

SPRING 2001

# BENNINGTON

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Direct correspondence to:  
Bennington Magazine  
Bennington College  
Bennington, VT 05201  
Phone: 802-440-4344  
Fax: 802-440-4351  
e-mail: [alumlett@bennington.edu](mailto:alumlett@bennington.edu)



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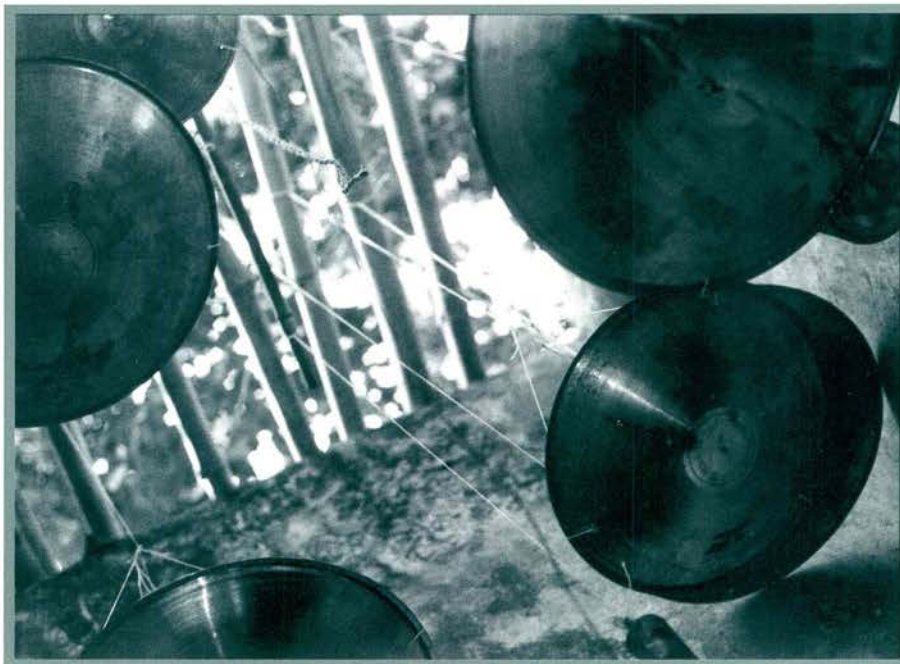
*Maid-Rite Kiss* by Liz Mamorsky '60 is "assembled from an old washboard, wooden foundry patterns, the innards of an adding machine, a calculator number pad, electronic board and chips, blind spot mirrors, a red rhinestone-studded leash, and sparkling ruby slippers."

Since graduating from Bennington, where she worked closely with Paul Feeley, Mamorsky has exhibited her paintings and unique recycled materials sculpture nationally and internationally. Her work is in numerous public and private collections, including those of The Jewish Museum, San Francisco; The Spertus Museum, Chicago; The Oakland Museum, California; Sony Corporation; Inhale Therapeutic Systems; First National Bank of Arizona; Santa Clara Medical Center; and the set of *Star Trek: Voyager*.

# BENNINGTON

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

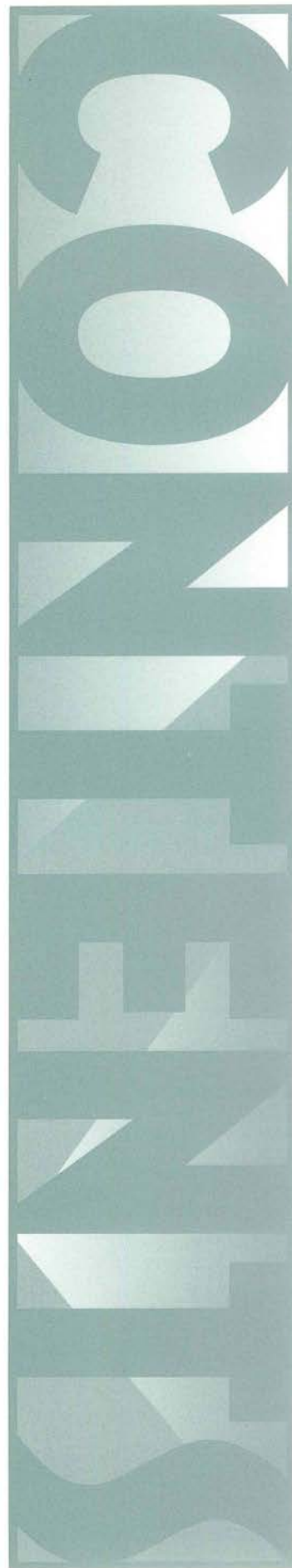
SPRING 2001



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# TENDING YOUR LIGHTNING FIELD

EXCERPTS FROM CONVOCATION 2000

BENNINGTON HAS A WAY of attracting individuals with impossible plans—teachers who are full-time working artists or scholars *and* full-time teachers—that’s the famous “teacher-practitioner” model. Students who are composing comic operas *and* writing gut-wrenchingly personal novels *and* painting political ceiling murals *and* designing salamander mating experiments, usually all in the same afternoon—that would be the “student-practitioner” model, I guess. We are individuals who are fierce about our individuality and our freedom; that is why we are here.

Sometimes that individuality means we don’t listen as well as we might, at first, to other people’s ideas; which makes teaching here a real challenge. And yet, knowing that you may not listen, I have some advice with which to begin this year. I advise you to reclaim your innocence.

Of course that sounds wrong; much of being in college, especially in your first term, involves the constant sense that you are too young—too young to get into that class for advanced students; too young to drink, legally; too young and green to know the ropes. And yet in some very serious ways that I have noticed, you are also showing signs of being prematurely gray.

I have often seen a student, even a self-proclaimed literature student, pick up a novel and eyeball it with a been-there-done-that skepticism, as if certain that something is being put over on him or her. So many students are deeply suspicious of what they are asked to read, like visitors to a strange land eyeing the oddly spicy, unidentifiable dish that has been set down on the table.

Listen up. This is Dickens, Austen, Shakespeare we are asking you to read. And Coetzee, Sebald, Ashbery—contemporary writers of genius. There are no worms in the dish. This is not a trick to see if you’ll puke. Even if, finally, we do not *like* Dickens’s *Bleak House*, it behooves us to *respect* *Bleak House*, it behooves us to try to imagine what *other people* have liked in *Bleak House*, before we turn up our noses. I cannot swear to it, but I am reasonably sure that, like me, all of my colleagues make it a practice not to waste your time with trivia. We ask you to read *great* books, *incredible* poems (listen to astonishing symphonies, study groundbreaking anthropology). We have gone to some trouble to select for you the very best there is.

What I mean about reclaiming your innocence is nothing less than this: that you approach every new book—painting, symphony, dance—as if it might mean your salvation. I will say it again. You should approach every new work of art, every new area of knowledge, as if it might contain the news that will save your life.

BY APRIL BERNARD



Believe it or not, that is how I (most jaded of jades) read, listen, see, and learn. People who keep their minds alive do that for their whole lives.

HERE IS AN ANCILLARY MATTER here, which is the business of process. If you are not afraid to be innocent, to be the open-minded and open-souled student that you in fact must be to truly learn—you will become terribly interested in your own process of learning. Boredom is impossible when you are the subject of every class.

Of course, when you love something at first sight, there's no problem—suddenly you can't get enough of, say, Emily Dickinson, and her life is fascinating and you want to write poems in homage and find out everything there is to know about her and her circle. You imagine yourself tiptoeing about Jennings in a nightie, murmuring, "Wild Nights—Wild Nights!/Were I with thee/Wild Nights should be/Our luxury!"

Difficulties arise with *dislike* at first sight. Here you must use your ingenuity. The first time you see a painting you don't like, say by Gustav Klimt (I choose this example because I don't like his work), you say, Hmmm. I don't like that. *Why* don't I like that? A first level of analysis might be, I don't like long creepy limbs and mosaic-like surfaces.... Well, why don't I? A taste thing? Do I dislike all mosaics? The mosaics in the Hagia Sophia, do I dislike those? No? Do I think mosaic style in this painting is too stylized, too self-conscious? Hmmm. What's the matter with being self-conscious? And for that matter, does the reason I don't like Klimt really have more to do with my own squirmy discomfort about his in-your-face eroticism? And why is that? Let's look at Klimt's contemporaries: How do I like their work? Are there novelists, composers working at the same time in the same place whose work resonates with his?

Every class, every question will become a lab experiment. Why am I having trouble understanding these lines of poetry? Is it the vocabulary, the syntax, or the strange attitude of the poet—he seems to be pleased that his beloved is dead!—? Why do I dislike this short story? Am I offended by the subject matter, and did the author *intend* to offend me? If he did, so what? Is great literature supposed to be *in-offensive*? Is the author obsessed with God and I just don't get it? Do I not know enough about the geography or the history of the place? None of these questions is irrelevant—you need to keep your eye at all times on the barometer of your own reactions.

AND SPEAKING OF BAROMETERS, I want to talk about the weather. That is, inspiration. Inspiration equals breath equals wind equals weather. OK. All of you are creators—just as we are

teacher-practitioners, and you are student-practitioners. Especially for those of you who have already defined yourselves as artists, but for the rest of you, too—you know that much of what it means to learn and make things comes from flashes of inspiration. So now I will tell you how to get inspiration.

There is, in New Mexico, on several acres of land, an art installation that has been there for a couple of decades, called *The Lightning Field*, by Walter De Maria. It's a huge, many-football-fields-stretch of flat land, dotted about with tall lightning rods in a grid. This is a part of the country where thunderstorms happen a lot; so when the storms come, the lightning leaps about from rod to rod, in fantastic patterns. There are platforms for visitors to observe the show, and of course, lots of photographic and film records of the phenomenon of the lightning dancing about.

I love the metaphor made available by *The Lightning Field*. Lightning, naturally, is inspiration—but the grid, the lightning rods, are what provide the skeleton for the lightning to move about and make patterns, to make the art. If there's no field of rods, there's nowhere for the lightning to go—except to a stray sheep, maybe, or a rock. Someone had to build the lightning field, and has to tend it, to keep the rods upright. This is the discipline of your job as creators: to build and keep the field of lightning rods, so that when lightning strikes, you will be able to catch it.

How do you make your field of rods? If you are a writer, you do it by reading, everything you can get your hands on; and you do it by talking with others about what you read, and writing about what you read, and also—but curiously, less importantly—by writing a lot of exercises, trial poems, trial stories, letters, journals. This job—the job of reading and living in literature—is your job for life, for as long as you hope to be a writer. There is no writer who simply writes: For his inspiration to make something, he has to have his materials in place.

Art, dance, science—every discipline has its comparable work of serious, thoughtful, sometimes joyous drudgery, of tending that field of rods to be ready when the weather gets electric.

And I have a great piece of news for you. No less than in the New Mexican desert, the weather here in Bennington, Vermont, is *extremely* charged. I don't know if it's true, but I have been told that the Native Americans who lived around here called this the Valley of the Four Winds—and you can see all four, distinctly, sometimes, if you look over the valley at the End of the World, the clouds racing weather against each other. The story continues that the belief was that the weather made this a place of great power and great madness.

So far I have found it very good weather indeed....



# FACULTY NOTES

David Anderegg will present a paper at the annual meeting of Division 39 of the American Psychology Association in Santa Fe in April entitled, "Ol' Blue Eyes: Psychoanalysis, Evolutionary Psychology, and the Culture of Self-Loathing."

Teacher of instruments **Ronald K. Anderson** has recently begun serving a three-year term on the national screening committee of the Fulbright Program for the U.S. Department of State.

**Joel Chadabe** has been on the international circuit recently: He was keynote speaker at the International Computer Music Conference in Berlin, Germany, last September, and a featured lecturer at Intersens, a December conference on connections between the arts that took place in Marseilles, France. Also in December, he was a panelist at ISEA (International Society for Electronic Art) 2000 in Paris.

A rehearsal and teaching residency for **Terry Creach's** Creach/Company will take place at the NYU/Tisch Summer Residency Festival May 14–June 22, 2001.

"Judy Fox: Figures in Limbo," a feature article by **Carol Diehl**, appeared in the November issue of *Art in America*.

L'Ensemble, **Ida Faiella's** chamber ensemble, produced *Who's that Woman? A Sondheim Cabaret* in January at Capital Repertory, Albany's equity theater. The piece, which included voice, piano, saxophone, violin, bass, and drums, is a revue of 22 Sondheim songs concerning the perspective of women. Originally presented in workshop at Bennington, the show involved a number of faculty and students: **Danny Michaelson**, costumes and set design; **Steve Espach**, lighting design; **Tom Farrell**, piano; **David Finck**, double bass; **Bruce Williamson**, saxophone; Beth Kessler '03, assistant to the artistic director; Chris D'Agostino '02, assistant to the designers; and Lang Crawford '03, audio.

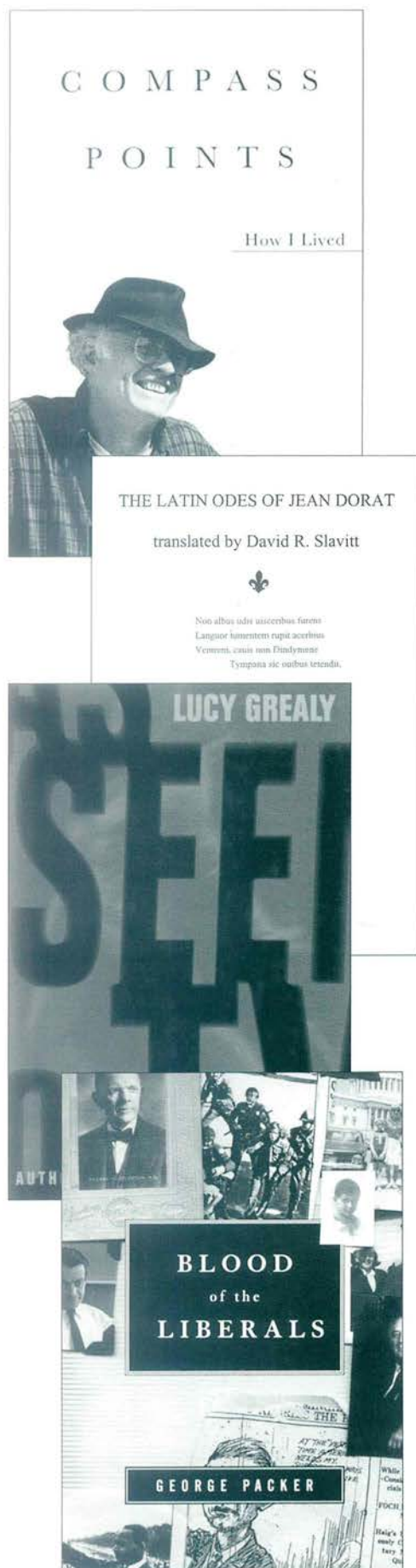
For sections from her most recent book, *The Leaf and the Cloud*, **Mary Oliver** has received the Emily Clark Balch Prize from the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and the 1998 James Boatwright III Prize for Poetry from *Shenandoah*. In addition, sections were included in *The Best American Poetry* series in 1999 and 2000. Two of the Modern Library's new Classics editions contain introductions by Oliver:

(continued on page 8)



*Incidental Sounds* by Sue Rees (metal scales, bells, oxen shoes, bamboo) was part of the KHOJ International Artists workshop at Modinagar, India.





