By Alison Pultinas

Have you wondered what happened to the ornate decorative edging that continues to top off the historic YMCA on Huntington Avenue? The prominent roof, visible from the Prudential Mass Pike exit, is missing both the cornice and the parapet, the low brick wall that protects the ornamental molding. Only one section was rebuilt in 2015, above the renovated Hastings Hall (the wing acquired by Northeastern University).

Suffolk Construction was the contractor for Northeastern and the YMCA. When the renovations for the Hastings wing were completed, the exterior work included reconstructing the cornice and strengthening the brick parapet. The wedding cake frosting above the renovated Hastings Hall (the wing acquired by Northeastern University) is missing both the cornice and the parapet, the low brick wall that protects the ornamental molding. Only one section was rebuilt in 2015, above the renovated Hastings Hall (the wing acquired by Northeastern University).

BY ALISON PULTINAS

The Fenway News

an acceptable outcome for this building.

needs to happen. That said, a timeline
safety must be preserved so the removal
We appreciate the effort on the other part
reconstruction?

In 2014, the Boston Landmark
Historical Commission (MHC) reviewed the
site of the Y’s gymnasium, a determination
of adverse effect was issued, triggering a
series of consultation reviews and mitigations
required for the reconstruction.

Meet the Neighborhood Improvement Committee

“The Neighborhood Improvement Committee (NIC) is a volunteer group made up of Fenway neighborhood residents, organizations, and businesses, and is facilitated by Berklee College of Music.”

The NIC’s first meeting was held back in June and was hosted by Berklee College of Music in partnership with First Fenway Cooperative. Since then, it’s had five meetings (the most recent of which was on Dec. 6 at The First Fenway Cooperative at Mavoile House). The focus of each meeting has been to discuss the growing number of aggressive panhandlers and drunken groups wandering the streets of the East Fenway. The NIC recently partnered with Health Care for the Homeless and Pine Street Inn to learn about the financial crisis that has taken place among the disenfranchised persons of the Fenway Neighborhood.

The meetings have featured dialogue with Counselors Josh Zakim and Tito Jackson, Representative Byron Rushing, Dr. David Munson, Health Care for the Homeless, Jim Green, Department of Neighborhood Development, and reps from the mayor’s office.

The NIC is looking to expand the conversation to address topics including graffiti, street activities, and affordable housing. If you’re interested in getting involved, email The Fenway News at fenwaynews@gmail.com.

In the upcoming year, Fogelman will

in January of 2016 and previously served as
Calderwood Director, succeeding Anne
Fogelman. I’m honored to be a part of this
renowned park system—it needs no
introduction to park lovers, park builders and
affordable housing. If you’re interested in getting involved, email The Fenway News at fenwaynews@gmail.com.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum announced on Oct. 27, 2015 that Peggy Fogelman is the new Norma Jean Calderwood Director, succeeding Anne Hasley. Fogelman brings her directorship in January of 2016 and previously served as the Director of Collections at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York as well as the Chairman of Education for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Director of Education at the nearby Peabody Essex Museum.

In 2016, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum presented a number of new installations around the Fenway. Among these was “On the Wall,” an exhibition that showcased the museum’s collection of contemporary art. The museum also opened the Gardner’s first ever exhibition in its “Off the Wall” exhibit. The museum also launched the Neighborhood concert program, modeled after Isabella Gardner’s curatorial legacy and reputation as a renowned hostess. The program brings together cultural leaders, musicians, artists, and other members of the community to bring the arts and community engagement into the Roxbury, Mission Hill, the Fenway and greater Boston communities.

In the upcoming year, Fogelman will

centers for Disease Control Approve BU
Biosafety Level 4 Lab in the South End

In June 2013, The Fenway News published an article about concerns surrounding the risk assessment of Boston University’s Level 4 Biosafety Laboratory in the South End. Late this past December, the Boston Public Health Commission issued the following statement:

“The Boston Public Health Commission has received notification that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has approved the Biosafety Level 4 laboratory to operate at Boston University’s National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories.”

As a regulator of biological laboratories in Boston, the Boston Public Health Commission has been reviewing safety plans and procedures at the lab since 2013. BHPC will continue to carry out a rigorous review process of National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories’ application, including a review of safety and security protocols and an ongoing monitoring and inspection program, to ensure that the Level 4 laboratory can operate safely prior to issuing any permits.

If Biosafety Level 4 Research is ultimately approved, BHPC will continue to work in coordination with Boston EMS, Boston Fire Department, Boston Police Department, and other agencies at the local, state and federal levels to ensure that any research done at the NEIDL complies with all applicable regulations, in order to protect the health and safety of workers and residents.

With the knowledge that total approval is still pending, The Fenway News has chosen to re-publish this article detailing the lab’s history and—as the authors put it—“its catastrophic potential for improbable threats.”

