The professors will receive their awards during the Undergraduate Commencement ceremony on Sunday, May 21.

David MacBride '73, professor of composition and music theory, the hartt school: humphrey r. tonkin award for scholarly and/or artistic creativity

Composer and pianist David Macbride '73, DMA, has written numerous works, ranging from solo, chamber, and orchestral music to music for film, TV, dance, and theatre, with an emphasis on percussion. During his more than 30 years teaching composition and music theory at The Hartt School, he has inspired and mentored hundreds of students, many of whom have gone on to become noted professional musicians.

An alumnus of The Hartt School, Macbride is universally recognized as one of the world’s most important composers of percussion music. The Humphrey R. Tonkin Award for Scholarly and/or Artist Creativity recognizes his works that challenge musicians technically, musically, and emotionally. His ability to embrace life’s issues and struggles is evident in pieces such as “Staying the Course,” a composition known to “shake the listeners to their core,” as it presents one note for every soldier who died in the Iraq war.

As a pianist, Macbride has toured much of the world performing recitals and is also known for his innovative audience-centered compositions. A recent work, “Percussion Park,” is a musical landscape where the audience is invited to freely roam the performance site in search of the music. The commissioned piece “Silent Hands” features an American Sign Language interpreter as part of the ensemble, and is intended to show connections between the expressiveness of sign language and musical gestures.

Macbride’s artistic endeavors have had a major influence on his teaching. He founded The Hartt School’s “Composers Ensemble,” providing an outlet for student composers to perform their own works, and initiated a course encouraging students to perform locally, having presented countless concerts himself throughout the Greater Hartford area and earning the University of Hartford’s Community Service Award in 2001.

Reflecting on his career at the University, Macbride acknowledges his mentor, Professor Emeritus Edward Diemente: “He provided me with positive experiences that set the stage for my composing to develop into a lifelong habit… I often remind my students that we are blessed to be in this world, the world of music, the world we live in.”