

FALL 2021

ST. OLAF

M A G A Z I N E



ON THE COVER

Juliana Goldman '21 photographed Roy's Peak in Wanaka, New Zealand, at sunrise after an 11-mile hike that began at 3 a.m. Juliana studied at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, in the spring of 2020.

ST. OLAF MAGAZINE

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SPIRE

Anna Leikvold '21
Oregon Extension
Lassen Volcanic National Park
Mineral, California

While backpacking, our group came across this majestic dead tree that stood tall over the rocky landscape.



ST. OLAF

M A G A Z I N E

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Professor Emeritus of Art A. Malcolm "Mac" Gimse, sculptor, poet, photographer, educator. BY CAROLE LEIGH ENGBLOM

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Each year, St. Olaf College recognizes alumni whose service and leadership exemplify the ideals and mission of the college. In honoring these graduates for their exceptional achievements and professional contributions, they become an integral part of college history and a testament to St. Olaf's tradition of excellence.

2020 Alumni Award recipients: Utit Choomuang '75, Amanda Cox '01, Branden Moriarity '07, Nicholas Epley '96, and Michael Solhaug '67; 2021 Alumni Award recipients: Jason DeRose '97, Kristen Rosdahl Ehresmann '84, Tony Miller '89, and David Rose '89.

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"If [1920s silent screen heartthrob] Rudolph Valentino was anything like the impersonation that Anthony Dexter gave of him, no wonder every woman was mad about him! He sizzled, he smoked, he was romance!" (*Photoplay*, 1951). BY JEFF SAUVE



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Greetings Oles, and welcome to the Fall 2021 edition of *St. Olaf Magazine*.

The theme that runs through this issue of the magazine is transition: transitions that are personal and professional; transitions at the college and in the St. Olaf community; seasonal transitions that usher in favorite traditions; emotional transitions, some that feel good and others that require us to adapt to new realities.

Generations of Oles have treasured the music created by St. Olaf music ensembles. From early radio broadcasts to vinyl records to CDs and DVDs, St. Olaf Records has delivered music to audiences through every popular medium. And now, traditional concerts and recordings by our music ensembles are transitioning to include digital and streaming platforms, widening the reach of St. Olaf music.

In early 2020, St. Olaf students studying abroad were suddenly recalled to the United States as COVID-19 took hold in countries affected by the first waves of the pandemic. Through their photography, they captured a world impacted by a rapidly changing global situation, a world in transition. Their haunting images can be seen in the 38th annual Gimse International and Off-Campus Photo Contest, featured in this issue.

St. Olaf Professor Emeritus of Art Mac Gimse '58, for whom the photo contest is named, embraces change through his unique blend of sculpture and poetry, which strives to capture the ultimate goodness of humankind. Now in his 80s, Mac tirelessly continues to create, firm in his belief that art provides a unique vehicle to “foster a transformation of values in oneself.”

Upon leaving the Hill, Oles Natalie Warren '11 and Ann Raiho '11 set out to complete a 2,000-mile expedition by canoe from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay, a grueling adventure filled with daily changes and challenges. Natalie and Ann hold the distinction of being the first women to do so.

In 1953, St. Olaf presented its first Distinguished Alumni Awards to Oles from the Classes of 1894, 1908, 1915, 1918, 1923, and 1925 who exemplified the ideals and mission of the college. This fall, nine alumni were recognized with Alumni Achievement Awards, underscoring the continuing leadership, service, and professional accomplishments of Oles in the 21st century.

When Steven Amundson became the conductor of the St. Olaf Orchestra in 1981, he had no idea he'd spend his entire career shaping the ensemble into one of the nation's premier collegiate orchestras. And yet, “My St. Olaf journey has ultimately been more about the people than the music,” says Steve, who is retiring after 40 years at St. Olaf. During this time of transition, he will continue to conduct the orchestra throughout the 2021–22 academic year.

I, too, am transitioning into a new chapter of my life. After more than 22 years and closing in on 65 issues of *St. Olaf Magazine*, I'm retiring as editor of this award-winning publication and leaving it in the very capable hands of my longtime colleague Kari VanDerVeen. This is my final magazine for St. Olaf, and I'm as proud of this issue as I was of my first issue in 1999. Eighty-five years ago, the inaugural *St. Olaf Magazine* — then called the *St. Olaf College Bulletin* — was published. The editors wrote in their first letter to Oles, “Nothing is more salutary in life than the knowledge that he or she is an essential part of something bigger and finer than him or herself.” I like that, don't you?

It's been a privilege to tell the stories of our exceptional alumni, students, faculty, and programs that speak to St. Olaf's tradition of excellence — and to share memories of bygone days on the Hill, to find the fun and reveal what is unique about the college and its people. However, I haven't done this alone. A magazine is only as good as its creative team, and *St. Olaf Magazine* has a core group of freelancers who deserve a shout-out for their excellence. These include Art Director and Designer Don Bratland '87, Photographer Tom Roster, Copy Editor Laura Hamilton Waxman, and some of the most talented writers in the Twin Cities: Erin Peterson, Marla Hill Holt '88, Joel Hoekstra '92, Jeff Sauve, Greg Breining, Suzy Frisch, Lynette Lamb P'22, and Andy Steiner. *St. Olaf Magazine* is further enhanced every year by the contributions of our student writers and photographers, many of whom have gone on to professional careers in journalism, publishing, and marketing, and by the outstanding contributions of my colleagues in Marketing and Communications. St. Olaf College, its far-reaching community, my colleagues — and you — have been a gift.

Fram! Fram!



UM! YAH! YAH!

ST. OLAF RECORDS GOES DIGITAL

By Connor Boritzke Smith

From radio broadcasts and vinyl records to tape decks and compact discs, St. Olaf Records has delivered the recordings of St. Olaf College's music ensembles to audiences through every popular medium. That tradition continues as St. Olaf Records has entered a formal partnership with Naxos Music Group to become one of the company's distributed labels.

Not only will Naxos handle the distribution of physical products (CDs, vinyl LPs, and DVDs), but more critically, it also will assist in the digital distribution of St. Olaf Records' discography of nearly 100 recorded titles to digital service providers that include Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, Amazon Music, YouTube, and many more.

To date, more than 65 titles from the St. Olaf Records back catalog have been fully distributed to digital and streaming platforms, featuring recordings by nine ensembles, including the St. Olaf Band, St. Olaf Choir, and St. Olaf Orchestra. Additionally, titles from the back catalog are still forthcoming, the bulk of which are recordings of the annual St. Olaf Christmas Festival.

"In order to reach current and new audiences, it was imperative for us to get our music to where people consume music most: streaming," says Jean Parish '88, director of College Relations for Music Organizations. "The flexibility of the digital distribution model will enable us to curate new releases composed of both previously performed and new works, showcasing the highest level of artistry for which our ensembles are well known."

While select projects will be curated for distribution through St. Olaf Records, the extensive online archive of past and future concert streams produced by the college will continue to highlight the breadth of St. Olaf music ensembles, offering our audiences the continued ability to listen to everything we produce.

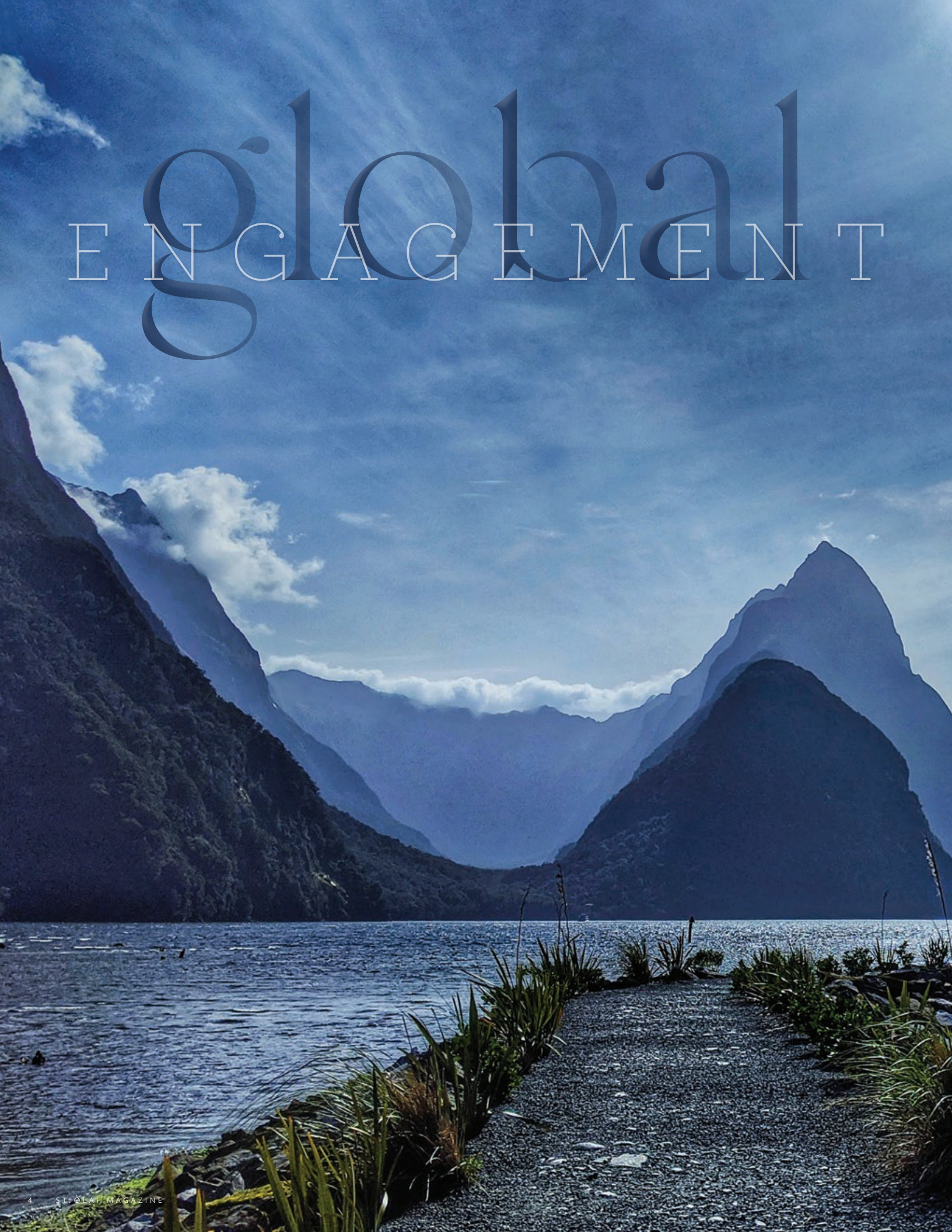
Planning is currently underway for new releases, and all listeners and fans of St. Olaf Music are invited to follow and subscribe to St. Olaf Records' artists on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, or wherever they consume music. 🦋

CONNOR BORITZKE SMITH is assistant director of St. Olaf Music Organizations.



"It was imperative for us to get our music to where people consume music most." — JEAN PARISH '88

global ENGAGEMENT






THE 38TH ANNUAL
Gimse International and
Off-Campus Studies
PHOTO CONTEST

MILFORD SOUND

Juliana Goldman '21 | University of Otago
Milford Sound · Fjordland, New Zealand

I went to Milford Sound the weekend before I flew home early due to COVID, and had the usually bustling tourist attraction completely to myself. It felt cinematic, to say the least.



IN EARLY 2020, due to the rapidly changing, unprecedented global situation surrounding COVID-19, 118 St. Olaf students who were participating in international and off-campus study programs at locations around the world were recalled to the United States. Students studying in countries affected by the early wave of COVID-19 outbreaks had already returned to campus. Most of the remaining students began the process of coming home, with International and Off-Campus Studies staff offering comprehensive virtual advising to each student. A few intrepid travelers completed their semesters abroad.

"It was a disappointing time for students who had saved and dreamed of international and off-campus study experiences, only to defer their plans due to health concerns and travel restrictions," notes Jodi Malmgren '92, director of International and Off-Campus Studies.

Although their programs were interrupted, these students, like so many Oles before them, took the time to document their experiences through photography and personal reflection. Many submitted their photography for the annual Gimse International and Off-Campus Studies Photo Contest, now in its 38th year. Eligibility to submit entries to the photo contest was expanded to include experiences by students taking St. Olaf courses remotely during the pandemic.

These haunting images were captured by students studying in Australia, Denmark, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand, and Spain, and in California and Minnesota.

THE RENOWNED RIDGELINE

Morgan Marxer '21 | University of Otago
Roy's Peak · Wanaka, New Zealand

*Ascending Roy's Peak was a difficult,
10-mile hike through the clouds.*



BACKPACKING

Anna Leikvold '21 | Oregon Extension
Lassen Volcanic National Park · Mineral, California

After our first segment at the Oregon Extension, we took a backpacking trip to Lassen National Park. We were completely isolated for most of the trip and were rewarded with stunning views at every turn.



QUARANTINE SUNRISE

Taylor Paulsen '21 | DIS Copenhagen
Staring Lake · Eden Prairie, Minnesota

After I was sent home from my study-abroad program in Copenhagen, I had to quarantine in my basement. My sister woke up at 5 a.m. to watch the sunrise with me, at a distance. It was a quiet, peaceful moment after the chaos of getting sent home.

TWELVE APOSTLES

Marcel Hones '21 | Environmental Science
in Australia and New Zealand
Port Campbell National Park · Victoria, Australia

*We stopped at the Twelve Apostles on our way
to Phillip Island and spent a mere snapshot of
time with these great pieces of earth before
moving along. Once there were twelve. We
only saw eight. The ocean hammers away
slowly and soon they will be no more.*



CALLING

Marcel Hones '21 | Environmental
Science in Australia and New Zealand
Phillip Island · Victoria, Australia

*The ocean was cold and harsh, the sea
lions called out, and we watched, quietly.*



FINDING A NEW PERSPECTIVE WITH THE OLD

Alexandra Smith '21 | CIEE Liberal Arts in Seville, Spain
Puente Nuevo · Ronda, Spain

This was taken after a hike down the mountain to catch a better view of the famous bridge in Ronda, El Puente Nuevo. I decided to take this iconic picture of the bridge with a twist by playing with the focus. I wanted it to be focused on the dandelion but still be able to make out the iconic bridge, allowing both the old and the new to coexist.





ATTENTION! | Yi Wynn Chan '22
Environmental Science in Australia
and New Zealand | Zealandia
EcoSanctuary · Wellington, New Zealand

A male lyrebird, with its huge tail fanned out, sings at the top of its lungs and dances to attract the attention of potential mates. Lyrebirds are infamous for their mimicry abilities. Catch them singing songs of other birds or mimicking a chainsaw — the sky's the limit for them (not really... they're ground-dwelling birds!)

TAKAHE — I'M STILL ALIVE! | Yi Wynn Chan '22
Environmental Science in Australia and New Zealand
Zealandia EcoSanctuary · Wellington, New Zealand

The South Island Takahe, New Zealand's bulky flightless bird, was thought to be extinct in the early 20th century. They were rediscovered in 1948 in an isolated valley in the Murchison Mountains, where they had retreated as a result of habitat loss.





**WHITE CAT IN
DOWNTOWN CAIRO**

Adele Raymer '22
American University in Cairo
Tahrir Square · Cairo, Egypt



MUSEUM RENOVATIONS

Adele Raymer '22 | American University in Cairo
Egyptian Museum, Tahrir Square · Cairo, Egypt
An unlabeled artifact is prepared to be moved to
the new Grand Egyptian Museum near Giza.



STAIRS IN GREECE

Emily Borkowski '21
DIS Copenhagen

An exquisite stairway alongside
a hilly road in Poros, Greece



ERES MI MEJOR AMIGA

Emily Borkowski '21 | DIS Copenhagen

Street art found in Valencia, Spain.
Eres Mi Mejor Amiga translates
to "You Are My Best Friend."