Article on page 4.

BY ALEXANDRA MALLOY

Fenway Institutions Induct a Slew of New Leaders

Institutions around the Fenway welcomed many new faces in 2016. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum announced on Oct. 27, 2015 that Peggy Fogelman is the new Norma Jean Calderwood Director, succeeding Anne Hasley. Fogelman brings her directorship in January of 2016 and previously served as the Director of Collections at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York as well as the Chairman of Education for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Director of Education at the nearby Peabody Essex Museum.

“The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is among the most unique and exciting institutions in the country,” said Fogelman.

“This is a momentous occasion for the museum and the community, and I am honored to lead the Gardner in its next chapter. The Gardner has a long history of excellence and innovation, and I look forward to working with the staff and Board of Trustees to continue the museum’s mission to inspire and engage visitors from around the world,” said Anne Hasley, outgoing director.

Fogelman said her first year has been
terrific, citing the success of revisiting some of the museum’s most treasured paintings in its “Off the Wall” exhibit. The museum also launched the Neighborhood concert program, modeled after Isabella Gardner’s curatorial reputation as a renowned hostess. The program brings together cultural leaders, musicians, artists, and other members of the community to bring the arts and community engagement into the Roxbury, Mission Hill, the Fenway and greater Boston communities.

In the upcoming year, Fogelman will

present the museum’s first ever exhibition that will focus on the art of sound in “Listen Here,” which will have a contemporary focus.

“Our range of programming will become even more adventurous, and we hope to introduce pop-up performances of music and dance to our galleries on a more regular basis,” Fogelman said. “My ultimate hope is that 2017 will be a year in which all Bostonians come to think of the Gardner as their own home, whether they want to contemplate amazing works of art, find solitude in our ever-blooming courtyard, or get down with the performers in our dynamic new music series, RISE.”

A few steps down the road from the Gardner, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy welcomed Karen Mauney-Brodek as the new president.

Karen Mauney-Brodek

“David Fogelman is a true leader in the field of parks and recreation and it is an honor to work here.”

Before coming to Boston, she served as program and project manager for the City of San Francisco Parks Department and was the chief of the Design Build Program in a
Friends and Neighbors Flush with Awards This Season

- Congratulations to Fenway CDC’s Rich Giordano, who has been awarded a prestigious award from the Massachusetts Association of Community Development. The Riccione Hadrian Award goes to a CDC organizer who has engaged neighborhood residents in building communities that are economically and racially just. For the past three years, Rich has been the director of community organizing at Fenway CDC, after a long history of working in community development in several Boston neighborhoods. Before coming to the Fenway, he was on the board of both the Mission Hill NHA and the Back of the Hill CDC. He also worked as an aide to several state and city politicians and held a number of varied earlier jobs. In the Fenway, Rich has focused on issues such as institutional expansion and displacement of residents on Cleury Street.

- At their annual meeting on Nov. 30, the Mission Hill Health Movement presented Diane Williams, a lifelong resident of Alice Taylor Housing Development, the first Gloria Murray Humanitarian Award. The Mission Hill Health Movement (MHMH) originally formed in 1976, are volunteer residents working for a livable environment and a healthy quality of life. The Gloria Murray Humanitarian Award recognizes a person who exemplifies Gloria Murray’s commitment to service, “Empowering the Community one person at a time.” MHMH created this award out of appreciation for her life and the years of service she gave to the organization. Diane Williams has worked with children and seniors in Mission Hill for many years, with the same volunteer spirit and goals for individual and community improvement as Gloria Murray.

- State Representative Gloria L. Fox was a Hall of Fame honoree at the Action for Boston Community Development’s Nov. 4 Community Heroes Celebration. Also honored was Tobin Community Center’s administrative coordinator John Jackson, who received a Community Heroes award at the celebration dinner. For more than a decade, Jackson has partnered with ABCD’s Parker Hill site to help low-income Mission Hill residents find employment. He has assisted in organizing ABCD events at the BCYF Tobin Community Center and has served with the Mission Hill Youth Collaborative.

- At their 2016 annual meeting at the Worcester Historical Museum, statewide non-profit Preservation Massachusetts presented Alison Pulitinas with one of the six K. Julie McCarthy Community Spirit Awards recognizing advocates in historic preservation. Alison is a co-founder of the Friends of Historic Mission Hill and more recently led the effort to document the history of Roxbury’s High School of Practical Arts and the Thomas Morgan Rotch Jr. Memorial Hospital at 55 Shattuck Street.