**P**ublisher's Weekly calls the autobiographical essays in faculty member Ted Hoagland's memoir, *Compass Points* (Pantheon Books), "a compellingly rich and complex narrative that ably showcases Hoagland's mental agility and talent for finding significance in the small, often unnoticed encounters that make up everyday life." In *Compass Points*, Hoagland reflects on his life and, in 11 loosely interconnected essays, tells a story that embraces the contradictions and complexities of the human experience. Remarks author Annie Dillard: "Everything he observes is interesting because his 'vivid care' enlivens. Here are wives and lovers, his rural Vermont life among hippies, his Manhattan life among writers—and Africa, North British Columbia, California forest fires, traveling with the circus, and years of temporary blindness to boot. He is a witness; he is a writer of literature."

I n his latest book, faculty member David Slavitt translates *The Latin Odes of Jean Dorat* (Orchises Press), the 16th-century French Hellenist and poet of the Pléiade reputed to have composed more than 15,000 Greek and Latin verses. Dorat was less well-known than his contemporaries, including Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay, because of his preference for writing in ancient languages; Slavitt's elegant translations, called "poetic achievements in their own right," bring Dorat's work into the limelight. Slavitt has written more than 70 books of poetry, fiction, and translation.

**M**ademoiselle magazine writes that Lucy Grealy "overcomes—with wit, intelligence, and an unconquerable spirit" in her book *As Seen on TV: Provocations* (Bloomsbury, August 2000). This compelling collection of essays gives insight into Grealy's life and thoughts—her realization that "rather than spend my time trying to find the answers, it might be worthwhile, or at least worth the change in scenery, to focus on the questions themselves." The result is imaginative and honest contemplation of seduction, fashion, sibling rivalry, reconstructive surgery, becoming an American citizen, and what she *should* have said to Oprah. Grealy teaches Bennington undergraduates as well as students in the Writing Seminars graduate program.

**"W**hat poverty was to Frank McCourt, what alcoholism was to Mary Karr, what death was to Dave Eggers, liberalism is to George Packer," writes *The New York Times Book Review* of *Blood of the Liberals* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, August 2000). "It's the dysfunction that serves as the larger-than-life force that shapes the people in his book as they wretchedly press up against a thing they can never quite comprehend." Packer traces three generations of his own family and the evolving meaning of liberalism over the past century in this pensive narrative, blending family saga and political thought. *The Washington Post* writes, "It is difficult to imagine a more precise and pointed summary of the current state of American liberalism." Packer teaches in the Writing Seminars.





JONATHAN KLINE

A collaborative experiment, *In Visible Fields*, created by faculty members **Susan Sgorbati**, dance; **Jonathan Kline**, photography; and **Michael Giannitti**, lighting design, was performed in Martha Hill Dance Theater in December. The composition was an exploration of time-specific, sequenced imagery incorporating motion and stillness, the visible and invisible. Performing were members of *Materia Prima*, an improvisational ensemble founded and directed by Sgorbati. Performers included **Agnes Benoit-Nader** MFA '00, Matthew Brown, **Maureen Ellenhorn** '88 MFA '01, Katherine Farrier, Lisa Gonzales, Sean Hoskins, **Jack Magai** '91, Sgorbati, Pam Vail, and Allison Weiss. Costume design was by Cayli Cavaco '01, with technical design by Ben White '02.



## BENNINGTON CONNECTIONS

*In response to a request last fall from President Coleman to give the second annual Sonya Rudikoff Gutman Lecture at Bennington, Jacques Barzun regretfully declined. Mr. Barzun, one of the founders of the modern discipline of cultural history, has written more than 30 books, including the just-published *From Dawn to Decadence*. His letter, which confirms the "six degrees of separation" theory about Bennington held by many, read, in part:*

...[Y]our invitation was particularly compelling because of my many links with Bennington. At Columbia, I took part in discussions preliminary to the founding with my colleague Robert D. Leigh, the first president. I came to know many on the original faculty, of whom some became lifelong friends. My late wife Mariana Lowell was in the music division for a dozen years, as well as in the Bennington Quartet that toured colleges. And later, when my good friend Lewis Jones became president, I was made a trustee. You can imagine what warm memories would have revived had I been able to revisit your campus....

*(continued from page 5)*

*The Essential Writings of Emerson*, published in October, and *The House of Seven Gables* Hawthorne, released in January 2001. She will read on March 26 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City.

During a recent sabbatical, Sue Rees was artist-in-residence at the University of Western Australia, Perth. For a show at the Cullity Gallery there, she produced a piece, *Memory of Coming and Going*. A second piece by the same name was exhibited at Art Resources in New York City in October. Rees had a recent Yaddo residency as well, during which she produced work for an installation at David and Hall Gallery in Hudson, NY, and for a group show, *The Notion of Motion*, at the Islip Museum of Art in Long Island. She traveled to India to attend KHOJ 2000, along with 22 other artists, where she worked on a set for Indonesian performance artist Marintan Siriat at the British Council in Delhi. Rees continues to work with Creach/Company on *The History of a Private Life*, with recent showings at Judson Church and Danspace Projects at St. Mark's Church in New York City, and with Kadmus Theatre Studio.

This year Glen van Brummelen was elected president of the Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Mathematics, and was also appointed abstracts editor of the journal, *Historia Mathematica*. He authored or coauthored several research papers on medieval Islamic mathematics and astronomy in the journals *Centaurus*, *Suhayl*,

and *Zeitschrift fur Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, a book article, and several reviews.

## MFA FACULTY

The University of Michigan Press has just issued Doug Bauer's book of essays, *The Stuff of Fiction: Advice on Craft*. Several chapters from the book appeared in *The Writer's Chronicle* from AWP, and Bauer also had a recent essay in Jason Shinder's anthology, *Tales from the Couch*, just out from Morrow.

Susan Cheever's memoir about raising her children, *As Good As I Could Be*, is forthcoming from Simon & Schuster in May.

*Bargains in the Real World*, a book of stories by Elizabeth Cox, will be published in March by Random House, which will also publish her new novel in 2002.

Thomas Sayers Ellis's poetry appeared in a recent issue of *Agni*.

Amy Hempel was the judge for this year's Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction.

*Given Sugar, Given Salt*, Jane Hirshfield's new book of poems, was published in March by HarperCollins. Poems from the book have appeared in *Agni*, *American Poetry Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *The Nation*, *Slate*, *Threepenny Review*, and elsewhere. In November she attended a gathering of poets in Krakow hosted by Czeslaw Milosz and



Wisława Szymborska. Later this year she and **Robert Bly** will co-lead a workshop at the Omega Institute in upstate New York.

**Sheila Kohler** has recent or forthcoming work in *Ontario Review*, *Yale Review*, *Antioch Review*, *Five Points*, and *Fiction*. Her book, *Cracks*, is now out in paperback and will also be published by Bloomsbury in England. Her new book, *The Children of Pithiviers*, is scheduled to appear in May from Zoland.

**David Lehman** has recent or forthcoming work in *Five Points*, *Antioch Review*, *Tin House*, *Ploughshares*, *Paris Review*, *Pif*, and *Fortune*. *The Daily Mirror* has gone into a fourth printing, and *The KGB Bar Book of Poems* into a second.

*The New York Times Book Review* included *The Book Borrower*, a novel by **Alice Mattison**, in its Noteworthy Collection of paperbacks published in 2000.

*Agni*, which **Askold Melnyczuk** edits, just published its 52nd issue. Melnyczuk's new novel, *The Ambassador of the Dead*, will be out soon from Counterpoint, and he wrote a review recently for *The Boston Globe*.

**Ed Ochester** had a recent residency at Yaddo. His chapbook from Adastra Press, *Cooking in Key West*, came out in January, and Story Line Press will publish *The Land of Cockaigne* in April. Poems of Ochester's have appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Pearl*, and elsewhere.

**George Packer's** *Blood of the Liberals* made *The New York Times Book Review* Notable Books list for 2000, and he had a recent piece in *The New York Times Magazine*. The paperback editions of *Blood of the Liberals* and *The Village of Waiting* will be out from Farrar, Straus & Giroux in August.

**Molly Peacock** recently edited *The Private I: Privacy in a Public Age*, which will be published by Graywolf in April. She is currently working on her *New and Selected Poems*, to be published by Norton. In February she was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Lancaster College, and in April she will produce and direct the Tenth Annual Maundy Thursday Reading of Dante's *Inferno* at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where she is poet-in-residence. Peacock, one of the originators of the Poetry in Motion poster series on New York City's subways and buses, is now editing a second volume of *Poetry in Motion: 100 Poems from the Subways and Buses*. This spring she will retire as president of the Poetry Society of America.

Poems by **Liam Rector** recently appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Slate*, and *Pif*. He read last fall in Philadelphia and in Boston.

**Bob Shacochis** contributed a review to a January issue of *The New York Times Book Review*.

*Among Women*, **Jason Shinder's** book of poems, is slated for publication by Graywolf in April. New poems are also forthcoming in *Tin House*. His new film and literary arts program at the Sundance Institute was featured at the Sundance Film Festival this winter. *Tales from the Couch*, which Shinder edited, is now out from Morrow, and includes essays by George Plimpton, **Lucy Grealy**, **Doug Bauer**, **Philip Lopate**, and others.

**Tree Swenson** was recently a panelist for grants to literature for the National Endowment for the Arts.

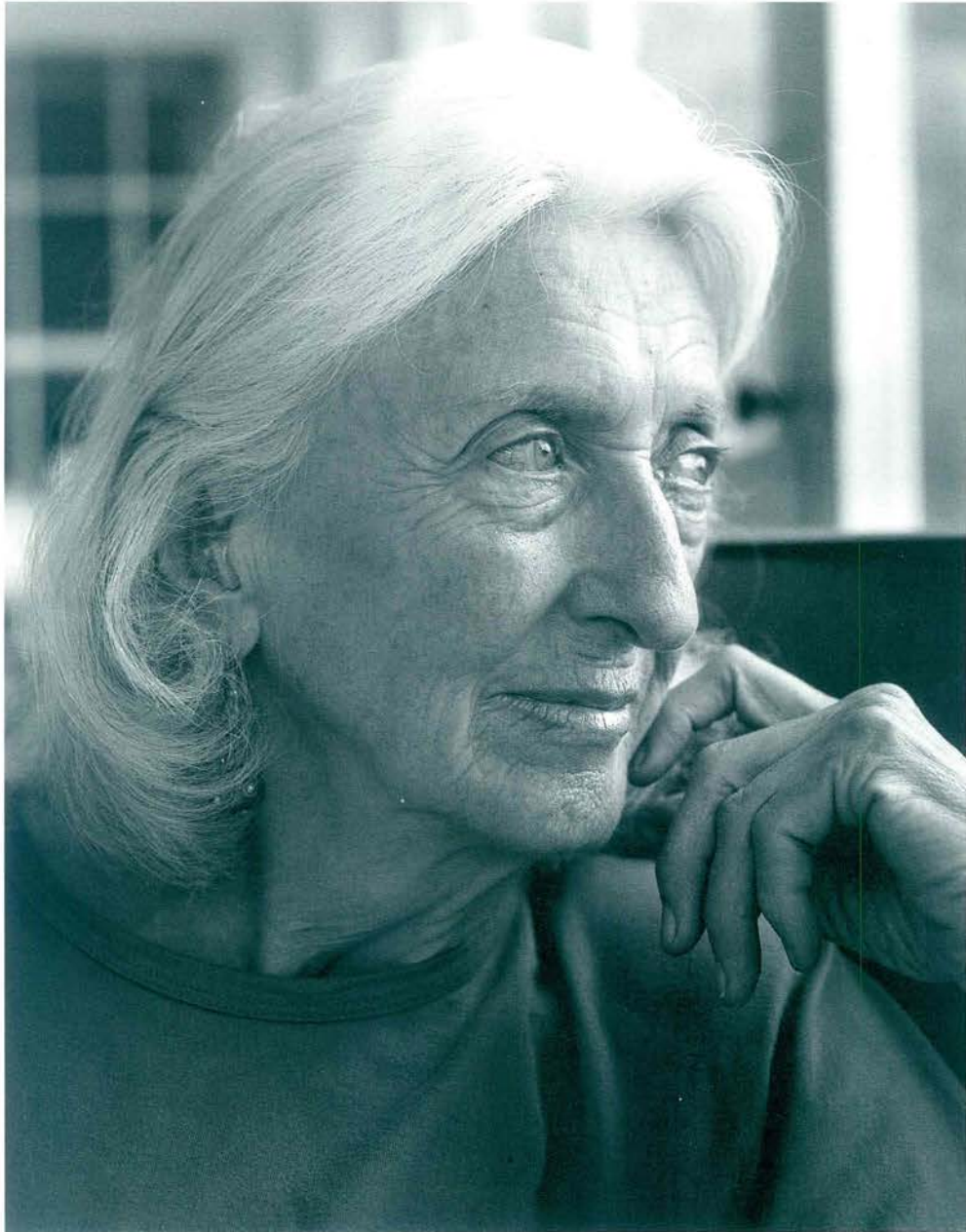
## FORMER FACULTY

In the November/December issue of *American Record Guide*, Mark Lehman reviews *The Art of Robert Bloom*, citing Bloom as perhaps "the most recorded oboist of the 20th century." The anthology of chamber pieces includes the 1949 *Sonata* by **Lionel Nowak**, written for Bloom while both composers taught at Bennington.

The Mayor of New York City proclaimed December 1, 2000, as **Martha Hill's** 100th Birthday Celebration Day. Citing Hill's "creative approach to dance education, expert teaching, and genius in fostering collaboration among creative artists," the Proclamation noted that "her legacy is seen on stages everywhere." The tribute was part of the Martha Hill Centennial Celebration, organized by a committee that included **Hudas Schwartz Liff '47** and **Ethel Winter Hyman '45**, among others. Speakers at the event included President Elizabeth Coleman, **Harvey Lichtenstein '52**, and Liff—who read a statement sent by former faculty member **Peter Drucker**. He noted that while other teachers may have changed their students' knowledge of the world, "Martha Hill changed her students' lives." The event raised \$30,000 toward the newly established Martha Hill Award, created to honor her contribution to the professional dance world.

*The Boston Globe* ran a piece in December highlighting the work of **Nicholas Martin**, among others, on a new version of *Hedda Gabler*. The play, originally performed at the Williamstown Theatre Festival last summer, opened in December at the Huntington Theatre Company, of which Martin is artistic director.





