

For the Love of a Mollusk

Heidi Knoblauch '08 opens a fashionable oyster bar in New York state's Capital Region.

By Alan Wechsler

Heidi Knoblauch '08 had her academic career all set. The Phi Beta Kappa graduate had earned multiple fellowships, three master's degrees, and a PhD in history from Yale. In 2015, she accepted a teaching position at Bard College.

And then she gave it all up. For oysters.

In December Knoblauch opened Plumb, a raw oyster bar and restaurant located in an up-and-coming section of downtown Troy, New York.

"I had a reckoning with myself," she says.

"What drew me to academia was the research," she said. "Starting (a restaurant) is one big research question."

"I fell in love with history at the University of Rochester," she says.

She wrote a senior thesis on the long campaign for national health care that began in the United States in 1945. She later published her research in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

During her brief stint at Bard, Knoblauch ran the school's program in experimental humanities, looking at ways to use digital technology to teach public history.

At the time, Knoblauch was living with her wife, **Kelly McNamee** '05, in nearby Beacon. Knoblauch commuted north to Bard while McNamee, a lawyer, would head south to New York City. When Knoblauch came to the city, McNamee would drag her to her favorite oyster bars. "I like

Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*, as well as *Ironweed*, were filmed here.

While poverty persists, the city's architecture and affordability have helped turn downtown into a trendy place, with coffee shops, a wine bar, a gastropub, and a popular Saturday farmer's market. It was this hipster atmosphere that attracted Knoblauch. It helped that a former flower shop became available, in the first floor of a building owned by her mother, Arlene Nock.

"I had no hesitation at all about her doing the bar," says Nock, a psychiatrist at the Stratton VA Hospital in Albany. "She just is one of those few people that you know will put a lot of thought into it, and she'll work really, really hard until it's done."

And Knoblauch did.

True to her research background, she wrote up a 35-page business plan. In the fall, she undertook a massive refurbishment of the space, adding two bars and a new ceiling, replacing wall-to-wall carpet with new floors, updating the cooler, and building custom-made tables for the 49-seat restaurant.


"This is by far the scariest thing I've done," she admits.

Based on opening night, she shouldn't lose too much sleep.

The restaurant was packed with friends, well-wishers, and oyster aficionados. She served multiple oyster varieties, including Kusshi, Mystic, Kumamoto, and Shooting Point Salts. Two shuckers worked full-time releasing the briny treats from their shells and serving them on ice-covered trays.

And what's so special about oysters? According to Knoblauch, apart from their legendary (but unproven) status as an aphrodisiac, they are said to take on the flavor of the sea around them. Thus the oysters of one region taste different from those of another, and come in different sizes and textures as well.

For Knoblauch, Plumb also offers community. She encourages her diners to discuss the oysters, the way wine connoisseurs discuss a vintage. And on opening night, there was plenty to talk about.

"Oysters for me are a point of human contact," Knoblauch says. "Oysters bring people together." 



In truth, Knoblauch always had an entrepreneurial bent. When she was 12, she sold water bottles to visitors at an antique festival near her home in Round Lake, New York. Then she graduated from the prestigious Emma Willard School in Troy and enrolled at Rochester, where she set upon her academic path.

THE NEW OYSTER CULT: Knoblauch (right) brings the contemporary oyster craze to the Capital District of New York state. The Plumb Oyster Bar, which opened in December, adds to the rejuvenation of downtown Troy. A December menu (above) features seven oyster varieties.

to think I played a small role in getting her interested," she says.

When McNamee got a job in Troy, the couple moved there together—and Knoblauch decided she wanted to work there, too.

Troy, home to around 50,000 people, is one of the three population centers, along with Albany and Schenectady, of the region known as the Capital District of New York. At its height, Troy was a major hub for the manufacturing of shirt collars. More recently, it's been known for its blight. But it's also a city of rare beauty, with street after street of historic brownstone facades. Many period movies, including Martin



Tantalized by Tessellations

Mathematician Doris Schattschneider '61 explores the complex geometry of artist M.C. Escher.

By Lindsey Valich

Most people who view the works of 20th-century artist M.C. Escher see patterned drawings. **Doris Wood Schattschneider '61**, a mathematician, sees a complex combination of art and math.

Schattschneider is an authority on geometry in the work of Escher, a Dutch artist best known for creating spatial illusions and tessellations—the tiling of a plane with one or more geometric shapes without gaps or overlaps. She visited Rochester in November to speak in the Department of Mathematics as well as at the Memorial Art Gallery, in conjunction with the exhibit *M.C. Escher: Reality and Illusion*.

