU

Over the years, it has also produced its fair share of arts administrators, among them Assis Carreiro (a former artistic director of the Royal Ballet of Flanders and now a cultural strategist with the High Commission of Canada in London), Jennifer Watkins (who administers the Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company) and Catalina Fellay-Dunbar (currently the Toronto Arts Council's dance officer). Given that the dance department has produced more than 1,625 graduates since its inception 48 years ago, the list does go on and on. "There's always a York connection, not to put too broad a brush on it," Beck says.

How will it now go forward?

"That's always a question in my mind," muses Beck as she prepares to launch the next DanceWorks season, likely with more York grads ready to take centre stage. "The youth will determine how it might advance." Winther, for his part, already has.

"My instinct," he says, "is not just repeating what's been done before. I want to push dance forward, and say something original with my movement." ●



*A York
doctoral student
is looking to reshape
the way discount
nail salons treat
their manicurists,
starting with an
examination
of their often
toxic workplaces*

NAIL BITER

THE NAIL POLISHES BECKON, pretty little bottles all in a row, annually enticing hundreds of thousands of Canadian women through the doors of salons where a manicure, once considered a luxury, has become a routine grooming ritual, almost as common as brushing teeth. The allure is mostly financial. Discount nail salons offer mani-pedi packages for as low as \$35, at least half of what the combination service would cost in more upscale establishments, leading to a boom in demand. But that cheap price comes at a cost, says Reena Shadaan (BSW '08, MA '12), a PhD student in environmental studies at York about to take an in-depth look at the ugly underbelly of the

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

THERE ARE TOXIC FUMES IN THE AIR.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXTRAPOLATE TOO FAR
TO REALIZE THAT IF WOMEN ARE WORKING
IN THESE CONDITIONS ALL DAY,
THEY ARE BEING REGULARLY EXPOSED
TO TOXIC HAZARDS

nail care industry, estimated at \$5 billion in Canada, according to IBIS-World's January 2017 Hair & Nail Salons in Canada: Market Research Report.

"Nail technicians face reproductive, respiratory and dermatological issues due to toxic exposures in the workplace, and musculoskeletal issues due to the nature of their work," says Shadaan, whose thesis will focus on the hidden dangers of nail salons, explicitly the risk they pose to the mostly immigrant women who staff them. "They also experience racial and gender oppression. There are many points of intersection and I intend to apply an environmental justice lens to the health and occupational safety issues common to discount nail salons."

A native of Malaysia who came to Canada in 1994 with her mixed Punjabi-Tamil family at the age of eight, Shadaan will work in partnership with advocacy groups, the Healthy Nail Salon Network and the Nail Technicians Network of Ontario, both located in Toronto, when conducting her research. The city is said to be home to an estimated 1,200 salons that employ 10,000 people. Most are newcomers from Vietnam and China who enter the nail care trade often

with little knowledge of English, let alone the country's health and safety laws, making them vulnerable to exploitation, chemical exposures and wage theft. But few have thought to examine their toxic working conditions before.

"The nail industry in Canada is under-regulated, making it easier to exploit this vulnerable group, and it's difficult to convince regulators, policy-makers and the people who could change the conditions in nail salons that there is a problem without good research, and no one has yet collected the data," says Anne Rochon Ford, who works with Toronto's Nail Salon Workers Project, an initiative of the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, emphasizing why Shadaan's proposed area of study is being heralded as important.

"They are a group of precarious workers and there are more and more of them coming to Toronto, largely new immigrants whose work conditions aren't always the best," continues the former York research associate. "These salons are smelly. There are toxic fumes in the air. You don't have to extrapolate too far to realize that if women are working in these conditions all day, they are being regularly exposed to toxic hazards."

It's a universal problem.

An investigation by British paper *Sunday Times* in 2013 estimated that there were 100,000 Vietnamese manicurists, mostly illegal migrants, working in Britain under what observers described as slave-like conditions. The exposé led Prime Minister Theresa May, then Britain's interior minister, to table the Modern Slavery Act, which aims to halt illegal working in risk industries like discount nail care.

In 2015, the *New York Times* published its own blistering report, this one focused on the estimated 17,000 nail salons spread across the U.S. After interviewing more than 150 nail salon workers and owners, in four languages, the paper found manicurists to be routinely underpaid and exploited, subjected to ethnic bias and other abuses. The story prompted Andrew Cuomo, then governor of New York, to order a crackdown on nail salons amid allegations that they treat their workers – often undocumented immigrant women – not much better than indentured slaves, it was later reported.

In Canada, little so far has been written on the hidden dangers of the country's discount nail salons, especially in academe. Immigrant nail technicians in this country also want



change, however, and are hopeful that Shadaan's initiative will go a long way in providing it.

"Yes, this research is important," says Demi Tran, owner of the Boutique D'Amour nail salon in downtown Toronto. "Inhaling the chemicals in nail polishes can have a long-term effect on the health of the nail salon workers. My staff is already aware of this, and we have already found ways to protect ourselves by eliminating acrylics, for example, and replacing them with gels, which are odour-free and contain less chemicals. But not everyone knows what to do, which is why a study like this would help."

Shadaan suspects a wilful blindness on the part of consumers who like getting beauty on the cheap is why change has been slow to come.

"Particularly in Canada, there is an absence of work on the health impacts and concerns of nail technicians due to their work conditions, partly because this kind of labour is deeply racialized, and comprised largely of immigrant women," says Shadaan, whose proposal to study these women, as well as their work conditions, earned her one of only 10 Canada Graduate Scholarships to Honour Nelson Mandela given to deserving grad students across the country in 2017.

The scholarships award \$35,000 over a three-year period to doctoral students whose research is allied with values associated with the late South African leader, chiefly the pursuit of peace, democracy, justice and freedom through advanced learning. The Brampton resident and York grad is determined to put it to good use.

"All my work has been centred around gender and environ-

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mental justice," says Shadaan, citing the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984 as a major influence. "I am interested in women, and the impact of toxic exposures on their lives, as well as their right to have children and raise them in healthy environments." Reproductive justice is a human right, she adds, and no amount of polish can obscure its prominence in her field of research.