GOODNIGHT, COPENHAGEN

Taylor Paulsen '21 | DIS Copenhagen
Holmbladsgade · Copenhagen, Denmark

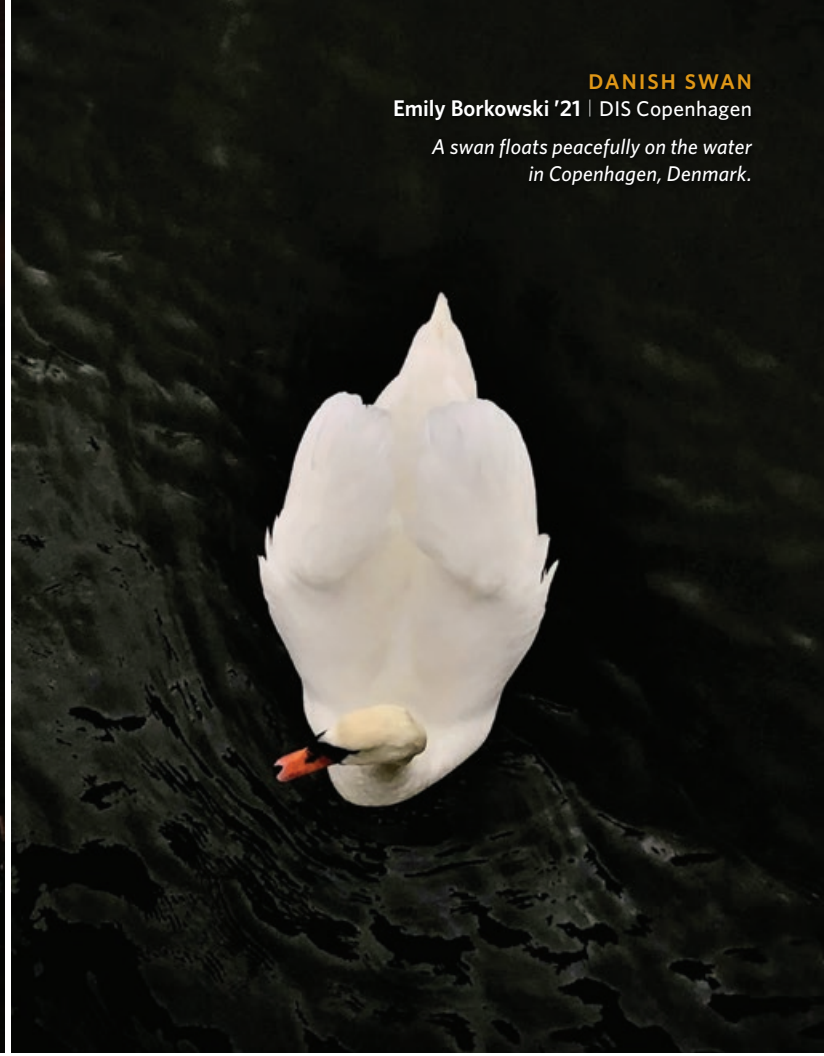
The sun sets behind my roommate as she does her homework by the warm glow of her lamp.



DANISH SWAN

Emily Borkowski '21 | DIS Copenhagen

A swan floats peacefully on the water in Copenhagen, Denmark.



THE LONELY WANAKA TREE

Grace LaNasa '21 | University of Otago
Lake Wanaka · Wanaka, New Zealand





SEEING DOUBLE / THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Alexandra Smith '21 | CIEE Liberal Arts in Seville, Spain
Las Setas ("The Mushroom") · Seville, Spain

The year 2020 was the year of seeing double. It started off as a year of reflection for me, and that's probably what started my passion for reflection photography. Although this picture was taken after it had rained, it was still like the calm before the storm, as it was the last day before Seville shut down due to COVID, a very bittersweet moment.



SEALY TARNS TRACK

Morgan Marxer '21 | University of Otago
Aoraki Mount Cook National Park · Canterbury, New Zealand

At this premier hiking destination on the South Island of New Zealand, pools of mirror-like water reflect the nearby Mount Sefton and Mount Cook. The challenging Sealy Tarns track consists of staircases rising 1,795 feet, a seven hour round-trip hike rewarding travelers with far-reaching views over Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and the Southern Alps.



TUNNEL BEACH

Grace LaNasa '21 | University of Otago
Tunnel Beach · Dunedin, New Zealand

*Sea-carved cliffs, arches, and caves
make this a unique part of Dunedin.*



TEARS ON THE DANUBE

Chloe Hanstra '21 | University College Dublin
Danube River · Budapest, Hungary

*Shoes along the Danube serve as a memorial
that honors the thousands of people who
were executed on the river's bank in WWII.
They were told to remove their shoes and
stand at the edge of the river, and
were shot so that their bodies
fell into the water.*



TOM ROSTER

“Here dwells the thinker and the scholar, the poet and the missionary, prophet and the reformer; all those who have a vision of a better world and have dedicated their abilities to its realization.”

— PROFESSOR CARL A. MELLBY, 1925

The words of Professor Carl A. Mellby, then considered St. Olaf’s foremost authority on the history of art, embodied the ideals of the college and its traditions. Nearly 100 years later, they embody the essence of Professor Emeritus of Art A. Malcolm “Mac” Gimse, a man of faith and grace whose dedication to St. Olaf and its mission, students, and alumni, and his deeply embedded global perspective, is reflected in his life’s vocation: sculpture, poetry, photography, and service.

As an Ole undergrad in the 1950s, Gimse was drawn to philosophy and Asian art, studying with early St. Olaf giants, including professors Harold Ditmanson in religion, Howard Hong ’34 in philosophy, and Arnold Flaten ’22 in art. He credits his wife of 60 years, Jackie, with sparking his early interest in art. Joining the St. Olaf art faculty in 1970, Gimse taught courses in sculpture and art history, including world architecture in China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia, and Africa. He built a bronze foundry at the college. He created art in his private studio and in his backyard. He was one of four founding faculty in the fine arts major, taught several rounds in the Great Conversation, and was a Paracollege tutor for more than 25 years. He was a National Endowment for the Humanities Visiting Scholar in the South Asian Institute at Columbia University in New York and in Chinese Art History at the University of Maryland. As a Joyce Foundation Scholar, Gimse conducted research on Indian temples, including six visits to the Taj Mahal.

A LIVING TREASURE | SCULPTOR, PHOTOGRAPHER,
POET, EDUCATOR, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ART

Mac Gimse ’58

By Carole Leigh Engblom

He and Jackie planned, led, and taught 35 International and Off-Campus Studies programs, including four Global Semesters, two Terms in Asia, and three Terms in the Middle East, and a dozen international Interims, including the *Visual Culture of Japan* Interim for the St. Olaf Band. They also led an additional 14 Alumni Study Travel programs. With cameras draped around his neck, Gimse chronicled their international travel through the art of photography, and he encouraged students to do the same. The International and Off-Campus Studies Photo Contest, begun by Study Abroad Adviser Helene MacCallum '73, became an annual event, and in 1983 it was named in honor of the Gimses.

“St. Olaf gave me my destiny as an artist and professor,” says Gimse, who received St. Olaf’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 2008. “It gave me the chance to fulfill my dream of teaching in a liberal arts curriculum set in theological dialogue, which was constantly inspired by many students and esteemed colleagues.”

Gimse’s work is a unique blend of sculpture and poetry that captures the ultimate goodness of humankind. His dedication to peace and human rights is manifested through many commissioned artworks in various forums, including the United Nations Human Rights Commission and, notably, bronze sculptures for 12 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, which have been presented at the Upper Midwest Nobel Peace Prize Forum. Gimse considers the sculptures cast for the Nobel Peace Prize Forum to be instrumental in the choices he’s made for his subsequent work, including the abstract sculpture *Angel of Mercy* honoring 2011 Nobel laureates Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, 24th president of Liberia and the first elected woman head of state in Africa; Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist; and Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist, politician, and human rights activist.

Gimse’s first commission to create sculpture/poetry presentations for the laureates came from St. Olaf in 1989, when the college hosted the inaugural Nobel Peace Prize Forum. The educational event, under the auspices of the Norwegian Nobel Institute and hosted annually by five ELCA Minnesota colleges on a rotating basis, aimed to bring students, faculty, and the public together with Nobel laureates, national and international leaders, scholars, and peacemakers to address issues of human rights and social justice, climate change, poverty, disease, and other ongoing challenges to humankind.

At the inaugural forum, Gimse’s commissioned artwork *Striving For Peace* was presented to Nobel laureates Norman Borlaug (1977) and the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1988), and his poetry recognized the work of nine additional laureates, including Lech Walesa, the International Red Cross, Andrei Sakharov, Elie Wiesel, and Mother Teresa. The 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Forum based its theme, “Striving for Peace: Roots of Change,” on the humanitarian accomplishments of its 2002 laureate, Jimmy Carter, 39th president of the United States. Gimse’s sculpture and poetry, *Roots and Wings*, was presented to Carter, to Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, and to educator Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core. Gimse’s later work honored the 2014 co-laureates, Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani activist for female education, and Indian social reformer Kailash Satyarthi.

Over the course of their 60-year marriage, Mac and Jackie Gimse have led dozens of St. Olaf study-abroad programs and are the namesakes of the Gimse International and Off-Campus Studies Photo Contest.

“My art is the window of my soul. My poetry is a door through which I invite people to join me in my search for goodness in humankind.”

TOM ROSTER





Striving For Peace (top left) was commissioned for the first Nobel Peace Prize Forum at St. Olaf College in 1989. *Roots and Wings* (top right) was cast for the 2004 Forum, and was presented to Jimmy Carter, 39th President of the U.S. and 2002 Nobel Peace laureate.

Bearing the Burden of Peace (above, shown from two sides) was commissioned for the third Nobel Peace Prize Forum at St. Olaf in 2000. Large bronze sculptures were given to David Trimble and John Hume, 1999 Nobel laureates from Ireland, and to the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway. Read Gimse's description of the work, and its accompanying poem, at stolaf.edu/art/mac-gimse/burden-of-peace-2000.

Gimse estimates he has created more than 2,000 bronze pieces over the years, and has carved stone, wood, and just about anything else he can find. Additionally, four of Gimse's poems have been set to music, two for the St. Olaf Choir and two for the St. Olaf Band. "My joy is in creating art and poetry, no matter where it goes from there," he says.

His sculptures have been exhibited in more than 120 galleries, colleges, and churches in the United States, as well as in 11 countries. His artwork can be seen at the Nobel Peace Prize Institute in Oslo, Norway, and in the Norwegian royal family collection. And it can be seen locally, in Northfield and in Dundas, where his stainless steel sculpture *Between Earth and Sky* stands beside the historic Archibald Mill at the trailhead of the Mill Towns State Trail.

Now in his 80s, Gimse tirelessly continues to create, firm in his belief that art provides a unique vehicle to "express depth and diversity in the human experience, challenge cultural perspectives, broaden our connection to others, and foster a transformation of values in oneself."

He most recently completed *On Horizon's Brim*, a visual interpretation of our "bending, colorful, and energetic universe." The stainless steel interactive sculpture is topped by a spinning double dove representing peace, love, and inclusivity. Years in the making, each element of the sculpture has underlying meaning and symbolism (see sidebar) that seeks to generate conversations and create common ground among every culture.

On Horizon's Brim may be Gimse's signature sculpture, incorporating themes he has explored through his early Peace Prize Forum sculptures. He continues to express through imagery and poetry the most pressing issues of our day, making each piece timely and relevant. At a time marked by fear of the unknown, coupled with inequity, racism, and social injustice, and then further compounded by the ever-growing threats of climate change, *On Horizon's Brim* symbolizes hope. It reaches out to those who "must speak out for their cause, gather comfort where there is unmitigated distress, and celebrate intercultural values in a world that must be more just and peaceful."

In the end, all Gimse can do is share with others, accepting or not, what is in his heart, what makes life worth living. "My art is the window of my soul," he says. "My poetry is a door through which I invite people to join me in my search for goodness in humankind." 🐦

CAROLE LEIGH ENGBLOM is the editor of *St. Olaf Magazine*.

The Symbolism of *On Horizon's Brim*

The 24-foot tall, stainless steel sculpture, topped by a 6-foot spinning *Double Dove of Peace and Love*, is comprised of three parts that work together to envision peace and reconciliation. Each part has underlying symbolism on a local and a global scale.

At the center is the *Color Column of Life*, with colors that represent a rainbow, a DNA double helix, and skin tones of humankind around the world. At the midpoint of the column is a globe, the *Sphere of Our Finite Journey*. The wheel at its base can be turned in either direction, one to watch the colors spiral into the globe, simultaneously up from the bottom and down from the top, which represents the geocentric vision of and human capacity for conservation of our planet's resources. When the column is spun in the other direction, both spirals emanate outward from the globe to symbolize our search for knowledge.

Surrounding the *Color Column of Life* are four "legs" of support, creating undulating waves and shapes to imply the movement of all elements. The legs have eight images cut into their bases: The blue panels have whale flukes and a breaching whale, representing an endangered species, as well as acknowledging all forms of life in, under, and around water. The yellow panels have a soaring eagle and a landing eagle, which represent a protected species along with all things capable of lifting off, natural and human-made. The green panels have trees with roots; one tree has leaves, the other is bare. These represent the endangered forests that absorb carbon dioxide and help to renew our source of oxygen, as well as provide habitat for animal life. The red panels have gender-reflexive humans stretching in all directions, resembling da Vinci's *Vitruvian Human* and declaring we are one human flesh. The *Double Dove of Peace and Love*, constructed of 3-inch stainless steel tubing cut in half to catch the wind, gives it a sense of movement day and night. From one direction, the Double Dove appears to be taking off with its beak down, and from the other direction to be landing with its beak up. It represents a kiss of peace for those who are reconciling issues in good faith through nonviolent civil discourse.

Mac Gimse stands beneath *On Horizon's Brim*. His hope is that the sculpture will be recognized as a symbol of peace and inclusivity.



FROM
THE



St. Olaf Orchestra Conductor Steven Amundson is retiring after 40 years of leading an extraordinary ensemble, leaving a legacy of passionate and generous music making that has been shared with all who have listened.

BY MARLA HILL HOLT '88



IN LOOKING BACK AT HIS ST. OLAF CAREER, Steven Amundson recalls that he initially wasn't interested in becoming conductor of the St. Olaf Orchestra, and it took two phone calls from St. Olaf to convince him to apply for the job in 1981. The first was from Charles Forsberg, then-chair of St. Olaf's Music Department and head of the search committee. The second was from President Harlan Foss, who gave Amundson the hard sell, detailing the merits of the college and its orchestra.

But Amundson, who had just won the coveted Hans Häring Prize for conducting at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, was newly employed as music director of the Tacoma (Washington) Youth Symphony. He planned to stay a while, so he politely declined to apply for the St. Olaf position.

"I didn't know enough about St. Olaf to realize how shortsighted that was, but I said I'd made a commitment to Tacoma and it was simply too soon to leave," he says.

But Foss persisted. He knew Amundson's parents lived nearby and told him if he applied and was asked to interview, he could also enjoy a visit with his family.

When Amundson eventually came to campus for a day of interviews, "I didn't know what to expect," he says. Late in the afternoon, he met with about 75 enthusiastic orchestra students, who packed into Christiansen Hall of Music's relatively small reception room. An hour later, he conducted those students in a rehearsal of Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 and Bernstein's *Overture to Candide*.

"My meeting with the students was a game changer. Their dreams for the orchestra were inspiring, and I was impressed with their intelligence, earnestness, and good humor," Amundson says. "They were simply way more talented than I'd expected. When rehearsal was over, I knew it would be a huge mistake to turn the job down, if offered."

But even though the day had gone well, Foss had one remaining concern: It was a big risk to bring in a 25-year-old with little collegiate-level conducting experience. "You're really too young for this position," Foss said.

Amundson didn't miss a beat. "Give me a few years, and I'll fix that," he said. Foss apparently liked the joke, because about 10 days later, Amundson was offered the job.

"Despite my age, it was certainly possible that I was the right fit at the time," Amundson says. "I believe in the ideals of the college, I value its traditions, and I'm a person of faith."

A consummate musician and educator, he has gone on to use his gifts of kindness, humility, and generosity of spirit, as well as his commitment to excellence, to shape the St. Olaf Orchestra into an unparalleled collegiate ensemble dedicated to heartfelt, passionate music making that all listeners can appreciate and celebrate.

THE MAKING OF A MUSICAL LIFE

As the youngest child of a Lutheran pastor, Amundson often sang with his four siblings at home. Starting piano lessons at age four and trumpet lessons at age nine, he later switched to the euphonium and picked up the trombone so he could play in his school jazz band and orchestra.