Schattschneider notes that many of Escher's tessellations incorporate the geometric concepts of symmetry, foreground, and background, as well as the moving of shapes using translation, reflection, and rotation. While Escher consulted mathematicians and scientific publications, he denied he had any mathematical aptitude. To him, math was what he encountered in his schoolwork, and consisted of manipulating complicated algebraic formulas and numbers.

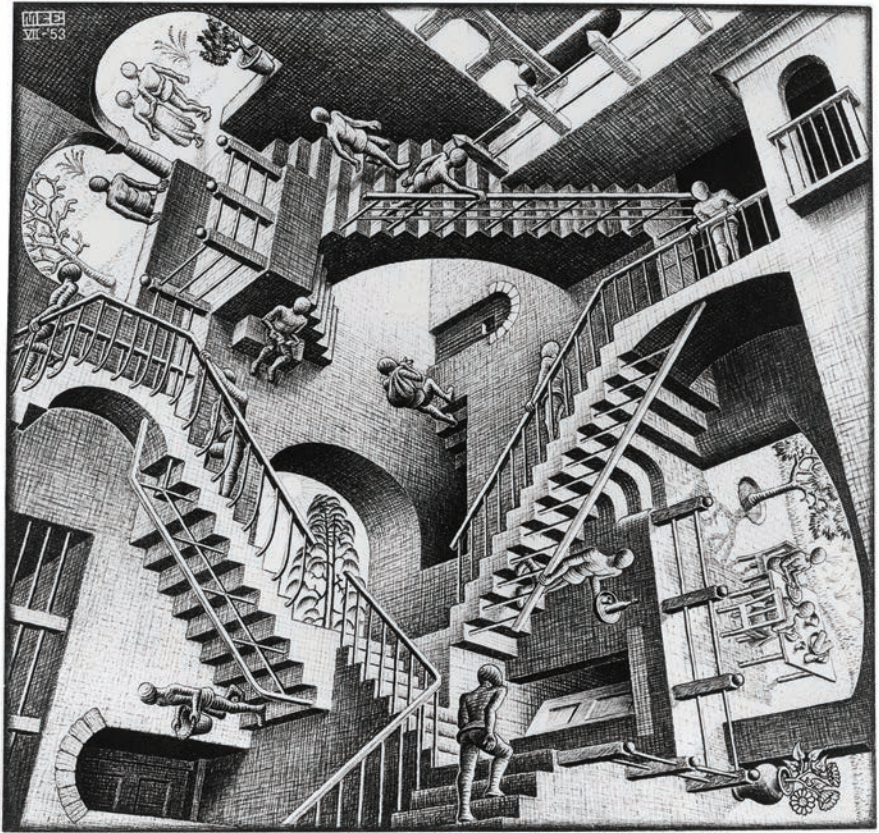
The general public often interprets math in the same way.

"Most people think math is numbers, formulas, equations, or algorithms," Schattschneider says. "They are unaware that the majority of mathematics is not that, and in fact, these days, most of that has been relegated to computers. Mathematics is really thinking through problems, posing problems, trying to find patterns."

It's a message that Michael Gage, the professor of mathematics who invited Schattschneider to Rochester last fall, is eager to spread.

"Once I heard that an Escher exhibit was coming to the gallery, the idea of bringing [Doris] in to talk about it in a Wing lecture was obvious," says Gage, referring to the department's George Milton Wing lecture series. "I find her interesting because she's been able to show how people who don't think they are looking at or doing mathematics, are doing mathematics."

As a student at Rochester in the late 1950s, Schattschneider took many studio art classes, but majored in mathematics because she enjoyed the challenge of solving problems and devising proofs.



MATHEMATICAL ILLUSIONS: Escher explored the concepts of infinity and "impossible drawing." His work *Relativity* (top) depicts three staircases with people climbing or descending; while *Fish/Bird No. 121* uses geometric translation to create a tessellation with two-color symmetry.

She went on to earn a PhD in mathematics at Yale and was the first female editor of *Mathematics Magazine* from 1981 to 1985. At Moravian College in Pennsylvania, where she taught for 34 years and is now a professor emerita, she combined her interests early on by designing a course on the mathematics of decorative art. That's when she encountered Escher's work for the first time.


One of the books she chose for the class was by crystallographer Carolina MacGillavry, who had collaborated with Escher to use his works to teach geology students about crystallographic patterns. The book's preface mentioned the artist's notebooks, and Schattschneider was intrigued to learn more about how Escher, who had little mathematical training, was able to create art that incorporated so many geometric principles.