"Getting your nails done is part of the self-care narrative, Shadaan says, but who is doing the caring, how are the labour conditions and what are the power dynamics surrounding the caring? These are some of my questions." ●

*Once upon a time at York,
a pair of students in the film studies
program each went on to become novelists
whose respective books bagged Canada's
biggest literary prize.
Coincidence or by design?
A tale in two parts*

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
MICHAEL REDHILL PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES
WILL FERGUSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK HEISLER

MICHAEL REDHILL: Splitting his time between editing
and writing award-winning novels like his latest about
ghostly twins

THE GILLER GUYS

FOR THREE YEARS, I HAVE BEEN LIVING HAND TO MOUTH. I'VE HAD A HARD TIME MAKING ENDS MEET. TO SAY THIS FEELS GOOD WOULD BE A LUDICROUS UNDERSTATEMENT

WHEN A VISIBLY moved Michael Redhill took the 2017 Scotia-bank Giller Prize at a black-tie ceremony telecast live across the nation from a downtown Toronto hotel ballroom last November, the author of the winning novel, *Bellevue Square*, tearfully thanked a long list of people, including his agent, his editor and his mother, in that order. He saved his biggest expression of gratitude for Michael Ondaatje and Linda Spalding, Canada's first couple of literature, who taught English at York in the years before Redhill decided to join the University in 1986 to pursue a film studies degree with a minor in creative writing. "I met my most important mentors at York," Redhill says later, underscoring how those early encounters went on to pay him dividends, and in more ways than one.

The bearded resident of Toronto's Riverdale neighbourhood is an editor as well as a writer. But the day after winning Canada's most important – and lucrative – literary prize, Redhill is playing hooky. It is now late in the afternoon and he rushes in late to a local Danforth café after spending most of the afternoon paying homage to Bellevue Square in Kensington Market, the inspiration behind his same-named novel about a woman and her doppelgänger and the confusion arising from their story of mistaken identity. Somewhere along the way he has also managed to squeeze in a visit to his bank to deposit the \$100,000 cheque handed out to the winner of the Giller Prize along with a trophy designed by craftsman, Soheil Mosun. The reality of what has just happened to him is only just starting to sink in.

"Look at my balance," Redhill insists, holding up his cell-phone in between sips of espresso and glasses upon glasses of cold water. A mobile app shows his bank details blinking brightly in the semi-darkness of a fall afternoon. There's the \$100,000 all right. But it's the screen's other figure, \$411,

that he's referring to. In effect, the author, a father of two teenaged sons, had teetered on the poverty line just a day before. His life as he knew it has already changed.

"This is not a brag," Redhill exclaims, his eyes threatening to go moist again. "For three years, I have been living hand to mouth. I've had a hard time making ends meet. To say this feels good would be a ludicrous understatement." Thanks be to the Giller, and thanks be to York.

"The University gave a lot of writers teaching jobs both at the Keele and the Glendon campuses," Redhill says, referring to Ondaatje and Spalding, who instructed him not inside the classroom, but more at their Cabbagetown home, which they opened to him in the days when he was still an aspiring writer. In the 1980s, they were editing the Canadian literary journal *Brick* and had invited Redhill in to learn firsthand about the trials, tribulations and tender rewards of the literary life. He is forever indebted. "It's where I learned to become an active member of an arts community," Redhill says, "in a way inspired by their example."

Experiences acquired on campus also informed the writer he is today. He was at York three years, travelling daily up to Keele from the apartment he kept in the city, a round-trip commute that ate up hours of his day. "It was a terrifying journey, back before the TTC had shock absorbers," he recalls, shuddering at the memory. "It felt like going to school in a bomb shelter. It was remote. There weren't a lot of services. But there was something very raw about the experience that created this real ferment in the arts."

Redhill quickly inserted himself into the scene, cutting his literary chops editing the York literary magazine *Yak*, in which he published the nascent poetry of fellow student Steven Page, "before he became a Barenaked Lady." Other young writers coming up at York at the time included Lesley-Anne Bourne, today an award-winning poet. "There was a very rich literary scene at York when I was here," Redhill says.

"I met bpNichol at York before he passed away and I had Don Coles, the professor who brought me out to Banff, and Bruce Powe, the Canadian novelist and poet. I took courses with both." Redhill has since led courses of his own at York, returning to campus as a sessional teacher, participating on panels and addressing students about what the life of a writer is really like. It can be tough, he tells them. But the bumpy ride – as Redhill can personally attest – is worth it. "The creative writing program at York gave me a life," he says. "It was the first time I thought I could spend my life doing this."

BEST KNOWN FOR *419*, his Giller Prize-winning book of 2012, Will Ferguson evolved into a novelist and screenwriter somewhat by accident. Becoming a writer hadn't figured in his career plans when the three-time recipient of the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour attended York at precisely the same time that Redhill did during the latter half of the 1980s. Both, in fact, were in the same first-year film class. But they didn't come to know each other until years later when mutual friends brought them together. They had kept their literary ambitions pretty much to themselves. "I wanted to study film and so I was pretty much focused on just that," says Ferguson, a resident of Calgary who grew up in Fort Vermilion ("close to the Arctic Circle") in northern Alberta.

Ferguson first came to the University in 1986 as a 22-year-old "mature" student, having travelled the world for a couple of years post high school as a volunteer with the Canadian volunteer organization Katimavik, among other government-sponsored youth agencies with a global reach. "I had travelled and acquired life experiences prior to coming to university, which made me different from most other students," he says. Ferguson chose the University for its film production program and for four years learned how to edit film manually with blade, tape and splicer. It was solid training. But by 1990, just as he and his fellow classmates were completing their degrees, digital had taken over the industry and raw footage became as antiquated as a VCR. "We all graduated as dinosaurs," Ferguson recalls, noting that Ceri Marsh and Kim Izzo, joint authors of a future best seller, *The Fabulous Girl's Guide to Decorum*, were among his film studies cohort that year who also went on to become writers. "And, you know what they say, novel writing is the last refuge of the unemployed."

All kidding aside, it takes a great deal of skill and discipline

to complete a novel. York taught Ferguson that and more. A course on screenwriting in the film studies program instilled in him writerly precision and an acute ear for speech, qualities that would come in handy when he turned to writing full-time shortly after graduation. "The screenwriting class I took at York was perhaps the most important course I could have taken for preparing me to become a novelist, but I didn't know it at the time," he says. "It's an economical form of storytelling, demanding and unforgiving. You must be able to reveal character through dialogue. It's a good discipline. I always advise aspiring writers to try to do a screenplay, at least just once. It's a very rigorous format."