Mayor’s ‘Go Boston 2030’ Action Plan Will Address Traffic Clogs in LMA

The Go Boston 2030 Action Plan is scheduled to be publicly released in January. Almost 2 years in the making, the plan was one of Mayor Walsh’s campaign promises for a transportation initiative for Boston’s future. Previously, a Vision Framework was released in September 2015. The Action Plan will target specific policies and projects, and, according to Alice Brown from the city’s transportation department, includes a proposed transit hub within the interior of the Longwood Medical Area (LMA) being planned by the area’s Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO) as a central location for buses and shuttles. A primary goal is to eliminate bus congestion in the center of the LMA and the organization has been working with state transit planners on strategies to consolidate bus routes in the area.

The specific location for this hub has not been publicly identified. As described in MASCO’s 2016 Annual Report, the plan depends on being able to pull back building footprints on either side by up to 25 to 30 feet to make room for bus pull-offs and protected bike lanes. “And it means, of course, you would have to trade building height for land area,” according to Marilyn Swartz-Lloyd, MASCO’s President. Their planners continue to advocate for a transit tunnel under Longwood for a longer term solution for traffic. However, MASSDOT’s proposal to take funds set aside for the Tunnel Study and repurpose them for “Bus Stop Accessibility and Operational Improvements within the Longwood Medical Area” was just approved at the December 15 Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting, apparently anticipating that the Longwood Tunnel is not happening anytime soon.

Alison Pulitinas lives on Mission Hill.

A rendering from the Action Plan showing how bus congestion might look in the LMA.

BY ALISON PULTINAS

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...community pressure in that tumultuous time five years ago when the Save the Y group pushed for designating 312-320 Huntington Avenue a Boston landmark. Their effort failed essentially on a technicality, possibly because of an editing error on the official inventory form created for the building in the 1983/84 Boston Landmarks Commission survey. In the description of 312-320 Huntington for the Fenway Completion Report there were contradictions and evaluations of its architectural significance. In volume one, authored by the three-person consultant team, the YMCA was included in the category of properties meeting the criteria for both the National Register list and as individual city landmarks: “...eligible as a major work by an important architectural firm...and as the 'home office' of the first branch to be organized in the United States”. However, the grade on the detailed inventory form in volume two was marked III, initiated by consultant Rosalind Pollan 4/84. Only buildings ranked I or II can be petitioned for city landmark status; therefore, the Y could not qualify. Y members petitioned for a hearing for a rating upgrade however the advocates were defeated and the grade was not changed.

The authors of the Fenway survey from the 1980s recommended creating a Symphony landmark district to include advocates were defeated and the grade was not changed. The process for forming a local historic district is also painstaking, but, unlike a National Register listing, it does not depend on the approval of individual owners. Districting would have provided not only protection of individual historic resources, but for their settings as well and that is relevant perhaps today even more than in the 1980s. Alison Paldbas lives on Mission Hill.

...a second view of the missing cornice on the Huntington Ave. YMCA properties and the abutting buildings (which are also historic, but in a lesser key, so to speak). The process then is both more political and less relevant. There are landmarked buildings, but absent the context of an overall district setting. Designating one structure at a time is painstaking and in order to qualify, a building must have regional and/or national significance. The process for forming a local historic district is also painstaking, but, instead of being a detailed inventory form created for the building in the 1983/84 Boston Landmarks Commission survey. In the description of 312-320 Huntington for the Fenway Completion Report there were contradictions and evaluations of its architectural significance. In volume one, authored by the three-person consultant team, the YMCA was included in the category of properties meeting the criteria for both the National Register list and as individual city landmarks: “...eligible as a major work by an important architectural firm...and as the 'home office' of the first branch to be organized in the United States”. However, the grade on the detailed inventory form in volume two was marked III, initiated by consultant Rosalind Pollan 4/84. Only buildings ranked I or II can be petitioned for city landmark status; therefore, the Y could not qualify. Y members petitioned for a hearing for a rating upgrade however the advocates were defeated and the grade was not changed.

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...introducing the bracelet that charges your phone

The Boston Housing Authority's Whittier Street Housing, across Tremont Street from Northeastern's International Village, has won a $30 million Choice Neighborhoods grant from HUD. Cities compete ferociously for these scarce grants, which require the winners to develop an integrated program of housing rehab, supportive social services, job training, and public investment. The City of Boston announced that it has lined up an additional $260 million in funding to completely rebuild the property and to fund related services. The Boston Red Sox announced their third and fourth concerts for summer 2017, two Dead & Company concerts on June 17-18. This brings the count of concerts to four already, after a record-shattering 13 over the course of last summer. Yissell Guerrero has begun work as the mayor's new liaison to Mission Hill, the Fenway, Back Bay and Beacon Hill. A Dorchester native and graduate of Emory University, she replaces Jacob Wessel, who has taken over the City Hall to Go program.