During a trip to The Hague in the Netherlands in 1976, she spent time photographing Escher's notebooks. She first presented her photographs at a 1985 conference in Italy, but encountered a shortage of literature regarding the mathematical depth of Escher's works.

"There were some wonderful books about Escher's graphic works and about his life, but the symmetry work was barely mentioned," she says. "I finally figured out that if someone was going to write the book, it had to be me."

She received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and took a sabbatical from 1988 to 1989 to study Escher's works at museums in the Netherlands, Washington, D.C., and Connecticut. In 1990, she published *M. C. Escher: Visions of Symmetry* (W.H. Freeman & Co.). A second edition was released by Harry N. Abrams in 2004.

Schattschneider continues to lecture extensively about the complexity of Escher's works.

"It's very unique art, and it's the kind of art that you can't just look at cursorily. You need to go back again and again and look closely," she says. "If you look at some of the works really closely, you'll just be amazed at what he was doing and how he did it." 

M. C. Escher: Reality and Illusion at the Memorial Art Gallery runs through January 29, 2017. Schattschneider lectured in the Department of Mathematics as part of the G. Milton Wing lecture series. For more information about Wing and the series, visit <http://web.math.rochester.edu/news-events/wing-lectures/>.

Design Your Own Tessellation

Schattschneider offers several tessellation "recipes," similar to those that Escher discovered after much investigation. In general, tessellations are created either by taking a simple shape and modifying it through geometric translation (moving corresponding endpoints of opposite sides by the same distance and in the same direction); or by modifying a shape through translation and reflection (the creation of a mirror image).

Follow these recipes to create your own tessellations, manually or with software programs such as *The Geometer's Sketchpad*, *GeoGebra*, *Cabri*, or *TesselManiac*.

Using translation



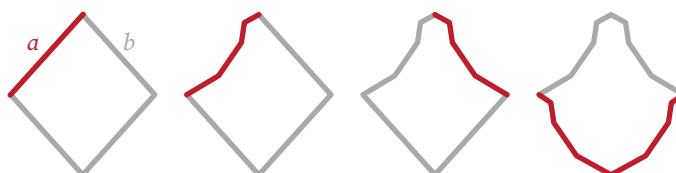
Parallelogram

1. Replace two adjacent sides (a and b above) with any series of lines or curves that connect the endpoints of the sides.
2. Translate the new lines or curves to their opposite sides.



Par-hexagon

1. Replace three adjacent sides (a, b, and c above) with curves that connect the endpoints of the sides.
2. Translate the new lines or curves to their opposite sides.
3. To tile the plane, translate the tile so that opposite edges match.



Using reflection and translation

1. Begin with a rhombus to create a tile with reflection symmetry.
2. Replace one side of the rhombus with a curve that connects the endpoints of the side (side a above).
3. Reflect that curve in a diagonal of the rhombus that meets one of those endpoints (reflect to replace side b above).
4. Translate the two curves to their opposite sides.
5. To tile the plane, simply translate the tile so that opposite edges match.



Bird No. 74 (detail, left), is based on a parallelogram. **Beetle No. 91** (detail, right), is based on a rhombus. **Fish/Bird No. 121** (opposite, bottom) is a double tile based on a par-hexagon.

The Social Work of Music

Jazz composer and pianist Darrell Grant '84E measures his success not only by how his music sounds, but also by what it does.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

Darrell Grant '84E has been a celebrated jazz composer and pianist since early in his career, when his first solo project, *Black Art* (Criss Cross), was named by the *New York Times* as one of the top 10 jazz recordings of 1994.

In 1997, he took an unusual step for a rising jazz artist. He moved out of New York City to Portland, Oregon, a place much less known for its jazz scene.

Grant and his wife, **Anne McFall** '85E, who studied viola at Eastman, were eager to start a new life there. Yet it was also a place Grant felt would allow him, to a far greater extent than in New York City, to form meaningful connections with audiences and with his community.


"One of the things I was interested in was the idea of doing well by doing good," says Grant, who teaches at Portland State University. "If you're going to create something, you get to determine the measures for success. And something I always wanted to figure out was ways to connect my musical projects to something broader in the community."