Ferguson honed his craft while teaching English in Japan in the 1990s. As an expat there, he began writing travel pieces for mass publications back in North America. He loved Japan. It made him regard his homeland, and the people in it, with unstinting clarity. In 1997, he published his first book, the ironically titled *Why I Hate Canadians*, following it a year later with *Hokkaido Highway Blues* (later retitled *Hitching Rides with Buddha*) and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Japan*, based on his own experiences thumbing his way across the full length of the country, from Cape Sata on the southern island of Kyushu to Cape Soya at Hokkaido's northern tip. "Going to Japan was also because of York," Ferguson says. "I took a Japanese cinema course with Ted Goossen, a Haruki Murakami translator, and I was completely fascinated by the encounter. Professor Goossen was the one who turned me on to the JET [Japan Exchange and Teaching] program, which I thought to do for one year to pay my debts, but then ended up staying for five. I never did work in film." Cinema's loss was literature's gain.

Ferguson went on to write an astonishing 10 more books in 10 years, among them 2001's *Generic*, 2004's *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw: Travels in Search of Canada* and 2009's *Beyond Belfast: A 560-Mile Walk Across Northern Ireland on Sore Feet*, all award winners. But it was *419*, the novel that took the Giller in 2012, that made him a household name.

A page-turner shot through with suspense and credible characters whose lives go sideways in the oil-rich Niger Delta in West Africa, *419* (four-one-nine is how you say it) takes its title from the Nigerian criminal code pertaining to fraud. The story is about a woman who investigates the death of her father after he falls victim to an email-based scam originating in Lagos' criminal underworld. Upon its release, critics observed that the novel both extended and departed from Ferguson's background as a travel writer, taking him into rich new literary territory. "I don't think I took a risk," he said at the time. "I think my publisher [Penguin Canada]



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IT'S A GOOD DISCIPLINE

took the risk, to be quite honest. ‘You know, what I really want to try is literary fiction.’ And they got behind it.”

Determined to build on that success, Ferguson took time when choosing what he wanted to do for his next work of fiction, *The Shoe on the Roof*, which came out in the fall. Again, York University provided inspiration. The comic novel exploring the complexities of the brain started out as a screenplay that Ferguson wrote in his dorm bedroom at York during his first year as an undergraduate. Back in the 1950s, his mother had been a psychiatric nurse in Weyburn, Sask., and when he had to produce a screenplay for one of his York film courses he remembered her “harrowing and triumphant” stories concerning people struggling with delusions. One tale involved a case she had heard about in the U.S., involving a pair of mental patients who both believed themselves to be Jesus. They were cured when they realized there couldn’t be two Messiahs on Earth at the same time. “I thought it was a great story, and manageable for my purposes. I mean, York in the winter looked very much like a psych ward. I thought I wouldn’t have to go far to get the patients,” Ferguson jokes.

He wrote a 10-minute screenplay for three characters (adding a third Jesus to symbolize the Holy Trinity) with the idea of using a single long tracking shot (“at an experimental angle”) that would slowly circulate the table to examine each player in turn. But it proved too difficult to pull off. Ferguson shelved the transcript until 2007, when he told his agent about it with a notion of expanding it into a feature film. That, too, never got off the ground. “And so, after *419*, when I was looking for another novel to do, I kept thinking of that screenplay. I thought to myself, you know, there’s a novel in here,” Ferguson says. “I did the exact opposite of what is usually the norm. I adapted a novel from a screenplay.” And became a writer after studying film at York. Which is what you might call a happy ending. ●

WILL FERGUSON:

His latest book is based on a script he wrote at York

Fresh Coat

Bojana Sentaler has designs on fashion's top tier

POST-CONVOCATION globetrotting typically sends new graduates back home with a broadened worldview, a lifetime of memories and a near-empty bank account. But for Schulich School of Business alumna Bojana Sentaler (BBA '06), travelling planted the seeds for her now flourishing career in luxury outerwear.

Even if you're not immediately familiar with her eponymous line of fashionable women's coats, chances are you've seen them around – whether on A-list celebrities, current or soon-to-be royalty, or the prime minister of Canada's wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, who catapulted the family-owned business to breakout success in 2015 when she donned a white *Sentaler* topper to the swearing-in of her husband at Rideau Hall. "I was honoured that Sophie Grégoire Trudeau chose to wear a *Sentaler* coat during one of the most important days for her family as well as for our country," says the 33-year old fashion entrepreneur in a recent interview at her company's minimalist downtown Toronto showroom. "The coat was on back order four times."

Not to be outdone, the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, sparked another buying frenzy after the *Sentaler* wrap coat with ribbed sleeves she wore during a 2016 week-long Royal Tour of British Columbia and Yukon immediately sold out within hours of her photograph overwhelming media sites. The same thing happened again just this past

December when Middleton's future sister-in-law, Meghan Markle, wore a *Sentaler* long wide-collar wrap coat with signature ribbed cuffs in camel for the 2017 Christmas Day church service held in Sandringham, England, site of Queen Elizabeth's country estate. Publications and networks around the world ran images of the "Suits" actress wearing the coat, which also quickly sold out and remains on back order because of international demand. "Globally, *Sentaler* has emerged as a blockbuster brand," says Vicky Milner, the founding president of the Canadian Arts & Fashion Awards (CAFA), who is also a York grad. "It has a reputation for great quality and great style, values that reflect positively on the Canadian outerwear industry as a whole."

So, how did a business grad with no formal fashion background end up heading a trendsetting brand all the world is now talking about? A lifelong fashion lover who moved with her family from Belgrade to Toronto at the age of nine, Sentaler says it boils down to prioritizing quality over quantity when it comes to clothing, a value learned early on from her mother. "She would always say to invest in the one good item you will feel amazing in rather than buying multiple items, and that inevitably would be the piece with the perfect fit, the perfect texture, the perfect fabric." Sentaler's innate interest in fashion was matched only by her much more practical fascination with business, eventually leading

BY LINDSAY MACADAM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES





**He told me,
“Bojana, you either have it
or you don’t
– and if you have it, go for it”**

her to major in marketing and minor in finance during her postsecondary studies at York’s Schulich School of Business.

Just as she was about to graduate from Schulich in 2006, Sentaler lined up a job with what she then considered her dream company: French beauty megabrand L’Oréal. She quickly realized, however, that her entrepreneurial spirit was not well suited to a nine-to-five corporate gig. She left her job and headed to Dubai to work with one of her best friends from Schulich on economic investment reports for emerging markets, with a focus on the Middle East. It was during this time, in 2008, that she lucked into an interview with one of her fashion idols, the inimitable Karl Lagerfeld, who was in Dubai at the time designing villas.

“I spoke to him off the record after the interview about wanting to have my own fashion line one day,” Sentaler recalls, “and he told me, ‘Bojana, you either have it or you don’t – and if you have it, go for it.’” She believed she really did have it, and travelled next to Peru where she came up with the idea to launch a fashion brand of stylish outerwear for chilly Canadians.