MURIEL CUMMINGS PALMER '43



# The Elders

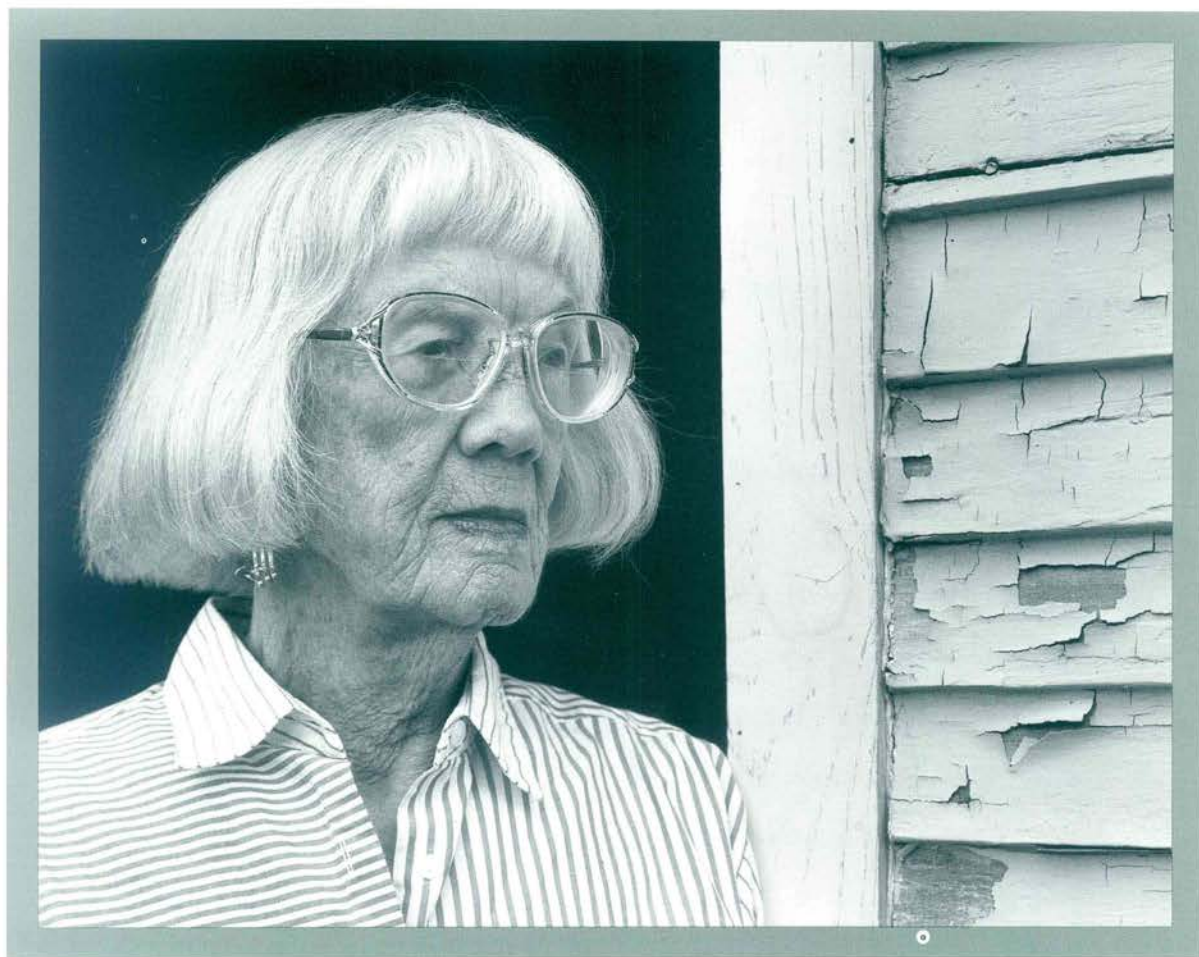
## OF NORTH BENNINGTON

In 1999, Kevin Bubriski MFA '97 photographed the 30 oldest residents of North Bennington, Vermont. Among them were many associated with the Bennington College community over the years, including Rebecca B. Stickney '43, Muriel Cummings Palmer '43, Helen Webster Wheelwright '37, Ben Belitt, Jane Hanks, the late Frank Baker, Mary Delia Florey, Wesley Green, Vera Matteson Hedding, Rose Hogan Hurley, Margaret Murphy McGuire, and Joseph Nadeau. Funded in part by a grant from the Vermont Arts Council, the photographs have been on exhibit at the Vermont Arts Exchange in North Bennington for the past year, with text by Larry Powers, octogenarian town historian and former village grocer. The photographs were made with the traditional tripod-mounted, large-format view camera.

Bubriski's photographs are in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and other museums. His photographs are represented by six galleries across the U.S. and by galleries in Taipei, Taiwan, and Nepal. His book, *Portrait of Nepal*, won the national Golden Light Award for Best Documentary Book of 1993. Bubriski has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Asian Cultural Council, the Fulbright Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



☞ The Elders ☞  
OF NORTH BENNINGTON



HELEN WEBSTER WHEELWRIGHT '37





REBECCA B. STICKNEY '43



◁ The Elders ▷  
OF NORTH BENNINGTON



BEN BELITT



# Liberal Education Democratic Leadership

by Elizabeth Coleman

*The following excerpts are from President Coleman's keynote speech at the October 2000 Artes Liberales Conference entitled, The Challenge of Liberal Education for the 21st Century. The conference was held in Warsaw, Poland, under the auspices of the Educational Leadership Program, part of the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation. Since the late 1990s, the Program has been involved in efforts to stimulate ongoing liberal education initiatives in Eastern Europe.*

Arguably the single greatest instance of an uncompromising liberal arts education in this century occurred at the University of Chicago under the leadership of Robert Hutchins. Central to the pedagogy of the College was the case method—a method whereby students are given all of the relevant materials for pursuing the issues under discussion. This method was used in every discipline—the humanities, the social sciences, the sciences. It meant creating an entirely new undergraduate curriculum. Hutchins got this idea of the case method, interestingly, while serving as dean of the Yale Law School. Hutchins's insight was that however well or ill this method worked in law school, it was an inspired pedagogy for a liberal arts education.

One of the most intransigent challenges facing those of us who want to engage students as active and responsible participants in the classroom is the difficulty of designing courses so that students have access to what matters most. That is precisely what the case study is designed to accomplish. And it matters. It is impossible to engage in serious discussion when there is

unequal access to that which is most fundamental to furthering the inquiry. Failure to accomplish that equality of access means that the activity of the students continues to be the taking in of that which someone else has to tell them. Students may be given the opportunity to talk, even urged to do so, but their talking is, in effect, a pedagogic technique or preference and something of a charade.

The task of the teacher in a liberal arts setting is to create a context in which students have the wherewithal to be serious participants—a model at the opposite end of the spectrum from the idea of the teacher as expert and the student as passive recipient of the fruits of that expertise. Wanting students to be active *and* serious participants is one thing. Achieving it is quite another. Among other things, it means that it is impossible to continue to treat the problems of pedagogy appropriate to liberal education as if they could be severed from questions of intellectual content. Anyone who has confronted the problem of designing a course that can generate serious discussion knows that it has to be addressed at every level—from the very conception of the course to the details of particular reading and writing assignments. I suspect that one of the primary reasons the classics provide such a compelling idea for a liberal arts education is because of their potential to help meet this challenge—in their case, primarily through the immense intellectual vitality and extraordinary range of the materials in and of themselves. They need nothing beyond themselves to be worthy of our sustained attention, and in themselves constitute a liberal education....



IN ADDITION TO THE NEED to be mindful of the intimate relationship of content and form, the issue of access also focuses attention on the complexities and urgencies of the relationship between teacher and student in a liberal arts setting. Here, a particularly powerful obstacle to the liberal arts emerges, and that is the extent to which the idea of the expert dominates our view of intellectual seriousness. So thoroughgoing is this association between intellectual maturity and expertise that the fact that the dominance of this model is a very recent phenomenon—little more than a century old—and the fact that there have been very different models comes as something of a revelation....

The model of the expert is at odds with the ideal of both teacher and student that informs liberal education. In the liberal arts, the teacher's purpose is to work in arenas in which everyone can be an active player *and* to develop capacities that are valuable as well as accessible by virtue of being fundamentally human. The world of the expert is a world of the special, of the limited, and increasingly, of the technical and the inaccessible. The craft of the teacher is the capacity to collapse the divide between teacher and student; the objective of the expert is to perpetuate it. The liberal arts must see things whole. The expert must see them in parts—typically, the smaller the better. The expert stands alone atop a pyramid; the teacher is surrounded.

The **CRAFT** of the teacher is the capacity to collapse the divide between teacher and student; the objective of the expert is to **PERPETUATE** it.

Perhaps the most insidious effect of the mindset that treats highly specialized knowledge as the apex of intellectual development is the way it informs our assumptions about the shape, the sequencing of an education. It would appear to be God-given that one goes from general to less general, from broad to narrow, from a multiplicity of perspectives increasingly to one, from spending time with students with differing goals to spending more and more time with those having the same goals. Arguments abound about how quickly one should move from broad to narrow and what the content and proportions might be of each of these categories, but rarely is the trajectory itself thought about, much less challenged. It is as if that pyramid structure embodied a self-evident truth about the nature of what constitutes intellectual progression. When a thesis or senior project is included as the pinnacle of that

progression, things are even more stark: The climax of an education would seem to be working in a room by yourself, writing about something that virtually no one but yourself will see....

Whatever the strengths or limitations of such a structure, it is the furthest thing from embodying the values of a liberal education, however defined. And whatever our rhetoric about the virtues of breadth, of interdisciplinarity, of seeing connections between seemingly disparate things, the students' experience is to be asked progressively to jettison everything but one interest and within that one interest, increasingly, to narrow the focus. It is apparently beyond imagining that the broad gauge might follow the narrow, or that the more fundamental questions, rather than the more abstruse and technical ones, might climax an education. The only access to depth would appear to be to turn away from breadth. In effect, the dimensions of the experience that are most associated with a liberal education are ultimately abandoned, even contradicted, as that education proceeds.

The problem is not the act of specialization in itself (although the current versions of specialization are often deeply problematic), and most certainly not the writing of a thesis. Intellectual focus and immersion can be powerful and deeply worthwhile experiences—so much so that it is probably unwise and shortsighted not to incorporate them in a liberal education. What I am getting at is their timing. The undergraduate thesis should not, in short, be the ultimate experience of a liberal education. If we are serious about an education being liberal, it needs to conclude as well as begin with an opening out. How that process plays itself out will vary profoundly over time—it is very different, for example, when the experience of working with students with diverse interests occurs at the conclusion of an education than when it occurs at the beginning. The relationship between breadth and depth, or between disciplines, is likely to be transformed when the return to the broad-gauged and the interdisciplinary is tempered by the student's own experience of immersion. Since there are virtually no contemporary, concrete examples of such an experience, you will need to imagine what it could be like, keeping in mind how things might change when the structure has the dynamic movement of the hourglass rather than the layering of the pyramid.

CRITICAL AS IT IS TO CONFRONT and challenge the hegemony of the expert, our tendency to establish the distinctiveness of the liberal arts by dichotomizing its relationship to other kinds of education strikes me as counterproductive and misguided. By dichotomous thinking, I mean: If *A* is good, *B* is bad; if *A* is broad, *B* is narrow; if *A* focuses on our humanity, *B* ignores it. So, for example, the



ways in which a liberal arts education is contrasted to a professional education suggest that the choices for students are between being a richly developed human being *or* a doctor, a person committed to civic virtue *or* a lawyer. There are other ways to think about difference.

The dichotomy between liberal education and the disciplines is even more unproductive. We often talk as if we consider the disciplines to be intrinsically illiberal, while in contrast, interdisciplinarity is treated as if it provided some special and intrinsic access to virtue. The presumed intellectual flexibility, openness, breadth of the interdisciplinary is contrasted to the rigidities and narrowness of disciplines. But intellectual focus is not necessarily narrow, and immersion in the study of one thing need not be illiberal. As I have tried to suggest, the issue is when and how it occurs. It is probably a good idea for students to discover the power of a particular perspective—to experience first-hand its tendency to see the entire world in its terms and to learn the seductiveness of that impulse. The educational challenge is to enable students simultaneously to experience the limitations as well as the power of a single perspective. The best way I know of achieving that is for students to engage deeply more than one such perspective. Another is to return again and again to first principles—to uncover the governing assumptions. The object is not to discourage students from making choices about what they most want to do, but to increase the likelihood that they will do so with eyes wide open rather than half shut. The challenge of the liberal education is to assure that the choice is made by expanding and deepening students' frame of reference, rather than by narrowing it....

THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT OFTEN underlie attitudes towards the relationship between the humanities and the sciences, and the relationship of both to the liberal arts might also benefit from some rethinking. Insofar as the liberal arts are associated with particular subject matters or clusters of disciplines, they tend to be the humanities. The sciences, in contrast, are almost never treated as part of the liberal arts family. Whatever reasons might have made sense of this in the 20th century have evaporated in the 21st. Nowhere is more fragmentation to be found than in the humanities, matched only by its increasing proclivities for the obscure and its contempt for the insights available to what Virginia Woolf called the Common Reader. And if you can stomach the fragmentation and the insularities of what often feels like a new secular priesthood, you still have to deal with the extent to which political correctness has been embraced within these disciplines, once thought to be citadels of intellectual and imaginative independence, autonomy, and

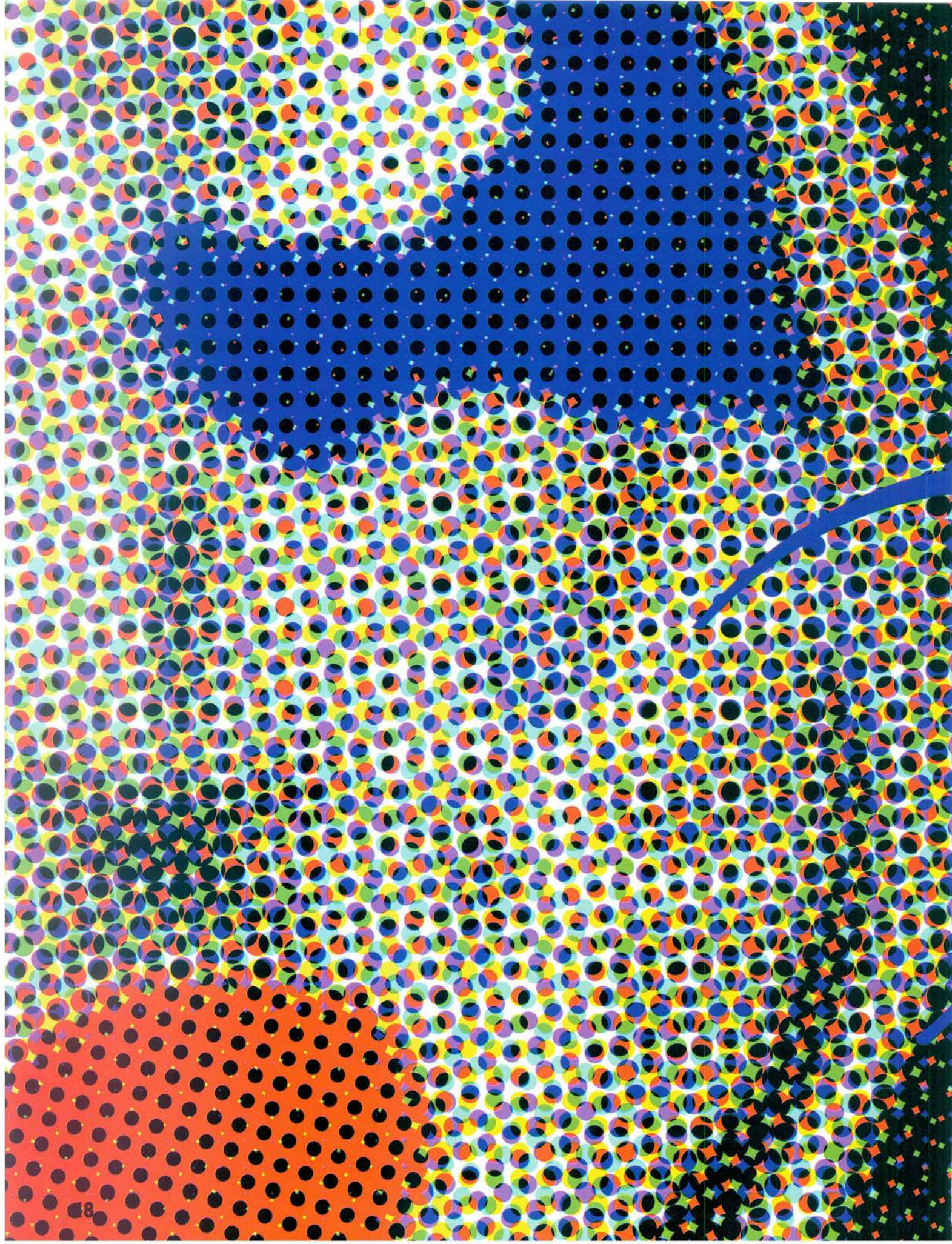
Wherever the conditions of an educational enterprise are such that the **RELATIONSHIP** between student and teacher is a rich **BLEND** of opportunity and obligation, there is the possibility of a liberal education.

freedom. Meanwhile the sciences, once the masters of carving things up into ever smaller pieces, are now tearing down walls, literally and figuratively, in recognition of the interrelationships among chemistry, physics, and biology, and they have proven most resistant to the pressures of the politically correct. I do not mean to suggest that the current teaching of the sciences is exemplary of liberal arts education, but I do mean our prevailing assumptions are no longer adequate to the realities.