"It's truly weird how many conductors are trombone players," Amundson says. "Sitting in the back row and counting lots of measures of rest, I listened, learned, and started

Amundson began his St. Olaf career in 1981, at age 25. "Despite my age, it was certainly possible that I was the right fit at the time," he says.





"It's been both humbling
and a tremendous
privilege to lead such a
fantastic undergraduate
orchestra. The past 40
years have flown by,
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“Steve’s voice resonates with an incredible amount of authority, and he’s got a wide-open heart for students — whom he always places first — and colleagues alike.”

— Timothy Mahr '78



The late Bob “BJ” Johnson often accompanied Amundson on tours. They are seen here relaxing together during Amundson’s first European tour in 1985.

conducting rehearsals in my head. As a young musician, I looked forward to being the person in charge.”

Amundson firmed up his plans to become a conductor as an undergraduate at Luther College, where he earned a B.A. in music while playing euphonium and trombone, singing in the Nordic Choir, and leading the college’s jazz ensemble during his senior year. His musical mentors included St. Olaf alumnus Maurice Monhardt ’52, Douglas Meyer, Bob Getchell, Fred Nylind, and especially Weston Noble, who was known for his 57-year tenure as music professor and conductor of the Nordic Choir and Luther College Concert Band.

Noble modeled a career that Amundson has strived for at St. Olaf. “He absolutely cherished each student and made us feel important and special,” Amundson says. “I’d never want to compare myself to him, but I’ve done my best to connect with my students and to create a positive, light-hearted environment while striving for a community filled with what we call ‘Orchie love,’ a tradition that started as ‘Cello love’ in the 1990s.”

After graduating from Luther, he earned a master of music degree in conducting at Northwestern University, where he studied with Bernard Rubenstein and John Paynter, choosing to focus on orchestral conducting because of its powerful body of literature.

“I fell in love with Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler — the list is endless,” he says. “I was enthralled. I loved the warmth and beauty of the strings and the sweeping physicality of it all.”

He continued his graduate studies at the University of Virginia and attended the Aspen Music School, where he was privileged to attend a two-week symposium led by Erich Leinsdorf. The following summer, Amundson studied conducting at the Mozarteum International Summer Academy in Salzburg, where he was mentored by the gifted master conductor Milan Horvat from Zagreb, Croatia.

“I learned so much from him about the mechanics of conducting, as well as how to treat the orchestra and how to study a score,” Amundson says. Competing against 49 other students from around the world, Amundson won the academy’s prestigious Hans Häring Prize, which came with a monetary award and the opportunity to lead a recording session broadcast on Austrian National Radio.

After moving to Tacoma, he was thriving in his first year with the youth symphony, fully engaged with the area’s musical opportunities. It seemed like the perfect situation.

And then St. Olaf came calling.

AN ENTHUSIASTIC, CARING LEADER

As a young faculty member in St. Olaf’s Music Department, Amundson usually wore a coat and tie to distinguish himself from his students. His colleagues were generally much older, and he was delighted when Anton Armstrong ’78 and Timothy Mahr ’78 — who were closer to his age — were hired as conductor of the St. Olaf Choir and conductor of the St. Olaf Band, respectively, in 1990 and 1994. He also appreciated the support of the late Bob “BJ” Johnson, longtime manager of Music Organizations, who “always had my back,” he says.

Flautist Beth Ross Buckley ’82, founder and co-artistic director of San Diego’s Camarada, was a senior during Amundson’s first year and recalls that she had no idea how young he was at the time.

“He didn’t tell us how old he was, most likely to create an intentional separation between student and faculty member,” she says. “He was so confident and self-assured, and it was immediately apparent how skilled he was, which contributed to him seeming older.”

Amundson immediately found the orchestra's tremendous potential energizing. From the start, he took an interest in his students' artistic and personal growth. He knew that if they worked hard and played with heart, they'd be successful. He fostered a family atmosphere within the group, cultivating a culture of community through his passion for classical music, teaching, and togetherness.

In the 1980s and through 1997, Amundson also conducted the Bloomington (Minnesota) Symphony Orchestra. During this time he began dating Jane Zak, a math teacher and talented Bloomington Symphony cellist who had played in the St. Olaf Orchestra for two years before transferring to the University of Minnesota to complete her degree in math education. Members of the Bloomington Symphony, thrilled for the couple, gave them an engagement party in the fall of 1987; they married in January of 1988.

The Amundsons' children, Beret and Karl, further enriched their lives. When the kids were young, they especially enjoyed having Orchies as babysitters, students who were "revered in our home," Amundson says.

"Family is so important to me," Amundson says. "It means everything to have married my best friend and to have had Jane's and the kids' full support in all aspects of my St. Olaf life and work."

Forty years after first setting foot in Christiansen Hall, Amundson is now emeritus professor of music and a highly respected senior member of the St. Olaf Music Department. "His voice resonates with an incredible amount of authority, and his comments and opinions come from a place of serious consideration," says Mahr, who considers Amundson a kindred spirit. "He's got a wide-open heart for students — whom he always places first — and colleagues alike."

Amundson's dear friend and colleague Richard Erickson '66, who was associate manager of the St. Olaf Orchestra and St. Olaf Band from 1995 to 2009, now markets Amundson's self-published compositions. For many students, "playing in the St. Olaf Orchestra is the highlight of their musical career. That's due to Steve's leadership, and his kind and caring nature," says Erickson.

Hosting Orchies in Amundson's backyard, 2000



The Amundson family in Norway, 2005



The Amundson family at Carnegie Hall, 2019

Beret Amundson '15 earned a B.A. degree in biology and chemistry from St. Olaf, playing viola under her father's baton in the orchestra, and her M.D. from Emory University. She is now an internal medicine resident at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Karl earned a B.F.A. degree in musical theater from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and is a composer and performer in New York City. PHOTO BY NATAN DVIR/POLARIS

“Steve lifts others up. He’s very adept at getting others to perform at their highest level. And while demanding, he is also gracious and giving. He has a true servant spirit.”

— Anton Armstrong '78

That kind and caring nature was on display during the early days of the pandemic, when Amundson composed and performed all four parts of a barbershop quartet in a video for homebound students. His performance, which drew thousands of views on YouTube and Facebook, included a tribute to the Class of 2020, a musical break on kazoos, and lyrics like “We really miss our Orchies, that’s certainly true ... since you’ve been away, we’re definitely feeling blue.”

A DYNAMIC CONDUCTOR AND TEACHER

Amundson has led the St. Olaf Orchestra in more than 750 performances, both on campus and at some of the world’s most renowned concert halls, including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York City, Chicago’s Orchestra Hall, Nuremberg’s Meistersingerhalle, Prague’s Rudolfinum, the Oslo Opera House, the Beijing Concert Hall, and the Ballena Azul Concert Hall in Buenos Aires.

Amundson’s style on the podium is an education in the art and craft of conducting, says his former student and longtime friend Craig Hella Johnson ’84, a Grammy Award-winning conductor of the world-renowned choral ensemble Conspirare. “He conveys the large, sweeping architecture of a work, as well as the nuanced details of phrases and rhythms,” Johnson says. “He’s just so fluid, clear, and concise. His gorgeous, technical communication is shapely and elegant. It’s always connected to the breath, with a sort of singing aspect to it. It’s just beautiful to watch.”

A longtime mantra of Amundson’s has been “If we sell it, they’ll buy it.” He calls his conductor’s credo “Passion Plus” — creating great performances by capturing the hearts and minds of audience members. He insists on technical precision and encourages students to move, breathe, and listen across the ensemble. This approach has led to performances that are alive, sincere, honest, and heartfelt.

“Watching the conductor is only one aspect of fine orchestral playing. Listening to each other to find your place in the sound is paramount,” says Amundson, noting that moving and breathing together as one is key. “It’s not just about playing accurate notes and rhythms — it’s about fully

embodying the music and relating it to human experience. We must try to discover the beauty and meaning in each piece we perform.”

Award-winning composer and double bass player Matthew Peterson ’06 says that the musical values he learned from Amundson resonate in his music today. “Steve taught us to take personal responsibility for creating the music in the moment by playing the dynamics, articulation, line, and gesture,” Peterson says.

The St. Olaf Orchestra will premiere Peterson’s newest work, *Symphony No. 1: The Singing Wilderness*, at pre-tour concerts in Minnesota and during its 2022 tour, which will be Amundson’s final time taking the ensemble on the road. “It’s perhaps my best work,” says Peterson, “and if anyone deserves that from me, it’s Steve.”

The piece, which celebrates Amundson’s career, was commissioned by St. Olaf with support from the Neil A. Kjos Endowment and the Robert Scholz Endowed Chair in Music fund established by Steven Fox ’77. The Northern Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Symphony, a Twin Cities-based civic ensemble founded by Amundson in 1982, also contributed to the commission.



Amundson’s “barbershop quartet” video, dedicated to the Class of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, has received nearly 38,000 views on YouTube since it was posted in May 2020.

Amundson has taught many students in courses on instrumentation, aural skills, music theory, and conducting, and he's incredibly proud of the hundreds of orchestra members who have become music educators, professors, conductors, and professional musicians (see sidebar). His influence extends far beyond the Hill, reverberating throughout the orchestral world at all levels. He has conducted countless honors orchestras and 25 of the country's All-State orchestras. He has taught at numerous music camps, and his skills as a clinician and adjudicator at conferences, festivals, and auditions have been much in demand.

NOTES ON A PAGE

Though he's now a successful, commissioned composer who has written 23 original orchestral works, Amundson didn't begin seriously composing until nearly 15 years into his St. Olaf career, when Armstrong asked him to arrange a tune for the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, to be performed by the St. Olaf Choir and St. Olaf Orchestra.

"Then my dad died suddenly," Amundson says. "He was my best supporter, and I loved him so much."

Amundson wrote his first original piece, *Angel's Dance*, in honor of his father. Published in 1995, it remains one of his most performed works and has been recorded by the Houston Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Set in 7/8 meter, *Angel's Dance* is rhythmic and colorful, lilting, and joyful, and quotes the hymn tune *Angels We Have Heard on High*. "It's meant to celebrate my dad's great optimism and joy. He loved singing, and that carol is one of the most joyful tunes I know," Amundson says.

Many of Amundson's Christmas-themed pieces, such as *On Christmas Day*, *Glories Ring*, and *Rejoice*, also incorporate favorite carols. They've been premiered by the St. Olaf Orchestra at the Christmas Festival and have received more than a thousand performances by university, civic, and professional orchestras, including the Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, and Toronto Symphonies.

Handprints, a piece commissioned in 2013 for the 50th anniversary of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra, was a finalist for the American Prize for Orchestral Composition. During its 2022 tour, the St. Olaf Orchestra will premiere Amundson's newest work, *Gratia Viva (Living with Gratitude)*, which was commissioned by Doug Scott in honor of his wife, Grace Schroeder Scott '72, who recently retired as a senior development officer at St. Olaf.

Friend and Mentor

During his tenure, Steve Amundson has influenced hundreds of Oles who have become music educators, professors, conductors, and professional musicians, all of whom bring him great pride, and who represent one measure of the strength and depth of St. Olaf's music program.

Countless orchestra alumni are playing professionally, including Micah Wilkinson '06, principal trumpet, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; Jelena Dirks '96, principal oboe, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; Kari Nostbakken Kettering '96, cello, Dallas Symphony Orchestra; Kristen Marks Sonneborn '86, principal bassoon, Naples Philharmonic; Ben Krug '04, cello, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; Jon Van Dyke '97, double bass, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Melita Glass Hunsinger '00, principal cello, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra; Justin Smith '00, violin, American Symphony Orchestra, American Ballet Theater, and concertmaster, Broadway production of *Dear Evan Hansen*; Emily Hagen '00, principal viola, Minnesota Opera Orchestra; Timothy McCarthy '14, assistant principal trumpet, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra; Angela Waterman Hanson '03, violin, Minnesota Opera Orchestra and Minnesota Sinfonia; and Patrick Hughes '84, University of Texas horn professor, chamber musician and soloist with numerous orchestras. Conducting alumni include Jayce Ogren '01, who has held positions with the Cleveland Orchestra and the New York City Opera; Aron Accurso '01, a composer and conductor on Broadway; and Travis Cross '99, conductor of bands at UCLA and a nationally known clinician.



The St. Olaf Christmas Festival has long been a collaborative effort. Anton Armstrong '78 (center) and Steven Amundson have planned and executed 40 Christmas Festivals together, and for many years were joined by a team that included conductors (from left) the late Robert Scholz '61, John Ferguson, and Sigrid Johnson.

Amundson has long discussed gratitude with his Orchies and was excited to write a piece with this theme. “I’ve dreamt of writing a piece based on the idea of gratitude, and I’m pleased to bring this to life,” Amundson says.

Amundson spends much of his summers composing at his family’s cabin in Ely, Minnesota, an idyll he finds inspiring, with its quietude, woods, and water. “I love paddling, hiking, and bicycling, which help me feel centered and bolster my creative energy,” he says.

“I’m most successful composing when I get into an almost dreamy, meditative state,” Amundson says. “I’ve been known to shed tears when I’m writing, when it feels beautiful and heavenly, as though it’s not coming from me. It’s often a reverent and spiritual process, and when inspiration comes, it’s a wonderful gift,” he says.

One of his pieces is actually titled *The Gift*, and its premiere remains one of Amundson’s most treasured performances with the St. Olaf Orchestra. The work honors the life of Eric Drotning ’02, an exceptional percussionist with the orchestra who died at age 24 in 2004. *The Gift* was commissioned by his family, which includes his sister, Elizabeth Drotning Hartwell ’99, who played cello in the orchestra.

The Gift quotes Drotning’s favorite hymn, *O Day Full of Grace*, and the piece’s main unifying element are the notes E, C, D, G — the beginning and ending letters in Drotning’s name. The orchestra performed the piece on tour in Drotning’s hometown of Albuquerque in 2008.

“It was very special,” Amundson says. “We were performing for Eric’s friends and family in a beautiful hall, and you could feel the love in that room. When we

Amundson and the St. Olaf Orchestra rehearse at the Oslo Opera house during their joint tour of Norway with the St. Olaf Choir in 2019.

PHOTO BY STEVEN GARCIA '20



finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the place. I'll never forget that performance."

Amundson literally once composed a piece on the fly. A day before the St. Olaf Orchestra and the St. Olaf Choir were set to depart for a tour of Norway in 2019, Amundson learned the orchestra would need to play a fanfare for the King of Norway's entrance to its performance at the Oslo Opera House.

"I could have used any brass fanfare, but I loved the idea of getting the whole orchestra involved, and none of the orchestra fanfares in our library seemed quite right," he says. So, while flying over the Atlantic Ocean, Amundson began composing an original piece, adding the choir at the last moment to sing *Beloved Norway, Amen!* in Norwegian. He finished *Grand Fanfare* in four days, just a few hours before the groups' one and only rehearsal.

"He wrote the entire thing by hand," says Armstrong, who recalls testing melodies by singing them out loud with Amundson on the plane, "causing our fellow passengers to think we were a bit crazy."

EXCELLENCE ON THE STAGE

The St. Olaf Orchestra has flourished tremendously under Amundson's leadership. The ensemble's highest honor is being a two-time first prize winner of the American Prize in Orchestral Performance among colleges and universities, claiming the prize over orchestral programs that included master's and doctoral students. In 2013, the group won for its performances of Silvestre Revueltas's *Sensemaya*, Sibelius's *Valse Triste*, and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No. 2, and in 2018 for its performances of works by Brahms, Bartók, and Rachmaninoff.

Reviewers have compared the St. Olaf Orchestra to professional orchestras for its technically proficient, energetic, and passionate performances of pieces not usually programmed at the college level, including Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, Richard Strauss's tone poem *Don Juan*, and Stravinsky's notoriously difficult ballet score *The Rite of Spring*.

Richard Ostling of *Time* magazine wrote, "I was astonished by the music of the St. Olaf Orchestra. It has to be one of the best college orchestras in the nation." In 2005, the Norwegian paper *Vårt Land* stated, "It is obviously unfair to compare this orchestra with the established and professional. But it is fully possible."

During Amundson's tenure, the orchestra has performed in 31 states and taken nine international tours to 14 countries, including groundbreaking performances in China, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Argentina.