The impetus came from friends who were then living in South America. They told her about a little-known durable and sustainable luxury fabric with a big warmth quotient: wool from Peruvian alpacas. After doing more research into the fabric and discovering its many unique characteristics – lightweight yet warm, soft yet hypoallergenic, both environment- and animal-friendly, as well as new to the Canadian market – Sentaler decided to begin the process of creating her own line of alpaca wool coats, believing they would have mass appeal: “I saw a gap in the market for those kinds of coats because we either had the puffy jackets or wool coats, but we didn’t have something in between that was fashionable, feminine and elegant as well as functional.”

In 2009 Sentaler officially launched her namesake brand, and then watched in astonishment as it grew beyond her wildest dreams. One of her first big boosts came when the venerable Canadian magazine *Chatelaine* featured her coats in a glossy fashion spread published in 2011. International attention soon followed. In 2014, Kim Cattrall, of “Sex and the City” fame, wore a *Sentaler* coat on the set of her followup series, “Sensitive Skin,” an image seen around the world. Other celebrities soon followed in Cattrall’s stylish footsteps. Tatiana Maslany from “Orphan Black” was seen wearing the signature ribbed sleeve wrap coat in black in

2016. The deluxe coats also recently appeared on ABC’s hit series “Scandal,” worn by actresses Darby Stanchfield and Tessie Santiago. But it’s the association with royalty that has really cinched global awareness.

“When members of the royal family undertake public engagements, their clothing and accessories are closely scrutinized and fashion designers often experience increased exposure and sales,” says Carolyn Harris, a royal historian in Toronto and author of *Raising Royalty: 1000 Years of Royal Parenting*. “*Sentaler* is the latest example of the impact of royalty on fashion.”

Yet, with prices averaging between \$1,000 and \$2,200, the coats are not for elites only.

A busy mother of two, Sentaler is desirous that her outerwear appeals to a broad spectrum of fashion-conscious women. Each season she releases a variety of silhouettes in a wide range of colours, from Tourmaline Pink to Gull Grey. These are coats meant to be worn and not just photographed; movement is built right into the design.

To emphasize the inherent flexibility of her outerwear, last season Sentaler collaborated with local dance artist Tanya Howard, a leading ballerina with the National Ballet of Canada, who became the face of the 2017 fall/winter collection. She also teamed up with ProArteDanza, the Toronto company led by choreographer Roberto Campanella and veteran indie dancer Robert Glumbeck. The unique marketing campaign involved a runway presentation danced on pointe at the FashionCan event, a CAFA initiative, which took place at Yorkdale Shopping Centre last February, in addition to static displays in the lobby of the Fleck Dance Theatre at Harbourfront Centre where ProArteDanza had a residency last November. The brand is literally on the move.

Available in all Nordstrom stores across Canada as well as select Saks Fifth Avenue locations, *Sentaler* recently expanded into the U.S. market and is now sold stateside through top retailers like Neiman Marcus, and online at BergdorfGoodman.com. From finance to fashion, Sentaler takes her new-found success in stride.

“One of the key things that I think got me to where I am today is the consistency,” she says. “I never compromised on quality. I never launched my product until I felt it was absolutely perfect.” ●

(with files and reporting from Deirdre Kelly)

Giving

FRIENDS & PHILANTHROPY

Engineering Possibilities

A new fund takes root at York University to help foreign-trained engineers work and thrive in Canada

BY AMY STUPAVSKY

AS AN EXECUTIVE MANAGING fraud detection solutions for global firms, Sonja Schindeler has spent a fair amount of time in taxis.

While in them, she would often talk to the drivers, many of whom were new immigrants. Listening to their stories, she was struck by a common refrain: Many had been trained as engineers in their native countries, but their credentials didn't qualify them to continue their careers in Canada. They drove cabs to make ends meet, and to give their families a chance at having a good life in their adopted land.

Schindeler and her husband, Rick Hrga, himself an immigrant who knows first-hand what it is like to struggle for acceptance in a new country, decided that a better way might be to offer a new opportunity for foreign-trained engineers to succeed in Canada.

"I met so many people working hard to give their kids an education, often sacrificing their own professional dreams," says Schindeler. "While they often had to

work at menial jobs, they were so tremendously proud when they talked about their kids being able to go to university. It was heart-wrenching to hear what these people gave up to help their families. That's when Rick and I started thinking about what we could do to help."

In June 2017, the couple made a future bequest to York University's Lassonde School of Engineering to establish the Sonja Schindeler and Rick Hrga Fund for Internationally Educated Engineers. The gift will enable foreign-qualified engineers to get the specific training they need to ensure their academic and professional credentials meet Canadian engineering licensing requirements.

"At Lassonde we recognize that great engineers do not possess technical skill alone, rather they are creative thinkers of broad perspectives and varying backgrounds," says Interim Dean Richard Hornsey. "By bringing the next generation of diverse, internationally trained engineers to Canada, this generous gift will allow our graduates to have an even greater impact on the world."

While the fund's specific structure remains fluid, its programming will be aimed at mature students, and will provide the flexibility they require to juggle work, family and training. Outreach programs will help promote the fund and study opportunities to newcomers. Depending on the students' needs, the funds can provide participants with technology and personal equipment, tuition assistance, housing accommodation, scholarships, meal plans and mentorship to begin their journeys and to map their careers in Canada.

"We felt there should be an opportunity for everyone, including immigrants with children, to realize their dreams of success for themselves and their families," Schindeler says. "We want to take parental sacrifice out of the equation so everyone can maximize their true potential, not just the next generation."

Engineering is a regulated profession in Canada. To become an engineer, individuals need to obtain a licence – a professional engineer (PEng) designation – from their provincial or territorial engineering association by fulfilling certain academic, language, ethics and work-experience requirements.

Many foreign-qualified engineers arriving in Canada encounter obstacles in finding an engineering career. According to Engineers Canada, a national industry support organization, internationally trained engineers often arrive to the country without fully understanding the licence requirements and application process, which in some cases can take up to five years.

Although the applicant can still work in engineering during this time – with supervision from a professional engineer – it can be difficult to secure a position without Canadian work experience. Add in language barriers and the need to find immediate work to support a family, and it's no surprise that foreign-trained engineers must take jobs that don't align with their level of education.

Yet, foreign-qualified engineers make significant – and essential – contributions to Canada's engineering workforce. In 2016, just over 30 per cent of newly licensed engineers were internationally trained. In some jurisdictions, labour market shortages make finding skilled professionals difficult without foreign-trained professionals coming to Canada.

