UTRGV College of Fine Arts

ARTS zine

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October 2025 Issue #1



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"BEGINNINGS OF A LEGACY:

UTRGV welcomes new Vaquero Marching Band director"

UTRGV 10TH ANNIVERSARY



WELCOME ZINE

Every new school year represents all that is fresh, new, exciting and hopeful in the journey ahead at UTRGV. We are thrilled to share out premiere issue of UTRGV ARTSzine. It is our desire that the multiple issues throughout the year inspire you, make you curious, entice you to events and enjoy learning about the unique personalities that make up this art world.

A digital magazine should always delight, surprise and challenge our senses, so please come back often to see new features, ideas and opportunities. We've envisioned a magazine experience that is like a smoothie – blended. As well, we want this space to inform, teach, prod and tease during your academic and artistic life with sparks of style and intellectualism along the way.

It's fitting to launch our inaugural issue at the moment of **UTRGV's 10th anniversary**, as we continue to make new history in our own corner of the world in South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley. Just like you, as this digital magazine forges new paths and uncharted areas, we seek to set a new standard for how we interact and communicate with each other and provide important information on creative activities.

In this first issue, we will look back at the past 10 years and cast our gaze forward to the next decade.

You'll hear from influential people, citizens, students, faculty, staff and administrators. And we want to hear from you. What do you want to read about in the future and who do you want to hear from?

Cheers to all things new in 2025-2026. **We've got this!**



ARTSZINE DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Message from the Dean:

I am pleased to welcome you to the College of Fine Arts inaugural magazine, ARTSzine. In this magazine, we will keep you informed about the amazing work of our faculty and students and up to date of our over 200 public events at our many venues in Brownsville and Edinburg.

The UTRGV College of Fine Arts is a community that explores the spectrum of what it means to be human in a complex society through the transformative power of the arts. Empowering creativity, fostering innovation, and nurturing artistic excellence, the UTRGV College of Fine Arts is dedicated to inspiring the next generation to make meaningful contributions to the local and global community through their talents and perspectives with a focus on arts entrepreneurship, emerging technology, transdisciplinary collaboration, and global citizenship.

As the artistic hub of the Rio Grande Valley, the College of Fine Arts faculty and students engage with artists throughout the Valley in growing the Arts economy and providing the people of the Valley with world-class artistic experiences.

Guided by a vision of artistic excellence and cultural enrichment, the UTRGV College of Fine Arts aspires to be a global leader in building connections and interdisciplinary collaboration. We envision a dynamic and inclusive community where boundaries are transcended, and the transformative power of the arts inspires positive change in the world.

Enjoy this inaugural issue of ARTSzine and please share it with friends, family, and colleagues. I invite you to join us for the many events that you will see advertised in this magazine and on our website. UTRGV is a community that is not just for our students and faculty but for all people of the Valley. I look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Ward, DMA
Dean, College of Fine Arts

UTRGV College of Fine Arts

DISTINGUISHED Artist Series



OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA

2025 TEXAS POET LAUREATE, AUTHOR & ARTIST

FRONTEXTOS:

BORDER TEXTS FROM THE BOOK OF WOUNDED SPARROWS



An Exhibition by artist and writer, **Octavio Quintanilla**

There is a kind of kismet in seeing and reading Octavio Quintanilla's works of art. It is a combination of surreal and disconcerting energy in the poems and their transformations into visual art pieces. Terse, strange and often tender, Quintanilla's works is expansive in the use of tech and multi-media image.

Since 2018, he publishes a visual poem on social media every day. He creates in a non-linear fashion, responding to the politics of memory, language, love and borders. He says, Hard not to have storyteller in my family. We come from the Mexican ranchos where electricity came late. There were no TVs back then, the late 70s so folks sat around to smoke cigarettes after supper, after a hard day's work in the fields, and talk. I grew up listening.

More than writing, this is probably what I do best. The elders in my maternal family were storytellers, especially my grandfather, who I dedicate a poem to in *'If I Go Missing'"*.