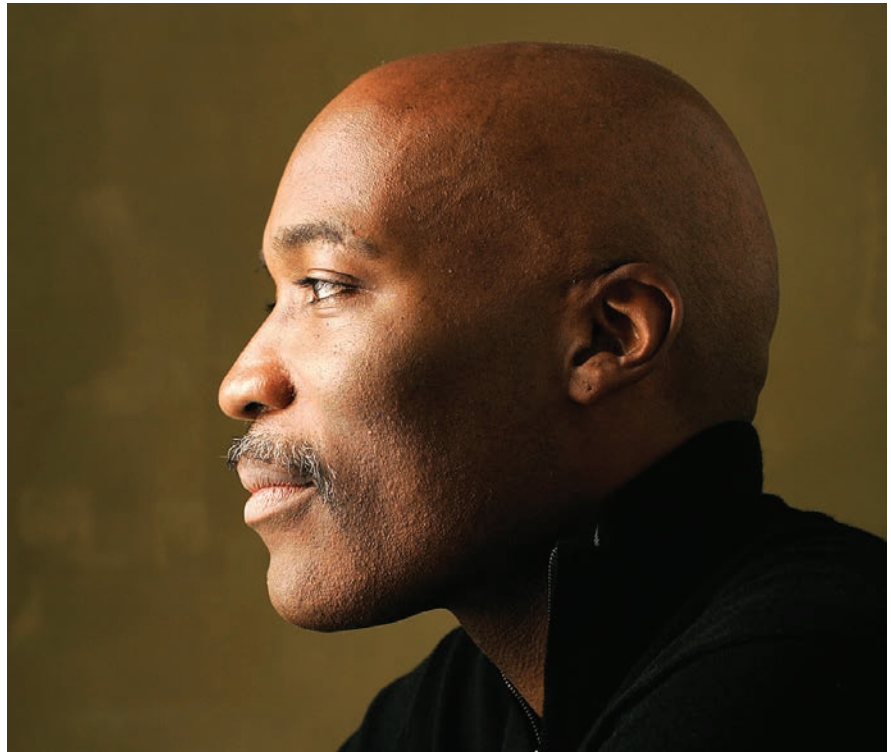
This past fall, Grant contributed an essay for a special edition of *Chamber Music* magazine (see "A Musician's Path to Change"). In it, he reflects on his own experience crafting a mission-driven musical practice. Artists have a unique means to "communicate, inspire, provoke, inform, and to move others to transform society and themselves," he writes, in articulating his own mission statement.

His projects have benefitted numerous Portland-area organizations. They've also explored deeply divisive areas of American life such as racial and regional conflict. In all cases, he says, music has the power to appeal to our common humanity.

But can drawing on our common humanity always achieve social transformation?

"That's the dilemma that everybody is grappling with," he says. "I don't have an answer." At the same time, he knows what his own approach will continue to be.

"There are individuals who will be able to make confrontational, powerful, combative art. I'm not one of those people. I'm probably always going to be one of those people with my hand open, rather than clenched." 



VALUE(S)-ADDED: In a variety of projects, Grant seeks to integrate his music with his values.

ESSAY

A Musician's Path to Change

By Darrell Grant '84E

A few years ago, the jazz pianist Herbie Hancock spoke with students in the music program at Portland State University, where I teach. In between questions about his musical history and his wide-ranging experiences, he shared some nuggets of his personal philosophy. I'll never forget his response to one student's question about the role of music in his life: "Music is important," he answered simply. "But I am a human being first and a musician second."

With its beauty, immediacy, and wonderful diversity, as well as its foundation in collaboration and deep listening, small ensemble music is a powerful vehicle for celebrating our shared humanity. A life in chamber music affords countless opportunities to build deep and meaningful interpersonal connections, and for nearly all of us engaged in the field—whether as performers, composers, or presenters—those connections sustain us in our professional endeavors.

That very capacity for community building, however, also compels us to look outward. How might we address the suffering of the people around us and offer a source of hope?

As a young African American growing up in the late 1960s, I was inspired by trailblazing performers like André Watts, Natalie Hinderas, and Leontyne Price, who were breaking new ground in the classical field; by jazz artists like Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong, who served as cultural ambassadors around the globe; by the social engagement of artists like Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Harry Belafonte, and Nina Simone in the movement toward civil rights; and that of African artists like trumpeter Hugh Masekela and vocalist Miriam Makeba, who used art as a vehicle for empowerment and a voice against injustice.

It made me wonder: Is there something unique about those who use their art as a platform for engaging with the wider world? Or does the possibility of artistically centered leadership lie in reach of all

of us? If so, what does it take for us to lead?