Rethinking the role of the arts in a liberal education is even more overdue. While their relative exclusion, or treatment as an afterthought, may be understandable from an historical perspective, it is no longer tenable. The potential role of the arts in a liberal education, particularly to the extent that it is concerned with civic virtue, is a subject unto itself. For the moment, it is worth reminding ourselves that there are good reasons repressive regimes put the arts at the top of their list of subversive activity, and it is worth considering that when it is a matter of embodying and conveying the values and the virtues of liberal education, the arts and artists are a match for any traditional academic discipline....

To sum up, then—wherever the conditions of an educational enterprise are such that the relationship between student and teacher is a rich blend of opportunity and obligation, there is the possibility of a liberal education. It is important to add that this relationship need be enacted in a public setting, where one's obligations to others are as important as one's obligations to oneself. Hence, for example, while the tutorial method is undoubtedly one of the most effective and certainly the most luxurious, it should never be the primary pedagogy in a liberal education. The classroom is the space where the particular and powerful ethos of liberal education is most vitally alive. It is a place that benefits from a rich diversity among individuals because of their commitment to participate in a shared enterprise. Unlike most worlds, in this one, the more one individual gains, the more everyone else gains, too. It is a world made by the actions and inactions of its participants, rather than some prefabricated world into which one fits well or ill. It is dynamic and it is open, and when it works, it is exhilarating and transforming.... ■









# mapping the BRAIN

## DRUG EFFECTS ON BRAIN-BEHAVIOR RELATIONSHIPS

*When Ciaran Cooper read "The Matter of Mind," an article by Susan Paris Borden '69 that appeared in the fall 1999 Bennington magazine, it fired his imagination and prompted him to attend last year's Bennington Conference on Mind and Brain. Cooper had more than a passing interest in brain-behavior issues: He is the founding president and CEO of MIICRO, Inc., a Chicago-based medical imaging technology company focused on advancing the understanding of brain-behavior relationships. Since graduating from Bennington, Cooper has also maintained an interest in writing: He has attended the Iowa and Bennington Writers' Workshops; he was a four-time artist-in-residence at Ragdale, an artists' retreat; and in 1994, he received an Illinois Arts Council award in fiction. This following article, in part a reaction to Borden's, touches on the heart of Cooper's work at MIICRO.*

BY CIARAN COOPER '88





e normally associate the words *map*, *chart*, and *atlas* with the study of geography, but as science strives to understand the workings of the human brain, it has adopted much of the nomenclature of explorers. Although maps are usually graphic in nature, they can represent not only the spatial domain of an object, but virtually our complete understanding of it, including how it does what it does. Similarly, the field of brain mapping incorporates information on both the structure and function of the brain. Significant advances in medical imaging technology now allow us to view the brain's structure in exquisite detail and to measure neurobiological functions at the molecular level. These capabilities give rise to structural and functional explorations of the brain at work, and provide an opportunity to link findings to the genetic underpinnings of human development and consciousness.

Theories on the interconnections between brain regions and neuronal pathways suggest that the brain operates on a certain homeostatic rhythm, constantly balancing the activity of individual regions and pathways through the modulation of other, related regions and pathways. Normal biological processes seem to occur in the brain within certain levels of common activity; just as ranges of “normal” heart rates exist for people of specific ages and genders, so do similar ranges exist for brain activity. Although researchers don't yet fully understand the underlying aspects of these activities, they have observed that a disruption of the brain's normal rhythm—through disease, aging, or trauma—prompts an automatic response in brain function to return to normal. In these moments, the rhythm is often still clear, but the activity of the pathways varies, based on a person's core abilities—his genetic and physiological makeup—and outside influences—psychological, environmental, and pharmacological interventions.

## The Brain at Work

Think of it this way: You're playing lead guitar in a band (to use a bit of Susan Borden's musical analogy)—not a jazz band this time, but a rock-and-roll band. You're playing a tune that everyone in the band is familiar with; everyone knows where the breaks are, where the bridge is, where the solos come in. The song has certain predetermined requirements, chords and notes that must be played in concert for the song to be recognizable by the audience. No two bands will ever play the song exactly alike—each band will have its own interpretation of the basic rhythm—but the various interpretations all share the same basic elements. Even within your band, there is room for improvisation, reflecting the talents and personalities of its members.

Now imagine this: In the middle of the song, things begin to go wrong, drastically wrong. The drummer breaks a stick, and somehow, inexplicably, he has forgotten to bring his backup sticks onstage. So the drummer stops playing, except for the bass drum—the most basic element of his part. What happens next is determined by the strength of the band members, their level of underlying talent and adaptability.

Let's presume that yours is a good band, a very good band. The drummer maintains a basic beat while he spins frantically on his stool, looking for the sticks that will save him. The bass player, the one who most closely interacts with the drummer, observes what is happening and immediately begins to compensate. Now you and the rhythm guitarist hear what is going on, too, but you look to the bass player for your cue. At first, she drops back to match the basic drum beat, stripping the song to its essential elements. The singer looks to you and also follows along; he steps back from the microphone and picks up a tambourine. Then the bass player, with all attention on her, begins to improvise on the rhythm, playing variations on her normal part to fill in the gaps and make up for the loss. You and the other guitarist catch on, matching the improvisation. You are now playing a different version of the song; but from the audience's point of view, it is unmistakably the same one.



Now imagine that your band is a brain and the drummer's sticks are serotonin, a powerful neurotransmitter that plays a vital role in the regulation of mood. Imagine, too, that the loss of a drum stick represents a drop in serotonin levels in the brain, resulting in depression, a fall-off in your normal underlying beat. The brain attempts to compensate by altering the behavior of the serotonin system—the drummer—and interacting with different neuronal pathways—you and the others. Over time, this will overburden the brain until the song breaks down or until the drum stick—serotonin—is replaced by an *outside influence*—such as a drug effect.

Depression affects almost everyone at one time or another, from mild melancholy to debilitating major depression that interferes with clarity of thought and simple day-to-day routines. Since the early 1980s, depression has been treated with drugs that raise levels of serotonin in the brain with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, such as Prozac. As it turns out, however, the simple serotonin model for depression is insufficient for addressing the full spectrum of depressive disorders and the variations among people's clinical responses. Other, related neuronal systems have thus received attention as well, resulting in a burgeoning pharmacopoeia of drugs that combat depression through various neuronal pathways. These different approaches provide opportunities to treat people who may react better to one drug than another, based on their differing genetic makeup and resulting biological variances. What's interesting is that despite their different underlying mechanisms of action, these drugs share significant similarities in their ultimate effects on the brain regions associated with the regulation of mood and behavior; these "end-effect profiles" may thus indicate or predict the clinical benefit of drugs.

Back to our drummer: By now he has succeeded in attracting the attention of one of the roadies offstage—an outside influence—and signals that he needs help. The roadie slips discreetly onstage and hands the drummer a new stick. Now the band is all in sync; at the exact same moment, as if nothing had ever gone wrong, the drummer drums, the bass player plays, you and the rhythm guitarist exchange chords, the singer returns to the microphone, and you finish the song without a hitch.

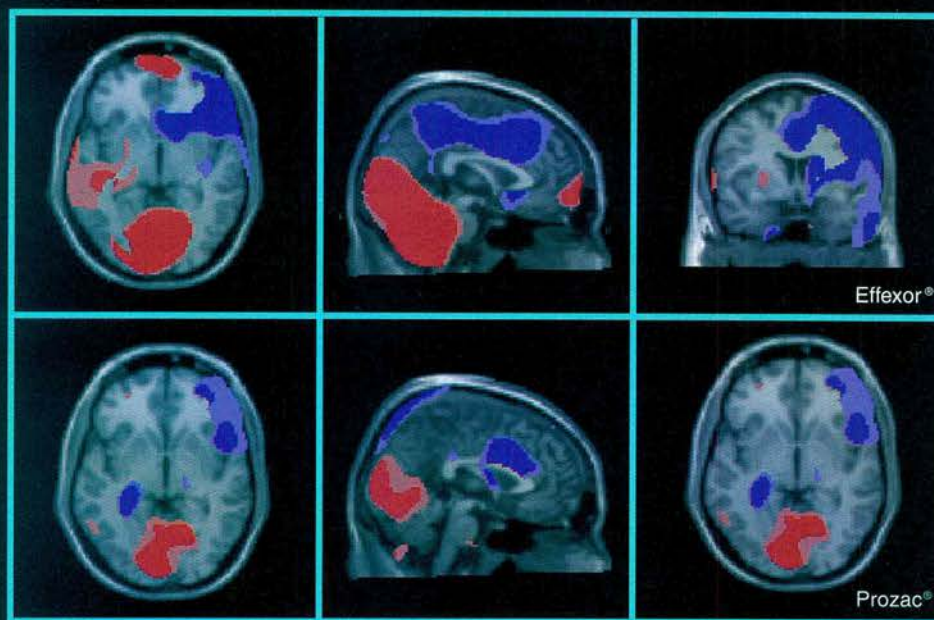
How does this connect to brain mapping? New methodological approaches allow us to record and begin to interpret how these systems in the brain interact, under normal circumstances and under stress, and how each of the major neuronal and hormonal pathways influences and maintains our normal homeostatic rhythm. In other words, brain mapping techniques allow us to observe your band during all of its performances, good and bad, sometimes focusing on the drummer, sometimes on the singer or others, and sometimes looking at the interactions among all of the members as they influence the final song.

BREAKTHROUGHS in neuroimaging techniques now allow us to  
measure neurobiological functions at the MOLECULAR LEVEL.

The INTEGRATION of this information into our understanding of basic  
brain function has led to NEW CONCEPTS and understandings of  
how the brain DEVELOPS and copes with age, disease, and trauma.



# mapping the FUNCTION OF THE BRAIN



ne brain mapping technique particularly well suited for depicting brain functions is positron emission tomography, or PET. PET provides a view of how the brain is working, rather than what it looks like, at a known point in time; it is commonly referred to as a functional neuroimaging technique. Functional neuroimaging has been used to study the human brain for about 20 years, mostly in university-based research settings. Early studies produced images based on the distribution of specific radiotracers (radioactive versions of chemicals in the body, such as glucose or oxygen, that are used to “trace” various biological processes) throughout the brain. By looking at the brain’s metabolism of glucose in different brain regions, under various conditions, researchers can demonstrate how the brain functions normally, how it functions under stress, and how it reacts to outside influences, such as environmental (light, heat, noise), psychological (mood, thinking), and pharmacological (“recreational” drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, and natural herbal agents) factors. The underlying principle is that everything the brain does requires energy, and all energy used by the brain is generated in the neurons that need it by metabolizing glucose molecules.

The importance of this is that researchers can now reflect the functions of the brain, in various states and at various times and ages, in terms of metabolic brain maps. From these metabolic “profiles,” we can begin to infer how the brain develops, ages, and decays, and to assess how outside influences, including central nervous system (CNS) drugs, affect these biological processes. Because we know that the brain’s neuronal regions are

interconnected, we can now also begin to explore how best to combat these stress factors. And because we know that everything the brain does requires energy, we now have a way of showing changes in brain metabolism as a representation of potential changes in mood, thinking, or behavior, which offers significant insight for CNS drug development and is the basis of ongoing research.

The brain maps above depict areas of the brain that were affected by the drugs being studied. Areas shown in blue represent regions with lowered metabolism, and areas in red represent regions that increased in metabolism.

The following study compared the effects of Prozac (an SSRI) to Effexor (a drug with multiple mechanisms of action). Both drugs showed similar effects related to their clinical benefit, but they also showed distinct differences, indicative of their differing mechanisms of action, optimum therapeutic dose, and side-effect profiles (Metz, JT, et al., 2000).

Numerous studies have shown a link between estrogen and memory in the aging brain, which has significant implications in Alzheimer’s disease research. A recent study was designed to demonstrate how different estrogen compounds affect the brain differently. A direct estrogen compound (Premarin) decreased regional glucose metabolism in areas associated with thinking and memory, while a selective estrogen receptor modulator (Evista) did not. The beneficial CNS effects of estrogen, including protection against dementia and other cognitive dysfunctions, may be mediated through, or indicated by, the metabolic changes induced in these cerebral regions (Metz, JT, et al., 1999).



## Better Living through Chemistry

In a more practical sense, brain mapping provides an opportunity to chart the effects of central nervous system (CNS) drugs in combating the impact of aging, disease, and trauma. As scientists continue to unravel the mysteries of the human genome, they are identifying the biological bases of many diseases, including neurological disorders and psychiatric illnesses. These are treated with chemicals designed to regulate normal biological processes in the body. CNS drug development is concerned primarily with the regulation or alteration of brain function via neuronal activity, hormonal fluctuation, and brain receptor density and binding, which is the ability of our neuronal systems to interact with hormones and neurochemicals. Neuroimaging of these physiological processes can provide unparalleled insights into the workings of the human brain and the effects of various pharmaceutical therapies in maintaining normal, healthy brain function.

The development of effective new pharmaceuticals is increasingly difficult and expensive, and relatively few compounds tested in humans reach approval for marketing. Pharmaceutical companies routinely spend hundreds of millions of dollars in clinical development of a compound that may ultimately be dropped due to problems encountered in human testing. Despite all our technological advances, we still cannot accurately predict what effect a drug will have until we test it on humans, and as many as 80 percent of the drugs tested annually fail to prove safe and effective. This process is particularly difficult and costly for drugs with principal actions on the central nervous system, because of the difficulties of studying brain effects in humans and the subjectivity of clinical observations. The primary problem is that pharmaceutical developers have previously lacked the ability to peer into the functioning human brain to see how drugs are working—how well, how fast, and for whom—as a predictor of long-term clinical effects. Using neuroimaging techniques, however, pharmaceutical companies can now design and test drugs that are more potent at lower doses, with fewer side effects and higher success rates than ever before.

In extensive work with human subjects, researchers have recently used functional neuroimaging methods to identify and characterize the metabolic effects of drugs in the brain in a range of therapeutic categories. They have also been able to demonstrate how different drug doses affect the brain and how different populations react differently to drugs (men vs. women, children vs. adults, Asians vs. Caucasians, for example) and to compare new drugs in development to established drugs on the market. Although this work has immediate applications in CNS drug research, the insights gained have even broader implications.

## The New Explorers

Last year, the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine was awarded to three neuroscientists: Arvid Carlsson, Paul Greengard, and Eric R. Kandel. Their contributions to science have opened a molecular window to the brain—Carlsson by identifying dopamine as the first neurotransmitter found uniquely in the brain, Greengard by describing the molecular cascade triggered inside the neuron by dopamine, and Kandel by recognizing that the molecular basis of cognitive processes must first be worked out in simpler systems before it can be understood in the brains of complex mammals.