"I'm so grateful that the college supports touring, which provides students with life-changing musical, cultural, and educational experiences," Amundson says.

Terra Widdifield '95, who played harp in the orchestra and is now St. Olaf's associate director of Music Organizations, says the orchestra's outstanding reputation makes her job — arranging concerts and events for the ensemble — easy and fun.

"Being the orchestra's manager is like driving a Rolls-Royce because the quality of their musicianship opens so many doors," she says. "It's a joy to match the orchestra with venues and collaborators that wouldn't be possible without its exceptional quality and reputation."

In recounting his most cherished performances, Amundson's love for the ensemble shines through, as does the realization that he could cite many, many



While en route to Norway in 2019, Amundson composed a fanfare that the St. Olaf Orchestra and the St. Olaf Choir performed just days later for King Harald V of Norway (right) at the Oslo Opera house.

more unforgettable moments. Performing for a packed audience at Carnegie Hall in 2019 is at the top of the list. “The students outdid themselves, and the crowd was absolutely electric,” he says. “It felt like the best home concert ever. I’m still pinching myself that we performed for a full house on that historic stage.”

Amundson also fondly recalls the tour to China in 2012, during which he spoke Chinese at each concert. “I spent many hours preparing just a few paragraphs, but the audiences barely let me get through one sentence before breaking into applause, so appreciative were they of the effort,” Amundson says. “Everyone we met welcomed us with such open arms, even asking students for autographs. It was a special tour indeed.”

Another memorable concert took place in 2016 in San Justo, Argentina, on a day the mayor had declared as “St. Olaf Orchestra Day.” The orchestra played to a standing-room-only crowd in a community center. “It was the first time most in the audience had ever heard a live symphony perform. It was a magical experience that will long be cherished,” Amundson says.

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF OTHERS

Though the St. Olaf Orchestra has flourished tremendously under Amundson’s leadership, he believes the ensemble’s accomplishments stand on the strong foundation of his predecessors, including Beatrix Lien, who expertly shepherded the orchestra’s string program for decades, and Donald Berglund, who led the orchestra with “patience, persistence, and grace” in his 34 years at the helm. The loss of a talented young conductor, David O’Dell, who was hired to succeed Berglund when he retired but who died tragically in a car accident only weeks before the start of his second year, still weighs on the hearts of those who played in his orchestra, says Amundson.

A highlight of Amundson’s career was the St. Olaf Orchestra’s performance at New York City’s Carnegie Hall in 2019.

PHOTO BY NATAN DVIR/POLARIS



Amundson also readily sings the praises of his colleagues in the St. Olaf Music Department, especially the instrumental faculty, who have been important mentors to orchestra members. “It would be impossible to give them enough credit,” he says. He also lifts up behind-the-scenes staff members who have handled tour and concert logistics so that Amundson and the orchestra can focus on music making.

“My St. Olaf journey has ultimately been more about the people than the music,” Amundson says. “The St. Olaf music community is a shining example of the power of music to deepen and enrich our connections.”

Amundson will continue to conduct the orchestra throughout the 2021–22 academic year, including four performances at the Christmas Festival, a tour to Washington, Oregon, and Montana in early February 2022, and a concert at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis on April 10, 2022. On June 4, 2022, St. Olaf will host an alumni orchestra reunion to celebrate Amundson’s retirement and the continued excellence of the St. Olaf Orchestra program.

Amundson’s colleagues will miss him deeply, Mahr says. “Steve has been an absolute anchor to music making at St. Olaf for so many years,” he says. “His spirit, his energy, and his joy on the podium will be greatly missed.”

Amundson looks forward to more time spent composing, guest conducting, and enjoying new adventures with his family. No matter where life takes him, he will carry the St. Olaf Orchestra in his heart. “I have learned that the music making endeavor is one that opens hearts, fosters community, and helps us be in touch with our emotional and spiritual well-being,” he says. “It’s been both humbling and a tremendous privilege to lead such a fantastic undergraduate orchestra. The past 40 years have flown by, and I’ve cherished the journey!” 🍀

MARLA HILL HOLT '88 is a regular contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*.



Amundson embraces music’s ability to bring joy to others but also likes to have a bit of fun, both in performance and rehearsal. He is good-humored and has entertained students with his amateur mime routines, magic tricks, and other antics. During the orchestra’s family concerts for younger audiences, Amundson has dressed up as characters such as Dumbledore or Chewbacca, and kids in the audience have competed for a chance to conduct the orchestra.



IN SUPPORT OF Musical Excellence

To honor his retirement and legacy, and to support the St. Olaf Orchestra, a fund has been established in Steven M. Amundson’s name.

For more information, contact the St. Olaf Development Office at 507-786-3030 or email development@stolaf.edu.

B O U N D F O R

Hudson Bay

A N D B E Y O N D



Natalie Warren '11 and classmate Ann Raiho '11 hold the distinction of being the first women to undertake a grueling 2,000-mile canoe route from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay. Warren's account in *Hudson Bay Bound: Two Women, One Dog, Two Thousand Miles to the Arctic* retraces their remarkable journey.

Interview by Lynette Lamb

PHOTOS BY LEE VUE AND ANN RAIHO

Camp Menogyn, the famed YMCA canoe camp on Minnesota's Gunflint Trail, has been the start of many canoe trips over the years, but few so epic as that detailed in Natalie Warren's *Hudson Bay Bound: Two Women, One Dog, Two Thousand Miles to the Arctic* (University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

Warren and her trekking partner, Ann Raiho, didn't set off from the canoe camp, however. Instead, they met there in 2007 as recent high school graduates — Raiho a Twin Cities native and Warren a Floridian inspired by a Miami friend to attend the camp.

After becoming fast friends at Menogyn, and further solidifying their bond at St. Olaf, the classmates decided to canoe from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay, a trip inspired by broadcast journalist Eric Sevareid's 1935 classic *Canoeing with the Cree* about a 2000-mile canoe trip Sevareid took with his friend Walter Port. (Having read the book as a senior, Raiho one day opened Warren's dorm door, threw it at her, and said, "Read this. We should do it.")

So it was that the longtime friends set out to follow Sevareid and Port's lead — and become the first women to complete the expedition. Once they'd arranged to have a canoe and gear donated and had raised enough money to rent a float plane, the two took off. They left Fort Snelling State Park on June 2, 2011 (despite Minnesota River flood warnings), determined to reach Hudson Bay before cold weather set in.

Along the way, they encountered the ecological devastation wrought by farming and development along the Minnesota River, huge waves on Lake Winnipeg, whitewater rapids near a Red River dam, thunderstorms, black bears, and plenty of disbelieving men and pesky journalists. But the duo also enjoyed many wonders — moose and polar bear sightings, northern lights, pearly pink sunrises, and the wild, free-flowing rivers of the north country. By summer's end, being back on land felt strange. As Warren put it, "The water was our true home."

I recently spoke to Warren about her friendship with Raiho, what drew her to St. Olaf, the inspiration to write her book, and the joys and challenges of her canoeing adventure.



When did you first meet Ann?

We met during our last summer at Menogyn, when we were both part of a 50-day trip to Nunavik [in northern Quebec], which is complete tundra and a beautiful part of world. We hadn't known each other before we shared a canoe, and then we discovered we were both headed to St. Olaf. That was especially amazing because I was the first person from my Miami arts high school to enroll there. Then we ended up living in the same dorm — so there were lots of forces pushing us together.

What drew you to Northfield?

Because I loved camp, I wanted to return to Minnesota for college. My camp friends were always my closest friends; we even share the same tattoo. And all of them were living in Minnesota. I was a serious saxophone player, so I applied to a few Midwestern colleges and was fortunate to receive a music scholarship from St. Olaf.

How did your friendship with Ann continue once you arrived at school?

College is such a difficult time — trying to figure out what you like and how you're going to succeed after graduation. We always ended up in each other's rooms, plotting trips. It was a coping mechanism for college angst, and it ended with us paddling to Hudson Bay. Whenever we had the chance, we would be booking it up north. And we were always trying to trick other people into going camping with us.

Your Hudson Bay trip took place a decade ago. What prompted you to start writing about the journey years later?

It's a funny St. Olaf story actually. After a presentation I gave in 2014 at Midwest Mountaineering in Minneapolis, this old guy wearing a St. Olaf hat, pants, and sweatshirt came up to me. His name was John Sylwester, and he had graduated 50 years before me. He was so excited to talk about our journey, and after that we became pen pals.

It was in mailing letters to him, one story at a time, that I began writing about the trip. He would send back handwritten letters about his own trips, and over the years ours became this great inter-generational friendship. At some point, I realized I wanted to document our entire trip.

When did you sit down to finish the book?

I decided to write it in 2017, but I kept it private because everyone sort of says they are writing a book, so no one takes you seriously. I sent out a book proposal and got my fair share of rejections. I felt so lucky when the University of Minnesota contacted me. I was driving through Michigan, on assignment for *Canoe and Kayak* magazine, when they called to offer me a contract. When I signed the contract in 2018, it was a beautiful

“THERE’S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR YOUTHFULNESS. WE FELT STRONG AND CAPABLE, AND OUR SOCIAL CIRCLE WAS MADE UP OF TOUGH FEMINIST OUTDOORSWOMEN FROM MENOGYN, SO IT DIDN’T SEEM THAT ABNORMAL FOR US TO TRY IT.”

and terrifying moment. I had written only 30,000 words of the 80,000 I would need. Writing was a journey all its own. Some days I felt like I could write for hours, and other days I had to force myself. My editor helped by removing a lot of reflective sections that took the reader out of the canoe. Now I hope that readers feel as if they’re right there with us. [*Hudson Bay Bound* is already in its second printing.]

What drove you two to undertake such a challenging trip at age 22?

There’s something to be said for youthfulness. We felt strong and capable, and our social circle was made up of tough feminist outdoorswomen from Menogyn, so it didn’t seem that abnormal for us to try it. We were concerned about the challenges, but we talked over the tricky parts in a way that was surrounded by positivity and potential. And we trusted each other so much. Our strong relationship made it much easier to go ahead.

Were you surprised to learn you’d be the first women to complete the trip?

We were! We found a few groups who had completed it since Severeid, but no documented accounts of women who had. When we needed an angle to help us raise money, we realized it was because we were women. It was a big deal, yet it was sad that in 2011 it was still such a big deal.

What would you consider some of the trip’s biggest challenges?

The journey to Hudson Bay is cool in that it includes paddling upstream, downstream, a massive lake, and an Arctic whitewater river. Each of those carries its own challenges. The 2011 Minnesota River flood was epic, and we departed at its peak, so we began our trip by paddling 300 miles at 1.5 miles an hour, which is slower than you could walk it.

The Minnesota River was highly polluted — the buffer zones weren’t there, corn was planted all the way to the river, there were huge eroded banks. Later we paddled through huge algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg, formed by the tilling practices followed by farmers along the Red River. The algae have ruined the fishing economy and the livelihoods of many small towns. Digging our paddles into that stinky green carpet had an unforgettable impact on me.

Was it also challenging to write about conflicts you had with Ann?

[Editor’s note: Raiho angered Warren by insisting they take a detour on Lake Winnipeg to meet some Menogyn friends; later Warren angered Raiho by failing to put their safety first. The latter blowup led to several days when the two women communicated only by note.]

Yes, it was difficult to navigate those parts. I got to tell the story from my voice, and it was hard to stop positioning myself as the one who was always right. It was challenging to try to consider how Ann was feeling in those moments. Being with just one other person for 85 days straight taught me a lot of interpersonal skills I still use in my marriage.



ANGELA STAHLING

What are you doing now?

Rivers have been the focus of everything I’ve done since that trip — leading river trips, doing environmental education, paddling the length of the Mississippi River while schoolchildren followed us online. My first “real” job was land protection work along the St. Croix River. Now I’m working on a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in communication studies, with a focus on environmental communication. My ultimate goal is to complete a thought project about what it would be like to free the Mississippi.

Have you continued to pursue music?

I continue to play sax regularly with my husband, John Synhavsky ‘10, a drummer and producer. [*The couple has a 7-month-old daughter.*] But my biggest recent musical excitement was getting to sing and play sax with The Okee Dokee Brothers on a book promotional song we recorded called *Roll on River*. I’ve officially peaked! 🦄

LYNETTE LAMB P’22 is a Twin Cities writer and frequent contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*. Her review of *Hudson Bay Bound* was first published special to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on January 22, 2021.



Ann Raiho and Natalie Warren in 2011 (above), and Warren today (photo by John Kaul).



THE TREE COUNTER

Ann Raiho '11, the second member of the Hudson Bay canoe team, has been as busy as her boatmate, Natalie Warren '11, since their epic voyage. After graduating from St. Olaf with a mathematics major and an environmental science concentration, she completed a master's in ecology from Colorado State University, a Ph.D. in ecology from Notre Dame, and postdoctoral research back at Colorado State.

Interview by Lynette Lamb | PHOTO BY RACHEL J. OIDTMAN

Where are you working now?

I'm employed by NASA as a contractor through the University of Maryland, working remotely from Colorado. I am part of team on a satellite called Surface Biology and Geology, which is still in the planning phase. The Earth Observatory Group is our informal name.

How would you describe your doctoral work in a nutshell?

My research focused on fusing complex ecosystem models with paleo-ecological data to inform unobservable long-term — decades to millennia — processes in forests. I worked with paleo-ecological data, which is fossil pollen taken from the bottom of lakes, and tree-ring records. I used those data along with mathematical models to better understand how forests change over long periods.

Could you give a specific example?

We used fossil pollen collected from over 200 lakes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan to re-create forest characteristics, like biomass from the past 10,000 years. During this time, many species shifted their geographic distributions. Understanding the exact timing and magnitude of these shifts gives us a better idea of how trees may respond to climate change in the future.

What is your satellite project designed to accomplish?

The satellite gives us so much more information: it takes a picture of every place on earth every 16 days, thus giving us a lot of repeat information. There could be many more big trees out there that we don't know about, taking up a lot of carbon. None of the current models agree on how much carbon is being taken up by trees; this satellite data should help us better understand that.

How is your work related to climate change?

Trees live a long time. Over thousands of years, different species will migrate when climates change. With Earth's climate changing rapidly now, we're trying to plan for the future and determine where plants will thrive — and not thrive. Long-term data showing how plants have moved in the past will help us figure this out for the future. The satellite's spectrometer takes pictures of things we can't see, such as nitrogen content, cellulose, etc. We're hoping to map plant characteristics from space and see how they change over time.

Did your time in the Boundary Waters affect your interest in ecology?

Absolutely. When I was younger, I read a lot of research about the Boundary Waters turning from a boreal forest into an open savanna because of climate change, so I have long been worried about global warming transforming the wild places that mean so much to me. And, of course, this is happening at a global scale as well as at a local one.

Did any particular part of your St. Olaf studies influence your career?

The Biology in India study abroad program set me up well for a lifetime of independent research. I often think back to that program as a true turning point.

Eight of us were sent out in pairs to two different field stations in the Tamil Nadu area of southern India. We spent four to six weeks doing an independent study project at each site. I looked at women's nutrition and food insecurity in one study and where different butterflies lived in my second study. I was just 19, and it was mostly just me trying to figure it out on my own. Those independent research skills that I've used so much really started developing then.

What advice can you give to Oles who share your passion for the environment and concerns about climate change?

Climate change is a global and complex problem, and a solution will require many types of people with a great variety of interests and skills. My strengths and interests have always been in math and wilderness environments. Focusing on these interests led me to a career in global change ecology. In college, having a wide variety of experiences but also sticking with something (math) that I felt was important and unique helped me realize this path. At the time, I didn't see the connection between my interests, but I instead felt that I could be flexible with my path. I always took opportunities that arose that fit with my background in math and ecology while also adding something I didn't know much about but was interested in.

In the short term, I recommend to students not to say no to any opportunity that sounds interesting to them, to search actively for more opportunities, and to step back often to see the bigger picture of how what they're doing or the path they plan to pursue contributes to the global effort to solve the climate crisis. 🌱



Raiho at home in Steamboat Springs with Myhan, the dog she and Warren picked up on their Hudson Bay expedition.

St. Olaf Alumni Awards

Each year, St. Olaf College recognizes alumni whose service and leadership exemplify the ideals and mission of the college. In honoring these graduates for their exceptional achievements and professional contributions, they become an integral part of college history and a testament to St. Olaf's tradition of excellence.