One day in the summer of 2004, I sat in the audience for a lecture by the South African minister Peter Story, who spoke about his experience in the historic struggle for justice and healing in South Africa. At the time, I was searching for inspiration and an organizing concept for my next recording. His stories of compassion, honesty, and courage in the face of unspeakable pain would become the inspiration for my 2007 album, *Truth and Reconciliation* (Origin Records). His talk also galvanized my own vision to use music as a tool for positive change. Shortly after that lecture I wrote the following personal mission statement:

I choose to believe in the power of humans to change the world. Art is the substance of our dreams and the medium through which resonates our most fervent hopes, highest aspirations, deepest truths, and most profound experiences. Those who create art possess a consequent extraordinary power to communicate, inspire, provoke, inform, and to move others to transform society and themselves, and we bear the responsibility to use this power to affect positive change in our communities and the world.

Linking my artistic practice to a mission challenges me to integrate my artistic choices and my personal values. In a culture in which economic bottom lines are often seen as the most significant measure of success, it provides a different barometer.

A few years ago, I created a course at Portland State entitled Artistry in Action. It provides an opportunity for students of all artistic disciplines to explore the ideas of mission and purpose in their artistic practices. In a section of the class focusing on community engagement, we do a game in which I hand out sections of the local newspaper and challenge the students to come up with an artistic project that addresses something they read there. The “game” is really an exercise in asking the most basic question: How can I help?

Today, the doors to engagement—by which I mean the opportunities to connect art with the issues affecting people's lives, and confronting the thorniest challenges facing our society—have never been as wide open.

And every action, however small, counts. 

This essay is adapted from “The Path to Change” in “Art in Action: Social Change through Music,” the fall 2016 special edition of Chamber Music magazine. Reprinted with permission.

In the News



Hoffman (Moka) Lantum



Lynne Davidson

‘Leading Global Thinkers’ Advance Maternal Health Care

Hoffman (Moka) Lantum '03M (PhD) and **Lynne Davidson** '01 (PhD) were named to *Foreign Policy* magazine's list of the 100 Leading Global Thinkers for 2016.

Lantum, an executive and consultant in health care delivery and management, and Davidson, a political scientist with expertise on poverty and microfinance, are the founder and executive director, respectively, of 2020 MicroClinic Initiative. The initiative, which Lantum founded in Rochester in 2011, works to improve maternal and newborn health care in underserved areas of the globe. Its program, Operation Karibu, has provided clothes, emergency transportation, birth preparation, training in infant care, and safe deliveries to thousands of mothers in rural Kenya.

Prior to their work on the initiative, Lantum and Davidson played multiple roles in the University and Greater Rochester communities. In addition to serving as director of medical services at Excellus

BlueCross BlueShield, Lantum, a native of Cameroon, founded the Baobab Cultural Center in Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts. Davidson is a former assistant professor of health services research at Rochester, as well as former deputy to the University president and vice provost for faculty development and diversity.

Two other members of the University community have made *Foreign Policy*'s list in the past few years. **Brian Grimberg** '96, an assistant professor of international health at Case Western Reserve University, was named to the list in 2014 in recognition of his work on rapid malaria detection devices; and **Narayana Kocherlakota**, who joined Rochester's faculty as the Lionel W. McKenzie Professor of Economics in January 2016, was named to the list in 2012. Kocherlakota, former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, is a leading scholar and public intellectual on monetary and financial economics.

Grammy Nomination Roundup

The 59th Grammy Awards will take place on February 12 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Nominees, who were announced in early December, include several Eastman School of Music alumni:

Steve Gadd '68E, Steve Gadd Band, *Way Back Home: Live from Rochester, NY* (BFM Jazz): Best Contemporary Instrumental Album.

Geoff Saunders '09E, bassist, as part of the O'Connor Band with Mark O'Connor, *Coming Home* (Rounder Records): Best Bluegrass Album.

Bob Ludwig '66E, '01E (MM), mastering engineer for Andrew Bird, *Are You Serious*

(Loma Vista Recordings): Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical.

Sean Connors '04E, percussionist with Third Coast Percussion, *Steve Reich* (Cedille Records): Best Chamber Music Performance.

Kristian Bezuidenhout '01E, '04E (MM), *Mozart Keyboard Music, Vols. 8 & 9* (Harmonia Mundi): Best Classical Instrumental Solo.

Gene Scheer '81E, '82E (MM), librettist for the opera *Cold Mountain* (Pentatone Music) and **Christopher Theofanidis** '92E (MM), *Theofanidis: Bassoon Concerto* (Estonian Record Production): Best Contemporary Classical Composition.