Breakthroughs in neuroimaging techniques now allow us to measure neurobiological functions at the molecular level. The integration of this information into our understanding of basic brain function has led to new concepts and understandings of how the brain develops and copes with age, disease, and trauma. Brain mapping, and indeed the entire field of brain research, is of particular importance for gaining insight into the biological elements that make us distinctly human and for explaining the correlation between brain chemistry, consciousness, and human development.

Despite these fantastic advances, we continue to have far more questions than answers; in fact, brain mapping technology has outpaced the current level of scientific understanding. Just as astronomers can now gather countless images of space—far greater than they have explanations for—we, too, stand at the very beginning stages, collecting vast databases of images that will only be fully understood at some point in the future. We, too, are explorers, gathering what information we can for the benefit of those who follow. ■



# STEVEN BACH: A CLASS ACT

DANIELA BOHILL '01

The studio cuts a deal with you: *Your* screenplay for \$200,000. They pay you \$25,000 in advance and promise \$25,000 more on receipt of the first 60 pages, \$50,000 more for the first draft, another \$50,000 for the revisions, and a final \$50,000 when they're satisfied with the product. Let's say you miss your deadline for the first 60 pages. What can happen? Well, the studio can demand its \$25,000 back, as well as reimbursement for lawyer's fees for the contract. And your agent wants to know where the commission is (at 10% or 15%) for the full \$200,000, a little matter of \$20,000 to \$30,000. Meanwhile, you've *celebrated* your contract by buying a Jetta with your advance and now, rather than receiving \$200,000, *you owe the studio, your agent, your lawyer, and possibly MasterCard a good \$30,000 or more that you have not got.*" Bach taps the chalkboard to emphasize each word, then sums it up for his first Bennington class in screenwriting: "And *that's* why I won't accept late work from you."

BY LISE JOHNSON '01



It's Steven Bach's professionalism that makes us pay attention. We're aware that our teacher published a best-seller in the mid-'80s on the subject of money and movies, called *Final Cut: Art, Money, and Ego in the Making of Heaven's Gate, the Film that Sank United Artists*. The book was reissued in 1999, just when *The New York Times* confirmed that *Heaven's Gate* had "altered Hollywood irrevocably." Bach was head of worldwide production at United Artists when filmmaker Michael Cimino, renowned for *The Deer Hunter*, sucked the studio dry to make a three-and-a-half-hour western that, upon its release, was called "an unqualified disaster" by many. Bach had been opposed to the project from the start. An Idaho native, he'd always considered westerns to be about as interesting as Roy Rogers and, on the whole, "incredibly phony." He opted to direct most of his energy toward another big film that year: *Raging Bull*.

"Put a clock in it," he tells a student whose screenplay lacks suspense. "Raise the stakes." In *Barn 1* the stakes are high enough; when another student defends an under-structured—and to this teacher, *aimless*—movie, eyes turn to the man in the corduroys and sweater. What will Steven say?

Before arriving in Hollywood, Bach attended Northwestern University and enjoyed a formative undergraduate term in Paris in the early '60s during the New Wave. Godard and Truffaut were wowing people with experimentalism, but also fueling the French love of American cinema. "While Americans considered American movies trash," Bach says, "the French were going crazy for them. I remember seeing, carved into the back of one of the seats at the Cinémathèque, the words 'Vive Orson Welles.'" It was in Paris that Bach discovered the cream of American-brand moving pictures, when the Cinémathèque Française, just around the corner from where he lived, showed three movies nightly and charged students only 20 cents per show. Sixty cents a day bought him an education in Fred and Ginger, Mary Pickford, and Hitchcock—an education in storytelling.

Bach underlines the three phrases he's chalked and repeats them. "Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. That's the story. And we know the boy gets the girl in the end, because the marquee says Joan Crawford and Clark Gable, or Gwyneth Paltrow and Ben Affleck. *How* they get together is the plot." He gazes expectantly through his glasses at students who are thinking nervously about what we handed in.

Bach taught high school in Winnetka, Illinois, after receiving his master's in American literature with the aids of a Ford Foundation grant. At 21 he was already teaching the most challenging courses, and thoughts of his future depressed him. "I thought, I'm not going to retire till I'm 65," he says, "and every year until then I'm going to have to teach *Moby Dick*. I can't do it." Thankfully, the school—alma mater of Charlton Heston, Rock Hudson, and Ann Margaret, among other screen legends—had appointed Bach faculty sponsor of the film society. While researching movies and the movie industry, he says, he suddenly realized that the great names of Hollywood hadn't just *hatched* there: "They

came from someplace, too." He decided to attend film school and, like hundreds of other young people who were excited by *Doctor Strangelove* and *A Hard Day's Night*, foster his inner Orson Welles.

Bach had read everything written on the subject of movie-making; he needed only to understand the business. His teaching experience got him T.A. positions at the University of Southern California, where he ended up grading his film-school peers—George Lucas among them. Did "Georgie" get good grades? "Of course," Bach says mischievously.

In class, he asks one student who seems shaky on her plot, "What's your story about? Give it to me in one line." She begins to explain her screenplay, jumbling the names and backtracking, until she's forced to give up. She and Bach stare at each other, smiling through mutual frustration. He turns to the class and says, "Guys, don't have more than one protagonist."

Back when he was in film school, a stint writing theater reviews for a scandalous underground paper got Bach free tickets to every show in Los Angeles. That led to a job reading plays and acting as dramaturge at The Mark Taper Forum. He still held out hopes of breaking into "the industry," and when MGM called and offered to double his pay, he quit The Taper and became story editor for the studio. From MGM, he went to work on pictures elsewhere before joining United Artists, where he took on a whole slate of movies in New York—the James Bonds, Woody Allens, and Pink Panthers. The East coast and foreign films were in his care, but he is quick to say, "United Artists had a reputation for trusting filmmakers," and he would continue that tradition.

Woody Allen gave him no problems. "With Woody, my function was to say yes or no. I was the only one who got to read the scripts," says Bach fondly. "I *would* have said no—but I liked everything he gave me." Peter Sellers—in Bach's words, "probably committable" and "vacant when he wanted to be"—was less easy to negotiate with, although always entertaining. Other movies soon came Bach's way, including *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Raging Bull*, *Manhattan*, and *Apocalypse Now*. We can thank him for suggesting there be no intermission in the Coppola film.

Bach will tell you that the great thing about Bennington for teachers is that they can design their own courses. As well as screenwriting, he taught the history of the American musical last fall, and is teaching a course this spring in adaptation of stories from one form to another. When he's not passing tips along to his Bennington classes, he's helping graduate students in the School of Arts at Columbia and adding to his literary achievements, which include articles for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *L.A. Weekly*, *American Film*, *Film Comment*, and *Vanity Fair*, as well as the book, *Marlene Dietrich: Life and Legend*, and his latest biography, *Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart*.

"There are two kinds of plot points," Bach tells his class. "Action plot points and *revelation* plot points. Of the two, revelation plot points almost always create more drama." ■



Excerpt from the Introduction to *Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart*

## “ H U C K L E B E R R Y   H A R T ”

*Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart* began when I was a student growing up in the dreary middle of a drearier nowhere and felt life suddenly given color and light by the pages of Hart's best-selling book, *Act One*. I wanted to know more about the man who wrote that tantalizing memoir of apprenticeship in the theater, the craftsman who wrote *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and *You Can't Take It With You* and *Lady in the Dark* and *A Star Is Born* and—as if all that weren't enough—directed *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*, too. The absence of any biography in the four decades since *Act One* first appeared and its author died convinced me that the only thing to do was write one, so I did and *Dazzler* is it.

The change Moss Hart made in my life was real. After some academic detours I entered the theater and related areas of show business, arenas that were creative and exciting and ruthless. The world of American show business breeds and betrays illusion, and its paradoxes—trivial and weighty—made me more curious than ever to understand a man who lived his life there with such apparent delight and easy grace. I knew, too, that I was not alone: *Act One* still changes lives. Ask any young (or not so young) actor, dancer, playwright, composer, or director making the rounds today and he or she will tell you: *Act One* is about him, about her.

Hart spoke to the stage-struck, but quickened aspiration on stages larger than the ones with footlights. He cast his beginnings as a romance and a fable: upward striving; rags to riches; the outsider triumphantly inside; a whole catalogue of Horatio Alger virtues and rewards that can still inspire. No wonder he liked to call himself “Huckleberry Hart.”

He was writing about a Broadway that was vanishing in the late 1950s, even as he recreated it on the page. It was the end of the Golden Age, when New York was the place books and magazines and movies came from (all their corporate headquarters were there). It was the acknowledged center of American culture and no aspect of it was more dazzling than the Theater, which was what New York meant for so many who wanted to be there and weren't. Broadway defined New York more than subways or skyscrapers or the Yankees. Broadway wasn't a street—it was the Great White Way, the Street of Dreams. Lights burned brighter there.

That Broadway is gone now, which is not an occasion for mourning. The daily rounds Hart's theatrical progeny make are as likely to be in Seattle, Denver, Los Angeles, or Newark as in and around Times Square. Broadway may always have been a state of mind, but it is real estate, too, and now a theme park. The New Amsterdam Theater,

where Hart began his career as an office boy called “Mouse,” is now owned by one—called Mickey.

And, on stage, a lion! New creative standards and legends will emerge from 42nd Street's renaissance, but Broadway, to the true believer, is about what is created there: the songs, stories, and plays that amuse, reflect, and sometimes reveal or shape us. Real estate sets boundaries; theater erases them.

Moss Hart was a storyteller, as all writers are, and a performer, as all playwrights must be. As I hunted and gathered for the facts of his life, I came to appreciate how artful a dramatist he was whenever he took up his pen, and how resourceful an entertainer. The man who rehearsed his dinner table bon mots while waiting for the guests to arrive was as incapable of not improving the story as he was of acting out a bad one. The differences between the life he lived and the one he told and performed were not discrepancies so much as creative, perhaps wished for improvements, and his friends mostly recognized and accepted them as such at the time. George Abbott told him he thought *Act One* had contrived a “Truth-ier-Truth” about the world of the theater. Another friend from the early days was dismayed and “shocked.” Still another smiled wryly at things “you omitted, but hell, you undertook to write ‘Act One’ and not ‘Chapter and Verse.’”

Biographers, however, must deal with chapter and verse, and I have tried to do that, just as—after years of sharing my desktop and hours with the memoirist of *Act One*—I have taken him at his word when there seemed no reason not to. There was also the life after *Act One*, a life of success, fame, glamour, and money for which he became the glittering personification. There was darkness, too, hinted at but hidden. There were rumors that needed to be tracked down and were.

What I have tried to do is depict, celebrate, and understand a life—“truth-ier truths” intact—without giving it more or less meaning than it had. It was a life of uncommon generosity in an often mean-spirited world, a life more painful than we knew and maybe a braver one, too. He was cherished and mourned by friends and colleagues not alone because of his success, but because of the man he became against so many odds and the man he aspired to be even when he seemed to have everything. I take that as reason enough to care about him now. And because he lifted spirits—not least his own—and made us laugh.

*Excerpted from Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart, by Steven Bach, to be published in April by Alfred A. Knopf; copyright 2001 by the author. Excerpts also appeared in the February issue of Vanity Fair.*

BY STEVEN BACH





**DAZZLER** THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOSS HART

STEVEN BACH



# FLARE

by Mary Oliver

1.

Welcome to the silly, comforting poem.

It is not the sunrise,  
which is a red rinse,  
which is a flaring all over the eastern sky;

it is not the rain falling out of the purse of God;

it is not the blue helmet of sky afterward,

or the trees, or the beetle burrowing into the earth;

it is not the mockingbird who, in his own cadence,  
will go on sizzling and clapping  
from the branches of the catalpa that are thick  
with blossoms,

that are billowing and shining,  
that are shaking in the wind.

2.

You still recall, sometimes, the old barn on your  
great-grandfather's farm, a place you visited once, and  
went into, all alone, while the grownups sat and talked  
in the house.

It was empty, or almost. Wisps of hay covered the  
floor, and some wasps sang at the windows, and maybe  
there was a strange fluttering bird high above,  
disturbed, hoo-ing a little and staring down from a  
messy ledge with wild, binocular eyes.

Mostly, though, it smelled of milk, and the patience  
of animals; the give-offs of the body were still in the air,  
a vague ammonia, not unpleasant.

Mostly, though, it was restful and secret, the roof  
high up and arched, the boards unpainted and plain.

You could have stayed there forever, a small child in  
a corner, on the last raft of hay, dazzled by so much  
space that seemed empty, but wasn't.

Then—you still remember—you felt the rap of  
hunger—it was noon—and you turned from that  
twilight dream and hurried back to the house,

where the table was set, where an uncle patted you on  
the shoulder for welcome, and there was your place at  
the table.

3.

Nothing lasts.

There is a graveyard where everything I am talking about is,  
now.

I stood there once, on the green grass, scattering flowers.

4.

Nothing is so delicate or so finely hinged as the wings  
of the green moth  
against the lantern  
against its heat  
against the beak of the crow  
in the early morning.

Yet the moth has trim, and feistiness, and not a drop  
of self-pity.

Not in this world.

5.

My mother  
was the blue wisteria,  
my mother  
was the mossy stream out behind the house,  
my mother, *alas, alas*,  
did not always love her life,  
heavier than iron it was  
as she carried it in her arms, from room to room,  
*oh, unforgettable!*

I bury her  
in a box  
in the earth  
and turn away.  
My father  
was a demon of frustrated dreams,  
was a breaker of trust,  
was a poor, thin boy with bad luck.



He followed God, there being no one else  
he could talk to;  
he swaggered before God, there being no one else  
who would listen.

*Listen,*  
this was his life.  
I bury it in the earth.  
I sweep the closets.  
I leave the house.

6.

I mention them now,  
I will not mention them again.

It is not lack of love  
nor lack of sorrow.  
But the iron thing they carried, I will not carry.

I give them—one, two, three, four—the kiss of courtesy,  
of sweet thanks,  
of anger, of good luck in the deep earth.  
May they sleep well. May they soften.

But I will not give them the kiss of complicity.  
I will not give them the responsibility for my life.

7.

Did you know that the ant has a tongue  
with which to gather in all that it can  
of sweetness?

Did you know that?

8.

The poem is not the world.  
It isn't even the first page of the world.

But the poem wants to flower, like a flower.  
It knows that much.

It wants to open itself,  
like the door of a little temple,  
so that you might step inside and be cooled and refreshed,  
and less yourself than part of everything.

9.

The voice of the child crying out of the mouth of the  
grown woman  
is a misery and a disappointment.

The voice of the child howling out of the tall, bearded,  
muscular man  
is a misery, and a terror.

10.

Therefore, tell me:  
what will engage you?  
What will open the dark fields of your mind,  
like a lover  
at first touching?

11.

Anyway,  
there was no barn.  
No child in the barn.

No uncle no table no kitchen.

Only a long lovely field full of bobolinks.

12.

When loneliness comes stalking, go into the fields, consider  
the orderliness of the world. Notice  
something you have never noticed before,

like the tambourine sound of the snow-cricket  
whose pale green body is no longer than your thumb.

Stare hard at the hummingbird, in the summer rain,  
shaking the water-sparks from its wings.

Let grief be your sister, she will whether or no.  
Rise up from the stump of sorrow, and be green also,  
like the diligent leaves.

A lifetime isn't long enough for the beauty of this world  
and the responsibilities of your life.

Scatter your flowers over the graves, and walk away.  
Be good-natured and untidy in your exuberance.

In the glare of your mind, be modest.  
And beholden to what is tactile, and thrilling.

Live with the beetle, and the wind.