"When we consider the skills required to fill the senior positions of retiring or promoted engineers, recent graduates may not be prepared to fill these mid- and late-career roles," says Brent Gibson, practice lead, communication, for Engineers Canada. "Individuals with engineering experience from outside of Canada may be well positioned to fill these roles."

This narrative hits close to home for Schindeler and Hrga – and is one of the reasons they chose to support foreign-educated engineers.

Hrga came to Canada from Austria in 1958 at the age of 19 with \$40 in his pocket. He trained in mechanical engineering at a technical school in Vienna, but after immigrating to Ontario, he worked as a manual labourer in various industries. Later, he became a lab technician for an appliance control manufacturer where he was soon promoted to the engineering department.

While working, Hrga attended school part-time to improve his English and academic qualifications, enrolling at York's Atkinson College as a mature student. Soon after, he started an electric motor manufacturing company, which was later acquired by Magna International. At Magna, Hrga rose quickly through the ranks to become a group president.

It's a true immigrant struggle and success story, and it has inspired Hrga to want to help other newcomer professionals get ahead in Canada.

"I've always had an appreciation for people who've devoted their careers to the engineering discipline. It's worked out well for me, but it was difficult to get here – coming to Canada, not speaking English and working my way up," Hrga says.

"I'd like to link our fund to what I had to go through, and make it just a bit easier for new engineer immigrants to succeed." ●

Alumni

Catherine The Great

Fundraising legend Catherine Nugent adds gleam to giving

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

WHOEVER SAID all that glitters isn't gold certainly didn't know Catherine Nugent (BA '70).

Toronto's premiere Glitter Girl – a sobriquet Nugent came by in the 1980s when she and a close-knit group of other prominent Toronto socialites dazzled the city with their champagne style, charm and good works – is a fundraiser's dream.

Today, the grande dame of fashionable society is as well-known for the mountains of cash she has single-handedly raised for charity as for her love of expensive jewels. "I'm a firm believer in giving back," says the McLaughlin College alum, who graduated with a bachelor of arts in languages in 1970 ("back when York was still a baby"), and credits her alma mater for teaching her everything she knows about creative philanthropy. "York has always been outside the box and that's how I like to operate. The University does things differently and so do I."

That difference includes the hugely successful Brazilian Ball, a legendary (now defunct) society fundraiser she co-founded with the late Anna Maria de Souza, a future fellow GG, while Nugent was still a York student. The first one took place in 1966 in a church basement in downtown Toronto, Nugent's record collection providing the party atmosphere.

Born to Canadian parents in Rio de Janeiro in 1948, Nugent had been moving to a samba beat from a young age, so the theme came naturally to her. Her late father, Robert Mackenzie, worked in the postwar years for the Brazilian Traction

Company, a major Canadian utility company later known as Brascan, which had been founded by his uncle, Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Nugent's mother, Peggy Mackenzie, a native Montrealer (and Harvard grad) who later became social secretary to York's first president, Murray Ross, was, as her daughter would become, a legendary hostess whose parties would inspire Nugent to err on the side of extravagance when creating her own.

"In Rio de Janeiro," she once told Rosemary Sexton, the former *Globe and Mail* society columnist whose 1993 book, *The Glitter Girls*, chronicled Nugent's rise to prominence among the Canadian jet set, "our life was full of deposed kings, maharajas, ambassadors, writers, artists and all sorts of controversial members." Boring, in other words, it wasn't. But Toronto – to which she had relocated for her postsecondary education after attending boarding school in Rothesay, N.B. – was a different story. The Brazilian Ball, with its approximation of Rio's hedonistic, sometimes debauched, Carnival festivities, was meant to loosen collars – not to mention other articles of clothing – as well as purse strings. It succeeded and largely because of Nugent's ingenuity, observers say.

"She is extremely bright, speaks three or four languages and has good ideas," pronounces Carole Grafstein, a regular Brazilian Ball attendee who harnessed that brain power for some of her own causes, including Run for the Cure, the popular Canadian Cancer Society fundraiser, which Grafstein launched in 1997 with Nugent's help. "She also worked

CATHERINE NUGENT:

At Toronto's Four Seasons Hotel, where she has hosted many a glamorous fundraiser

with me at the Canadian Opera Company when we brought in Yves Saint Laurent and raised \$1 million,” adds the wife of former Canadian senator Jerry Grafstein. “She has been a very good citizen to Canada because she’s fundraised a lot of money, starting with the Brazilian Ball, which she helped get going here.”

Nugent chaired the event through various iterations of conga lines and fan dances, taking it from arriviste status to the most anticipated night on the city’s social calendar before the sequinned G-strings were hung up for good in 2012. During its 46-year run, the Brazilian Ball didn’t just show WASP Toronto how to party, but also raised more than \$60 million for hospitals, charities and leading educational and cultural institutions in South America and Canada. Given Nugent’s association with York, the University twice was a recipient of the ball’s largesse, receiving \$1.5 million for the LaMarsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution in 1998 and another \$2 million for the Accolade Project in the Faculty of Fine Arts in 2006. Nugent obtained the funds by offering up Toronto what it didn’t know it was missing: over-the-top style.

“The ballgowns were immense, made of satin and taffeta by Winston Kong and topped with headdresses. The ’80s,” she says, inserting a dramatic pause, “were magnificent.” Not that her other decades have been any less spectacular. Take, for instance, the 1960s, a time when York was the new kid on the academic block, beckoning people like Nugent to explore new social and professional frontiers. Wanting to join the diplomatic corps and become an interpreter, an ambition nurtured by her upbringing in a foreign land and mastery of Portuguese and French as a child, she came to York for its languages program and something more besides.

“The allure was that it wasn’t the University of Toronto. It was a new thing and it was fun,” she recalls. “The Ministry of Love is what we called the big building on the Keele campus. But like a lot of things fresh in Toronto at the time, it was regarded as a bit suspect. For sure a lot of interesting people were there, armed with great ideas. It was an exciting time. A time when you believed anything could be possible.”

