

2010 Awardees – Benenson Awards in the Arts

The Edward H. Benenson Awards in the Arts are given annually to undergraduate students to broaden their educational and professional objectives 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 are fifteen award winners this year.

Michael Bergen, a theater major and 2010 graduate, received a Benenson Award to participate in a summer conservatory program with the Michael Howard Studios, a professional acting studio for theater, film, and television in New York City. The six-week program is an intensive immersion program, with classes on “scene study, movement, voice, camera, Shakespeare, acting techniques, clown, improvisation, and the business of acting.” Michael has performed in 13 Duke productions and has also appeared in a professional production in Texas and a semi-professional production in Durham.

Junior Marissa Bergmann, a visual arts major, is the recipient of a Benenson Award to allow her to return to Florence, Italy, where she studied in fall 2009, to attend a non-credit summer study program at the Studio Arts Center International (SACI) in Florence, Italy, to work closely with Romeo di Loreto, professor of photography, in an advanced darkroom setting.

Graduating senior Michael Blake, a history major, received a Benenson Award to return to Cape Town, South Africa in summer 2010 to continue to work with the District Six Museum, where he interned for two previous summers. He will assist museum staff during the World Cup school break to execute and facilitate week-long youth workshops, including oral history seminars, digital story-telling and poetry workshops, documentary photography lessons, and a small scale film festival.

Graduating senior Ben Cohen received a Benenson Award to help prepare for a collaboration with Duke football coach David Cutcliffe on his first book, a memoir. Ben will use part of his award to attend the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference, a three-day conference in Dallas, Texas devoted to discussions of memoir, craft and storytelling; he will also use his award to “approach and meet” several other narrative nonfiction writers, including J.R. Moehringer, Sally Jenkins, Tom Verducci, John Feinstein, and possibly others.

With Benenson support, graduating senior Kathryn Hampton will attend the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program at the Arena Stage, in Washington, D.C., a 40-week program designed to give recent college graduates hands-on experience in theater management, fundraising, audience development, and marketing, among other areas.

John Harpham, a graduating senior with majors in political science and French, received a Benenson Award to travel to Paris for three weeks in June 2010, during the World Cup, to write a piece of long-form journalism on the culture of French soccer through the lens of a local bar, Le Village, and on Le Village through the lens of soccer. Upon his return, he plans to complete his article and submit it to *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*.

Supported by a Benenson Award, graduating senior theater studies major Kana Hatakeyama will spend five weeks in summer 2010 at the American Conservatory Theater's Summer Training Congress, in San Francisco, CA, taking core skill classes in acting, text, speech and voice, movement, improvisation, clowning, combat workshop and audition technique, taught by A.C.T.'s core acting company, conservatory faculty, and distinguished guest artists. The program culminates in a performance project in Hastings Studio Theater. Kana has acted in, as well as produced and directed, several plays at Duke.

Carmen Hernandez, a junior visual arts major, received a Benenson Award to create a video, using stop motion animation and digital printouts, to describe the journey of a graffiti character on a subway wall to the surface world and the "contrasting realities that it faces" when it reaches that place. She plans to carry out the project in the New York City or Los Angeles subway.

Graduating senior Mary Ashton Inglis, a music major, will use her Benenson Award for two activities. First, she will attend the Old Time Music and Dance Week at Warren Wilson College, one of seven week-long workshops of the Swannanoa Gathering, dedicated to preserving Appalachian folk art traditions; she will take classes in old-time fiddle with one of two master musicians recommended by her current fiddle teacher. Mary Ashton will also use her award to study for six months with Sheila Browne, from the UNC School of the Arts, whom she describes as "one of the foremost American violists," to allow her to be prepared technically and musically for graduate school auditions at conservatories in winter 2011.

