

Benenson Awards in the Arts: 2016 Awardees

The Edward H. Benenson Awards in the Arts are given annually to undergraduate students to broaden their educational and professional perspectives in the arts. The awards are made on a competitive basis

for the most outstanding project proposals and are determined by a committee of distinguished faculty representing all areas of the visual and performing arts. There were 20 award winners in 2016.

Kari Barclay (2016)

"Encuentro 2016: Dissidence, Sovereignities, Performance"

Kari Barclay participated in the Hemispheric Institute's conference, "Encuentro: Dissidence, Sovereignities, Performance" in Santiago, Chile. Attending live performances, workshops, lectures, and round tables, she learned about political theater in the Americas and met other scholars, artists, and activists in the field.

Cullen Burling (2016)

"Devised Training with Pig Iron"

Cullen Burling attended the Pig Iron three-week intensive summer workshop of 2016 in Philadelphia. The workshop aims to help each participant find their artistic voice through teaching the neutral mask, character mask, and clown.

Maurice Dowell (2016)

"Summer 2016, American Dance Festival, Nederlands Dans Theater Summer"

This summer Maurice Dowell attended the American Dance Festival's Six Week Summer Intensive on scholarship as a staff assistant, and also attended Nederlands Dans Theater's Two Week Summer Intensive following ADF. Maurice had the chance to train in myriad styles of dance, taking class from modern dance legends as well as see world-renowned companies perform every week.

Zachary Fowler (2016)

"Beyond Photovoice: Girls' empowerment through journalistic opportunities"

Zachary Fowler worked with the WISER school in Muhuru Bay, Kenya, home to 120 young women attempting to become the first in their families to finish high school. The project was designed to create an opportunity for the WISER Girls to tell their own stories through a new initiative in the journalistic arts. By the end of the project, WISER Girls completed an Op-Ed workshop, wrote their own Op-Eds about their experiences in their community, and staged their pieces in an exhibition on campus and online.

Catherine Goodwin (2016)

"Bread and Puppet Four-Week Summer Apprenticeship"

Catherine Goodwin participated in the Bread and Puppet summer apprenticeship, a four-week experience in communal living and artistic experimentation. In addition to creating puppet and circus performances, apprentices work on the communal farm. The purpose of the apprenticeship is to bring together artists from all backgrounds, skill sets, and experience levels to create and work together.

Carl Heinz (2016)

"Digital Ecosystem: South America"

Carl Heinz created a Digital Ecosystem that investigates the relationship between the flora & fauna and industries of South America, documenting individual species (flora, fauna, street signs, advertisements, vines, wires etc.) as well as contact zones where nature and human civilization co-exist. The goal of this project was to create a world where the "natural" and "man-made" worlds are seen as one.

Stephanie Joe (2016)**“Multidisciplinary Immersion in 21st Century Ballet as a Dancer, Choreographer, & Scholar”**

Stephanie Joe developed an intensive in which she attended the Society for Dance History Scholars (SDHS) Special Topics Conference “Contemporary Ballet: Exchanges, Connections, and Directions” at New York University and Columbia University; saw and analyzed several live performances by leading ballet companies; and participated in advanced/professional level ballet classes in contemporary and modern art schools.

Isabella Kwai (2016)**“Story-telling and the art of identity in forced migration”**

Isabella Kwai used the Benenson Award to delve into the refugee discourse in Berlin, where many of resettlement shelters have emerged, and write a collection of short stories and articles centered around the cultural experience of both refugees and German citizens in this tumultuous time. Isabella partnered with organizations like Flüchtlingsrat Berlin (Refugee Council Berlin) to gain access to resettled refugees, and conduct interviews with both refugees and German citizens.

Jenny Li (2016)**“Going Back to My Roots: Engaging a Rural Chinese Community in the Art of Musical Performance”**

Jenny Li’s project involved bringing a series of musical performances into a rural Chinese village and involving community members in the preparation process, while advocating for the creation of more opportunities to support individuals (particularly young people) in the village with an interest in the musical arts. She also produced a documentary film to serve as documentation for the project and provide an ethnographic exploration into the role of music in rural China.

