



Fall 2016

# footprints

Wayland Baptist University

## **They're Back**

**Students return to campus as  
Koinonia kicks off Fall 2016**

**More Koinonia photos, page 36**

**Dr. Bobby Hall addresses employees, page 2**

# TELLING THE STORY

WAYLAND GRADUATE'S  
FILM SCREENED AT  
EUROPEAN ART FILM  
FESTIVALS

*Laura was alone.*

*Having suffered a great loss, she  
pulled away from society ... from  
community.*

*Only with the help of a young boy  
will she find her way back.*

*Will she find empathy.*

*Will she perhaps, once again  
see a young man standing on a  
bridge.*

Charles Pepiton has been rather busy lately. And when you ask him what he's been up to, you will no doubt be intrigued by his answer. The only comparable story might come from his wife, Rebekah (Wilkins).

Both 2001 graduates of Wayland Baptist University, Charlie earned a bachelor's degree in theatre

Story by Jonathan Petty, Director of Communications  
Photos by Rebekah Wilkins-Pepiton



arts while Rebekah earned a degree in mass communications. Also an artist, Rebekah recently illustrated a book “A Story of America Goes Walking,” written by her friend Saara Myrene Raapana. The book was published in June by Shechem Press. More on her book can be read with the accompanying story.

Charlie, on the other hand, has been busy with his own project -- directing an art film.

“Laura, or Scenes from a Common World” is a collaboration with Pepiton’s friend and writer Damon Falke. Pepiton met Falke shortly after graduating

from Wayland when he spent a couple of years teaching at East Texas Baptist University where Falke’s wife was an English professor at the time. The two developed a friendship that led to working together on several projects, not the least of which was an original, visceral, physical, lyrically poetic undertaking that was recently screened at the Art Video International Film Festival in Cannes, France. The film has also been accepted at film festivals in Greece and Sweden.

The idea for “Laura” sparked after Pepiton attended a theatrical training workshop in Po-

land. The workshop was run by a theatre group that focuses on physicality in its performances, where the physical nature of the performance is more important than the text – a concept that is contrary to the norm.

Since meeting in 2006, Falke and his wife had moved to Norway. Following the workshop in 2013, Pepiton stopped in Norway on his way home, and he and Falke began discussing their next project.

“I said, what do you think about writing a piece that is abstract, but clear, but it needs physicality in order to become

Alexandra Kazazou is the lead performer in “Laura, or Scenes from a Common World.” She is an actor and director working principally between Poland, Greece, and Turkey. She is a founding member of the Studio Matejka physical theatre laboratory in collaboration with The Grotowski Institute (Poland).



Above: Charlie Pepiton, right, works with teammate and collaborator Wes Kline on location in Norway. Kline served as the director of photography, editor and sound designer for Pepiton's film, "Laura, or Scenes from a Common World."

Right: Pepiton with his wife Rebekah who served as producer for the film, and who has also recently illustrated a book.



clear?" Pepiton said. "[Falke] is one of those writers where you can throw him a weird idea that I'm not sure anybody else could do anything with and he says, yeah, I think I can write that."

A few months later, Falke sent Pepiton a five-part poem called "Laura." The two began editing and working it into a script, the focus of which is a woman who has suffered loss and disassociated herself from the world around her. The story revolves around her finding her way back.

"Essentially, it is about love," Pepiton said. "She isolates herself after this loss and so the film is about her coming back to community and learning to be connected with people again."

In a writer's statement, Falke said the journey is similar to that of Daphne in "Apollo and Daphne" as recorded by the Roman poet Ovid in "Metamorphoses." In the poem, Daphne is struck by

Eros' dull arrow and runs from love, only to regret her final decision to be transformed into a tree in order to avoid being caught by Apollo. "Laura" differs in that she finds her way back to love and community with the help of a young boy.

The film was shot in Tromsø, Norway, where the scenery brings a physical element to the piece. Pepiton, who worked not only with Falke but also a number of other team members, including his wife, said the film was definitely a collaboration of all parties involved. He said it has a very European feel to it, so he targeted European film festivals for a possible screening. He said getting accepted to a festival feels like winning a lottery.

"Thousands of film festivals go on in this country alone, much less around the world," he said. "I just started entering it in festivals where I thought it would have

resonance."

While his film has been accepted at several European festivals, Pepiton said it's unfortunate that he will not be able to make the screenings, but after all, he does have a real job. Pepiton has been admittedly nomadic since graduating from Wayland in 2001, moving approximately every two years. They currently call Spokane, Wash., home where he teaches directing and acting at Gonzaga University and Rebekah teaches visual art at a local high school.

The two were married two weeks after graduating from Wayland, then headed off to the University of Idaho for graduate work. Pepiton completed his Master of Fine Arts in 2003 and was subsequently offered a teaching position at ETBU. Feeling the need for more professional experience in order to adequately teach others about

theatre, Pepiton gave up teaching and moved to Pagosa Springs, Colo., where he and Rebekah opened a residential theatre company.

“We moved there in 2007 and ran a residential company for three years just as the economy was bottoming out. That was a hard time to run an arts organization,” he said. “But it was a great time to experiment with some things, take some risks and just see if we could do it.”

In 2010, the Pepitons joined the Peace Corps and moved to China where they taught English in a Chinese university. While English classes were the primary job, Pepiton said they had the flexibility to choose a secondary project. There was already an English language drama club at the university, so he got involved and started producing Shakespeare plays. Pepiton said it gave him the opportunity to experiment with what theatre could do outside of entertainment.