*This is the dark bread of the poem.*  
*This is the dark and nourishing bread of the poem.*



excerpts from

## MODERN ART

by Evelyn Thal Toynton '70

Her full name was Rosalind—Rosalind Fleischmann Dreyfus—and she was the real thing, a Medici, an heiress, with a mane of frizzy red hair and the galloping lusts of a feudal baron. She had had forty-three years to learn that no one would ever love her for herself alone; most of the time she seemed like the perfect predator, all will and appetite and scarlet lipstick, but in unguarded moments her face could take on the desolate look of a woman in a Walker Evans photograph.

Things might have gone better for her if she had stuck to the company of the very rich, who would certainly have welcomed her despite her bad table manners and the dirty slip that always showed beneath her hem. She could have sailed the Aegean on their yachts, sat with them at the best tables in the best restaurants, her lips gleaming with animal fat, avidly crunching up bones with her sharp teeth. But her cravings were all for art, for the life of the spirit, which she somehow thought she could achieve by taking artists to bed. And then, of course, things always deteriorated fast. Between what she wanted, which was something like redemption, and what they wanted, which was much more basic than that, there could be no reconciliation.

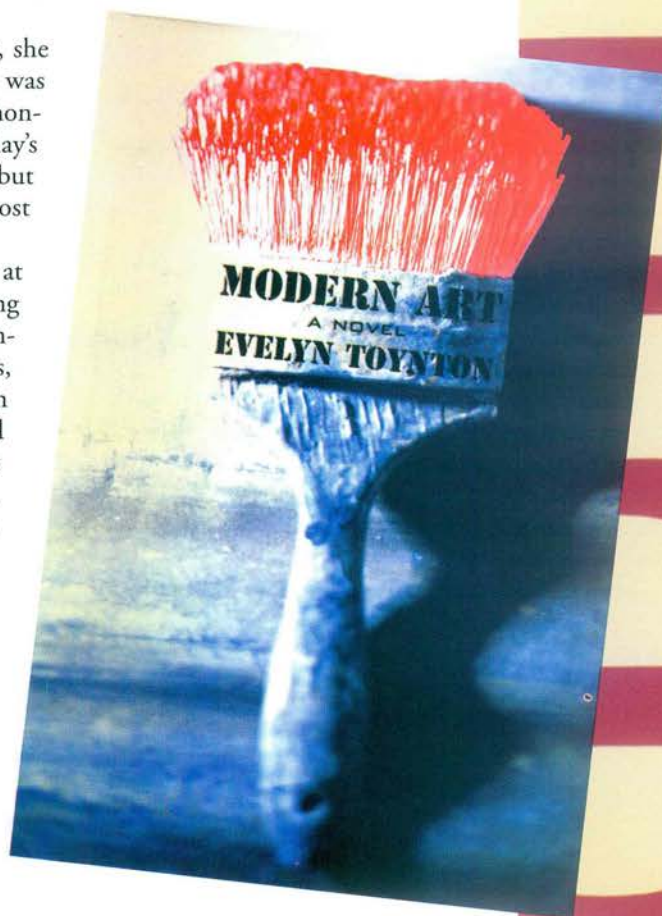
It was on realizing this that, inevitably, she sought revenge. Her bloodlines on both sides were full of robber barons, men who had specialized in the destruction of their enemies, and this spirit still lived in her, though she lacked their ruthless self-control. She shrieked and howled, threw heavy objects from windows, slashed the canvases she had paid good money for. It was said that, like Ibsen's heroine, she had once burned the only manuscript of an indigent writer's novel, after finding him naked with another woman in the house she had lent him in the south of France.



In the last months before the war, she had raced around Paris buying up paintings cheap from their panic-stricken makers. *La Vautour*, the artists called her—the vulture—as she bullied them into parting with their best canvases. But when she sailed for America on the S.S. *France*, she brought with her not only their paintings but some of them, too, the ones in most danger from the Nazis—three Communists and three Jews, several with wives and children—for whom she had miraculously, with the help of heavy bribes, obtained visas. Back in New York, she installed all thirteen of her new dependents in a townhouse near the East River that she had bought years before and never lived in because she disliked the staircase. She brought them oxtails and brown bread and oil crayons, hired a little man to tutor them in English, but like all the previous objects of her generosity, they showed no signs of gratitude. The crayons were the wrong brand, the light was hopeless to work in, she had never told them they would all be sharing a kitchen. Fights broke out among the women, who demanded that she referee. One of the Communists, when she tried to seduce him, locked himself in his upstairs bedroom, threatening to leave by the window.

A few months later, they dispersed, finding themselves hole-in-the-wall apartments of their own, borrowing shamelessly from her when the rent came due. She was left with her crates full of paintings. Then, with the war on in Europe and retreat to her villa in Nice impossible, she had her inspiration: to open a gallery in New York where she could show the refugees' work. Soon they were all grumbling about her commission and the way her shows were hung. And when she announced that she was looking for American painters too, the downtown artists, though they all schemed to get her to their studios, sat around the bars mocking her pretensions to culture as well as her sexual habits. What they really minded was that she insisted on being seduced in their dingy walk-ups, rather than in her bedroom on Fifth Avenue; she believed, as they never could, in the purity of their squalor.

At last, having promised shows to far too many painters, she decided to extricate herself through a juried competition. It was there that Hugo Klesmer, the emigré painter she feared and honored most, had made a rare impassioned speech in praise of Clay's work. At first she protested—she thought he must be joking—but soon she was parroting his remarks to everyone else: "the most original painting in the room," "the first truly American art." Thus were Clay and Belle swept into Rosie Dreyfus' orbit, or at least her outer circle, where they stood, incongruously, looking on. Belle, to whom Rosie had taken an instant dislike, was summoned to the gallery several times to help address invitations, and then shouted at for bad penmanship; once Rosie even demanded two cents for an envelope she claimed Belle had ruined. Clay, on the other hand, though he was edgy and silent around her, she treated with elaborate respect, calling him Mr. Madden in her tenderest, most girlish voice and apologizing fulsomely for every demand on his time. It was Belle who received the instructions about keeping him sober at Rosie's parties—Rosie had a whole network of informers—just as it was Belle who was expected to deliver his paintings. And Rosie invited them only to her more respectable gatherings, attended by her Park Avenue friends. For some reason, they were kept away from the parties she was famous for, where jazz musicians and actresses and Italian countesses smoked hashish in the bathroom.





When they arrived at her apartment, the night that Sophie warned Belle against her, the Europeans were clustered at the mantelpiece, with Klesmer, pale and severe, in their center. Meanwhile, the small contingent of downtown painters stayed near the bar, gulping down whiskey. Belle stuck by Clay's side, both of them sipping seltzer out of crystal tumblers, until the Blodgetts, a couple they had met at another of Rosie's parties, came over and greeted them. Mr. Blodgett, a lawyer, was large and pink-cheeked and jovial in an awkward kind of way; Mrs. Blodgett was fragile and sad and painted watercolors. She began telling Clay in her whispery voice about seeing the Marin show: "It made me want to run away to the seaside. Have you ever painted the ocean, Mr. Madden? Don't you think everyone should?" He looked tense but manful, bending down awkwardly to hear her better.

"That was a damn fine show," he said, and then fell silent. Belle started talking rapidly about the sea, quoting Conrad and Walt Whitman. She was becoming very adept with quotations. She also offered the information that Clay was a great admirer of Melville, since he'd neglected to mention that himself.

A jowly, leathery woman with bright red lipstick and a diamond pin came and greeted Mr. Blodgett, who agreed with her that the Reds seemed to be giving it to the Germans at Stalingrad. Rosie appeared, nestling against a blond boy with bad skin. "This is Anthony. He doesn't hate me as much as the rest of you."

There was a sudden blast of alto sax: somebody had turned the gramophone up. Abruptly, a few people sprang to life and started dancing. One young painter deserted the bar and started to jitterbug all by himself.

"Anthony's going to help me in the gallery," Rosie told them sweetly when the record ended. "But first we're going to spend some time cataloguing my collection."

"We've told our friend from Owens Merrill all about your paintings," Mrs. Blodgett said. "He's dying to see them."

"Send him round," Rosie said. "I love watching people fall in love with my paintings. Even Joyce admired them, although of course he can't see too well. Only the Nazis refused to be converted. At first I thought it was my Jewish parents they minded, but no, it was my decadent paintings."

"Interesting, isn't it, how seriously the Germans take art these days." It was a portly, wall-eyed little man who had been standing nearby, the center of yet another group. "But of course what most people fail to understand is that Nazism is essentially an aesthetic phenomenon."

"How brilliant," Rosie said. "What do you mean, exactly?"

He strolled over, looking pleased. "It's obvious once you think about it. Nazism is simply the Greek ideal filtered through the distorting lens of Nietzsche. The blond beast, beyond good and evil, all that relentless drive towards purity. I'm thinking of writing something on the subject."

"That's Alfred Lehrman," the leathery woman said. "He's a famous scholar, he's just written a book about Courbet." Mrs. Blodgett whispered to Clay, "Don't men like that always make you feel so shy?"

Everyone was respectfully silent, until Hugo Klesmer detached himself from the group at the fireplace. "If you had seen the ruins of Rotterdam, my friend, I do not think you would talk about aesthetics in that way."

"But that just bears out my thesis: Rotterdam is precisely what happens when one attempts to live by one's aesthetic creed. The Nazis seem mad to us because they have put into practice a theory that others have only talked about."

"That's absolutely true," Rosie said. "Professor Lehrman, you're a genius. Anthony, get me another drink."

Lehrman smiled graciously at Klesmer. "I'm not defending them, you know. It's just that I find the phenomenon interesting. You don't, I take it."

"In a hundred years, it may be acceptable to call them interesting," Klesmer said. "But not at this time, no."

Lehrman shrugged, palms in the air. "If one has been trained not to take things personally, anything can be interesting. Particularly questions related to aesthetics." Several people murmured approvingly.

"You think you'd be standing around in Germany right now talking about aesthetics?" It was Clay.

Lehrman stroked his chin, as charming as ever. "That hardly seems relevant. An observation can be true in any context."

"You're a Jew, aren't you? Your people are disappearing every day. You think they'd care about your fine distinctions?"

Rosie gave Belle a furious look, as though this must be her fault. Lehrman threw up his hands. "My dear sir, I can hardly presume to speak for any group of people. One's thoughts still belong to oneself, even in wartime."

A doggy-looking woman with a bowl haircut who had come up behind Lehrman took his arm protectively. "Why aren't you in the army," she asked Clay, "if you feel like that?"

He took a step towards her. "Because they wouldn't take me."

"Why not? You look healthy enough to me."

"That's none of your business," Belle snapped.

"Oh God,"—it was Rosie—"This is ridiculous,"



and then to Clay, "I think you owe the professor an apology."

"No, no, that won't be necessary," Lehrman said. "It was only a misunderstanding. A quibble over art."

He had turned away when Clay yelled at his back, "You prick. You wouldn't know art if it weighed four hundred pounds and sat on your face."

For some reason Belle thought of Sophie. Everyone edged away, moving as one body, until she and Clay were marooned together in the center of the room.

And then Klesmer appeared. "How do you do?" he said briskly. Clay remained mute. "I have hoped to make your acquaintance since I saw your work." Klesmer clucked his tongue. "I cannot do all the talking. Somebody must help me. You, then," he said to Belle. She gaped at him. "We will discuss the charms of New York."

"You're being sarcastic, right? You don't really think it has any charms."

"Not at all. I think it an ideal city, except for the trees. And the museums are too crowded. If I were in charge, I would impose a large entrance fee to discourage people."

"But that's so undemocratic."

"Precisely." He beamed at her.

Now Clay was looking longingly at the door; Klesmer made a face. "You are tormenting yourself needlessly, I promise you," he said, as a dance tune came out of the gramophone. "Artists have said worse things."

"He's right," Belle said. "I don't care. Let's dance." But Clay ignored her.

"Perhaps the young lady will dance with me," Klesmer said. "And you go talk to Stefan Probst. He also admires your work. Remind him that he mustn't leave without taking his umbrella."

She could not conceive of his dancing, except in some stately eighteenth-century way, a minuet maybe; she could imagine him marching, or clicking his heels at attention, but never, ever doing the jitterbug. But that was what he proceeded to do, flinging her outward and snapping her back, his torso

erect, his bony face as severe as ever, his feet, in their narrow black shoes, kicking rhythmically. When she stumbled against him, dizzy from being whirled around, she could feel the brittle bones in his chest.

Then the record ended, and he wiped his brow with a spotted handkerchief he took from his breast pocket. "When I was in Paris and would listen to such music, I used to imagine that all Americans were aficionados of *le jazz*. It was one of my greatest shocks on coming to this country, to find that so many had no knowledge of it." He replaced the handkerchief as boogie-woogie poured from the gramophone again. "Shall we try once more?"

So they did, and this time she found her rhythm; she shimmied and dipped, the mass to his line, the horizontal to his vertical; her shoulders, her arms, her pelvis were suddenly independent of her feet, could take off in whole different directions. It seemed with every passage as though she might not come back to him in time, but miraculously she always did; they were a symmetry, or more than that, a conspiracy, in league against the others, who looked on disapprovingly while they danced themselves out of reach, playing off the music, moving against it, ahead of it, until they had found their freedom.

Then he bowed to her gravely, as though they'd been dancing a minuet after all, and they started all over again.

Thirty years later, when Klesmer was long dead, she went to the opening of his retrospective at MOMA—one of the very rare occasions, by then, when she entered a museum in a spirit of homage—to be greeted by the sight of a red, medieval-style banner with a quotation from him: "All painting is about rhythm." For a minute, as she stood there in her heavy silk suit, with heavy Mexican silver around her neck, lightness descended; even her joints felt weightless, as if some other, more ethereal body were inhabiting her own. And she thought how strange it was that Klesmer, severe and ascetic Klesmer, with his thinning hair and concave chest, had managed what no one else in the world ever had; he had shown her what it felt like to be beautiful. ■

*Inspired by the lives of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner (Clay Madden and Belle Prokoff in the novel), Evelyn Tönynton's Modern Art creates a fictional universe full of vivid characters and intense confrontations. Edward Hoagland called the novel "wise, adroit...resplendent with shimmering, incisive writing about the New York art scene and what it's like to be young there, or aging." Tönynton's work has appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, The New York Times Book Review, The American Scholar, and elsewhere.*





## THE CLASSES

### 1940s

**MaryAverett Seelye '40** performed at Baltimore's Roland Park Place in November. The show included works by Howard Nemerov, e. e. cummings, and Lucille Clifton, among others, as well as a piece by Bulent Ecevit, given in both Turkish and English.

**Barbara Bacon Rosenberg '43** reports that in September "the Villa Panza of Varese, Italy, became a museum with three rooms of my paintings, (three works per room), two of which were Rothko's rooms in the first collection." Rosenberg continued her conquest of Italy when Ozzano Monferrato hosted an exhibition of her work from December through February.

**Marjorie Hill Noon '44** was commissioned to do a large oil painting for a permanent installation at the new Hopkinton (NH) Town Library. Noon has had works in several shows in the past year and continues to study painting at the New Hampshire Institute of Art.

A physical therapy volunteer at Aspen Hospital, **Rebecca Grafton Sparks '44** continues to be an avid skier, painter, musician, and grandparent.

Retiring for the second time, **Carolyn Arnold Westwood '45** is relinquishing her Cummington, MA-based Windfields Bed and Breakfast, as well as the maple syrup made on Windfields Farm.