Octavio Quintanilla is a UTPA graduate, Poet Laureate for the State of Texas, and Professor of Creative Writing at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio.

This **Distinguished Artist Series exhibition** is available **August – December 2025** in the **Performing Arts Complex Lobby.**

Free to the public.



FINDING YOUR BEAT:
A Conversation with Kenan Wilson Phillip

Interview questions by Krista A. Olivarez & Aisha Teegarden
Interview conducted by Krista. A. Olivarez
Article transcript by Krista A. Olivarez & Aisha Teegarden

August 14, 2025

"... the reason I loved poetry so much was not so much because of what the poem said or its messages, but because of ***how it sounded.****"*

Kenan Phillip is a Spring 2025 graduate of UTRGV's MFA in Creative Writing program. Professor Emmy Pérez was his poetry thesis chair. During his time as a graduate student, Phillip served in various Department of Creative Writing roles, including teaching as a Graduate Assistant Instructor.

Prior to his graduation, Phillip submitted his first poetry manuscript (written prior to his MFA thesis) for publication with FlowerSong Press. This full-length debut, The Ego Rhythm, was published this year by FlowerSong.

MFA Creative Writing candidate, Krista A. Olivarez, sat with Phillip in the same conference room where their weekly graduate instructor assistantship meetings were held last year and where previous podcast episodes of Write by the River / Escribiendo el río were recorded, except this time, Phillip was now on the other side of the microphone and is a recently hired lecturer in the Department of Writing and Language Studies beginning this fall 2025 semester.

Olivarez and fellow MFA student and department coworker, Aisha Teegarden, crafted questions specifically for Phillip, centered on his book.

The following is an excerpt from the fifty-five-minute podcast. Please refer to the podcast for the entire interview. Olivarez facilitated the conversation with her and Teegarden's co-prepared questions:

Krista Olivarez (KO): One poem that had great emotional spark, and symbolic imagery was *Perspectives on a Bullfight*. I'm interested in learning about the story behind this poem.



Kenan Phillip (KP): I'm glad you picked that one, it's one of my favorite pieces in the whole book. I like, for me, that it intercuts between a lot of very clear, very vivid images. I tried to do that in all of my poetry, but I think *Perspectives on a Bullfight* [...] one of the things that I'm always very aware of while I'm reading it is that it's a series of, like, images so sharp, like they flash through your mind as you're hearing them, or reading them, in my case.



KO: Do you want to explain to the audience, those who don't have copies of the books yet, what kind of story these images are conveying and, also, why a bullfight?

KP: We start off with this description, we have some flashes, we have a cat in an alleyway screeching and then we have Billie Holiday in—I always imagine it's a kind of, like, a bar, like an opera lounge, about to sing, right—and people have asked me why Billie Holiday. I just like Billie Holiday, she's very good, she's great.

> *"It's almost like you're trying to* ***find a rhythm;*** *you're trying to* ***find a beat.****"*

KP: We enter in the middle of the fight. ...the matador ends up making a mistake. He slips up, gets gored, and you know, he's dying tragically, and he makes a sound. I guess you could call it a cough or an exhale, as he's dying, and that sound—these are the last lines of the poem, and I always love reading it—that sound, sounds a little bit like Billie Holiday clearing her throat before she starts to sing, right?



Cyrus Cassells, Texas Poet Laureate 2021 and CFA Distinguished Artist for Fall 2024, visits Kenan Phillips' Poetry Appreciation class on Sept. 27, 2024. Photo by Emmy Pérez.

KP: So, to answer the question that you started me off with, why a bullfight? [...]They've kind of got this weird literary history[...]a lot of famous writers[...]fixated on bullfights, Faulkner for example[...] the violence of it, but also[...]the stupidity of it? [...]Which makes it a very human thing to do[...] And, I think writers are kind of fixated on the mentality that it takes to do something like that, like, the macho[...] "Yeah, I got this! [...] I can do anything?" [...] You have to think of yourself as doing something glorious, because why would you do it otherwise? [...]