The college is pleased to recognize its 2020 and 2021 alumni award recipients: Utit Choomuang '75, Amanda Cox '01, Branden Moriarity '07, Nicholas Epley '96, and Michael Solhaug '67, Jason DeRose '97, Kristen Rosdahl Ehresmann '84, Tony Miller '89, and David Rose '89.

2020 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Utit Choomuang '75

Animator Utit Choomuang has led a life of intellect and curiosity about the world around him. His artistic talent, work ethic, and easygoing personality sustained a distinguished career as an animator for such shows as *The Simpsons* and the *Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show*. He now lives near his childhood community in Thailand, where he is continually seeking ways to bolster the village of his ancestors.

Choomuang first came to the United States in 1971 as a Rotary Club exchange student at Northfield High School, sponsored by Sigurd Fredrickson, a music professor at St. Olaf, and his wife, Margit. They recognized his artistry, curiosity, and intellect, and helped him

apply for and receive a scholarship to attend St. Olaf in the fall of 1972. "Not in my wildest dreams did I think I could go to college," Choomuang says. "At St. Olaf, I was allowed to dream and given the freedom to speak, think, and do. I had access to unlimited subjects and discovered the ability to think and learn for myself." He graduated in three years with a B.A. degree in art and art history.

While developing his burgeoning animation skills and learning the art of moving pictures, Choomuang was mentored by the late Professor Emeritus of Art Arch Leann, who told Choomuang he could be a filmmaker. "I was fascinated that you could make a drawing walk and talk," Choomuang says. As a senior, his animated film *By and Bye* about his first experience flying in an airplane won first prize in a WCCO-TV film competition.

Choomuang's career as an animator has included stints with independent filmmaker Barry Nelson, CBS-TV's *Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show*, and Disney Television's *Goof Troop*. He joined *The Simpsons* on a trial basis before getting paid to work in character layout, drawing images from storyboards to define a scene's action.

"My first drawing of Bart walked too much like Charlie Brown, so I practiced day and night, trying to get better at drawing the Simpsons," Choomuang says. Eventually, he was promoted to overseas animation director at Akom Animation in Seoul, South Korea. Choomuang managed three subcontracted studios with hundreds of artists who were responsible for animating every frame of each episode of the show. He retired from *The Simpsons* after 16 years.

"It was the perfect job for me," Choomuang says. "I'm a problem solver. I knew camera work, sound work, background, ink and paint, every aspect of animation. I'm proud of having worked on a famous show."

Today, Choomuang lives in Nongnokkai, Thailand, his childhood home, which has been overdeveloped and stripped of trees by the shrimp farming industry, and devastated by a recent typhoon. After pursuing sustainable shrimp farming and reforestation efforts for several years, he now cultivates and maintains land and waters that support local farming and fishing projects. He also is developing an English immersion school for local villagers, which is currently paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"So many people helped me to come to the United States and to study at St. Olaf," Choomuang says. "I was lucky to meet the right people at the right time, which has led to a magical life. I want to create that magic for others. Thailand is the place I know, and I've gone home again to help people have the same chances I did."

2020 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Amanda Cox '01

As the *New York Times*'s data editor, Amanda Cox leverages and presents data in reader-friendly formats, such as charts, graphs, and interactive news.

Cox got her start in journalism when she took over the humor page of St. Olaf's student newspaper, the *Mess*. "My roommate was dating the editor and I often told him the page wasn't funny," Cox says. After the students responsible for the page left abruptly over a disagreement, Cox was asked to fill in. "I'd see an older couple regularly read the paper together after church on Sundays," she says. "The same feelings I saw watching them are now evoked in seeing my *Times* work being read on the subway."

Cox earned a B.A. degree in mathematics and statistics at St. Olaf



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JAMES ESTRIN/NEW YORK TIMES

and a master's degree in statistics at the University of Washington, during which she interned with the graphics department at the *New York Times*. She was hired as a graphics editor in 2005 before joining *The Upshot* in 2014, the *Times's* website featuring articles that combine data visualization with conventional journalistic analysis. In 2019, she was named data editor, coordinating data work across departments and serving as an adviser when questions arise about how to think about and use data thoughtfully.

"Certain types of scale, context, and patterns are best understood in forms beyond words alone," Cox says.

Known for her statistical expertise and rigor, programming skills, and artistry, Cox's work has been recognized with several honors and awards in the field of data visualization. In 2012, she received the Excellence in Statistical Reporting Award from the American Statistical Association. In 2013, she gave the keynote address at the inaugural meeting of *OpenVis*, a conference on open-source data visualization tools and techniques. She spoke there again in 2017 and 2018.

Cox is continually imagining new ways to inform readers with data, and is proud that she has a conference room named in her honor at Google headquarters.

2020 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Nicholas Epley '96

Behavioral scientist Nicholas Epley is the John Templeton Keller Professor of Behavioral Science and faculty director of the Center for Decision Research at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. He also is a Neubauer Family Faculty Fellow at the university.

Epley's work in social cognition — how thinking people make inferences about what other thinking people are thinking — is helping us understand each other better. His experimental research focuses on investigating the accuracy of those inferences and the common mistakes we make in attempting to read other people's minds. He is the author of *Mindwise: How We Understand What Others Think, Believe, Feel, and Want*.

"Our beliefs and our mental states are invisible, and yet everyone makes inferences about others' minds as easily as we breathe," Epley says, noting that his research has shown that people tend to use their own perceptions, biases, and egos as the basis for often incorrectly interpreting others' behavior. "I investigate the gaps between what we think others think of us and what they actually think of us."

Epley earned a B.A. degree in psychology and philosophy at St. Olaf. "St. Olaf inspired me in academics like nothing else I've experienced in life," he says. "I was given the independence to do my own research and to pursue the things I was interested in." He conducted his first behavioral science research with psychology professors Mark Sundby and Charles Huff, publishing his first scientific paper with Huff. He also completed an independent study in moral theory — studying why good people do bad things — with Professor of Philosophy and Religion Edmund Santurri. "We just plowed through books from Alasdair MacIntyre to Dostoevsky. It's what inspired me to become an academic," Epley says. "I loved having the independence to figure out what I was interested in and to test my ideas."

Epley went on to earn a Ph.D. in psychology at Cornell University and worked as a professor in the psychology department at Harvard University before joining the Chicago Booth faculty in 2004. He teaches an ethics and well-being course to M.B.A. students called *Designing a Good Life*, but research remains his core focus. A recent study, conducted on Chicago public transportation, found that people who engaged in conversations with the strangers sitting next to them had a more pleasurable commute than those who did not.

"Our brains are uniquely equipped to connect with the minds of others, and that connection is a major source, maybe even the dominant source, of well-being for us," Epley says. "It's critical to our mental health and also surprisingly powerful for our physical health."

Epley's research, which is funded by the National Science Foundation and the Templeton Foundation, has been published in both the mainstream media and peer-reviewed journals. He is the recipient of the 2018 Career Trajectory Award from the Society for Experimental Social Psychology, the 2015 Book Prize for the Promotion of Social and Personality Science, the 2011 Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology from the American Psychological Association, and the 2008 Theoretical Innovation Award from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. He was named a Professor to Watch by the *Financial Times*, one of the World's Best 40 under 40 Business School Professors by Poets and Quants, and one of the 100 Most Influential in Business Ethics in 2015 by Ethisphere.



CHRIS LAKE PHOTOGRAPHY

2020 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Branden Moriarity '07

Branden Moriarity is an associate professor in the Department of Pediatrics/Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology at the University of Minnesota Medical School and the director of the Moriarity Lab, which has garnered widespread attention for its cutting-edge work in preclinical drug testing, genome engineering, gene therapy, and cancer immunotherapy. The lab is known for developing novel cellular therapeutics for the treatment of cancer and genetic diseases.

"I've been interested in cancer research since I started in the sciences," Moriarity says. "Everyone knows someone — or is someone — who has had cancer, so that's what drives me."

St. Olaf gave Moriarity his start in scientific research. While earning a B.A. degree in biology and chemistry with a concentration in biomolecular sciences, he was a research assistant in Professor of Chemistry Doug Beussman's lab and a summer Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) International Research Scholar in the Czech Republic, studying the way certain chemotherapy agents interacted with DNA and publishing a paper on his findings. He also participated in St. Olaf's Biology in South India study abroad program. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in molecular, cellular, developmental biology, and genetics from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 2012, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship from 2012 to 2014.

"I was taught graduate-level science at St. Olaf, especially in my upper-level courses," Moriarity says. "I was surprised during my first year in graduate school to be rehashing what I'd already learned. That allowed me to focus more on my research, and to propel it faster and further."

Throughout his time at St. Olaf, Moriarity was supported by TRIO's Student Support Services (SSS) program, a federally-funded, college retention program designed to help ensure academic success for first-generation students or those from low-income backgrounds.

"The SSS program's impact on me was huge, and I wouldn't be where I am today without it," Moriarity says.

Moriarity also holds academic appointments in three of the University of Minnesota's graduate programs: Microbiology, Immunology, and Cancer Biology; Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology, and Genetics; and the Comparative and Molecular Biosciences. These are in addition to appointments in the university's Stem Cell Institute, the Center for Genome Engineering, and the Masonic Cancer Center, at which he co-directs the Genome Engineering Shared Resource.

Moriarity has authored or co-authored more than 60 peer-reviewed publications on pediatric cancers, osteosarcomas, cancer immunotherapy, and genome engineering. Among his many awards are recent honors from the University of Minnesota, including a McKnight Land-Grant Professorship, an Early Innovator Award, and an Innovator in Translational Research Award. He has received the TRIO Achievement Award from the Midwest Federal TRIO program and Minnesota's Federal TRIO program.

In addition to his demanding research and teaching schedule, Moriarity has started three genome engineering and cancer immunotherapy biotech companies out of the University of Minnesota, including Catamaran Bio, a Boston-based startup that manufactures genetic therapies to treat cancer based on research conducted at the university's medical school. Catamaran Bio recently raised \$42 million in venture capital, a record amount for any company rooted in the university's scientific research. Moriarity was the chief scientific officer of B-MoGen Biotechnologies, which was acquired by Minneapolis-based Bio-Techne Corporation in 2019. He currently is a founder and chief innovation officer of Luminary Therapeutics, which is focused on nonviral autologous CAR-T cell therapies.

"These companies allow us to place critical focus on designing and engineering new therapies, and then getting them to the clinic safely," Moriarity says. "They're providing hope."

2020 OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Michael Solhaug '67

Pediatric nephrologist and Vietnam War veteran Michael Solhaug has led a remarkable life of service as a humanitarian and healer. His distinguished career in pediatric medicine includes work as a clinician at Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk, Virginia, and as an educator and administrator at Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS). He was among a handful of Vietnam vets on the first Operation Smile medical missionary team to visit Vietnam in 1989 to provide corrective facial surgery to thousands of children, returning to the country on three subsequent trips with the organization in 1990, 2007, and 2014.

"I was able to use my skill and my heart in a different way for the Vietnamese people," Solhaug says. "The missions developed friendship and understanding between the Vietnamese and the Americans, and transformed the vets from soldiers to healers."

A talented hockey and football player, Solhaug graduated from St. Olaf with a B.S. degree in biology and chemistry in 1967 and was inducted into the St. Olaf Athletic Hall of Fame in 2007. While he focused on sports and social activities in college, Solhaug says that, in hindsight, his years at St. Olaf were "incredibly formative."

"I learned the innate worth of every human being and that there is vitality in honest human relationships. St. Olaf also instilled in me the importance of service to others," Solhaug says.

After graduation, Solhaug continued a family tradition of military service, enrolling in the U.S. Navy's Officer Candidate School and volunteering for Swift Boat duty in Vietnam. He spent most of 1969

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2021 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Jason DeRose '97

Journalist and National Public Radio Western Bureau Chief Jason DeRose believes in the power of journalism to tell people's stories authentically.

"People should be characters in their own stories, not anecdotes," he says. "Their experiences, feelings, and beliefs should be taken seriously. Public radio and other forms of nonprofit journalism are mission driven, rather than profit driven, which enables us to connect with the people at the heart of any story."

DeRose, who holds a B.A. in English and religion, *magna cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, from St. Olaf and a master's of divinity degree from the University of Chicago, has worked in radio since high school. At St. Olaf, he worked as a technical board operator at WCAL for NPR's *All Things Considered*, while also studying literature, history, philosophy, religion, and the arts in the interdisciplinary Great Conversation program.

"Great Con was a deep dive into what it means to be human, and working at WCAL was a fantastic hands-on experience, and where I first learned how to do much of what I do now, professionally," DeRose says. During college, he interned on NPR's Washington Desk in Washington, D.C., where he also temped as a producer on *All Things Considered*.

As western bureau chief, DeRose oversees and edits news coverage from member station reporters and freelancers in California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii. He also edits NPR's coverage of religion and LGBTQ rights. He previously was a business editor at the network during the Great Recession of 2009-10 and an editor on the NPR midday news program, *Day to Day*. Prior to joining NPR, DeRose worked as a reporter and editor at WBEZ in Chicago and KPLU in Seattle.

Over the course of his career, DeRose has reported on stories of national importance, such as views toward Islam in post-9/11 America and clergy sex abuse in the Catholic Church. "In covering important issues, journalism can have a lasting impact and do good in the world," he says.

While in college, DeRose also interned as an oral history interviewer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and was a journalism trainer at the International Center for Journalists. He has taught journalism ethics, radio reporting, multimedia storytelling, and religion reporting at DePaul University in Chicago and at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

DeRose holds leadership roles at his church, St. Paul's Lutheran in Santa Monica, California, where he works with LGBTQ pastoral ministry interns. He also supervises interns at NPR and regularly



ALLISON SHELLEY / NPR

"I learned the innate worth of every human being and that there is vitality in honest human relationships. St. Olaf also instilled in me the importance of service to others."

— MIKE SOLHAUG '67

in command of a five-man patrol crew. He was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat V for valor during a 1969 riverine operation, and later received the Navy Commendation Medal for valor and meritorious service. He currently serves on the Swift Boat Sailors Association Board of Directors.

Solhaug says his wartime experiences in Vietnam shaped his desire to become a doctor. In an essay at the time of his 30th St. Olaf Reunion in 1997, Solhaug wrote, "I witnessed the extremes of human behavior... and also discovered the nobility of the human spirit ... especially [in] the children. [They seemed to be saying,] I am strong enough to heal, if you will be my healer."

After a stint as a middle school substitute science teacher further cemented his passion for working with children, Solhaug attended the University of Minnesota Medical School, earning an M.D. in 1975. He began his career working jointly as a specialist at CHKD and in primary care at Tidewater Children's Associates in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Solhaug founded CHKD's pediatric nephrology department to provide specialty care to children with acute and chronic kidney-related diseases, and has served as both its medical director and academic director. He currently is professor of physiology and professor of pediatrics at EVMS, where he has conducted National Institutes of Health-funded research. He is vice chair of education in the Department of Physiological Sciences, and his past administrative roles include associate dean positions in academic affairs and admissions, as well as serving as president of the Faculty Senate, among others.

Medical school admissions work has been particularly satisfying for Solhaug. "Helping young men and women find pathways to medicine is important to me," he says. He shares that passion with St. Olaf, mentoring students as they prepare for medical school, including 15 Oles who have attended EVMS. His service to St. Olaf also includes mentoring student-athletes, supporting the Ice Arena project, and serving as co-chair of his 50th Reunion committee.

teaches the art of storytelling at Holden Village, a retreat center in Washington State's Cascade Mountains. He has been on Holden's board of directors since 2009.

DeRose remains engaged with St. Olaf through his friendships with several of his former professors and his participation in alumni travel programs. He recently was part of an alumni panel on journalism careers and supports both the Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion and the Great Conversation.

2021 OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Kristen Rosdahl Ehresmann '84

Epidemiologist Kristen Rosdahl Ehresmann has led a life of service guided by an abiding faith and servant ethic. As director of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control Division of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), she believes the role of public health is to foster strong and healthy communities.

"Every person matters, and we care for them, no matter their circumstances," she says. "That mission fits with my faith perspective — following the commandments of love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself — and helps me fulfill who I was meant to be."