Rayner Liu (2016)**“Training in West Coast Hip Hop Dance Foundations”**

Rayner Liu used the Benenson Award to pursue training in foundations of various hip hop and funk dance styles, with the goal of using hip hop to advance international diplomacy and global social justice. His stylistic focus is on isolations, street jazz, locking, grooving, waacking, voguing, and house with regional bases in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Abhi Shah (2016)**“The short film would be called ‘Patola.’”**

Abhi Shah made a film on the art behind the patola, a traditional dress made only in Patan, a city in western India. Today, only a few families in Patan still weave the historical patola. In documenting the remaining families, Abhi grew from applying his filmmaking abilities in documenting a dying tradition and through the challenge of addressing the social and economic factors fueling the art’s decline.

Jaewook Shin (2016)

Music as Medicine – Bringing Music to Residents at Durham Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

Jaewook Shin’s project utilized recorded and live music to promote well-being of residents at Durham Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (DNRC). The goal of the project was to improve residents’ physical and mental health as well as in their interaction with family members, nursing staff, and volunteers.

Madison Spahn (2016)**“Chicago Summer Opera and Miami Music Festival”**

Madison Spahn participated in the Chicago Summer Opera and Miami Music Festival, which are top-tier training programs for aspiring classical singers. They offer the opportunity to intensively study role preparation, diction, movement, audition technique, and more with world-renowned faculty.

Harmony Zhang (2016)**“Training at the Stella Adler Summer Conservatory in New York City”**

Harmony Zhang attended The Stella Adler Studio of Acting’s Summer Conservatory from June 6th to August 12th, 2016 in New York City, in preparation for graduate school for an MFA in Acting. This training strengthened her foundational acting skills and propelled her future artistic endeavors.

Zhen Zhang (2016)**“Letting Go”**

Zhen Zhang pursued a photography project titled "Letting Go" to document the local Buddhist culture and explore the “letting go” Buddhism philosophy in Bhutan, the most isolated country in the world. As he intends to not only document this Buddhism philosophy but also instill it into his photographing techniques, he wants to inform his audience through his project to live in the moment and let go.

Andrew Tan-Delli Cicchi (2017)**“Documenting Teen Fatherhood and Masculine Narratives in New Zealand”**

Using visual, audio and written mediums, Andrew Tan-Delli Cicchi created a multimedia documentary on the experience of teen fathers in New Zealand. The documentary looked into exploration into local masculine youth cultures through the lens of young fatherhood, and the manner in which this culture instructs flawed ideas of gender and sexuality. The purpose of this project is to expand cultural narratives of masculinity to be more inclusive.

Alex Bressler (2018)**“Through the Looking Glass: A Stained Glass Project on Queerness in Rural and Agricultural Settings”**

This project portrays the experiences of queer farmworkers in agricultural spaces through stained glass using Alex’s own experience as a queer student intern at the Duke Campus Farm and interviews at queer-focused farms in the US. These pieces illuminate the experiences of a specific queer community while critically analyzing structures of marginalization surrounding the rural and queer intersection.

Sophia Caplin (2018)**“Voice Training at the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute”**

Sophia Caplin studied Baroque technique and performance at the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute. This opportunity included training with the institute’s internationally renowned faculty as well as performance in master classes and ensembles with period instruments.

Caroline Fernelius (2018)**“Revising, Re-envisioning: The Evolution of Sound and Meaning in Wallace Stevens’ Poetry”**

By examining archival collections of the late American modernist poet Wallace Stevens, Caroline Fernelius aimed to develop an operative understanding of the writer’s revising practices, particularly with attention to the evolution of sound and meaning. She applied this critical work to her own creative production of a folio of several original poems, seeking to understand the nature of a changing poetic imagination over time.

Nancy Merlin (2018)**“Summer Intensive at Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theater”**

Nancy Merlin attended a three-week physical theater intensive at Dell’Arte International. Attending this intensive was instrumental in helping her develop movement technique for the stage. Nancy also hopes to culminate her time at Duke by devising a cabaret-style showcase of the history of comedy, and will draw heavily on commedia dell’arte.