KO: You reference John Henry... While written and created to be a representation of Black strength and resilience, you challenge this fictional figure, writing your speaker to say he, "couldn't hold a candle" to them... Can you say more about this claim that your speaker is making... And what it means to you?

KP: Oh, yeah. [...] John Henry is a Black railroad worker. [...] The story sort of represents an idea of Black masculinity, especially around out work that has pervaded the culture and is still there to this day... You go out and you work until you drop... you have to. [...] John Henry's wife and child are left fatherless, right, but it's fine because they have the reward from the railroad company... he's provided for his family. So even though he's dead, right, he's done what he's supposed to do. It's easy to see why this kind of gets valorized.

KO: ...You found this harmonious balance between being philosophical, anthropological, and personal, and I want to ask how you did that when it came to picking the poems for the book and organizing them in their own perspective sections...

FINDING YOUR BEAT:
A conversation with
Kenan Wilson Phillip
[CONT.]



KP: So, the title of the book is The Ego Rhythm... I've described it as is a kind of—your early 20s are this time when you're trying to find yourself, right? [...] It's almost like you're trying to find a rhythm; you're trying to find a beat [Mhm]. I think that, like, interlaced mix of, like, philosophy and anthropology and emotions you describe, I think that's my beat, that's my rhythm. [...] Philosophy is anthropology... anthropology becomes philosophy... the personal becomes philosophical... it's hard to tell where one begins and one ends, right? [...]

KO: ...I mean, now that we're coming to this realization or reminder that the personal, the anthropological, and the philosophical are like really close to each other, like, it must have not been that difficult, but, I mean, if there was any difficulties, you know, please do tell.

KP: The last section... It's kind of a run-on with, I think, two interludes. And that's because, again, it was written all as one, just like this kind of rambling, poetical rant. And there were a lot of periods where I was like, "Okay, that's crazy, I got to break this up. I got to chop this up into regular poems, I got to make this work," right? And I was like, "No, no, actually I think I think it works on its own, as its own section." ... I think that was possibly, like, the most difficult task for me in the book, not necessarily deciding where things go, but making myself not shave off too much, right? [...] The urge to edit some of them was very strong.

*"I think, poetry, the real aim of poetry, is **making things clear**, drawing things out..."*

KO: [...] So, your style of writing is not necessarily rooted in traditional form, but you do utilize poetic devices. [...] Can you say more about your preferences when it comes to your poetic style, your voice and form?

KP: I think I developed a lot of my voice before I started my grad program. [...] I've always loved poetry, but when I was a little kid, the reason I loved poetry so much was not so much because of what the poem said or its messages, but because of how it sounded. [...] I liked how they moved in my ears, I liked how they moved in my mouth, and I think that's always been my guiding light. [...] So my voice has literally been my voice, right. It really is just a trial and error, but always, I think, trying to fit my own preferences. I always try to write work that I would enjoy reading, right? [Mhm]. [...]

KO: Last but not least... What are some misconceptions people often have about poetry, do you think? And how do you hope your poetry challenges those misconceptions and provokes the thoughts of readers?

KP: ... Something that I've encountered very often, especially with students, is this idea that poetry not only had to rhyme, but has to follow a very specific set of rules, right? [...] They will stare at you dumbfounded, looking for the magic solution, because they've been told that poetry is saying something secret... they're waiting for me to explain the rules... [...] I think, poetry, the real aim of poetry, is making things clear, drawing things out... [...]

KO: Thank you so much for coming from Harlingen to Edinburg to have this interview and podcast episode. [...]

KP: Thank you for having me on, I really appreciate it. It's been a pleasure.

You can purchase The Ego Rhythm at flowersongpress.com. Stay up to date on Kenan's future events, and professional journey by following him on Instagram, @kenan.phillip. Kenan also invites you to follow @unfoldedpoetryproject , a poetry nonprofit in the RGV, where he serves as a board member and Volunteer Coordinator.

You can also follow @utrgvmfa for notifications on even more interviews/podcasts with amazing writers and artists hosted by the creative writing department here at UTRGV.