In the 1970s, Nugent married the late Stephen Leggett, an Osgoode grad turned crown attorney, whom she had met

A lot of interesting people were there, armed with great ideas. It was an exciting time. A time when you believed anything could be possible

while working as a court interpreter soon after graduation. Moving into a Rosedale mansion, the couple went on to have two children: Margot Elizabeth in 1975 and Jacqueline Nancy Anne in 1977. In the 1980s, the established glamour queen divorced her first husband to become the wife of David Nugent, the English-born founder of Riviera Concepts, a global cosmetics company that manufactured and distributed bestselling fragrances by fashion designers such as Alfred Sung, Bob Mackie and Nina Ricci. In 1989, they had a son, Jonathan. Soon afterward, Nugent and her family decamped to France, where she spent the 1990s helping her husband with the business. David Nugent died in Toronto in 2013, spending his final days at Bridgepoint Health, a complex care hospital built around the old Don Jail and today operated under the aegis of the Sinai Health System, which Catherine, in her fashion, helped get off the ground.

After returning to Canada at the start of the new millennium – and thinking that her Glitter Girl days were well behind her – Nugent was approached by Bridgepoint to sprinkle some of her magic on Fandango!, yet another Latin-themed dancing-for-dollars event, this one targeting health care. “I wasn’t sure I wanted to get involved,” Nugent says. “But then I listened to the dream, and they got me at the word heart.”

Initially, the organizers had asked her to coach them on how to pull off a proper fundraiser; after she provided them with a This Is How You Do a Gala memo, however, they begged her to take on the job.

“Catherine is a selfless individual who networks for the good of everyone,” says Janice O’Born, who sits on the Mount Sinai/Bridgepoint board. “Her accomplishments in philanthropy are endless.”

Since acquiring the reins of Fandango! in 2004, Nugent has raised more than \$3 million for Bridgepoint, plus another \$1.8 million through the Great Jewellery Heist, a glamorous gemstone-laden luncheon she hosts each October at the Ritz-Carlton in Toronto. Nugent is the reason it shines.

“People call me a socialite but please spell it l-i-g-h-t,” she says. “Otherwise it’s a term that gives a lot of women who do good work a frivolous name. I mean, how many millions have we raised?” Too many to count. ●

Entry Ways

An Osgoode grad pins down the parameters of Canada’s immigration laws

BY ALEXANDRA LUCCHESI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

As immigration policies continue to evolve in the U.S., senior Canadian immigration lawyer Cathryn Sawicki (BA ’95, JD ’06) believes more and more businesses will look to relocate to Canada “as a friendlier, healthier place to have their employees prosper.”

“People used to think immigration was just refugees,” elaborates the Osgoode Hall Law School grad who helms the Global Business Immigration Services Team at PwC Law in downtown Toronto. “Now, I think they more realize that immigration affects their companies and the mobility of their employees.”

To help her fellow lawyers better serve this new class of immigrants as well as others, last year Sawicki published *Canadian Immigration and Refugee Law: A Practitioner’s Handbook*, a comprehensive and practical guide referencing relevant legislation and in-depth analysis of the fundamentals of immigration law.

She and co-authors Chantal Desloges and Lynn Fournier-Ruggles, both immigration specialists, wrote the book using plain language, making it accessible to a broad audience, “which is in itself an important public service,” says former minister of citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism Jason Kenney, who has publicly endorsed the book.

For Sawicki, the timing was right.

“I think as our neighbours address their immigration issues, it allows Canada to really position itself as an incredible place in which to live and do business,” she says. “And I think that’s really fantastic.” ●



Noteworthy

#WeToo

A pair of Glendon grads join forces in the fight for female empowerment and equality

BY DEIRDRE KELLY

WHEN Beverley Wybrow (BA '71) was president and CEO of the Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF), the Order of Canada recipient mentored a young student from her alma mater, York University's Glendon College, encouraging her to make an impact in the fight for women's equality in Toronto and across Canada.

Kristin Blakely (BA '00, MA '02) did so, and then some.

A public sociologist committed to advancing gender equality through scholarly teaching, advocacy and board work, Blakely teaches undergraduate courses in sociology at Glendon along with leadership courses focused on gender and diversity at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies.

In addition to her many responsibilities, in February of this year she became co-chair of the CWF, where she hopes now to become a role model herself.

"Really, it's a continuation of what I've been doing in the women's movement for the past 13 years," says Blakely, co-author of the 2008 book *Gendered Worlds* and a frequent contributor to such academic publications as *Contemporary Sociology*, the *Journal of International Women's Studies*, the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* and the *Journal of Family Issues*.

"I will be continuing the struggle for gender equality in Canada by participating in women's boards combined with my academic work, which is focused on the same area."

Blakely interned at CWF in 2000, just as she was starting her master's degree at York, and the experience honed her interest in women's issues and heightened her appreciation for Glendon for having inspired in both her and Wybrow a

passion for Canada's women's movement.

"It's this tiny place," says Blakely, "and it's pretty amazing that we both ended up discovering women's studies and then each other." Wybrow, who did social work, led the way.

In 1985, she established the Assaulted Women's Helpline in Toronto, and then, in 1991, helped launch CWF, a national non-profit organization helping women and girls. She stayed with the organization 22 years, taking early retirement in 2014. Under her guidance, CWF granted \$35 million to 1,300 community programs across the country, and attracted 9,000 donors.

"I loved it very much – it was a very entrepreneurial, innovative, exciting time," Wybrow says. "The idea of women helping other women, and money coming only from private sources to fund work, was very appealing to me."

Blakely, in her position as CWF board co-chair, hopes to build on that legacy of promoting power and equality among women.

"Being a public sociologist, for me, is about bridging my work in the community with my scholarship in the academy," she says, "and feeling like I can affect change in both areas." ●



Kristin Blakely



Beverley Wybrow

Yesterday and Today, Olé!

A new book sheds light on how immigration supports multiculturalism

BY DEIRDRE KELLY

TO GAIN A BETTER understanding of immigration, national identity and multiculturalism in one of the most important receiving societies in the Americas, York University grad Benjamin Bryce (MA '08, PhD '13) recently published *To Belong in Buenos Aires* (Stanford University Press), which looks at German migration to Argentina from Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The 248-page book highlights the importance of children and ideas about belonging in driving the formation of immigrant communities.

"The ethnic institutions that made communities, and that maintained cultural difference in Buenos Aires over a long period of time, paradoxically worked to integrate immigrants into Argentine society," says Bryce, whose interest in the topic was sparked by a York graduate exchange to the Freie Universität in Berlin, which he took as a master's student in 2008.

Today an assistant professor of history at

the University of Northern British Columbia, Bryce wrote the book for other scholars and academic researchers, but believes the subject matter would appeal to anyone interested in any discussion about immigration to Latin America, or global multiculturalism in general.