Ehresmann has spent her entire career at MDH, where she is currently responsible for its HIV/STD, tuberculosis, refugee health, and immunization programs, as well as its activities related to emerging infection and infection prevention and foodborne, waterborne, and zoonotic diseases. Her research and publications have focused on vaccine-preventable disease in both children and adults. She is a recipient of MDH's Achievement Award and its Star Honors Award for Exceptional Leadership.

As an educator, Ehresmann holds an adjunct faculty position at the University of Minnesota and, until 2020, held a community faculty position at Metropolitan State University, which honored her with a Faculty Excellence Award in 2009. She regularly appears in statewide media and before the state legislature to discuss public health initiatives. "The liberal arts were foundational in teaching me to communicate effectively, as a large part of my job is educating others on the science of infectious diseases and their prevention," she says.

Ehresmann's team at the MDH has been particularly visible during the pandemic, assisting in the planning and coordination for the prevention, management, and mitigation of COVID-19. The work has been equally difficult and rewarding, she says. "My motivation is that we've helped people be healthier by preventing disease and death."

While earning a bachelor of science degree in nursing from St. Olaf, Ehresmann studied abroad in Vellore, India. The experience piqued her interest in working in public health.

"Working in India transformed my worldview and awakened my desire to 'get upstream,'" she says, referring to the health care approach that examines and addresses root causes rather than symptoms to improve outcomes. After graduation, Ehresmann volunteered for Eat Smart for Your Heart, a summer community outreach program geared toward encouraging healthy eating and activities to improve heart health, an experience that further cemented her desire to go into public health.

She has worked as a registered nurse at several hospitals and clinics and earned a master's in public health in epidemiology from the University of Minnesota in 1990. She began her career at MDH as a graduate student worker and has risen through the ranks to her current position as division director. "I've had a lot of continuity in my career," she says, noting how much she's enjoyed working with many dedicated science professionals over the years.

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"The liberal arts were foundational in teaching me to communicate effectively, as a large part of my job is educating others on the science of infectious diseases and their prevention."

— KRIS EHRESMANN '84

At the national level, Ehresmann is a member of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials Infectious Disease Policy Committee and the National Vaccine Advisory Committee and is a liaison member of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee. She also is a voting member of the Council for Outbreak Response: Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial-Resistant Pathogens. From 2008 to 2012, Ehresmann was a voting member of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

Ehresmann has been a consistent steward of St. Olaf, hosting interns at MDH and giving lectures in the nursing program, as well as volunteering with the Piper Center for Vocation and Career for events related to health care.

2021 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

David Rose '89

David Rose's peripatetic career highlights the value of his liberal arts education. Since graduating in 1989, he has been a five-time technology entrepreneur, an MIT educator, a two-time author, and an international speaker. He is an expert in digital product innovation for the Internet of Things, inventing products that help millions of people every day.



"I'm always interested in emerging categories," Rose says. "I'm constantly thinking about how technology might improve people's lives." Recently he has been working on using augmented reality to show people things they otherwise find hard to visualize or imagine, such as more sustainable landscapes or new designs for walkable cities.

Rose recently assembled a team to create ClearWater AR, the first augmented reality experience for boating and fishing. The company is developing smart tech that helps people see underwater topography and the location of fish, and increases the visibility of hazard buoys in low light and fog.

"Augmented reality can paint a 'Yellow Brick Road' on the water to help people navigate more safely," Rose says.

Rose has worked as an innovation consultant to invent new products for Fortune 500 companies and founded five companies across the consumer electronics, health care, and social shopping industries. He was vice president for vision technology at Warby Parker, where he developed an online vision testing business and a virtual try-on app. Most recently, as a futurist at EPAM Continuum, he created prototypes with emerging technologies, such as computer vision for at-home physical therapy, and affective computing to help autonomous cars understand driver attention.

Rose's computer vision company, Ditto Labs, developed tools to identify products in shared photos and videos so that people could "ditto" their friends and shop for similar items. His health care company, Vitality, invented the GlowCap, smart medication packaging that nudges people to take prescription medications for diabetes or transplants. His other companies have created products for digital photo sharing, interactive science museum exhibits, and smart toys like Guitar Hero and LEGO Mindstorms. His company Ambient Devices fused physical product design with digital connectivity in the Ambient Orb, which changes color to represent information, such as weather forecasts, stock market trends, energy consumption, blood sugar levels, and number of steps walked.

Rose holds a bachelor's degree in physics and studio art from St. Olaf and a master's of education from Harvard University. During his time on the Hill, he sang in the St. Olaf Choir and was the photo editor of the *Mess*.

"St. Olaf is an incredible sandbox," Rose says. "I nurtured so many interests. The liberal arts made me curious and interested in diving down the rabbit hole about everything. Whether it was physics, art history, architecture, Eastern religions, or music, St. Olaf offered a depth and rigor that made each subject irresistible."

Rose's first book, *Enchanted Objects: Design, Human Desire, and the Internet of Things*, is a blueprint for a future filled with animate everyday objects. His second book, *SuperSight*, explores the impact of computer vision and smart glasses. He has taught at the MIT's Media Lab, Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, Yale University's Graduate School of Design, and the Copenhagen Interaction Design Institute in Denmark. He holds five patents, and his inventions have been featured at the Museum of Modern Art, in the *New York Times*, *Wired*, and the *Economist*, and on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*.

2021 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Tony Miller '89

Entrepreneur Tony Miller is founder and managing partner of Lemhi Ventures, which leverages venture capital to change the health care services industry. Lemhi's portfolio includes 15 companies that utilize disruptive innovation, technology, and data to deliver better health outcomes, lower costs, and greater control to people over their health care decisions.

"We work to change the products of health insurance, not the operating side of it," Miller says. Lemhi's first two venture capital funds raised \$450 million, which is fully invested. The firm is currently in the process of raising its third fund.

Until June 2021, Miller was the founder and CEO of Bind Benefits, Inc., a Lemhi-invested company that partnered with UnitedHealth Group to pioneer personalized health plans that allow people to pay for coverage and services as they need them. Previously, he was co-founder and CEO of another Lemhi-invested company, Carol Corp., which introduced health care shopping and provider comparison tools for consumers.

Miller calls himself an "accidental Ole." His first choice had been to go to the University of North Carolina, but St. Olaf afforded him the chance to compete on the football and track teams for all four years. "Playing sports at St. Olaf was a phenomenal experience that I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else," he says. "My teammates are still some of my best friends." He earned a bachelor's degree in biology and went on to earn a master's degree in kinesiology from the University of Illinois. He also holds an M.B.A. from Cornell University.

His early career includes a stint as a wellness coordinator for Medica Health Plans — an

experience that opened his eyes to how health insurance might be restructured, he says. He also worked at UnitedHealth Group and for Deloitte and Touche, where his main project was helping Kaiser Permanente buy and sell health plans nationwide. "All of those experiences

exposed me to the inner workings of the health care services industry, and how its products might be improved," Miller says. "I started to wonder, 'What if the consumer was more in control of the dollars spent on health care?' " That curiosity led Miller to co-found Definity Health in 1998, which became a pioneer and national leader in consumer-driven health benefit programs, before it was sold to UnitedHealth in 2007.

Miller regularly shares career advice with St. Olaf students as a guest lecturer in St. Olaf's Interim entrepreneurship class, taught by St. Olaf Entrepreneur in Residence Sian Muir.

"I tell the students that even though I have a business degree, everything I apply in business I learned from the liberal arts," Miller says. "Cornell taught me the hard skills of business, like finance and microeconomics, but the liberal arts foundation I got at St. Olaf helped me develop a questioning perspective that is nuanced and analytical. It taught me to have a point of view and to be purpose driven in using my skills to be part of the solutions to societal problems." 🍷

MARLA HILL HOLT '88 is a regular contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*.



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1960s

Roger Aus '62 has edited and contributed to a collection of 19 essays featured in *Haggadah in Early Judaism and the New Testament*. He writes, "At 80, this will probably be my last book. But who knows?"

■ **Irene (Renee) Gubrud Finch '66**, a gifted musician and singer, passed away unexpectedly on Nov. 3, 2020, from a pulmonary embolism following abdominal surgery. "Irene was a wonderful woman, and a deeply spiritual woman of great compassion," says her longtime friend **Anton Armstrong '78**. "She overcame a major physical disability to pursue an illustrious performing and teaching career." At age 15, Irene suffered spinal cord nerve injuries in a carnival ride accident in her hometown of Canby, Minn. Diagnosed as a partial paraplegic, she walked with the aid of forearm crutches for the rest of her life. After receiving her B.S.M. at St. Olaf, Irene studied at The Juilliard School for her master's degree in vocal performance. While at Juilliard, she won the Concert Artists Guild First Prize, an award that included a debut recital at Carnegie Recital Hall. During her career, she sang with every major American symphony orchestra as well as many European ensembles. She received numerous awards and honors throughout her career, including First Prize in the prestigious Naumburg International Voice Competition. She taught classes in meditation and was artist-faculty at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Sought out as a voice teacher, she taught privately and served as adjunct on the faculties of Columbia University and Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music. Irene received the Distinguished Alumni Award from St. Olaf in 1981 and an honorary doctorate from Concordia College, in Moorhead, Minn. She is survived by her husband of 36 years, Steve Finch, as well as three brothers and their families, who all deeply loved her.



1970s

Stephen Solum '70 has an announcement: "I am retired!" ■ **Betsy Tudor Nelson '77** writes, "When the country went into lockdown last year, friends from the classes of 1976, '77, and '78 started a weekly Zoom to stay in touch and help each other through uncertain times. St. Olaf Zoom Happy Hour has met every week for 58 weeks, and will continue for the foreseeable future!" Pictured, L-R (bottom row): **Rick Viken '76**, **LaRaye Osborne '78**; (middle row) **Dale Ness '76**, **Mike Lane '76**, John Wang; (top row) **Bob Nelson '78**, **Betsy Tudor Nelson '77**, **Anne Frank Jones '76**, **Karen Petersen**, **Bret Petersen '76**. ■ **Beth Tweet Nevala '77** is the recipient of the 2021 Lynn Mielke Distinguished Educator Award for her commitment to students and their families. Beth has spent 16 years working with students in grades 6-8 who have emotional and behavioral disorders. She was nominated by an unprecedented number of her peers and team members for this award. ■ **Tara Koch McAdams '78** shares, "As proof that God has a sense of humor, I spent the pandemic earning my M.A. in theology from Wartburg Seminary, [graduating] in May 2021 by Zoom. I'm a late-in-life Lutheran but learned there's no time limit on finding your faith. After a long career in global corporate communications, I'm now a communications consultant at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, Minn. Long live lifelong learning!"



1980s

John "Radar" Reinan '80, a news reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, was a member of the reporting team awarded a Pulitzer Prize for

breaking news coverage of the murder of George Floyd and its aftermath. ■ **Bonnie Campbell '81** writes, "After several years with the National Park Service Inventory and Monitoring Program as data manager for the National Capitol Region Network, I was recently selected as the first regional data manager for the South Atlantic-Gulf Coast and Mississippi Basin region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [I'm] focused on extending the impact of scientific data across the service and ensuring compliance with federal regulations."

2000s

The Rabbit Listened, a picture book by **Cori Doerrfeld Page '01**, made the *New York Times* Bestseller list! ■ **Sara Himmerich '04** has earned her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Northern Illinois University, and has begun her postdoctoral fellowship in primary care mental health integration at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. ■ **Ariel Nereson '08** was awarded a 2021 Dance Research Fellowship by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts's Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Selected from a robust pool of applicants, Ariel will join other researchers and dance artists in exploring the complex relationship between dance and democracy. ■ **Joanna Cullen '09** writes, "In late March 2021, after over 10 years with the same organization, I accepted a new position with a great small company in Minneapolis called Stone Arch Bridge Group. I am serving as a technical product manager (and an agile product owner) to grow and support their 'Journey121' marketing platform. After several months in this role, I could not be more pleased to have made this move."





ALUMNI & FAMILY TRAVEL

Alumni, parents, and friends of the college, why let St. Olaf students have all the fun? You're invited to join St. Olaf professors and like-minded travelers on stimulating adventures that broaden perspectives and celebrate the joy of learning. Get all the information you need at stolaf.edu/travel. Here's a sampling of what's coming up.

Monarchs in Mexico

Led by David Schalliol & Molly Hanse
February 13–19, 2022

Patagonia in Depth: Hiking, Glaciers, Culture, and More

Led by Dave '80 & Pat Van Wylen '80
March 15–28, 2022

Struggle for Civil Rights: Religion, Race, and the Work for Justice in the American South

Led by David Booth & Ann Tobin
April 5–14, 2022

Croatia & Slovenia: Hiking, Biking, Kayaking, Waterfalls, and so much more

Led by Michon & David Weeks | May 31–June 12, 2022

Wilderness Adventure in the Boundary Waters

Led by Judy Tegtmeyer & Wes Braker '18
June 12–18, 2022

Journey to the Holy Land

Led by Peder Jothan & Kaethe Schwehn | June 15–27, 2022

Theater in London

Led by Diana Postlethwaite & Paul Thiboutot
September 9–18, 2022

2010s

Sofia Lindgren Galloway '13 is newly enrolled in the M.A./M.F.A. program in theater education and applied theater at Emerson College in Boston. She expects to complete both degrees by the spring of 2024. ■ **Zenko Jordan Montgomery '13** ① was ordained as a Soto Zen priest earlier this spring, in the lineage of Shuryu Suzuki Roshi. The ordination took place at central California's Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, the oldest Zen monastery outside Asia. Zenko has practiced there since 2015. ■ Mezzo-soprano **Alma Neuhaus '18** ② graduated from the Juilliard School with a master of music degree in voice. Recent engagements include MetLiveArts, Lincoln Center Restart Stages, the New York Philharmonic, and Juilliard Opera. Alma will join the Music Academy of the West as a 2021

Vocal Fellow and the 2021 Bach Roots Festival as a featured soloist. ■ **Jenna Castillo '19** writes, "I am joining the University of Washington's Sociology Ph.D. program starting in Fall 2021! First-generation college graduate, first-generation on my way to earning my doctorate. #TRIOworks!"

2020s

In late May, **Douglas John "Jack" O'Hara III '20** joined the Class of 2020 in a celebratory on-campus commencement ceremony that had been canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic. ③ Jack shared a special moment with his grandma, **Ruth "Tulla" Froiland Hansen '45**, who is 98 years young, and his parents, **Doug '84 and Pam Hansen O'Hara '84**. 🐣



①



②



③

On the Shelf

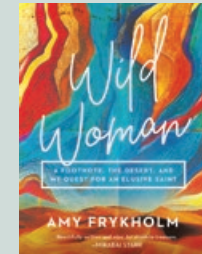
NEW BOOKS BY ALUMNI & FACULTY



Thinking Algebraically: An Introduction to Abstract Algebra (American Mathematical Society, June 2021), by **Thomas Sibley '73**



The Adventure of Mr. Mouse (Amazon, March 2021), by **David Schulenberg '90**



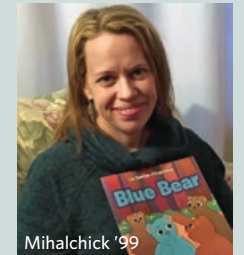
Wild Woman (Broadleaf, August 2021), by **Amy Johnson Frykholm '93**

Blue Bear (Fulton Books, Feb. 2021), by **Elizabeth Bester Mihalchick '99**

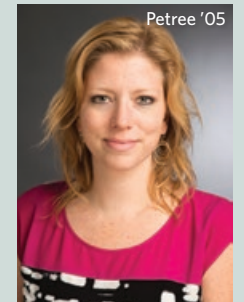
College Ready (Wise Action, June 2021), by **Chelsea Petree '05**

Hope in the Darkness: Finding the light after the trauma of rape (Self Published, July 2021), by **Carrie Manke '06**

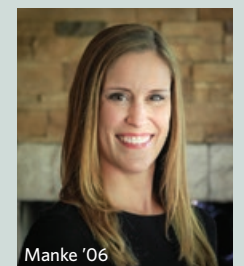
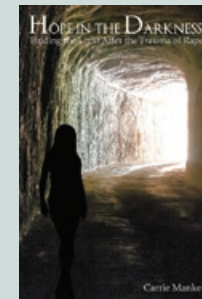
Dovetails in Tall Grass (SparkPress, Aug. 2021), by **Samantha Lundgren Specks '10**



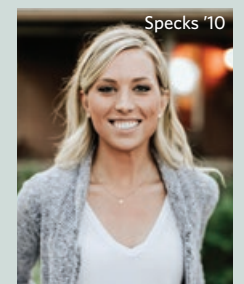
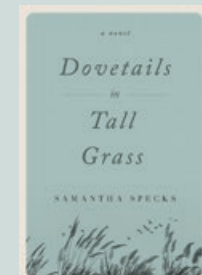
Mihalchick '99



Petree '05



Manke '06



Specks '10

Meet the St. Olaf Fund Board



BY JULIE WRASE '82

THE ST. OLAF FUND BOARD supports St. Olaf College and its students, working to increase giving through the St. Olaf Fund. The board plays a vital role in personally engaging alumni and family members through volunteer work focused on peer-to-peer solicitation. The St. Olaf Fund Board, comprised of alumni and parent volunteers, provides support and guidance to the overall St. Olaf Fund volunteer program and serves as a sounding board, representing the alumni and parent communities.