...last month offered a lot of restaurant news. First, Boston was totally ready for Eataly when it opened on November 29. The shape-shifting Italian food empire (it's a food hall! It's a restaurant! It's a cooking school! sold 500 pounds of mozzarella, 500 pizzas (plus another 1,800 slices), and 2,500 “coffee drinks” on its first day—actually, its first half day. The Bostinno website reports that the owners gave the staff an unexpected day off on December 5 as a gesture of thanks for handling the overflow crowd. That same news that the West Fens will welcome a branch of the much-praised Portland (Maine) seafood restaurant, Eventide Oyster, this coming spring. It will occupy one of the vacant storefronts in the Van Ness (aka the Target building). On the heels of that news came word that the Wegman's branch—the idea of which has had many Fenwickians salivating for years—won't be part of the first phase of redevelopment of the Landmark Center. Wegman's made the announcement, expressing interest but sounding decidedly noncommittal about the whole thing. Samuels told The Boston Business Journal that the design, already approved by the City, has gone back to the drawing boards and confirmed the Wegman's announcement. Not that this will replace Wegman's in anyone's heart, but Yelp released a list of Boston's 25 best restaurants (based on reviews on the site), and coming in at #5 was a place ICMYI hadn't even heard of: a hole-in-the-wall at 51 Mass. Ave. called Cornish Pasty. The Globe's 'Globe Magazine' named Kylie Webster Cazareau and Meggie Noel Bostonians of the Year. The two Boston Latin School students complained about and organized against Latin administrators' handling of complaints about racist behavior by other students. The resulting political firestorm ultimately persuaded the BLS head of school to step down. A researcher at Brigham & Women's (who also teaches at Harvard Medical School) has scored a major research prize for the second year in a row. Dr. Steve Elledge won the 2017 Breakthrough Prize, which carries a $3 million honorarium, for his research into how chromosomes can detect and repair damaged DNA. Last year Elledge won the Lasker Award, one of the most prestigious in medical research. The Boston Business Journal reported that Simmons College saw revenue from its online degree offerings—graduate programs only—double in the school's last fiscal year compared to the previous one. The college told BBJ that it considers this fast-growing source of revenue extremely critical to its finances, particularly when its endowment takes a stock-market hit, as it did during the same period. Simmons once offered a women-only MBA program but it has moved the program online and opened it to men.

Introducing the bracelet that charges your phone

Antonio Bertone, a Franklin native, chose Brookline Ave. in the Fenway as the official headquarters for his accessory line, Kyte&Key, named for Benjamin Franklin's famous experiment. The brand's products, which ensure that users are never without a phone charger, combine fashion and functionality. The central product is the “Cabeato,” a stylish leather bracelet that doubles as a phone charger. Kyte&Key also sells leather charging cords and charging wallets (which are leather billfolds that house a power bank concealed within).

Bertone, a former marketing executive for Puma, frequent events Kenmore Square punk club The Rathskeller as a teenager and has stayed up-to-date on the changes in the Fenway. Now, with Kyte&Key headquartered in the Fenway, Bertone has even stronger ties to the community.

—KELSEY BRUUN
Against malevolent actors, the classified security analysis upon which this conclusion was based is not open to the public. Thus, citizens cannot know for sure what constitutes “sufficient” in the eyes of lab planners. As noted criminologist James Fox writes during the 11-year struggle a warning to city counselors that if they buck the Mayor on this issue, they risk their political futures. In the 1980s, the Cambridge City Council banned Level 4 research in that city. The Boston City Council has the same power now to ban Level 4 research as was done in Cambridge many years ago. However, only four current councilors—Charles Yancey, Tito Jackson, Ayanna Pressley, and Felix Arroyo—have, up to this point, signed onto a Joint Statement calling for a ban against Level 4 research. As Mayor Menino’s tenure nears its end, many Bostonians—and especially those in the affected neighborhoods—are calling for each of the mayoral candidates and all those vying for City Council seats to reveal their stances on the biolab. The upcoming city election is seen by some as a chance to move the lab out of the realm of political deal-making and into the arena of public debate.

Opponents of the lab will be appealing the state’s approval of BU’s supplemental environmental impact statement. This appeal will challenge the conclusion that the risks of the lab are acceptable. It will also examine the oversight role assigned to the Boston Public Health Commission by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). Whether the EEPHC has the necessary expertise to carry out this charge is a question that the lab’s opponents want answered. They are also concerned with the wisdom of spending scarce public health dollars on monitoring a biodense lab rather than allocating funds towards health and safety concerns of Boston’s citizens.

Klare X Allen is the Lead Community Blogger. Since May 15, 2013, “Much of the threat assessment concerning malevolent threats from within and without was based on expert opinion and speculation.” Fox concludes that, “Up to this point, the level of scrutiny concerning the project coming out of City Hall has been inadequate.” Some consider Mayor Menino’s unwavering support for the BU Biolab and his reluctance to meet with its opponents has been at the firm for at least 50 years as a secretarial night staff manager. Lois was part of a crew that worked at the firm from the mid-1960s, turning out correspondence to clients and others. In addition to Lois being a key photographer for the Fenway News for many years, her pictures memorialized our various gatherings and events, most particularly our annual holiday parties. Lois is beloved by her coworkers, all of whom wish her all the best in the next chapter of her life.” Keep an eye out next month for a spread of some of Lois’s photos from her old Fenway News days.