The interview has been lightly edited for clarity and is an excerpt of a larger work.

To listen to the full podcast episode,

click here.





"BEGINNINGS OF A LEGACY:

UTRGV welcomes new Vaquero Marching Band director"

By Amanda Alaniz
Photo: Paul Choy July 29, 2025

RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS – JULY 29, 2025

Dr. Dustin Ferguson traveled nearly 4,000 miles from Hawai'i to the Rio Grande Valley to lead the Vaquero Marching Band in making history during UTRGV's inaugural football season as the new Athletics Band director.

Eager to build a legacy through music, Ferguson believes this fall will be transformative for the Vaquero Marching Band, which launched in 2023. They are preparing to boost school spirit, energize fans and set the tone for game day.

"With the band still in its inaugural stages, the students are in a unique position to be part of a legacy from the very beginning," he said. "They get to set the trajectory and help establish the culture for the first time."

As marching band is a new addition to the university, Ferguson is ready to collaborate with every band member to cultivate a vibrant culture as the football season approaches. "There's something about college marching bands that has always been such a passion and a thrill for me," he said. "I want to be able to share that with so many other people in so many different communities."

FROM THE FIELD TO THE PODIUM

Growing up in Florida, Ferguson was drawn to music's wide range of styles and ability to evoke different emotions with just a few notes. His résumé includes notable experiences from University of Florida to Ohio State, where he earned a doctorate in musical arts. Most recently, he served as the interim associate director of bands and marching band director at the University of Hawai'i.

"I've had the opportunity to grow everywhere I've gone and bring bits and pieces of each of those experiences to make something even more unique here," he said. "It will be different, and it will be amazing with what we're able to create with students, staff and the community here."

He has experience with both competitive and noncompetitive marching bands, having directed the Park Vista High School band in Lake Worth, Florida, which competed at Grand Nationals. As the new Athletics Band director, he looks forward to discussing with band members what they envision for their culture and experience this season.

"BEGINNINGS OF A LEGACY:
UTRGV welcomes new Vaquero Marching Band director"
[CONT.]



"With the band still in its inaugural stages, the students are in a unique position to ***be part of a legacy****..."*

"Getting the band thinking about: What do we want the culture to be? What do we want the overall experience to be? That is what will set us up on the upward trajectory from now until forever," he said.

FROM REHEARSAL TO REALITY

Marching band is a fast-paced, high-energy environment, especially in college. Ferguson finds it incredibly rewarding to see the crowd cheer after a six-minute halftime show, knowing the performance was learned in less than a week.

"You put it on the field, you deliver it and you feel really good about it – that is something else," he said. "Another thing is being part of an organization that's bigger than yourself. You're just one small piece that helps make it successful."

Ferguson looks forward to the band's performance during UTRGV's first-ever football game halftime show. The band will undergo two weeks of camp in August to prepare for the pre-game and halftime performances.

UTRGV Football is set to kick off its inaugural season on August 30 at the Robert and Janet Vackar Stadium in Edinburg against Sul Ross State. The Vaquero Marching Band and UTRGV Spirit Team will play a key role in this historic moment.

"I'm excited. I moved 3,000 to 4,000 miles to be ready for this," he said. "I was able to do a brief walkthrough of the stadium, and when you're on the field touching the turf, seeing the stands and envisioning the thousands of people that will be there – I'm definitely ready."

To learn more about the Vaquero Marching Band, visit:

utrgv.edu/marchingband/



UTRGV | College of Fine Arts

DISTINGUISHED *Artist Series*



DANIEL PARDO QUINTET

AWARD-WINNING FLUTIST, COMPOSER, AND PRODUCER

Columbian born flutist Daniel Pardo and his Quintet mix home-made boleros with jazz and classical in luscious music that has him surrounded in various orchestral settings. At times he brings in a plethora of flute sounds that create a cirrus sounding warmth, coupled with tropical influences, soft romance and a world culture view. His flute sings with a voice that seems almost human in its expressiveness. Whether he's navigating the gentle sway of a ballad or soaring through more vibrant passes, Pardo's technical mastery and heartfelt phrasing make every piece a highlight.

