NOISE MAKERS

A TRIO OF HOFSTRA ALUMNI
HAVE CLIMBED THE MUSIC BUSINESS
CHARTS, ONE HIGH NOTE AT A TIME.

PROFILES BY LIZA N. BURBY PORTRAITS BY MATTEO BRACCO

college major does not always lead students to their ultimate career path. But sometimes, inspiration and encouragement can be just the right impetus for a student to pursue their interests and push beyond what they had previously dreamed for themselves.

That was the case for three Hofstra University alumni who have climbed the ranks of the music industry. They share how their time at Hofstra paved the way for their successful careers and prepared them to give back to their alma mater.





playing the guitar, I became my dad's resident product development arm, a role I would fill for my entire career," Jim D'Addario said. "My father was constantly bringing home prototypes, and I tested them with my bandmates."

The D'Addario family has been making instrument strings for centuries. Jim, however, originally planned to become a music teacher and performing artist. After transferring to Hofstra, D'Addario discovered a love for the intricacies and logic of music theory. "Although I really enjoyed teaching guitar one-on-one, I realized teaching in the classroom environment wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," he said. "I was really interested in sound and music production and highly motivated to help my father and brother in the family string business."

D'Addario changed his major to music and began to work with his family while continuing at Hofstra. In 1970, newly married and with only one semester remaining to complete his degree, he was struggling to finish his studies. He was ready to drop out and focus on the family music business.

It was Hofstra Music Professor Herb Deutsch, an electronic music pioneer, who motivated him to stay. "He said, 'Jim, you're so close to finishing. You're going to regret it your whole life if you don't.' He convinced me to stick it out and helped me get my degree."

company. Fifty years after its start, D'Addario is now one of the market leaders in musical instrument strings and many other music accessories.

After stints as the company's vice president, president, and CEO, Jim D'Addario is now chairman of the board and chief innovation officer, with oversight of the mechanical and product design engineering teams.

In 2008, after Hofstra began its music business program, Jim and Janet established the James D'Addario Music Business Endowed Scholarship, which provides financial assistance to deserving music business students. "I thought of how a dual major like the music business curriculum would have been such a perfect fit when I was in college."

Hofstra honored D'Addario with the Alumni Achievement Award in 2007 and named him the honoree at the 2015 Hofstra Gala. D'Addario also served on the University's Board of Trustees for several years. "The lessons I learned during my studies at Hofstra and my postgraduate involvement volunteering on the Hofstra Board were instrumental in my growth as a musician and business leader," D'Addario said. "I'm forever grateful to Professor Deutsch and Hofstra for the part they played in my personal and business successes."

themselves in the same story. Unless, of course, that story belongs to Diana Cecchini, who first came to Hofstra in 1983 as an accounting major. "I chose Hofstra because it had an excellent business and accounting program and was known for its Career Center, where companies directly recruited from campus," Cecchini said.

She was indeed recruited before graduation by some of the big accounting firms. It was Eugene Maccarrone, her business law professor, who steered her toward Ernst & Whinney (now EY). "It was likely the best decision I've ever made," Cecchini said. "It opened up many opportunities and brought me to where I am today."

One of her clients was Korg USA, the American arm of a high-end Japanese manufacturer and distributor of musical instruments used by musicians throughout the world. After she audited them, the CFO asked if she would like to join the company as assistant controller. While she had not planned on moving to a new company, she was drawn to Korg USA's work environment.

"The culture in the music products industry is truly unique, filled with creative and passionate individuals, many of whom are musicians," Cecchini said. "Although I had no prior

I was genuinely interested in. I love coming to work every day, knowing that we're contributing to making the world a happier place."

Cecchini has been with Korg for 34 years and has steadily advanced through the ranks. "I've been involved in every aspect of the business. Currently, I lead the IT, finance, manufacturing, and purchasing teams, and I'm actively engaged in all strategic planning. I'm also an officer of the company and a trustee for all our benefit plans."

She headed back to Hofstra in 1991 to earn an MBA and has stayed connected to the University ever since. Cecchini has been a member of Hofstra's Women in Leadership program, which provides female students with professional resources and network opportunities, since 2014. "It's a great group of women who are leaders in their industries." She's also been paying her experience forward by hiring interns and graduates of Hofstra's music business program.

"When I first started, there weren't many women in finance, and even when I joined this company, women weren't initially in leadership roles. Now I'm seeing more and more women in the music products industry. You just have to pursue what interests you and go for it."



hen Anita Chinkes Ratner first arrived at Hofstra, she did so with an open mind. With a specific career yet to be nailed down, she was eager to discover her path - wherever it might lead. "I started out as a history major, but in my first years at Hofstra, I was like a rudderless ship floating and taking classes that appealed to me, without a specific degree in mind," Chinkes Ratner said. "Hofstra supported me on my path of self-discovery. Bobbing around and changing my major multiple times eventually led me to classes that had a profound impact."

Television broadcasting and media studies classes opened her eyes, such as Dr. Sondra Rubenstein's course on the history of television and its impact on culture. "Her media theory class stands out because it got me to think critically about the impact and history of TV," said Chinkes Ratner, who knew she had found her place. "The [Herbert School of Communication's production] studio was brand-new at the time, and many of the professors were award-winning television creators. The television production classes were exciting and unlike any I had taken before. I loved creating content and working as part of a TV crew. I was hooked!"

Chinkes Ratner got hands-on experience interning at a local production company. After graduation, an opportunity arose to work as a production assistant for Woodstock '94 for MTV. "It changed my life. Being immersed in music and working on a large-scale live production was a dream come true. I loved working at MTV, and I was determined to find a way to stay."

She then landed a temp position with the company, which started her successful climb up the ranks, eventually leading her to music supervision. As Paramount's executive vice president of creative music strategy, Chinkes Ratner oversees all aspects of music for the Paramount cable brands and streaming services, including BET, Comedy Central, MTV, Paramount+, and Showtime. She is the lead creative executive for original scores and songs, music releases, soundtracks, and in-house music supervision. She also leads Paramount's music publishing businesses and music services across cable, streaming, and CBS.

Outside of the office, Chinkes Ratner is committed to supporting the next generations aspiring to work in the music and television industries. She founded the MTV Entertainment Group's First Time Composers program, which provides access to resources and education for aspiring music creators of all backgrounds. She also supports related organizations, including She Is the Music, Girls Make Beats, and EarthGirl.

Chinkes Ratner has the same passion for her alma mater, where she currently serves on the Dean's Advisory Board for Hofstra College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and is an advisory council member for Hofstra's music business program. "The students have great perspective and energy working with them inspires me," she said. "Hofstra gives them access to excellent and relevant internship opportunities, and the students graduate with experience that is equivalent to someone who has already been working for a few years."