



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



# 2022

## SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.<sup>SM</sup>



### *Greetings!*

I'm delighted to present this collection highlighting senior thesis projects completed by students in the College of Arts & Letters Class of 2022.

Within these pages, 280 seniors describe their 298 theses, capstones and creative projects. This package represents countless hours of original research, practice, analysis, interviews, writing, and creative work.

The projects detailed here are as interesting and diverse as the students who chose them. They include exploring the foundation for cluster algebras, writing a musical comedy, studying the role of faith in political participation, preserving an endangered language, and examining discrimination in the mortgage lending market.

During these endeavors, seniors have worked one-on-one with their advisors, who have provided valuable support, expertise and guidance. Many students also have benefited from generous grants that enabled them to travel, view archived manuscripts, purchase materials, and gain knowledge and cultural experiences. They have also demonstrated tremendous resiliency throughout the many challenges that COVID-19 has posed to their undergraduate careers — including the ways it forced many of them to reshape or recalibrate their projects.

Each year, seniors affirm that both the process and knowledge gained are invaluable, and often transformative.

I am proud of these seniors for pursuing their interests, making discoveries, and contributing to academic scholarship and the creative arts. I'm also extremely pleased that the percentage of Arts & Letters seniors completing theses, capstones, and creative projects has increased from 8% in 2008 to approximately 40% the last few years.

I hope that you enjoy learning about their projects as much as I have.

*Sarah A. Mustillo*

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I.A. O'Shaughnessy Dean  
College of Arts & Letters

**Mary Biese**

- Major: Program of Liberal Studies
- Minors: Theology and Liturgical Music Ministry
- Advisor: Steve Fallon

## Sodden-with-its-Sorrowing-Heart: Prayer Amidst Tragedy and Poetry as Prayer in J.R.R. Tolkien's and Gerard Manley Hopkins' Poetry

I put J.R.R. Tolkien's unfinished poem, *The Lay of Eärendel*, alongside Gerard Manley Hopkins' *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. After connecting the authors biographically and thematically, I explored how these two poems articulate harrowing loss, a crying-out (prayer), and the merciful response of the divine to that prayer. I also investigated the authors' invitation to pray with poetry, especially in the face of great tragedy.

I've loved Hopkins' poetry and Tolkien's fictional corpus for many years. Tolkien's poetry is a subject rarely studied, which made for an interesting investigation. I was further inspired by a recent groundbreaking book on Tolkien, which encourages scholars to take into account Tolkien's Catholicism and his wide readership.

*Traveled to London and Oxford in England with funding from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies.*



### Samuel Ebner

- Major: Music (Concentration in Vocal Performance)
- Supplementary Major: Arts & Letters Pre-Health
- Advisor: Kiera Duffy

## Senior Recital

As a senior performance major in the Department of Music, I organized, prepared, and performed a senior recital, which is the culmination of years of vocal work that includes sets from numerous composers, including JS Bach, Manuel de Falla, and Gabriel Fauré. I also am proud to include a set from Florence Price, a 20th-century African American female composer whose work has unfortunately been disregarded and underperformed until recently.

I chose these composers to challenge myself vocally, and to illuminate incredible artists like Price. The recital was specifically designed to include multiple languages and sets from various time periods. Ultimately, I chose songs that I could relate to and that had important meaning in my life.



## Andrew Ganahl

- Majors: Physics and Music  
(Concentration in Piano  
Performance)
- Minor: Philosophy
- Advisor: John Blacklow

## Senior Piano Recital

I performed several pieces of solo repertoire by Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin, as well as a chamber work by Shostakovich.





### **Anna Nelson**

- Majors: Finance and Music  
(Concentration in Piano Performance)
- Advisor: Daniel Schlosberg

## **Senior Piano Recital**

My senior piano recital consisted of pieces written by composers such as Domenico Scarlatti, Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, and Béla Bartók. The approximately one-hour recital consisted of both solo and collaborative piano works. This recital is the capstone of my music education of nearly 17 years, and it especially highlights my piano studies at Notre Dame under the direction of Daniel Schlosberg.





## Catherine Vazzana

- Majors: Mathematics and Music
- Advisor: Stephen Lancaster

## Senior Voice Recital

I sang songs by Franz Schubert, Lili Boulanger, Giulio Caccini, and Claudio Monteverdi, as well as musical theatre selections, one of which was written by a friend and myself. I tried to include songs from a variety of periods and styles.