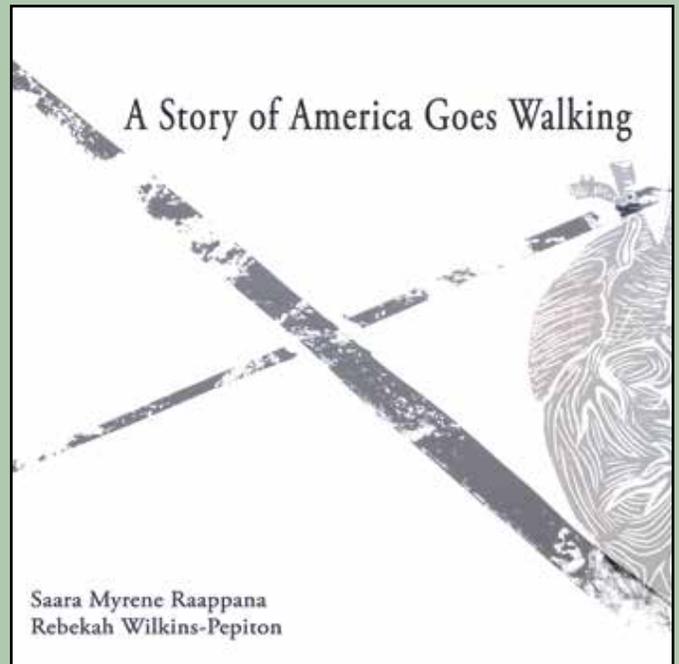
“That’s a question I had been playing with for a long time, and that came from Doc’s (Marti Runnels) theatre classes. A lot of his classes give a lot of room for experimentation and asking what can theatre do more than just entertain,” he said.

Having expanded his experiential resume, Pepiton once again started applying for teaching positions. He was given a visiting assistant professor position at a university in New York where he stayed for two more years before moving to Gonzaga – a move he hopes keeps him in one place for quite some time.

“Every two years or so we were moving to what’s next,” Pepiton said. “But I think we are done with that now. I think we are ready to stick around. We are ready to quit packing up every two

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**see PEPITON, page 41**



## Rebekah Pepiton illustrates book

SPOKANE, Wash. — Shechem Press is pleased to announce the publication of “A Story of America Goes Walking,” a contemporary response to Henry David Thoreau’s famous 1862 essay “Walking,” by poet Saara Myrene Raappana and artist Rebekah Wilkins-Pepiton.

“You may name it America, but it is not America; neither Americus Vesputius, nor Columbus, nor the rest were the discoverers of it. There is a truer amount of it in mythology than in any history of America, so called, that I have seen,” writes Thoreau.

“A story of America hoisted itself out of a Massachusetts pond / and was surprised / by endless meadowlands / of blacktop,” begins Raappana’s opening poem, which is accompanied by Wilkins-Pepiton’s startlingly fractured conifers and geologic inclusions.

Raappana and Wilkins-Pepiton, who met while serving as U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers in China from 2010-12, tackle the question of America and its lasting mythologies through a dialogue of words and images. “A Story of Amer-

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**see BOOK, page 41**

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## PEPITON

from page 11

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years.”

While Pepiton may be ready to settle down, don't look for him to slow down. He and Rebekah are still very involved with their Square Top Theatre group, where they work with other artists to collaborate on projects. Pepiton is working with students, not only teaching them acting and directing skills, but directing productions as well. His list of credits continues to grow, including directing his former professor, Dr. Runnels, and a classmate, Cory Norman, in Wayland's production of "Freud's Last Session" last spring. Runnels and Norman

will be traveling to Washington in September to perform the play at Gonzaga.

Pepiton is also looking at another original, experimental piece called "Budapest" that could turn into another major project.

"It started with a poem that is a long and formal piece, then we'll see where it goes from there," he said. "We're still playing with it."

You can keep up with Pepiton and his projects at [cpepiton.com](http://cpepiton.com) and [squaretoptheatre.org](http://squaretoptheatre.org). For more information on "Laura, or Scenes from a Common World," log onto [lauramovie.com](http://lauramovie.com).



Charlie Pepiton working on location in Norway.

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## BOOK

from page 11

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ica Goes Walking" takes readers from Thoreau's New England pond to the forests of the U.S. Midwest and on to the Chinese southwest in search of the story of America. Whether told by kids playing make-believe, the map-like curves of the human heart, or women waiting in a hospital room in Chengdu, the only way to figure out which stories are true is to walk through them. In an election year fraught with competing narratives and vitriol, this walk is never more important.

"A Story of America

Goes Walking' is a book of sauntering, of moving toward, into, and through the holy land and moving with the attentive eye and ear of an exile. This is a book that meditates on unrootedness and the sacred, as well as who gets to decide such demarcations. Enjoy this collection—a rare and fine one—where text and image seem bound together in the best sort of synergistic energy," writes Tod Marshall, 2016-18 Washington State Poet Laureate and author of "Bugle".

"Words and images

perfectly interpenetrated — a subtle duet of imagination and passion — a book more than the sum of its parts that invites the imagination along its intricate, spacious pathways, its white spaces, its vistas opening inward toward the infinite forest of soul. A soundless, resounding triumph," writes Stephen C. Behrendt, George Holmes Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Nebraska and author of "Refractions."

"Whitmanesque in scope and success, these poems and images create an Ameri-

ca that holds us safe just as it terrifies, that asks us to question our individual participation in a larger American mythology. A visual and literary achievement of the highest degree, this is a book I want to live inside forever," says Andrea Scarpino, 2015-17 Poet Laureate of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and author of "What the Willow Said as it Fell."

For further information, contact Shechem Press management at: [shechempress@gmail.com](mailto:shechempress@gmail.com), or visit: [www.shechempress.com](http://www.shechempress.com).