Daniel Pardo is recipient of Gold medals in the Instrumentalist and Album categories by the 2024 Global Music Awards, a featured artist in the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the winner of the Beethoven Innovation Award and Absolute First Prize in the Professional and National Music categories at the Beethoven International Competition UK. He is a associate professor of flute at Prairie View A&M University.

OCTOBER 25, 2025 | 7PM

PERFORMING ARTS COMPLEX

1201 W UNIVERSITY DR.
EDINBURG, TX

For **tickets** or **more information** visit:

UTRGVARTS.tiny.us/danielpardo



ART & DESIGN AT UTRGV



Pictured:
Future Art & Design Building in **Brownsville**

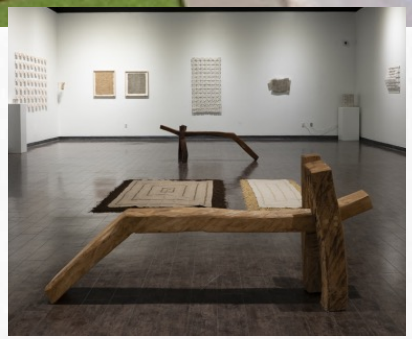
Design has a purpose. Art has a meaning.

The UTRGV Edinburg and Brownsville campuses have provided time, funding, personnel and energy in building, sustaining, growing and investing in facilities that are transforming the Rio Grande Valley's future as an arts and culture destination.

The Edinburg Visual Arts Building is a 70,000 square foot building with studios, classrooms, galleries and meeting spaces that were all originally a Walmart facility.

The new Brownsville Visual Arts Complex is a nearly 46,000 square foot renovated elementary school which will have state of the art classrooms, facilities and gallery spaces. These buildings will help to ensure the success of all art and design students for years to come.