A November reception honored the opening of a new woodcut triptych by **Helen Frankenthaler '49**. The piece, entitled *Madame Butterfly*, was on display at New York City's Knoedler & Company through January 6.

### 1950s

**Barbara Nelson Pavan '54** writes that she is "working as the local evaluator of a Reading Excellence Act grant" received by a school district in her area.

After her last treatment of chemotherapy in September, **Wanda Peck Spreen '54** reports that her ovarian cancer is in remission. Diagnosed in 1996, Spreen has had two recurrences, but writes that she "hopes to keep the devil at bay for at least another year."

Painter **Anne Stodder Adams '54** is busy serving on the advisory council for the Office of the Aging in Lancaster, PA. Her family grieves the loss of her son, Kurt Umlauf, from lung cancer. Adam's other son, Jon, a physician in the U.S. Navy, was recently made a commander.

**Ethelyn Blinder Honig '55** memorialized the Thunderbolt Roller Coaster, the famed Coney Island landmark destroyed last fall, with a series of drawings on paint. An exhibition of her work, *lost: one unusual pigeon...at coney island*, was presented by New York City's Jan van der Donk in November and December. The gallery described the series as "drawn and photographed images which overlay distemper paint, focus on the delicate web-like patterns of the ferris wheel, the roller coaster, the parachute jump and cyclone fences and appear in her work like skeletons reminiscent of a past era."

For the second year running, **Linda Schandler Porter '55** is happy to have made her living wage through acting.

The non-profit arts service organization, Austin Circle of Teachers, has named **Latifah Taormina (Irene Ryan) '55** its new executive director. Taormina finds the work "exciting and rewarding."

After receiving certification in Imago Relationship Therapy (special couple's therapy) and in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing), **Ellen C. Weber '55** reports that her psychotherapy practice "continues to go very well." In March of last year, Weber's first granddaughter was born.

**Carrie McLeod Howson '56** reports she loves Essex County, NJ. She helps educate others about Alzheimer's Disease, from which her husband John suffers.

In November, **Kay Crawford Murray '56** became the fourth recipient of the prestigious Edith I. Spivak Award, which recognizes "outstanding contributions to the advancement of women." Previous recipients include Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye and Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin. Murray currently serves as the General Counsel of the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice. She chaired the Committee on Women's Rights from 1984-86, and has served on the Counsel of the Association, the Committee on Government Counsel, and the Committee on Nominations. Murray's other honors include the 1965 Outstanding Young Women of America and the 1995 Women of Power and Influence awards from the National Organization of Women.

"I finished it, and it was like that line from *Field of Dreams*: 'If you build it, they will come.'" *The Chicago Daily Herald* recently featured an article on **Elaine Gordon Silets '56**, who has come to be known as "The Train Lady." After losing her job as a legal administrator in 1991, Silets began her own business, Huff & Puff Industries, Ltd., which custom-designs elaborate model train layouts. Commissions include the Chicago Children's Museum and an annual multi-level installation at the John Hancock Building. This year, the Hancock exhibit featured skating dinosaurs, a working cable  
(continued on page 37)



TO: The Pioneers

FROM: Helen and Becca, Pioneer Agents

RE: Report on Alumni Weekend in *NOTES*

It would not be suitable here for us to quote fully our esteemed and respected editor of the alumni magazine, upon our pointing out to her that in the *NOTES* report on the last Alumni and Parents Weekend, the word "Pioneers" was not mentioned. Not once. "But," sputtered the generally unflappable Ms. Godwin, "the Pioneers were the main event! Are you sure? Let me look... \*\*@!#\*\*!#@\*#!!" (This from a woman who almost never tolerates exclamation points!)

"Well," we responded, smiling slyly. "We know how you can redeem yourself." Ahem: The space below has been dedicated to selected quotes from a few of the many fan letters we received after the Weekend. (By the way, 61 alumnae Pioneers were on hand for the event, along with a dozen husbands and even some children and grandchildren—all of whom added tremendously to the fun.) It was, really, a wonderful party:

*"I came away from my visit to the College for the Pioneers Reunion deeply impressed with the outreach programs on truancy and conflict resolution and languages and cultures. They certainly embody Bennington's traditional goals of encouraging creative and innovative approaches to the educational process—and both confront major national issues of an increasingly diverse society...."*

—Tao Strong-Stein '45

*"What a splendid celebration! It was great seeing people again and seeing the College vibrant and exciting. I wanted to start over."*

—Merrell Hopkins Hambleton '43

*"The Pioneer Reunion was simply wonderful. Yvette Edmondson and I took up where we left off all those years ago. And I delighted in the community of outlook with those gals who shared that adventure of Bennington's beginning."*

—Betty Evans Munger '37

*"The atmosphere was so welcoming—the alums full of Bennington enthusiasm, panels and programs excellent. The campus looked great, including the living rooms! I particularly enjoyed the friendly contact with the students, and appreciated their taking time to be with us."*

—Gretchen Van Tassel Shaw '39

*"Please thank everyone for being so helpful: the people in the tent, the drivers of the fun golf carts, and people whom I encountered here and there.... The Friday night performance, combining singing, dance, and acting, was superb."*

—Yvette Hardman Edmondson '36

*"I think the powers-that-be did a fantastic organizational task, replete with consideration and thoughtfulness. The 'kids' seemed very friendly and responsive. Tying old knots is restorative for us all."*

—Louise Friedberg Strouse '36

*"That was a fantastic reunion weekend: the food, the transportation, the program, and the several energizing inputs from Liz all made it a rare and rewarding occasion."*

—Mary Eddison Welch '40



## A LIFE FULL OF LEAPS

or me," writes **Tao Strong-Stein '45** in a statement accompanying her recent work, "Art is the continuation of an adventurous life, a Romantic's voyage into the heart of the Mystery." The seafaring metaphor is apt: Among her other adventures—which include careers as dancer, choreographer, actor, writer, whittler, sculptor, and painter—Strong-Stein was a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captain for a decade or so in the 1970s.

Even at Bennington, Theo (later changed to the current spelling) Strong had what she calls a "checkered career." She came to study theater, but following a field work term (then known as NRT) in New York City, switched her focus to sociology. After graduating, Strong worked in Admissions at Bennington and also took dance classes at the College. Upon her return to New York City, Martha Graham's June Course caught her attention: "I thought, I'd better see what I'm going to do with my life," Strong-Stein remembers. "At the end of the session, after we had each performed our compositions, Martha came up to me and said these words: *You have great power*. That was so stunning that I couldn't do anything but continue in dance."

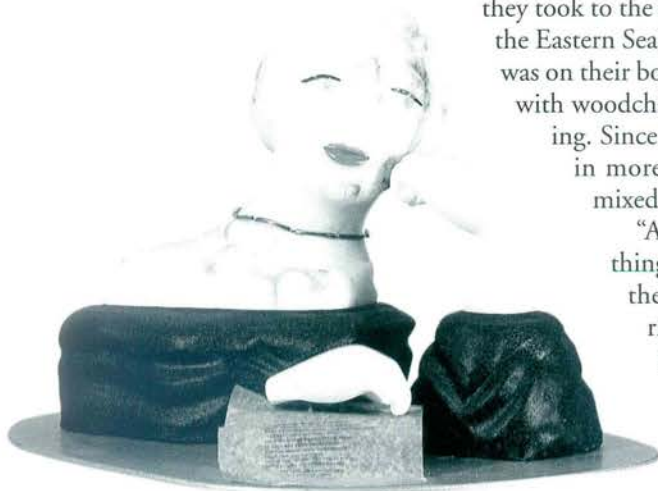
For the next 20 years, Strong-Stein danced—with Nina Fonaroff's and Jean Erdman's and her own dance companies. Then, "seduced by a regular paycheck," she took "the next big leap in space." Her career on Broadway began with *The King and I*, and continued with four more Broadway shows, television, off-Broadway, and summer stock. She met her husband, arranger-conductor Julian Stein, in the musical *The Golden Apple*. Together, they wrote musicals and industrial shows; in the process, a new passion was born: writing. For five years Strong-Stein researched and worked on a play, *The Thornberry Tree*, about Richard III; it garnered much interest behind the scenes, but was deemed too expensive to produce.

In her husband, Strong-Stein had found a fellow adventurer. "We became addicted to change," she admits. In 1970 they took to the seas, sailing the Mediterranean, the Eastern Seaboard, and the Caribbean, earning their keep as charter skippers. It was on their boat that Strong-Stein first began whittling—"The cockpit was filled with woodchips," she recalls—which led her eventually to sculpture and painting. Since relocating to dry land in the 1980s, Strong-Stein has participated in more than 50 group and solo shows nationally, receiving awards in mixed media and stone and wood sculpture.

"Art is my last fling," she believes. "I love studying and exploring new things; it's such an open-ended process. It's going to take me the rest of the way." Well, maybe: But interest in her Richard III play, copyrighted back in 1967, has recently rekindled, and Strong-Stein finds herself rewriting and preparing for concert readings of the piece—once again in the midst of the next new thing. ■



*Spectre*, palm spath, paint, papier maché, cord, wood, glass, 59" x 15" x 21"



*Penelope*, alabaster and mixed media, 20½" x 30" x 24"



(continued from page 34)

car and gondola, and a winter carnival scene with blinking lights and a merry-go-round.

*The New York Times* announced that **Lois Landau Mazer '57** married Martin Zelman on November 9 at Bouterin, a New York City restaurant. The bride is a stockbroker with Gilford Securities and a trustee of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

**Muriel Altman Ladenburg '58** is enjoying her second year of retirement from the position of assistant dean at Brandeis University. January saw the arrival of Ladenburg's third granddaughter.

On July 21, **Phyllis MacAlpine McGuire '58** remarried and relocated to Florida. Son Frank followed suit in September by taking his own marriage vows.

The 13-year-old Turtledove art-to-wear boutique is still going strong, with founder and owner **Harriet Turteltaub Abroms '59** spending more time in her studio making some of the items the store sells. In addition to running her own business, Abroms and husband Gene travel frequently to spend time with their four grandchildren.

Now retired from the University of California, Riverside, where she taught ancient art and archeology, **Hillary De M. Adams (Judith Snyder) '59** has been active in environmental protection issues. Her passion and involvement have led her to found a number of organizations, including Navarro-by-the-Sea Center for Riparian and Estuarine Research, Navarro Watershed Protection Association, and The Charles Fletcher Society for Historical Research.

## 1960s

**Corinna Harmon '63** is looking for information on the whereabouts of **Rosalind Robinson '65**. If you have any leads, please contact the College's Office of Communications.

Now that her son Daniel has graduated from Columbia University and daughter Elizabeth is in the 11th grade, **Debra Kram Fisher '66** has returned to work. Fisher left *ABC News* in 1978, after 10 years as a writer/producer, to raise her family. She now owns Debra K. Fisher Representing Fine Crafts, which represents Southern and Appalachian folk artists and crafters.

The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, **Roxana Barry Robinson '68** finished the year by publishing two stories in *The Atlantic Monthly* ("The Face Lift" and "Family Christmas") and an essay in *The New York Times* as part of "Writers on Writing."

This year marked the 10th anniversary of Young Writers Camp, directed by **Jane Elkington Wohl '68**. In addition to running this successful pro-

gram, Wohl teaches English at Sheridan College in Wyoming, and is an associate faculty member of the Goddard College MFA in Writing Program.

## 1970s

*Old Man River*, an independent film directed by **Allan Holzman '70**, made its New York City premiere in October. Based on a one-woman show written and performed by Cynthia Gates Fujikawa, the film is "as much drama as documentary." *Independent Feature Project* and *The Film Society of Lincoln Center* enthuse, "...this award-winning, filmed theatrical experience is a heartfelt and visually stunning tale of family history told and love found." The film was shown at the College in 1999.

New York City's The Kitchen was lit up in early January by a series of performances by **Cathy Weis '70**, "an early and imaginative explorer of dance and electronic media," according to *The New York Times*. The program, which included Scott Heron, Ishmael Houston-Jones, and Jennifer Monson, comprised new multimedia pieces. A highlight was the joining of artists performing live from Macedonia with New York dancers and computer-animated characters, all via the wonders of the Internet.

Having survived the "Mardi Gras" of recent political events, Tallahassee-area resident **Randie Denker '72** continues to fight for the preservation of Florida's delicate ecology. Working out of their own "grassroots-style" law firm, Denker and her husband Paul have succeeded in generating a two-year moratorium on construction in their county, as well as a landmark sector plan that provides for "what are probably the strictest lake protection regulations in the nation." Denker and her husband have formed a political alliance/neighborhood group aimed at preserving the rural character of their community.

On December 21, **Carol Jameson '72** was promoted to vice president and senior counsel at The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation, a holding company that provides services to The Depository Trust Company and National Securities Clearing Corporation. Before entering the field in 1992, Jameson was an associate in the corporate departments of two Manhattan-based law firms.

*The Times Argus* (VT) writes, "a powerful score that combines spicy modern styles and real operatic emotion, it creates a portrait of rural Vermont that not only rings true, but tears at the heartstrings." **Erik Nielsen '72**—singer, composer, conductor, and teacher—premiered *A Fleeting Animal: An Opera from Judevine* on October 20. Presented and commissioned by the Vermont Opera Theater, this setting of David Budbill's *The Judevine Poems* was



performed in various central Vermont venues. "Nielsen's score was thoroughly modern but eclectic at the same time, not afraid of tonality and not averse to atonality either, so that the whole question of tonality—the great bugaboo of 'modern' music—became nearly irrelevant," reports *The Herald* of Randolph. Nielsen is the recipient of the Vermont Composer of the Year award and has received numerous awards from ASCAP, with works performed in Carnegie Hall, Europe, and Australia.

Recently earning national teaching certification in early adolescence through young adulthood, **Caren C. Pert Pearson '72** continues to teach art, now at the elementary level.

When not busy with her family, **Martha Siegel '72** can still be found playing and teaching the cello at the United Nations International School and at the Henry Street Settlement in New York City. Siegel writes that she is now working on building a musical community in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

"She found a way to write Emily Dickinson and William Faulkner into a single sentence," said *The New York Times* in a November spread on **Sally Munger Mann '73**. Following a slide lecture at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Mann presented photographs documenting her 30-year married life, unknowingly propelling herself once again into controversy. The pictures, which Mann describes as "a record of intimacy and quietude," were criticized by a Richmond, VA, audience member for pushing "the envelope of decency." Included in the collection is a three-year documentation of the progression of her husband's muscular dystrophy—transforming "the photographic inventory into elegy."

**Peta Raabe '73**, a partner in Lager, Raabe & Skafte Landscape Architects, is "surprised to find herself mother of a high-school freshman and a sixth-grader."

Having completed her first novel, **Diana Theodores '73**, reader in theater at Dartington College in Devon, England, began a residency at the Firkin Crane Centre for Dance Development and Choreographic Research in Ireland. She will generate a series of events and publications exploring relationships between writing and choreography. Dance critic for *The Sunday Tribune* in Ireland from 1984 to 1993, and author of two books on dance criticism, Theodores has spent the last two years chairing a European forum series called Conversations on Choreography. She was a founding member of the Samuel Beckett Centre at Trinity College in Dublin, and went on to receive the first Trinity College Ph.D. in dance. Her choreography/directing credits include productions at the Abbey Theatre, The Royal Court, and the Gate Theatre, among others. She encourages classmates living in England to contact her.

A vice president for legal affairs at Triton Energy Limited, **Bellanne Meltzer Toren '75** recently completed her term as 1999–2000 president of the Association of International Petroleum Negotiators, an organization with some 1,000 members worldwide. Toren lives in Coppell, TX, with her husband and teenaged sons.