We'd like to thank all our volunteers, as well as our former St. Olaf Fund Board members: Catherine Wierz '90; Carolyn Major '98, secretary; Leslie Nelson-Abell '08; Rosemary and Mike Dunigan P'20; and Clayton Smith Jelinek '10, St. Olaf Fund Board chair 2018-20.

And we'd like to introduce our current St. Olaf Fund Board members and share their reasons for serving.

Holly Butka P'18, '21 is an Ole parent from Chesterfield, Missouri. "St. Olaf provided my daughters the chance to learn, travel, and develop relationships that will last their lifetimes, and I want others to have similar opportunities."

Scott Douglas '74, P'01, '05 is the St. Olaf Fund Board vice chair and a retired high school principal. "Fundraising opens opportunities for Oles to receive a liberal arts education and make a positive impact one Ole at a time."

Duane Engstrom '53, P '77, '79, '82 is a retired family physician. "I have volunteered for the St. Olaf Fund for 42 years."

Jan Olson Estep '78 is the retired CEO of Nacha, administrator of the ACH payment network. "I 'learned to learn' at St. Olaf, and it has served me well throughout a career of continuous learning. It is time to give back to St. Olaf."

Dan Frankenfeld '15 is a learning and development professional in the Twin Cities. "I joined the St. Olaf Fund Board to advocate for more mindful solicitation of young alumni and to promote a vision of [a] St. Olaf [that is] financially equipped to become more inclusive and equitable."

Kayleen Seidl Hecksher '13 is an actress and voice teacher in New York City. "The music training I received [at St. Olaf] gave me the skills and confidence to follow my dreams, so I want to do everything I can to help current and future Oles follow their dreams."

John Hegg '63 is a professional school counselor. "[As a school counselor], I was made aware of many qualified students who would have made excellent Oles but had financial constraints. My passion and the St. Olaf Fund Board's mission is to help make an Ole education possible."

Carlton Holte '67 is a technical editor in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "Working with the St. Olaf Fund Board gives me a chance to tell friends and classmates about today's Oles and how our gifts support their futures."

Beth Cadwallader Horsager '85 is the St. Olaf Fund Board secretary and a foreign language translator and educator living in St. Paul. "St. Olaf prepares its students to be global citizens and builders of community, and I want to be sure that this continues."

Calvin Hussman '90 is vice president for Alumni and Development at Lawrence University. "I am grateful to St. Olaf College for providing the foundation for happiness in my career and personal life."

Ronald Pechauer '59, P'88, '91, is retired. "St. Olaf prepared me to be a citizen of the world! The St. Olaf Fund is one way to assure that current and future students continue to experience this."

Matthew Schneider '99 is a CleanTech executive living near Pasadena, California. "I joined the St. Olaf Fund Board to support Oles who, through their vocations, change lives daily."

Laura Wilkinson Behrens '04 lives and works in Washington, D.C. "I serve on the St. Olaf Fund Board because, like others did for me, I want to help ensure current and future Oles are able to have great experiences and opportunities."

Julie Wrase '82 is the St. Olaf Fund Board chair and an attorney from Little Canada, Minnesota. "St. Olaf prepared me well for life and my career, and I want others to have similar opportunities."



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Future Oles

Erin Carlson '00, a son, Ethan
 Amy Bonhag Pignatore '02 and Nick Pignatore, a daughter, Silje **8**
 Kate Bennett Farnum '04 and TJ Farnum, a son, Wesley
 Heather Austin '06 and Austin Bentley '05, a son, William **3**
 Christine Hinrichs Garrison '06 and Ollie Garrison '06, a daughter, Greta
 Travis Mattson '06 and Natalie Mattson, a daughter, Hadley **2**
 Kyla Taylor '06 and Aaron Taylor, a son, Leo **6**
 Jenna Landsom Paulsen '07 and Joseph Paulsen '07, a son, Arlo **1**
 Anna Nordstrom Arnold '08 and Seth Arnold, a daughter, Gwendolyn
 Abby Lane '08 and Adam Gerber, a daughter, Hannah
 Amber Gilbertson Grochocinski '09 and Geoffrey Grochocinski, a son, Griffin
 Martina Link Richardson '09 and James Richardson, a daughter, Charlotte
 Rachel Schwabe Fry Lowe '10 and Thomas Lowe, a son, Evan
 Abby Benson Kemper '11 and Joseph Kemper '11, a daughter, Cecilia
 Deanne Schmidt Harris '12 and Jeffrey Harris '13, a daughter, Avery **5**
 Lindsay Kubina Lanz '12 and Zack Lanz, a son, Finn **4**
 Juliette Gibes Sponsel '14 and James Sponsel '12, a son, Ashton **7**
 Mandy Sirek Stone '14 and Carl Stone '12, a son, Carl
 Reilly Quirk Orner '15 and Joe Orner, a son, Lucas
 Nick Stumo Langer '15 and Katlyn Arndt, a son, August
 Alex Lebens Carlson '16 and Nathaniel Carlson '15, a daughter, Lillian

Weddings

Franny Gustafson Joshi '07 and Gaurav Joshi, June 26, 2021
 Katherine Abell King '11 and Timothy King, May 15, 2021
 David Kirkhoff '15 and Gretchen Osdoba, Aug. 28, 2021
 Stephanie Kisch Anderson '16 and Brent Anderson, April 10, 2021
 Sarah De Vries Alexander '17 and Addison Alexander, April 10, 2021
 Rebekah Thomas Cochrane '18 and Maddy Cochrane, May 31, 2019
 Naomi Porter Froeschle '18 and Ben Porter Froeschle '19, July 11, 2021

Deaths

Agnes "Elaine" Wiger Branham '40, Rice Lake, Wis., March 26, 2021
 Helen Rafshol Curry '42, Bloomington, Minn., Feb. 11, 2019
 Jeanne Nelson Andersen '43, Atlanta, March 30, 2021
 Ruth Mutchler Thompson '43, Northwood, N.D., March 18, 2021
 Harriet Nilsen Atkins '44, Mount Angel, Ore., April 5, 2021
 *Blake Sower '44, Saint Paul, Minn., May 16, 2021
 *Donald "Don" Flom '45, West Fargo, N.D., May 1, 2021
 Jeanne Esp Lombardy '45, Billings, Mont., June 17, 2021
 Gordon Stone '45, Thousand Oaks, Calif., April 18, 2021
 Hjordis Gornitzka Asper '46, Chimaquum, Wash., May 24, 2018
 Ruth Skinsnes Jacobson '46, Edina, Minn., July 7, 2021
 Jeanette "Jen" Wieman Madsen '46, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, July 7, 2021

- Patricia "Pat" Anderson Soulen '46, Hopkins, Minn., April 24, 2021
 Melba Tenney Tengesdal '46, Appleton, Wis., April 16, 2021
 *John "Dick" Utne '46, La Jolla, Calif., May 30, 2021
 Barbara Quandahl Vorhes '46, Altoona, Wis., Aug. 20, 2021
 Marion Hanson Beatty '47, Waterloo, Iowa, April 29, 2021
 Doris Tanner '47, Richville, Minn., Dec. 8, 2017
 Louise Knutson Maakestad '48, Story City, Iowa, July 19, 2021
 Ruth Wekseth Yeary '48, Phoenix, Aug. 1, 2021
 Bonnie Kouba Erdahl '49, Sisseton, S.D., June 28, 2021
 Alice Morden Gravatt '49, Ashburn, Va., Aug. 13, 2021
 Bernice Schutte Lowell '49, Newtown, Conn., June 21, 2021
 *Matt Ruohoniemi '49, St. Paul, Minn., April 6, 2021
 Alvhiid "Avy" Slen Sherve '49, Stevensville, Mont., Aug. 12, 2021
 *David "Dave" Finanger '50, Merrill, Wis., June 2, 2021
 Rachel Husom '50, St. Paul, Minn., July 20, 2021
 Adah-Marie Sathe Jefferis '50, Castroville, Texas, April 13, 2021
 Borghild "Bonnie" Skepstad Jeter '50, Blaine, Wash., Oct. 19, 2019
 Norris Sandvold '50, Honolulu, July 28, 2021
 *Roger Schoening '50, New York City, June 5, 2021
 Edward Thompson '50, Northbrook, Ill., June 26, 2021
 Marjorie Birkeland Baumgartner '51, San Juan Capistrano, Calif., April 7, 2021
 Janet "Jan" Kelly Dyste '51, Minneapolis, May 13, 2021
 Gloria Gullicksrud Griffin '51, Minneapolis, May 13, 2021
 William "Bud" Heiam '51, Cook, Minn., Aug. 6, 2021
 Bette Anderson Hendrickson '51, Bismarck, N.D., Aug. 5, 2021
 Elizabeth "Beth" Reu Johnston '51, Conyers, Ga., Aug. 14, 2021
 Roald Kindem '51, Burnsville, Minn., April 28, 2021
 *Richard "Dick" Klein '51, Tahuya, Wash., Feb. 28, 2021
 Marilyn Skarstad Small '51, Minneapolis, May 15, 2019
 Ruth Larson Budke '52, Asheville, N.C., Nov. 4, 2020
 Paul Hansen '52, St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 30, 2020
 James "Jim" Heinecke '52, Austin, Texas, Dec. 13, 2020
 Lillian Heikkila Lehto '52, Birmingham, Mich., Aug. 1, 2021
 *Norman "Norm" Midthun '52, Excelsior, Minn., July 24, 2021
 Marion Engelstad Rice '52, Malvern, Pa., May 20, 2021
 Wallace Small '52, Moorhead, Minn., Dec. 12, 2020
 Nancy Knutsen St. Marie '52, Beaverton, Ore., March 29, 2021
 Alvilda "Polly" Albertson Fagre '53, Middleton, Wis., April 30, 2021
 Marion Miller Iverson '53, Raleigh, N.C., Jan. 20, 2021
 *Jerald "Jerry" Johnson '53, Owatonna, Minn., May 18, 2021
 Paul Johnson '53, Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 26, 2021
 Herman "Herm" Maltrud '53, Los Alamos, N.M., July 23, 2021
 Dorothy Carlson Ostlie '53, Northfield, Minn., Aug. 19, 2021
 *Merlin Bauer '54, Northfield, Minn., June 26, 2021
 Marlene Hustad Engstrom '54, Northfield, Minn., April 11, 2021
 Dolores Severson Evans '54, Tucson, Ariz., Jan. 17, 2021
 Reuben Jessop '54, Rescue, Calif., June 10, 2021
 Frances Fisher Limber '54, Spokane, Wash., June 27, 2021
 Charlotte Straub Roe '54, Silverdale, Wash., July 17, 2021
 *Gerald "Gerry" Simonson '54, Denver, April 23, 2021
 *John Almlie '55, St. Paul, Minn., June 24, 2021
 Reuben "Rube" Groehler '55, Edina, Minn., April 5, 2021
 Oscar Ness '55, Lake Mills, Iowa, May 23, 2021
 Lola Fluttum Reckoff '55, Canby, Minn., May 21, 2021
 Mary Vogtsberger Bergquist '56, Bloomington, Minn., Aug. 13, 2021
 Amy Liu Jasinski '56, Pensacola, Fla., May 13, 2021
 Mary Johnson '56, Rockford, Ill., May 16, 2021
 Theodore "Ted" Spreiter '56, Broken Arrow, Okla., June 3, 2021
 Constance "Connie" Stephenson Stensaas '56, New Hope, Minn., July 25, 2021
 *Allan Hartzell '57, Sioux Falls, S.D., May 3, 2021
 *Alan Zelm '57, Stoughton, Wis., Dec. 15, 2020
 *Charles "Chuck" Anderson '58, Lodi, Calif., April 12, 2021
 *Larry David '58, Thousand Oaks, Calif., Feb. 16, 2021
 Ernest "Daniel" Eckberg '58, Edina, Minn., June 25, 2021
 Jane Arnold Henderson '58, Pittsburgh, July 9, 2021
 Armond Paulson '58, Austin, Texas, April 23, 2021
 Carol Vatland Thomas '58, Porter, Texas, June 5, 2021
 Janice Johnson Tweet '58, Eden Prairie, Minn., June 13, 2021
 *David "Dave" Valen '58, Minneapolis, Aug. 2, 2021
 *Robert Carlson '59, Bemidji, Minn., July 27, 2021
 Judith "Judy" Olson Friess '59, Rice Lake, Wis., July 1, 2021
 Shirley Hoegger McGiffin '59, Barron, Wis., May 10, 2021
 Joanne Thronson Thomas '59, Dassel, Minn., July 13, 2021
 Sandra Petersen Anderson '60, Austin, Minn., July 15, 2021
 Theodore "Ted" Greenfield '60, St. Paul, Minn., July 7, 2021
 Dorothy Mork Monger '60, Corona Del Mar, Calif., Aug. 9, 2020
 *Roger Vanhooser '60, Waynesboro, Va., April 29, 2021
 Sylvia Sanders White '60, Wenatchee, Wash., May 4, 2021
 Dennis Davis '61, Great Falls, Mont., April 8, 2021
 Marion Huss Sides '61, Apple Valley, Minn., April 13, 2021
 John Sylwester '61, Arlington, Minn., May 17, 2021
 *Wayne Anderson '62, Rollins, Mont., July 25, 2021
 Barbara "Barb" Felstul Tollakson '62, Fridley, Minn., Jan. 31, 2021
 Kathryn "Kathy" Folkmann Jones '63, Mason City, Iowa, March 29, 2021
 Charles Mann '64, Richmond, Calif., July 28, 2021
 Robert "Bob" Munson '64, Maple Grove, Minn., March 11, 2021
 Kathryn Torske Nielsen '64, Sunndalsøra, Norway, April 3, 2021
 Marvin Schrimpf '64, Bella Vista, Ark., May 27, 2021
 Paul Eastman '65, Phoenix, June 27, 2021
 *Clark Hampe '65, Tyler, Texas, July 2, 2021
 Harold "Pete" Happe '65, La Crescenta, Calif., May 4, 2020
 Patricia "Pat" Aarestad Anderson '66, Wausau, Wis., May 10, 2021
 Jera Rasmussen Miller '67, Tucson, Ariz., June 16, 2021
 *Roland "Larry" Schwandt '67, Fort Mill, S.C., May 23, 2021
 Susan Johnson Wilkinson '67, Minneapolis, May 23, 2021
 Karen Kolb '68, Omaha, Neb., Aug. 5, 2021
 Joan Olson Sutterlin '68, Ottumwa, Iowa, March 26, 2021
 Sally Bay Bartlett '70, Orange Park, Fla., March 26, 2021
 Delaine "Del" Zempel '70, Starbuck, Minn., May 18, 2021
 Jeanine "Jeannie" Droen '71, Salem, Wis., July 31, 2021
 Douglas "Doug" Koons '71, St. Paul, Minn., June 11, 2021
 Richard Lilleberg '71, Park Ridge, Ill., Oct. 22, 2017
 Michael "Mike" Peterson '71, Minneapolis, June 14, 2021
 *Loren "Al" Fering '72, Des Moines, Iowa, July 7, 2021
 Joan Knutson Hoffman '72, Owatonna, Minn., May 8, 2021
 David Lindemann '72, Inver Grove Heights, Minn., Oct. 15, 2016
 Scott Palm '72, Cambridge, Minn., July 8, 2021
 Stephen "Steve" Solomonson '72, Highton Victoria, Australia, July 1, 2021
 Pamela "Pam" Sherwood-Gabrielson '73, Scandia, Minn., May 4, 2021
 Kris Kline '75, St. Paul, Minn., July 8, 2021
 Virginia May '75, Duluth, Minn., March 28, 2021
 Sylvia Gravrock '76, Phoenix, June 22, 2021
 William "Bill" Green '77, Minneapolis, April 13, 2021
 Jane Boehlke Suddendorf '77, Port Washington, Wis., July 4, 2021
 Jeffrey Nierode '80, Sheboygan, Wis., April 6, 2021
 Erick Titrud '80, Moretown, Vt., June 8, 2021
 Susan Medhaug '83, Roseville, Minn., April 14, 2021
 Tammy Lind '88, Braham, Minn., July 16, 2021
 Karen Carr Rosell '95, St. Louis Park, Minn., April 28, 2021
 Andrea Ritland '05, Madison, Wis., Aug. 11, 2021
 Alice Tibbetts '20, St. Paul, Minn., April 15, 2021
 *VETERAN

Kris MacPherson

PROFESSOR EMERITA OF ASIAN STUDIES AND LIBRARIES

Kris MacPherson passed away on June 20, 2021, at North Shore Health Hospital in Grand Marais, Minnesota. She was 68. During her St. Olaf tenure, Kris saw her career as a four-stranded braid, intertwined and interconnected. It encompassed library and information literacy, Asian studies, environmental studies, and relationships with others. Her passions stemmed from early opportunities for experiential learning: camping in the Adirondack Mountains, helping in her school library, and participating as a high school exchange student in Japan, where she lived with a rice farming family that didn't speak English. That last experience spurred her to learn Japanese and piqued her interest in Asian and environmental studies. After earning her B.A. at Earlham College, Kris received a master of library science degree from the University of Michigan and joined the St. Olaf faculty in 1982.