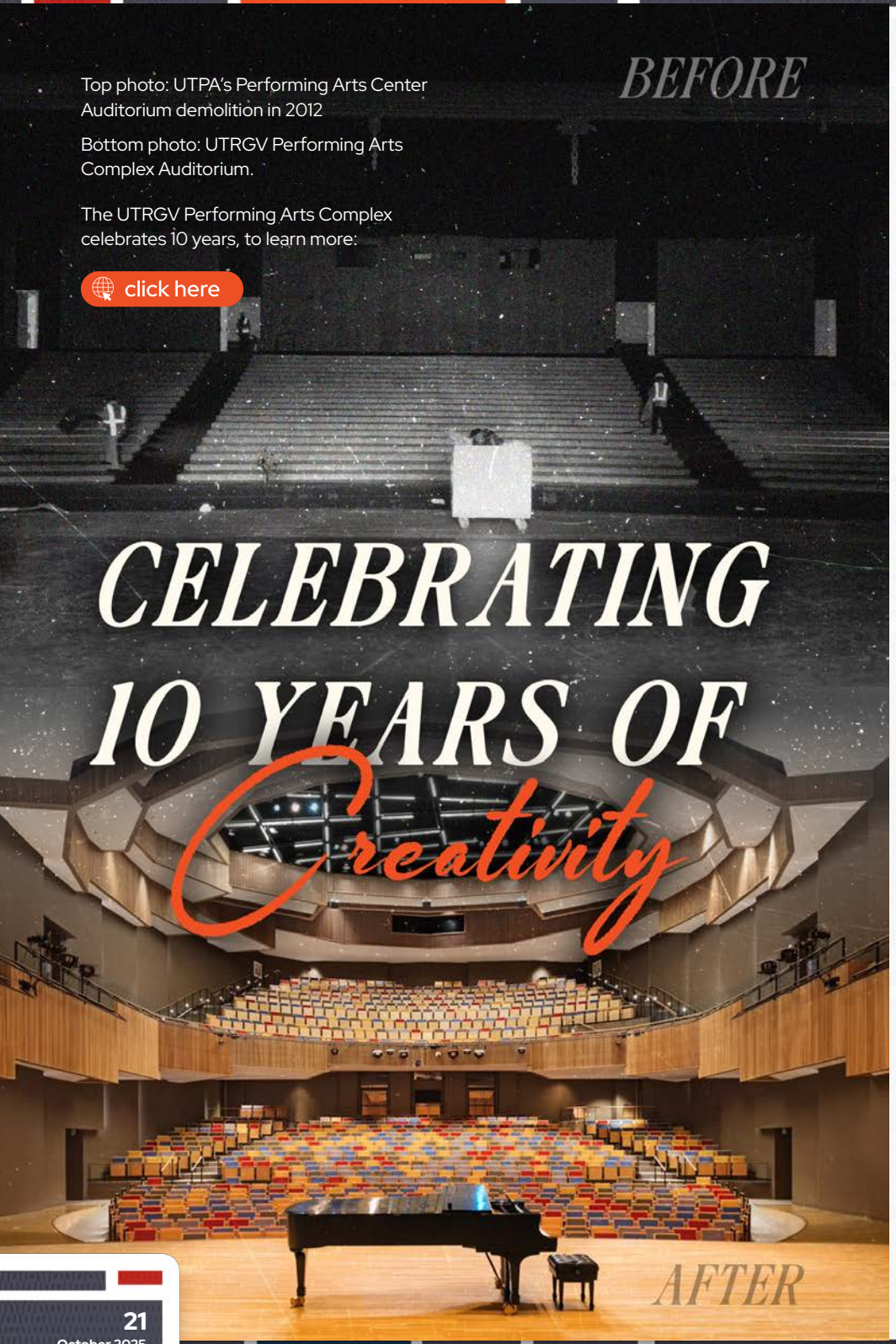








Pictured:
Art & Design Building in **Edinburg**



Top photo: UTPA's Performing Arts Center Auditorium demolition in 2012

Bottom photo: UTRGV Performing Arts Complex Auditorium.

The UTRGV Performing Arts Complex celebrates 10 years, to learn more:

click here

ARTSZINE SEPTEMBER 2025 EDITION

College of Fine Arts Accomplishments

Student and Alumni

- Avery Castillo, MFA Candidate in Creative Writing, Winner of the Texas Association of Creative Writers Graduate Poetry Competition.
- Keatan McKeever, MFA in Art, opened the Castro Gallery in Harlingen.
- Karina Molina, BA in Theatre ('25), working as Production Assistant on the national tour of *Suffs*.
- UTRGV Ballet Folklórico was invited by the American College Dance Association (ACDA) to perform at Jacob's Pillow in the Berkshires, Massachusetts, after being recognized for the best dance performance at the ACDA National Gala in Washington, DC, in June.
- UTRGV Theatre's production of Romeo and Julie was recognized by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF).
- UTRGV Flute Choir performed at the National Flute Association Conference in Atlanta.
- UTRGV String Orchestra performed at the National Festival of Arts in Antigua, Guatemala.
- UTRGV Trombone Ensemble performed at the International Trombone Festival in London, Ontario, Canada.
- UTRGV Tuba/Euphonium Ensemble performed at the International Tuba Euphonium Association Conference in Valencia, Spain.

Faculty

- Adam Boggs, Assistant Professor of Art History, was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to conduct research in Tijuana, Mexico.
- Donald Lyles, Professor of Art, exhibited at the Galerie Latuvu in Narbonne, France.
- Scott Roeder, Associate Professor of Tuba/Euphonium, Winner of the International Tuba Euphonium Association Bobo Award for Recording Excellence in Classical Solo Tuba for his album, *TubaSongs*.
- Brian Warren, Professor of Theatre, directed *Lend Me a Tenor* at the American Gothic Performing Arts Festival in Ottumwa, Iowa.

For additional information, or to inquire about having your artwork or achievements featured in a future issue, please contact the Dean's Office. COFA@utrgv.edu or visit utrgv.edu/cofa



The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
College of Fine Arts