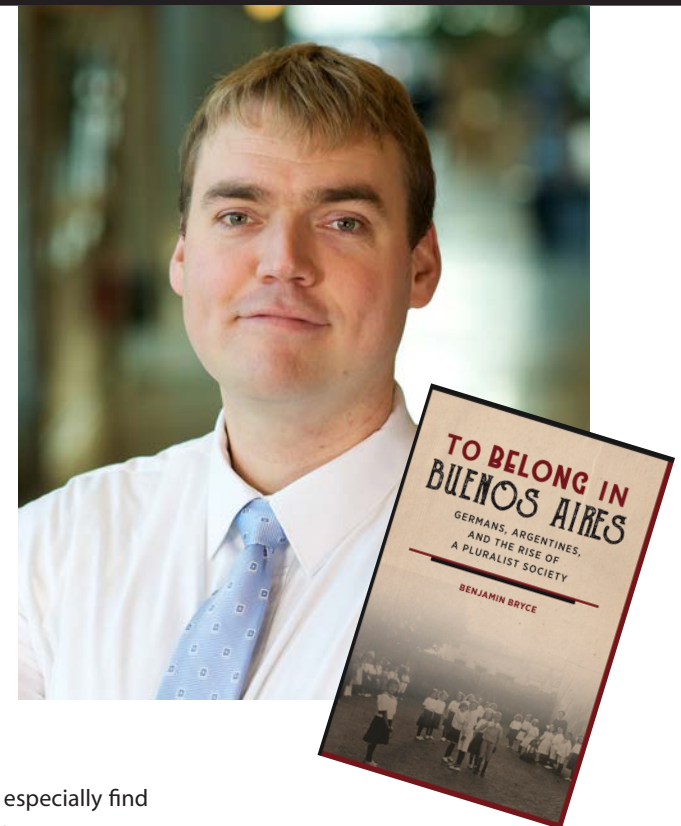
Canadians, he says, would especially find the subject matter relevant.

"Argentina attracted more immigrants than Canada between the 1860s and the 1960s. I think a lot can be learned about past examples of multicultural societies in forming our own. Discussions about the dangers or problems of immigration that one found in Argentina a hundred years ago are similar to those that one finds in North America and Europe today."

Once upon a time, the Argentine people dreaded the influx of German and other immigrants, regarding the newcomers

as culturally different. Slowly, and over time, the groups meshed and merged to form a vibrant pluralistic society. Hatred of the other was clearly misplaced.

By highlighting the importance of children and ideas about belonging in driving the formation of immigrant communities, Bryce provides plenty more historical examples to show "how things played out can help placate fears about cultural difference." ●



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Classes

1973

SZUBERT WILSON, MONICA
(BA Hons. Glendon)
Since retiring from her 34-year

teaching career, Monica spent nine years working part-time for Theatre Collingwood and volunteering for another local community theatre company, trying her hand at acting



BALCOMBE, JONATHAN (BSc Hons. '83 Bethune)

After York University, Jonathan moved to the U.S. where he obtained a PhD in biology in 1991. He went on to author four books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *What a Fish Knows* (2016), translated into 10 foreign language editions. A founding editor of the open-access journal *Animal Sentience*, he has recently been teaching a course on animal sentience for the interdisciplinary Viridis Graduate Institute in Ojai, Calif. This year, he returns to Canada after a 31-year absence to continue work on a new book.

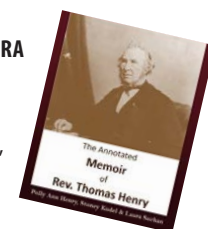
and scene-writing. Presently, she is executive producer of Gaslight Community Theatre Productions in Collingwood, Ont., her home for more than 40 years.

1974

FREEMAN, SHELLEY
(BA Hons. Vanier)
With her husband, **ROD MACDONALD** (BA '69, LLB Osgoode '72), Shelley relocated to Montreal in 1979, where she obtained her MSW from McGill University and began a 32-year career as a community social worker in psychogeriatrics. In 1999, she obtained a BFA from Concordia University. Today, she is an artist with paintings exhibited at galleries in Quebec, including the Gallery at Victoria Hall in Westmount, the Centre des Arts de Dollard and, as of this year, the Maison de la culture Villebon in Beloeil.

1975

KUDEL, STONEY
(BA McLaughlin)
A full-time professor at George Brown College in Toronto, Stoney recently published *The Annotated Memoir of Rev. Thomas Henry*, a book using newspapers, photographs, letters and other archival sources to bring context to the *Memoir of Rev. Thomas Henry: Christian Minister, York Pioneer, And Soldier Of 1812*, originally published in 1880. He collaborated with fellow York grad **LAURA SUCHAN** (MA '00), executive director of the Oshawa Museum,



on the project whose followup will be an annotated version of Rev. Thomas Henry's letters.

1976

JAMES, DORSEY
(BFA, BEd Bethune)
Since retiring from his position as a teacher at Markham District High School for 25 years, Dorsey is regularly invited back to schools and art camps to share his experience as an accomplished carver and sculptor of wood. His preferred subject matter is the gods, goddesses, wizards and witches of ancient folklore and mythology, examples of which can be found in Ontario parks. Recently, he travelled to Switzerland to complete a sculpture project for an accomplished former ballerina.

1984



MILLER, LESLIE
(PhD)
Leslie taught Sociology of Gender Relations in the nursing program at the University of Calgary's campus in Doha, Qatar. Now retired, she regularly returns to the Middle East as a tourist.

1988

MCMILLAN, SUSAN
(BAS, MBA)
As the territorial commander of the Salvation Army – Canada and Bermuda, Susan leads a faith-based charity with \$700 million in annual revenue and over 700 programs, including churches, long-term care facilities, shelters, addiction and rehabilitation centres, thrift stores, a hospital and a university college. In December, she was named a fellow of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, one of only 69 professional accountants to receive the honour.

1989

KIRK, HEATHER
(MA)
A Canadian author and retired college teacher, Heather recently published her seventh book, *Seeking Peace: The Quakers* (Borealis Press). Illustrated with almost 100 images, the book explores one of the longest and most influential non-violent resistance movements in



history. She has also written books on Canadian novelist Mazo de la Roche, author of the Jalna series.

1991

ZAFAR, MOHAMED S.
(BA Atkinson)
After graduating from York University,

Mohamed pursued further education abroad in the U.K. and Trinidad and Tobago before completing an internship at the Attorney General Chambers in Guyana. A criminal defence lawyer, his main areas of practice are family law, civil litigation, and criminal and estates. In September, he joined the Ontario Bar as a barrister and solicitor.