Lois Johnston (center) with Julie Picher (left) and Stanley J. Riemer (right), Managing Partner at their annual holiday party.

The Fenway News will appear on Friday, FEBRUARY 3.

The Fenway News is published monthly by the Fenway News Association, Inc., a community-owned corporation dedicated to community journalism. If you would like to volunteer to write, edit, photograph, lay out, distribute, or sell advertising on commission, please contact us at Fenway News, PO Box 23077, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123 fenwaynews@gmail.com www.fenwaynews.org

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**“Comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.”**

The founders of The Fenway News adopted this motto to express their mission of exposing and opposing the dangers the neighborhood faced in the early 1970s—rampant arson, predatory landlords, and a destructive urban renewal plan. If the original motto no longer fits today’s Fenway, we remain committed to its spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.

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The deadline for letters, news items, and ads is Friday, January 27.

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Successful Fundraising Campaign Saves Kaji Aso Studio
For more than forty years, Fenwickians have enjoyed Kaji Aso Studio on St. Stephen St. The art school (known also for its poetry, music, and tea ceremonies) was almost forced to close after the building’s former owner put it up for sale. Staff members and friends of the studio launched a public fundraising campaign in September of 2014. “We hit $10,000 in the first two weeks,” said executive director Kate Finnegan. “We just kept rolling.” Come April 2015, they had raised $350,000 of the $500,000 campaign goal. By taking a larger mortgage at the lower interest rates, the Kaji Aso crew pulled off an unlikely purchase to save their home. The Fenway News was happy to report on this in our January 2016 issue. (If you’re feeling generous, there’s a link to donate on the homepage of the studio website.)

The Courant Closes
The Fenway News said goodbye to The Courant in March of last year after publisher David Jacobs announced that the February 5 issue would be the paper’s last, due to the costs of settling a lawsuit filed by a former employee. The paper reported on Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and the South End—and sometimes put the spotlight on events we’d missed in our own Fenway backyard. It was in its twenty-first year of publication when it closed up shop.

Big Papi Goes Bye-Bye
Who’s closer to a Fenwickian’s heart than David Ortiz? The lovable slugger announced his retirement early last season after fourteen years of Red Sox ball. Then he went on to hit 38 homers and lead the club to first place in the American League East. Not a bad way to go out, Papi.

Berklee and BoCo Join Hands
Two of the nation’s finest music schools made it official last summer: they’re a thing. Boston Conservatory and Berklee College of Music merged in June 2016 to create Boston Conservatory at Berklee. (Berklee College continues to be an independent institution.) By all reports it’s so far, so good for the newlyweds.

BOOKS
2016’s Top Ten
Now you know what happened in our neighborhood last year—but what were people reading? We’ve compiled a list of the year’s hottest books so you’ll know what to pick up for your 2017 list.

1. All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr: Set during WWII and told from the perspectives of a young French girl and German soldier, demand for this 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winner carried over into 2016.

2. The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins: In this suspenseful thriller, nothing is as it appears.

3. Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever by Jeff Kinney: Greg Heffley may be wimpy, but demand for this series is not. The other books in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series were also heavily borrowed in 2016.

4. Fates and Furies by Lauren Groff: The story of a seemingly-charmed marriage told from two very different perspectives.

5. Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates: In this memoir written for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates shares his experience with racism as a black man in America and hopes for the future.

6. My Brilliant Friend Book One: Childhood, Adolescence by Elena Ferrante: Told in a vibrant and descriptive setting, the mystery surrounding the real identity of Elena Ferrante kept this story of friendship on patron’s minds.

7. Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee: Set twenty years after To Kill a Mockingbird, this ‘lost’ early novel by Harper Lee features an adult Scout returning to Maycomb at a time of radical change.

8. Wonder by R.J. Palacio: This children’s book about a boy with a facial deformity attending school for the first time was a staple on summer reading lists throughout the city in 2016.


10. Luckiest Girl Alive by Jessica Knoll: A dark psychological thriller about a woman who appears to have the perfect life, but has a past full of tragedy and secrets.
Each month in 2017 at the MFA, travel back to a time when storylines were weirder, movie stars were scrappier, and special effects meant Claymation and slime. The 1980s and early 90s produced a wave of wildly creative independent films that opened viewers’ minds to new ideas: supernatural phenomena, otherworldly creatures, and the countercultures thriving on the fringes of American society. The yearlong series kicks off with a film from 1980 (Ken Russell’s psychedelic nightmare Altered States) jumping forward a year each month until the series concludes in December with a film from 1991. Before the show, enjoy trailers and commercials from the year the film was made. Most screenings fall on the first Friday of the month, and are on 35mm film. Tickets available at www.mfa.org/film or at the museum are $9 for MFA members, $11 for nonmembers, $5 for students at local universities.