Kevin Lincoln, a junior English major, will work on a novel this summer for his graduation with distinction program in Creative Writing. While he plans to complete a substantial part of the novel this summer, he also has applied to several unpaid book publishing, literary magazine publishing and magazine journalism internships this summer. He will use his Benenson Award to defray his housing costs in New York City. He writes, "As an aspiring writer, I'm attempting to break into these fields because they provide either the opportunity for me to work on my writing, or the chance to work in the domain of literary fiction, which is what I hope to write." Kevin hopes to work in an internship during the day and write in the evenings and weekends. He plans to apply to MFA programs in Creative Writing after graduation.

Graduating senior Anna Mazhirov will use her Benenson Award to purchase a camera and to pay for living expenses in Brighton Beach this summer to work on *The New Brighton Beach Memoirs*, a two-part project on the current immigrants from the former Soviet Union living there. She plans to write a collection of short stories as well as a nonfiction documentary piece, supplemented with photography and audio recordings, to be submitted for publication in a literary magazine. Anna was born in Odessa, Ukraine, speaks Russian and Ukrainian, and growing up in Brooklyn, she often visited Brighton Beach. After graduation she plans to intern at a literary magazine or teach English abroad for a year and then apply to MFA programs.

This summer, Tatianna Mott, a graduating theater major, will use her Benenson Award to participate in a summer conservatory program with the Michael Howard Studios, a professional acting studio for theater, film, and television in New York City. The six-week program is an intensive immersion program, with classes on "scene study, movement, voice, camera, Shakespeare, acting techniques, clown, improvisation, and the business of acting." Tatianna

decided to pursue a career in the arts in her junior year; while at Duke, she has been active in an a cappella ensemble, several dance groups, a gospel choir, and five Duke theater productions.

Danya Taymor, a graduating theater major, received a Benenson Award to accompany Theater Studies faculty member Jody McAuliffe on a ten-day, two city trip, to research and film various aspects of Nigerian immigrant life for the fall 2010 production of one of Nobel Prize-winning Nigerian author Wole Soyinka's plays at Duke, which McAuliffe will direct. Danya will travel with McAuliffe and a local filmmaker to both Toronto and Detroit, two cities that have large Nigerian immigrant populations, to research and film for the production. She plans a career in directing and has already directed four full-length plays at Duke.

Ali Yagin, a sophomore double major in political science and theater studies, will use her Benenson Award to attend Odin Week Festival, in Holstebro, Denmark; the Festival is a nine day program conducted in English, introducing the Odin Teatret's working techniques to the participants. Odin Teatret is a theater laboratory founded in Denmark by Eugenio Barba, who relies heavily on movement-based theater and barter of theater-i.e. an exchange of techniques from different cultures. Throughout the program, the participants will be trained like Odin's artists, and will be exposed to previous works by the theater, films, and lectures; the program also includes a meeting with Eugenio Barba. Ali has been involved as an actor, producer and director in nine Duke productions and currently heads the student-run theater group *Wendell*.

Graduating senior Eric Zhou received a Benenson Award to continue to explore the topic of his senior honors thesis project in the Music Department, entitled *The Red Violin: Contextualizing Music in the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, which explored the effects of the Cultural Revolution on music in China through various types of media, including scholarly articles, performance recordings, books, interviews, and personal anecdotes. Zhou proposes to use his award to work with Chinese musician and scholar Xiang Ze Pei. A well-known violinist who was sent to a labor camp during the Cultural Revolution, Xiang is the former Concertmaster of the Beijing Philharmonic, the former Associate Concertmaster of the Beijing Central Opera, and was honored by the Chinese Government with the highest award available to a Chinese musician. Zhou will take biweekly lessons from Xiang in technique and musicality in both Chinese and Western classical music, will participate in master classes in Beijing and orchestral opportunities, and will also construct a multimedia collage that "depicts Professor Xiang's personal journal as both a musician and a human being through the Cultural Revolution." Zhou will return to Duke in December 2010 to present his research in a lecture-style performance through the Rare Music series sponsored by Perkins Library and the Music Department.