1992

SIDDIQI, NAEEM
(MBA)
With more than 20 years of experience in credit risk management, Naeem has played a key role in developing SAS Credit Scoring. He continues to provide worldwide support for the initiative. His second book, *Intelligent Credit Scoring: Building and Implementing Better Credit Risk Scorecards, 2nd Edition* (Wiley), came out last January. It is the followup to *Credit Risk Scorecards*, first published in 2005.

1993



KLEIN, ALEXIS
(BA Hons. Glendon)
Since graduation, Alexis has been employed in the investment and banking industry as a chartered investment manager. In 2016, he launched the first-of-its-kind LGBT Corporate Canadian Index. The Canadian stocks included in the index are those deemed to be promoting diversity by embracing lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender individuals as well as diversity and inclusion.

2012

MORGAN, ALTHEA
(BA)
Althea is featured in the 2016 book by Farrah Hodgson, *Confessions of a Single Mother: The Struggle is Real* (Thompson & Co), a compilation of firsthand accounts by 14 women from diverse backgrounds. Her contribution is the chapter entitled "How Dare You Chase Your Dreams," in which she shares how she graduated from York University as a single mother of three children, who



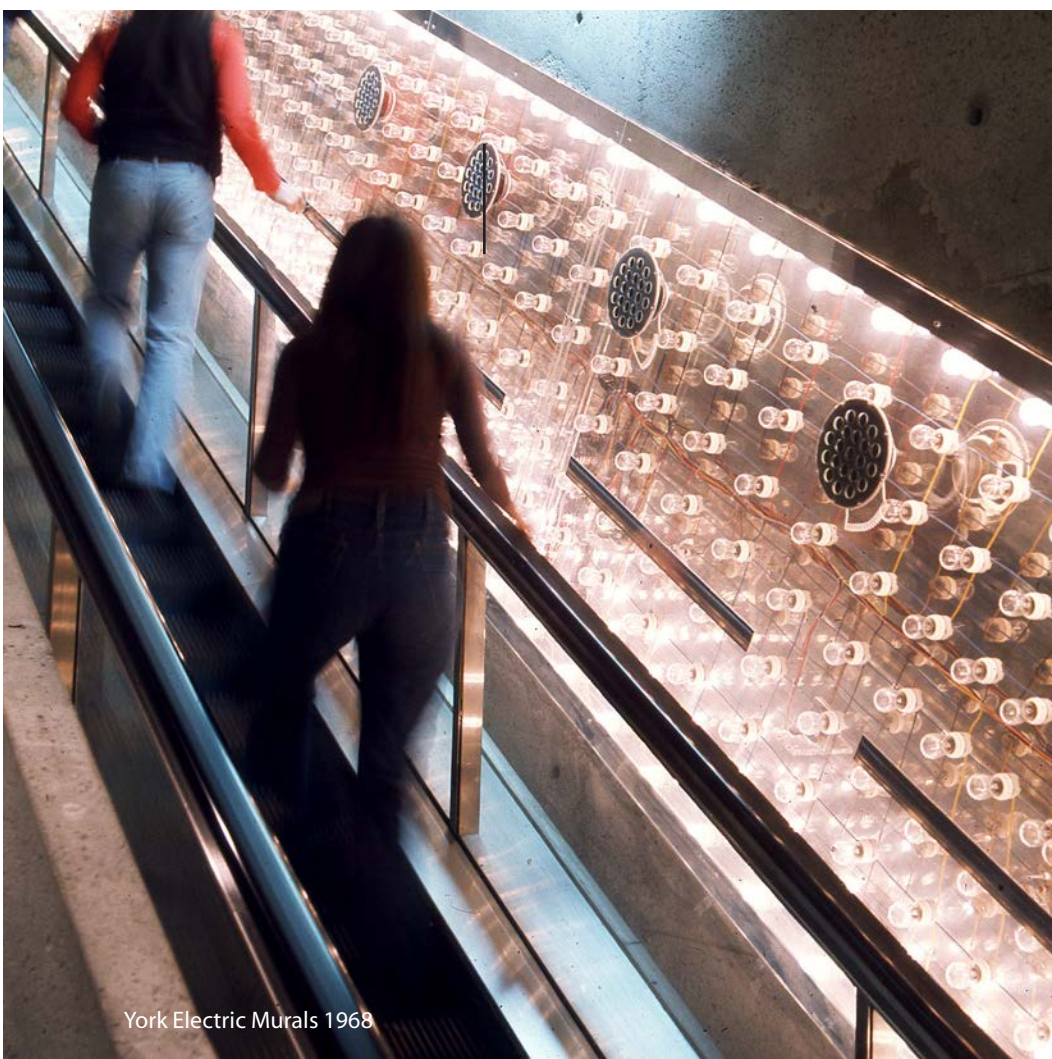
APPLEBAUM, MINDY (MBA '12 Schulich)

Soon after graduation, Mindy launched Luxury Move Management, a specialty moving business servicing home, commercial and institutional spaces. It is headquartered in Vaughan, Ont.

then went on to complete a law degree and a master of laws in California.

2013

CHEN, LISA
(BA Hons.)
After York, Lisa went on to complete a master of library and information science at Western University, graduating in 2015. Since 2016, she has been an intranet support specialist at Volaris Group, the venture capital arm of Constellation Software specializing in startups and early-stage companies. She uses technology to help clients with their business needs.



York Electric Murals 1968



Installation



Hayden at control board



Flashback

AS YORKDALE STATION GETS READY to throw the switch on a resurrected rainbow light sculpture that hasn't dazzled the public since its removal from the Toronto subway in the mid-1990s, attention is once more drawn to its creator, Vancouver-born light artist Michael Hayden, and the other pieces he has designed with a mind to brightening everyday lives. Among them is *York Electric Murals*, an interactive light and sound sculpture that the 75-year old Canadian avant-gardist and longtime resident of California produced for the Scott Library at York University in 1968, returning to it for inspiration when making *Arc en Ciel* at Yorkdale a decade later. Groundbreaking for its time, but long since dormant, *York Electric Murals* consisted of incandescent light bulbs, programming systems and an original score by Canadian composer John Mills-Cockell, Hayden's ongoing collaborator in the Intersystems multimedia performance group. It beamed to life when passengers on the library escalator touched the sculpture at any point during their ride, activating the sound and light displays. Students and faculty alike bathed in a sensory glow meant to charge people's batteries without them even knowing it. "I felt that students are overloaded with information and I wanted something that could be deciphered simply. It was a bold gesture," says Hayden, who hopes the University will follow the Toronto Transit Commission's lead in reigniting his original creation. "York gave me an opportunity to try out a new idea. I was in the right place at the right time." ●

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