- Jan 6: Altered States (Ken Russell, 1980)
- Feb 3: Ms. 45 (Abel Ferrara, 1981)
- Mar 4: The Thing (John Carpenter, 1982)
- Apr 7: In Flames (Lizzi Borden, 1989)
- May 5: Repo Man (Alex Cox, 1984)
- Jun 2: Red Movie: Beyond Thnderdome (George Miller/George Ogilvie, 1985)

Jul 6: River’s Edge (Tim Hunter, 1986)
Aug 4: The Last Boys (Joel Schumacher, 1987)
Sep 1: They Live (John Carpenter, 1988)
Oct 6: Vampire’s Kiss (Robert Birmann, 1989)
Nov 3: Jacob’s Ladder (Adrian Lyne, 1990)
Dec 1: Don’t Tell Mom the Babysitter’s Dead (Stephen Aerek, 1991)

By John enthstrom

While there have been more visually, physically opulent productions of Shakespeare’s The Tempest than the actor-driven one being portrayed through Jan. 8 by Actors Shakespeare Project in FSP’s 18th year, you won’t often see one that does better at keeping the blaze of Shakespeare’s language alive and enabling the actors to deliver characterizations that are rounded, real, and human. It also, incidentally, makes one of the best cases I’ve ever seen—for one need be made—for the strengths of “cross-genre” casting of these abundant Shakespeare scripts.

The historic theater director Peter Brook has called The Tempest “Shakespeare’s most difficult play” (and he staged it three times, in England and France). In spite of the widespread speculation or misconception that the play, written probably in the year it was first performed, 1611, was Shakespeare’s last theatrical work and represented the poet-dramatist’s “farewell to the stage,” it wasn’t and it didn’t. Before leaving us in 1636, Shakespeare collaborated with fellow playwright John Fletcher on three more plays, bringing the total of his astounding dramatic output to 39 scripts.

Certainly the last play that Shakespeare wrote by himself, The Tempest is the third in a series of “romances” (the others are Cymbeline and The Winter’s Tale) that he composed in the last decade of his life; they are artifacts of his “Jacobean period.” All these pieces date from a few years after the newly installed King James I undertook the patronage of Shakespeare’s theatre troupe, now called the King’s Men. In addition to the enormous prestige the new status involved, it made Shakespeare a Groom of the Chamber.

That did not mean there were no constraints on his dramaticity. Five years before Shakespeare wrote Tempest, Parliament cracked down on profane language in London’s theaters, requiring playwrights to revise and bowdlerize their work and go about setting their plays in places that were more remote and abstract than the Christianized England of earlier productions. Notice that the Bard’s later scripts like Pericles, Coriolanus and Antony and Cleopatra are set in classical antiquity with mythic references. Tempest unfurls on an obscure island in the Mediterranean but one on which New World elements—bountiful wilderness, colonize the Americas. One obscure island that Shakespeare used was an obscure island in the Mediterranean but one on which New World elements—bountiful wilderness, colonize the Americas. Instead of Evans Island, he wrote of an obscure island in the Mediterranean but one on which New World elements—bountiful wilderness, colonize the Americas.

Using language that is both earthy and elevated, intellectual and impassioned, with poetry of unparalleled magnificence, Tempest wove a fantastic tale for his Jacobean audiences of shipwreck, wilderness living, political mischief and strife, parental and romantic love, and magical transformations. Tempest was the first of the Bard’s dramas to appear in the posthumously published First Folio of 1623 seven years after Shakespeare’s death, with scrupulous editing and text presentation and elaborate stage directions that many productions over the years have taken and run with, emphasizing physical spectacle and eye candy often to the detriment of the complex, mysterious human content with which Shakespeare invested the script.

Such was the case two years ago with the American Repertory Theater’s ballyhooed production of Tempest with staging by the popular theater magician, Teller, and swing music by Tom Waits. Though popular with ART audiences, it was high-end junk theater, an over-directed exercise in virtuosic but vacuous kitsch. ASP artistic director Alyn Burrows doesn’t have the pricey resources of the ART at his disposal: the production is done on a shoestring budget, with spare physical and textual trappings. But at the same time you can’t call this Tempest an experience of sensual poverty. Most of the action in this version is confined within a medium-size proscenium stage in United Parish of Brookline’s modest Willet Hall. Sound designer Arthus Guiral came up with a bracing, eclectic selection of music, from German beer ads to Berlioz’s Faust. All of set designer Tyler Kinney’s contributions are interesting, and one is sublime. The designer provides a pair of sails—stage right and left—on which abstract color patterns are projected at various times. They also furnish the one indelible visual moment, during one of the magical interludes: while the sails glow green, inanimate objects and fingers appear behind press, pressing on the visible surface of the screens to create a three-dimensional finger painting: an effect that is truly worthy of being called “such stuff as dreams are made on.” (The lighting is by Chris Bocchiaro.) There are no fancy flying effects but there is respectable swirling on rope.