During her 35 years at St. Olaf, she focused the heart of her work on helping students develop strategies that foster research and lifelong learning.

She taught widely, primarily on how to do research in various areas, but also through an interdisciplinary Asian studies course, and she provided



leadership for the St. Olaf Luce Initiative on Asia and the Environment (LIASE) grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. Her love of experiential learning led her to direct summer programs at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in northern Minnesota and to teach a January Interim course based there. She also led three study abroad programs to Asia, as well as an organic farming internship in Japan.

Kris retired from St. Olaf in 2017, recalling the highlights of her time on the Hill: "watching students connect their ideas with the greater scholarly conversation when researching library databases; those times in the woods when they are canoeing or hiking and encounter an environmental issue firsthand; in Asia, watching students use a new language for the first time on location; working with my colleagues to develop a program and implement it successfully."

During her retirement, she and her husband, Tim, lived off-grid on the Gunflint Trail in the northern Minnesota Boundary Waters area, where they built a solar-powered log cabin and enjoyed retirement life, their children, and their grandchildren. Kris was a knitter, a birder, and a baker of desserts. She volunteered at the North House Folk School and was a member of the Library Friends and Northwoods Fiber Guild. When she retired, her colleague Karil Kucero, associate professor of art history and Asian studies, remarked, "With a critical eye and a quick smile, Kris has worked to build both the Asian Studies and Environmental Studies Departments. She has been a patient and thoughtful mentor to faculty, staff, and students alike, and throughout it all, Kris never lost her sense of humor or her candor. She will be sorely missed."

J. Randolph "Randy" Cox '59

LIBRARIAN, PROFESSOR EMERITUS

John Randolph "Randy" Cox passed away on September 14, 2021, at Three Links Care Center in Northfield. Born on Oct. 7, 1936, in Albert Lea, Minn., he graduated from Albert Lea High School in 1955 and St. Olaf College in 1959 before receiving his masters in library science from the University of Minnesota in 1961. Following a short stint at the St. Paul Public Library, Randy returned to St. Olaf in 1962 as a reference librarian and member of the faculty, retiring in 1996. Randy taught one of the first college courses on mystery and detective fiction in the United States and, after retirement, led classes at the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium for many years.

Randy's passion for his interests led him to be an inveterate collector, beginning in childhood, and a highly regarded scholar in several areas. He was a dedicated Sherlockian, invested in the Baker Street Irregulars in 1967 (The Conk-Singleton Forgery Case). He edited the *Dime Novel Round-Up* from 1994 through 2012 and was considered the foremost expert on Nick Carter. Randy served as an editorial advisor to *English Literature in Translation* from 1969 to 2008, was an active member of the American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association from 1984 to 2005, and in 2014 was presented with the Munsey Award for his lifetime's efforts in promoting the pulps. He wrote several books and scores of articles and author profiles for a wide variety of publications.

Randy's collections were extensive, and included crime fiction, old-time radio, dime novels, comic books, juvenile series books, and cartooning. Never shy, he began writing to authors in high school and kept every piece of correspondence. Randy donated material to several universities around the country, with the bulk of his life's work in the Cox Collection at the University of Minnesota. Everyone who knew Randy agreed that he was a kind, gentle, patient, and considerate man who was tremendously generous in sharing his expertise and information with anyone who asked. He was also a faithful Christian who dedicated himself to the Episcopal Church as a lay reader and warden at Holy Cross, Dundas, and All Saints in Northfield.

Upon learning of his death, many of Randy's St. Olaf colleagues remembered him fondly, sharing stories and personal memories of a beloved friend. Professor Emeritus of English Jonathan Hill shared this story: "Some 50 years ago, in a dark lower corridor in the old Rølvaag

Library, I saw a figure coming towards me in a deer-stalker, a heavy coat, and a large pipe in his mouth. I knew better than to express any surprise. But as the figure passed, I noticed a mischievous look on his face, a glint in his eye, an expression which seemed to say, 'Do you actually believe I'm for real?' and he made a loud sucking sound on his pipe. It was Randy, dressed as Sherlock Holmes, making his way to his Interim course on the detective story (an Interim that was always a best seller). That first encounter summed up for me Randy's character: on the one hand, he was



an outstanding, nationally recognized scholar in his field (crime fiction, the dime novel, popular literature); on the other, and how much rarer this is in academe, he took neither himself nor his field too seriously."

Professor Emeritus of English David Wee '61 said Randy "had more Batmania than many of us even knew existed. He was the founder and leader of Northfield's Birdy Edwards Society (I, too, was a member), one

of the scion societies of The Baker Street Irregulars — local groups of Sherlock Holmes fans around the world. And he doubtless holds the all-time record for spending more time in the bowels of Rølvaag Library than anyone. I join the rest of you in missing Randy's eccentric and remarkable presence among us."

Professor Emeritus of Religion Gary Stansell shared this: "In the 1970s, several members of the Religion Department, including and perhaps especially Dit [Harold Ditmanson], talked about the mystery novels they were reading as we drank Charles Wilson's weak coffee he made in the aluminum church-basement style coffee pot. What did a country boy from Texas know about the mystery genre? So, on advice from the cognoscenti, I turned to Randy for advice. 'Have you ever read Robert Parker?' he asked. No, but I followed his advice, learning however that Parker was a step below the loftier levels of, say, a P.T. James. But I was and remain grateful anyhow. From Randy's beloved *Book of Common Prayer*, Burial Rite I: 'Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord; and let perpetual light shine upon him.' "

In addition to Randy's extensive network of friends and associates around the country, he is survived by his brother, James Cox of Albert Lea.

OUR OWN VALENTINO

BY JEFF SAUVE

In 1951, St. Olaf's very own Anthony Dexter (born Walter R. Fleischmann Jr., Class of 1935) starred in the title role of Columbia Pictures' *Valentino*, a lavish Technicolor biopic of the legendary 1920s silent screen heartthrob Rudolph Valentino (1895–1926).

The road from Northfield to Hollywood started for Fleischmann in 1933, when he transferred to St. Olaf from Hebron College in Nebraska. In an interview with *Photoplay* magazine, Fleischmann recalled that his campus debut as an actor was purely accidental. An English major, he registered for a fall term class in play production, believing it would be a “snap.” Plus, the introverted young man figured the experience would provide him with an opportunity to socialize more freely with the young ladies.

The class prepared to present the old English morality play *Everyman* in November, and Fleischmann tried out for the lead role. To his surprise, he got the part. Not only did he discover that acting took real effort, but it was something he enjoyed and for which he had a natural talent.

Fleischmann found himself center stage once again in Frank H. Bernard's melodrama *Silas the Chore Boy*. At 5:30 on the evening of the premiere performance, one of the male cast members informed Elizabeth Walsingham Kelsey, long-time sole theater instructor and director, that he was snowbound in a town nearby and could not make it by curtain time. Kelsey immediately turned to Fleischmann, noting “I locked Walt in a room with a script, and at 8 p.m. he went on the stage, played the full part without missing a cue.”

In the following two years, Fleischmann performed in several other college productions, including Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (fall 1934). With each performance, he worked hard at honing his acting skills. College reviews described him as a “quiet, likable, unassuming young chap” whose stage presence and polished acting skills made him a natural-born performer. As a senior, Fleischmann played the title role in Bjørnson's *Sigurd Jorsalfar* (spring 1935). Kelsey recollected that although Fleischmann did not speak or understand Norwegian, he memorized his lines — word-by-word with proper pronunciation — under the able coaching of two campus

language experts. His performance was first-rate and nearly flawless in delivery and intonation.

Following graduation and leading up to and after his service in World War II, Fleischmann appeared in a few Broadway productions under his legally changed name of Walter Craig. He also toured with actress Mae West's stage company. His big acting break came in 1948, when he was ‘discovered’ by Columbia Picture's producer Edward Small after a reported

11-year search for the perfect celluloid Rudolph Valentino clone, during which time Small claimed to have made over 400 screen tests from a pool of 75,000 aspiring actors.

Upon signing the movie contract for *Valentino*, Small thought Fleischmann needed a more dashing professional name than Walter Craig, and hence he was rebranded as Anthony Dexter. The publicity surrounding his dead-ringer looks of Rudolph Valentino proved good press, generating a thousand

fan letters per week. Upon the film's release, *The Hollywood Reporter* called him “the new best bet for stardom.” *Photoplay* magazine went even further: “If Valentino was anything like the impersonation that Anthony Dexter gave of him, no wonder every woman was mad about him! He sizzled, he smoked, he was romance!”

Fleischmann's rising star unfortunately fizzled when *Valentino* flopped at the box

office, and he was reduced to appearing in B-movies and taking minor television roles in the years that followed. During the 1970s, Fleischmann, who still used the moniker Anthony Dexter, taught high school speech and drama in Los Angeles. A former student said, “He was kind of a one-hit wonder, but a heck of a nice guy and an inspiration to his students.” Fleischmann passed away in 2001 at the age of 88, in Greeley, Colorado. 🍷

JEFF SAUVE is a historian and a regular contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*. This story and similar entertaining stories by Sauve recently have been published in *St. Olaf Theater: A Centennial Celebration, 1921–2021*, available at byallmeansgraphics.com.



WALTER FLEISCHMANN



There was a reunion between Dexter and Elizabeth Walsingham Kelsey, dramatics instructor at St. Olaf college, when Dexter was in the Twin Cities recently for personal appearances with the film “Valentino.” Picture was taken backstage at the Orpheum theater in Minneapolis.

INSPIRE CHANGE

THROUGH PLANNED GIVING

Ron Hunter '70 co-founded the Cultural Union for Black Expression (CUBE) at St. Olaf more than 50 years ago to help Oles better understand Black history and culture, as well as issues facing Black communities. He included a scholarship for current CUBE students in his estate plan, enabling them to continue CUBE's important work.

"As a student, the money problem was a big one for me. By providing financial aid through my estate, I know I will do something positive to help students and advance the issues I care about long into the future."

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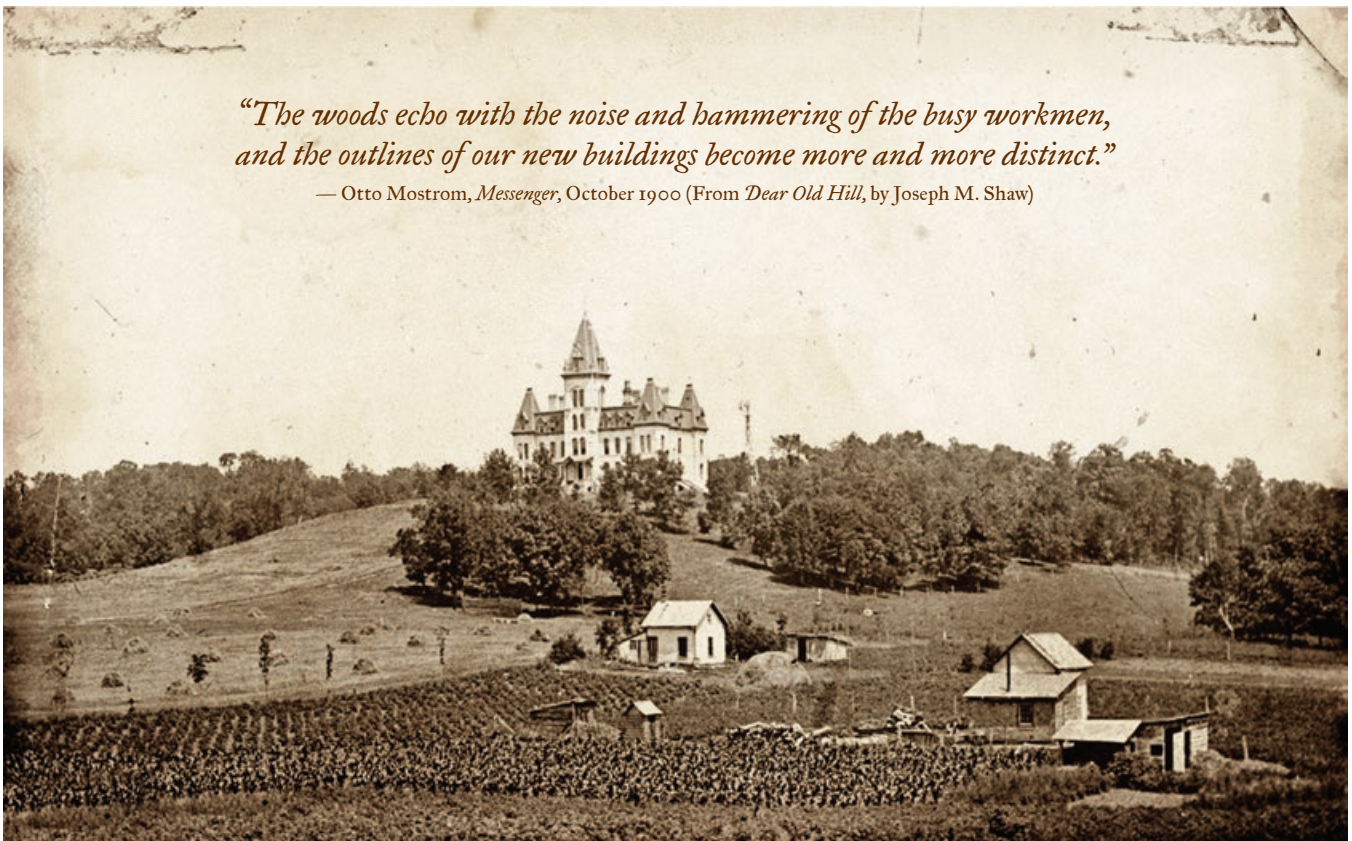
FRANCISCO GRANDE
HOTEL & GOLF COURSE

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PARTING SHOT

*“The woods echo with the noise and hammering of the busy workmen,
and the outlines of our new buildings become more and more distinct.”*

— Otto Mostrom, *Messenger*, October 1900 (From *Dear Old Hill*, by Joseph M. Shaw)



EARLY YEARS | A lot of building took place on campus between 1900 and 1912, including Steensland Library, Hoyme Memorial Chapel, and two large dormitories, Mohn Hall and Ytterboe Hall. And yet, undisturbed by all the activity at the college, a small farm — accessible by the well-traveled dirt road that was St. Olaf Avenue — was content to go about its business of cows and crops. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ST. OLAF ARCHIVES