There’s more good news. Costume designer Amber Voner has created a set of lovely costumes that range across the visual palette from touches of Edwardian fashion for Prospero (Marya Lowry) and the nobles, to Jacobean finery for the clown Trinculo (Mara Sidmore) and abstract painting for the other-worldly creatures Ariel (a game, agile Samantha Richert) and Caliban (a sinister, grotesque Jesse Hilton). The former resembles a fish with a long, billowing tail of black fabric while the latter is draped in tattered, shopped Hoodworn Cowly Lion. These nonhuman aliens—a “airy spirit” and “savage and deformed slave”—are given movements and speech and is Desdemona that are highly choreographed, while the other players behave more naturalistically.

Not everything works up to standard. For instance, Greg Kurstin’s Nods to Boston Musicians

Noreastern Crossing to Compile Visual Artist Pool

Another Year, Another Boatload of Grammy Nods to Boston Musicians

By Barbara Brooks Simons

Ashley-Barnett-Mulligan as Miranda and Kai Tishikos as Prospero — Noreastern Crossing

By Barbara Brooks Simons

Noreastern Crossing, the community space in Northeastern University’s International Village building, is looking to compile a talent pool of visual artists who can display their work on a rotating basis along two prominent walls facing Tremont Street. Although this location is open to all artists, the preference is for those:

- Live and/or work in the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury, Fenway, South End, and Mission Hill
- Currently work/study at Northeastern University

Exhibitions will be installed annually in January/February and August, and will be on display for 4-6 months. If two shorter shows are scheduled in a year, a third show may be produced. For details on how to apply, visit http://www.northeastern.edu/communityaffairs/ open-call-for-artist-submissions-at-northeastern-crossing/
BY STEPHEN BROPHY

When we look at paintings hanging on museum walls we are more or less aware that some experts behind the scenes have made decisions about which paintings should be exhibited, with which other paintings, and how. Some of us know that these experts are called curators. Fewer of us make the leap to understanding that the movies we see in museum auditoriums have been projected onto those screens based on similar curatorial decisions.

At Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), these decisions are made by two people: Carter Long, the Katharine Stone White Curator of Film and Video; and Katherine Irving, the Manager and Assistant Programmer of the Film and Video Office. The Fenway News spoke with them recently to get more understanding of their curatorial roles. Long sees his job as “finding cinematic gems, and creating a proper setting for them.” Irving believes her role is to “represent all the types of cinematic work, not just what people expect.”

Long and Irving oversee on of the most ambitious moving image programs of any museum in the country. They typically have from 15-18 screenings a week, where most museums with any kind of film program seldom screen more than 4 or 5. The addition of a new theater when the new American Arts wing was added makes this a little easier, since the Remis auditorium is frequently filled with lectures, music, and other events.

One of the main concerns of a curator is preservation. The MFA doesn’t actually own any films, but it works with several different organizations concerned with this issue, including Rialto Pictures, Milestone Films, and the UCLA film preservation program. It does its best to preserve the films that pass through its hands by having top of the line 35mm projectors as well as a 36mm projector.

It has had digital projecting capacity for the past three years, and can also present films in DVD, Blu-ray, and videotape formats. The Film Office is part of the Contemporary Arts Department, which guarantees collaboration with other curators. “We are getting more experimental,” Long says about this collaboration. Among other things, the department hosts frequent overnight parties in the Evans Wing on selected Friday evenings, and the Film Office offers post-midnight screenings of cult favorites as part of the overall party.

Coming up this month, along with the revival of Battle of Algiers, is a reprise of a series that visited a few years ago, The Films of Pierre ETAIX. The annual Boston Festival of Films from Iran opens on Jan. 18 for a two-week run, and two documentaries, on Hieronymus Bosch and Nick Cave, will also be screening.

Long is concerned that “Netflix and streaming services are probably our biggest competitors for audience now,” but he worries even more about “what has happened to availability of film as these different formats have taken over the markets—we are losing a lot of things that aren’t considered marketable.” The range of movies he and Irving make available on the MFA’s two screens are solid responses to these concerns.

Stephen Brophy lives in the East Fens.

> TEMPEST from page 6

narrative in motion—is a disappointing blur in this version because you can’t hear the actors’ voices above the sound effects and Burrows’ choreography is not particularly evocative at that juncture. (Burrows is the second director to take on the show following the initially announced Eric Tucker, actor and director of New York’s Redmill theater.) The same space was used more imaginatively, more dimensionally, in the ASP’s Troilus and Cressida a couple of years ago in which Burrows performed memorably as Leontes.

More than the physical production is vanished in this Tempest: the cast of characters is also stripped down. Out of over a dozen speaking parts, Burrows and company have cut such important personages as “honest old councilor” Gonzalo and distributed the remaining roles among eight players. There’s some doubling of parts. Mara Sidmore makes a dignified Queen of Naples and a wonderfully loopy “jester” character Trinculo. ASP stalwart Michael Fenid Walker undertakes both the shipwrecked nobleman Sebastian and “drunken butler” Stephano. He’s more successful in the latter attempt than the former since his characteristic way of delivering Shakespearean speech as if it were monologues American vernacular is better suited to the burlesque elements of the play that Trinculo and Stephano (joined by Caliban) represent.

The text of Tempest—not one of Shakespeare’s longer plays—is also reduced by ASP, for example, in the famous “masque” sequence on out by Prospero for the two lovers (an ardent Lydia Barnett-Mulligan as Miranda and a starry-eyed Kai Tshikasi as Ferdinand), we get only one classical goddess, Ceres (Richard’s Ariel in a gown spanned with glittering lights on a darkened stage) in place of the three goddesses that Shakespeare called for. But even if production, text and characters are cut, there is nothing reductive about the overall ensemble endeavor. The director’s vision and the company’s performance are richly layered and satisfying in many ways. Take, for example, the casting of women in male roles.

While there’s ample precedent in theater history for casting Ariel female, having a woman play Prospero—the central character and “muster of ceremonies”—is a more recent development. Memorable examples of late include Vanessa Redgrave in the role at London’s re-created Globe Theater and Helen Mirren in the innovative Julie Taymor film. ASP’s Marya Lowry as Prospero can hold her head high. She is exquisite, grand, magisterial. She makes the familiar passages (like the proverbial “such stuff as dreams are made on”) new, and conveys a sense that this Prospero, designated here as “the former Duchess of Milan,” must have been a wise, discerning and just ruler. Lowry has had plenty of experience playing Shakespearean nobles: her ASP credits include the title role of Macbeth, the queen in Cymbeline, and Gertrude in Hamlet. In the rich sonorities of her voice and the subtle shadings of her line readings, Lowry calls to mind the late Irene Worth (who would also have made a great Prospero). Cross-gender casting can only illuminate and enrich the Shakespeare plays!

The program for the ASP Tempest liens an extensive number of donors to the company’s adventure, for which we can all be grateful. It would be nice if there were more young people mixed in with the predominantly graying audience, but you can’t have everything. This was a production and performance for Randholders and theater lovers to revel in and dream about.

John Kingston lives in the West Fens. (Note: This month and next, the Donmar Warehouse theater company of London’s all-female production of The Tempest, starring Harriet Walter as Prospero, the third phase of their trilogy of Shakespeare plays set in a women’s prison, will play at St. Ann’s Warehouse in New York.)

The Battle of Algiers (1966)

Long says, “I’m always looking for what blows me away, what makes me discover something new.” He was particularly pleased that Rialto Pictures has recently remastered (www.mfa.org/programs/series/the-battle-of-algiers) the film “is a case study in modern warfare, with its terrorist attacks and the brutal techniques used to combat them. Pontecorvo’s tour de force has astonishing relevance today.”

A curator does not only decide what gets exhibited, but also helps us to interpret it. One of the main ways the Film Office does this is with its film notes, handed out for free before most screenings. Irving says that “one of my primary goals in writing film notes is to make films feel accessible to people who might feel left out of the exclusive club of film aficionados—to give them points of access.” She also wants to help viewers “relate what they are seeing on the screen to their lives.”

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Stephen Brophy lives in the East Fens.
New ‘Doll’s House’ Ushers in New Year at Huntington

When you compile this monthly calendar over the years, you start to recognize certain patterns. One of the most reliable how slim choices are in the first few weeks of the New Year, as cultural calendars turn to new beginnings. You can get involved. 6:30 p.m. Open to the public.

THU, JAN 12
• Rep. Michael Capuano’s liaison holds office hours, 12-2 p.m., at Fenway Health, 1340 Boylston. Call 617-621-6209 if you have a concern but can’t come.
• The Boston Arts Academy will host a community meeting at the Fenway Community Center at 6:00pm.

TUE, JAN 17
East Fens Police/Community meeting, 6pm, Mervin School, 100 Norway St.

TUE JAN 17
• Fenway CDC’s Urban Village Committee: Help monitor development and advocate for the neighborhood you want, 6pm at the CDC office, 70 Brookline St. To verify date or for info, contact Richard Giordano at 617-276-4657 x116 or rgior@fendnwaycfd.org.
• Symphony Neighborhood Task Force meets, 6pm, 320 Huntington Ave., 2nd floor.

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