*The Performer's Guide to the Collaborative Process* by **Sheila Kerrigan '76** was released by Heinemann in March. Based on Kerrigan's 17 years in collaborative theater and including interviews with more than 70 collaborative artists (including **Liz Lerman '69**), it "demystifies the creative process and sheds light on healthy group dynamics. It's for anyone who wants to create original performances collaboratively." Kerrigan is currently working in various residencies, guiding adults, high school students, and children through the collaborative creative process.

**Amy Sawelson Landes '76** lives in Tarzana, CA, and serves as creative director of The Food Group, a business-to-business advertising agency specializing in food. Outside of work, Landes keeps herself busy with her husband Stan, her nine-year-old autistic son, and her six-year-old daughter. Landes encourages Bennington alumni to exchange information on autism with her.

**Elisabeth (Buffy) Miller Shapero '77** reports that she is happily divorced and living with her "radiantly beautiful and charming" daughter. She would love to hear from Bennington friends: 345 Thornridge Dr., Stamford, CT 06903.

Nearing the end of its first season, CBS's *The Fugitive*, starring **Tim Daly '79**, is a roaring success. Featured in a December article in *People* magazine, Daly told interviewers that he has "a great deal of passion for [*The Fugitive*]," and is "really interested in making it good." Viewers and critics agree that Daly has achieved his goal. From the impressive stunts he executes himself to the "steely yet soulful" emotional performances, Daly's Dr. Richard Kimble holds its own with predecessors David Janssen and Harrison Ford. Says the show's executive producer, John McNamara, "Tim radiates intelligence and strength."

**Nathan Williams '79** reports that he loves his new job as science teacher for The Long Trail School in Dorset, VT.

## 1980s

**Susan Scher Chase '80** sends word from Washington, D.C., where she has spent the last 20 years working at the World Bank "on poverty, debt relief in Africa, and now on policy and strategy." She will graduate with an MBA from Marymount  
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LAWRENCE AGLAND

## LEAVING SOUNDS TO CHANCE

t a Telluride composers' conference in the early '90s, John Cage was asked, "If you were 60 years younger, who would you study with?" Cage replied, "James Tenney."

"That did my career some good," laughs **Jim Tenney '58**, who recently left his post as distinguished research professor at York University in Toronto to occupy the Roy E. Disney Family Chair in Musical Composition at the California Institute for the Arts. Now he moderates a weekly composer's forum, gives tutorials in composition, and teaches a course on sound, hearing, and music perception. The author of two influential texts on new music—*A History of 'Consonance' and 'Dissonance'* (Excelsior, 1988) and *META + HODOS* and *META Meta+Hodos* (Frog Peak, 1986)—he has received grants and awards from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Canada Council, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst.

Tenney began his studies at Juilliard under pianist Edward Steuermann, but dropped out after losing interest in performance and turning on to composition. At the Bennington Composer's Conference the following summer, Tenney hit it off with Bennington teacher Lionel Nowak, and Nowak arranged for the young composer to attend what was then a women's college. He was the only man in his graduating class.

Tenney recalls fondly, "My two years at Bennington were some of my most enjoyable. Lionel was a real role model for me as a teacher. His way was not to impose his aesthetic on the students, but to encourage us in our interests." Others who shaped Tenney's work were Harry Partch, Carl Ruggles, Edgard Varese, and John Cage, who had a penchant for leaving sounds to chance.

After receiving his degree, Tenney went to Bell Labs in New Jersey where, with Max Mathews, he developed programs for computer sound-generation and composed the early electronic works for which he is most famous.

"The visceral aspect of music is every bit as important to me as the intellectual," he told *The L.A. Times* last September, addressing a common criticism of experimental music. The ecstatic *For Ann (Rising)*—successive computer-generated glissandos striving for their highest notes—proves this. Although Tenney now writes only for instruments, he programs his computer to manipulate randomly the details of his compositions, rightly considering chance to be on his side.

—Lise Johnson '01



Barbara Andrus '74, who has been exhibiting her work for more than 20 years, showed work most recently in fall 2000, as part of *Environmentally Concerned 2* at the Bronx River Art Center and Gallery. She had a solo show in 2000 at the Barbara Harris Gallery in New York City; a review in the October 2000 issue of *Sculpture* noted that Andrus "goes through a process that intrinsically fuses an awareness of form from aesthetic and architectural points of view with a fascination with nature, not as a site she wishes to mimic or interpret, but as a source of engineering she chooses to articulate." Andrus has also exhibited at the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA; the Islip Art Museum in Islip; the Bronx Museum of Art and Art in General in New York City. After attending Bennington, she graduated from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Andrus has had a number of residencies and arts fellowships, including several stays at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA.

*"My sculpture is an idiosyncratic, personal interpretation of architecture and domestic structures, working at extremes of scale. My material is wood: In my use of it I emphasize its natural qualities, the textures, colors, feel of the tree. The small, intimate works are made with pleasure in invention and meant to give pleasure in the sculptures' accessibility; they are meant to be handled and touched. The big installations respond to the spaces they breathe in; they are my version of a personalized architecture."*

*"The pieces are hand-made, sawn with chain and band saws and with Japanese handsaws. The joints are basic, direct; the parts are glued and clamped together. Fabricating the piece, working with wood that has a strong character, is key. The joy in invention and making is a luxury for me."*

*—excerpts from the artist's statement of Barbara Andrus*



ELIZABETH HARRIS

*Up in the Trees, installation shot, 1999–2000.*



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University in Arlington, VA, in May. She continues: "I am happily married with two beautiful (smart!!) daughters, ages 6 and 1. Still figure skating and speaking French. Would love to hear from old classmates."

According to a November piece in *Crain's New York Business*, **Jonathan Elias '80** began his career at Bennington when, as a senior, he was offered the chance to write the music to accompany the trailer for the movie, *Alien*. As a result of that effort, Elias and his brother, Scott, launched Elias Arts in 1981 to write music for trailers, ads, and corporate identities. Over the last two decades, the brothers have worked with hundreds of companies, including McDonald's, Yahoo!, IBM, Mercedes, and Nike. Their company has scored more than 6,000 projects and won close to 600 awards.

Writes **Susanna Dent '81**: "It is very beautiful where I live, and I love to paint." Where she lives, along with her 5-year-old daughter, is Brainbridge Island in Washington State. Dent has galleries in downtown Seattle (Eyre/Moore) and in New York City (Sears/Peyton).

**Anthony Cafritz '85** and Janan Compitello were married September 30 at the North Bennington Art Park. On November 3, a sculpture exhibition of recent work by Cafritz launched the opening of Tunnel City Gallery in North Adams, MA. The show ran through December 8.

Christie's, the world's leading fine art auctioneers, has named **Andrea Fiuczynski '85** president of Christie's Los Angeles. She was profiled in an *L.A. Times* Sunday edition on December 31. Fiuczynski has been with the organization since 1985.

Last May, **Rhea Nowak '85** graduated with an MFA in printmaking from the University of Connecticut.

According to a January interview in London's *The Independent*, **Jonathan Lethem '86's** novel, *As She Climbed Across the Table*, will be published in Britain by Faber. For his subsequent novel, *Motherless Brooklyn*, Lethem won a National Book Critics Circle Award and a Crime Writers' Golden Dagger in Britain; the book has been optioned for a film by Edward Norton.

Composer **Judith C. Lane '86** has been commissioned for the second time to create a world premiere work for the Children's Opera Company of Ossining (NY). *The Secret Cave* recounts the true story of 20 French children who hid a group of Jewish schoolchildren from the Nazis. The work premieres this spring; Lane will also co-direct. She has also been a teaching artist for the Metropolitan Opera Guild, and has completed artistic residencies in the U.S. and Europe.

## 1990s

**Gabby Leff '90** and her husband Michael Gerdis are happy to announce the birth of their daughter, Jessica Rose, on August 19. Gabby was director of casting for Disney/Touchstone television until last year when she left to cast a series and pilot for ABC television. She is now taking time off to spend with her daughter. She can be reached at gabby-gabriela@aol.com, and would love to hear from her old friends.

*The Providence Journal* announced that, on September 23, **John R. Cournoyer '90**, vice president of real estate and development at Forest City Ratner in New York City, married fellow New Yorker Elizabeth Oliver Ransom, assistant vice president and senior training consultant with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

**Mary Bucksbaum '91** recently became Mary Bucksbaum Scanlan when she married Patrick Scanlan. Bennington alumni **Limore Gruber '91** and **Stephen Szoradi '91** attended the wedding. Scanlan caught up with **Anna Gaskell '92** during Gaskell's opening at the Aspen Art Museum.

In June, **Danielle Signoracci '91**, a consulting and valuation analyst for hotel consulting company, HVS International, received her MBA from the University of Denver.

Director and founder of a non-profit elderly care organization, Main Dans La Main Genève, **Ardan Michael Blum '92** is proud to report that they are the first group in Switzerland to provide Internet access to nursing homes through large screens and key pads. Featured in a recent article of the *Tribune de Genève*, Blum remarks, "Missing many, happy at 30."

**Emanuelle A. Kihm '93** writes: "After Bennington I went to the New School for Social Research for a master's in anthropology/cultural studies. In 1998, I founded The Open Classroom Collaborative, a non-profit arts education organization in NYC. We offer dance, music, theater, and visual arts workshops to elementary and high schools city-wide. For the past two years we have been awarded the Annenberg Grant for Arts Education. We are always looking for good artists and teachers to work with us. If you are interested, please give us a call at 718-851-8512. Currently, we are in the process of fund raising so we can continue to provide quality programming to inner-city students. Your donations would be greatly appreciated."

In November, **Dorothy A. Wallace-Senft '93** presented a slide show at the Bennington Free Library featuring Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

After moving to Miami from Boston last spring, **Christa Larry '94** reports that she doesn't miss the



cold at all. Larry is currently enjoying work as a writer for MyCity.com and hopes to get back into painting. She would love to hear from classmates and can be reached via e-mail: christaelizabeth@yahoo.com.

LICAP (The Long Island City Arts Project) recently joined forces with theater et al, a not-for-profit theater company based in New York City, for a play reading series of new and eclectic work that ran from October 25 to February 28. **Brian Rogers '95**, artistic director of theater et al, shares his enthusiasm for the program with fellow employees **Jonathan Paine '95** and **Sheila Lewandowski '97**.

**Nathan Parker '96** will premiere his latest work, *Numerous Women*, a dark comedy about sex, violence, and nail polish. The show will run April 18–May 12, Wed.–Sat. at 8:00 p.m. at Theater 22, 54 West 22nd St. in New York City. Producing the play are **Victoria Perry-Cairl '99** and **Seth DeCroke '98**.

At the 2000 A.A.U. National Tae Kwon Do Championships held in New Orleans, LA, competitor **Jessica Peck '96** won two gold medals.

**Kelly Grundman '97** writes that she's stayed in touch with friends **Pablo deOcampo '98** and **Jessica Phillips '97**, despite a move to Asheville, NC. The trio visited **Mary Early '97** at her Washington, D.C., home and studio. Phillips managed the historic renovation of Grundman's home before moving to New York City in January.

An ecstatic **James S. Simon '97** wrote on November 9, "I passed the Bar !!!!!!!!!!"

As reported in *The New York Post*, **Peter Hathaway Stewart '97** celebrated the December 5 opening of his photographic exhibition, entitled *Derby*, in New York City. The party, hosted by author Anthony Haden-Guest, model Chandra North, editor Maer Roshan, and writer **Jared Paul Stern '94**, was attended by celebrities, including authors **Bret Easton Ellis '86** and Michael Gross, top models Irina Pantaeve and Jaime Rishar, columnist and author Joe Conason, fashion editor Lucy Sykes, photographer Patrick McMullan, writer **Ruth Gutman '95**, architect **Mark Nye '94**, and socialite **Elizabeth Lind '91**. Stewart, who is also working on a book of short stories, divides his time among Vermont, Virginia, and Berlin.

While studying the social behavior of the Florida Scrub Jay at Archbold Biological Station in central Florida, **Daniel Levitis '99** sustained an injury to his iliopsoas tendon, confining him to crutches. Levitis currently lives in New York City, where he continues to mend and "live off of chocolates donated by concerned friends and family."

## 2000s

Having settled in Budapest, Hungary, **Paul Kikuchi '00** and **Matthew Pillischer '00** are presently recording a new album at Ear Catapult Studios in Budapest under the band name, The K Disorder.

**Oona Gilles-Weil '00** is enthusiastic about working as a peace educator in Pennsylvania, teaching non-violent conflict resolution to children and adolescents.

## MFA's

**Donald Odita '90** sends great news about his work. *Color Theory*, his solo show in New York City at the Florence Lynch Gallery, was nominated last fall for Best Show of the Year by the International Association of Art Critics in New York. His paintings were exhibited last fall as part of *Five Continents and One City—The Third International Salon of Painting* at the Museum of Mexico City. Other international exhibitions featuring his work include paintings and mixed media at the Kunsthalle in St. Gallen, Switzerland; paintings at the Schuster & Scheuermann Gallery in Frankfurt and Berlin, Germany; and paintings in a group show at the National Museum in Warsaw, Poland. The fall/winter 2000 issue of *NKA, Journal of Contemporary African Art*, features Odita's work on the cover and in two articles. The artist has recently moved to Tallahassee, where he teaches painting at Florida State University.

**Margo Aragon '96** had a poem in *The Cortland Review*, an online magazine. She participated in a panel discussion on "BookFest," in Boise, ID, which aired on C-SPAN last fall. Aragon is marketing director at the University of Idaho Press.

The fall issue of the *Vermont Literary Review* had a story by **Sharon Cook '96**.

**Don Freas '96** had a poem in the fall/winter edition of the *Asheville Poetry Review*. He also has a new chapbook, *Natural History*, and one of his poems will be included in an anthology entitled, *From Daughters and Sons to Fathers: What I've Never Said*, to be released by Story Line Press in time for Father's Day 2001.

**Carol Malone '96** recently accepted an appointment at the University of Tennessee to teach English.

For the second year in a row, **Sharon Preiss '96** was a finalist in the Dead Metaphor Press chapbook contest. "Ahh, always a bridesmaid," she says.

**Bob Hornbuckle '96** published a piece in *Under the Sun* and has another forthcoming in *Potpourri*.

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# WE'RE SO FAMOUS

by Jaime Clarke MFA '97

he way you win a dead pool, if you're not familiar, is you pick a list of people you think are going to kick it. You pick for the entire year. The one with the most right wins. Like anything. The trick is to have a couple wild cards, people that no one would ever pick. You get those by doing your homework, like reading *The National Enquirer* and those kinds of papers. But also you have to think a little bit, too. You read the regular news and think, Why is so-and-so canceling all of his appointments? How is so-and-so doing now that his wife is gone? Sometimes silence is the biggest clue. If you go a while without hearing anything about so-and-so, that's usually a good indicator.

Living in Hollywood helps, too. You hear a million rumors and all it takes is for the wildest one to be true and you move ahead of everyone else (any pick under age 45 pays double dividends). Different dead pools have different rules; some say the obituary has to appear in at least three national newspapers to count, some prohibit two players from choosing the same celebrity, others are lotteries (names are drawn from a hat for \$10 each and when a celebrity dies that ticket holder wins, clearing out the jackpot).

I'm in all the big pools: The Lee Atwater Invitational (<http://stiffs.com>), Chalk Outlines (<http://pw1.netcom.com/~jluger/chalkout.html>), and the original dead pool, started in the '70s, The Game (<http://members.aol.com/ggghostie/home.html>). I had Kurt Cobain in '94 and two years ago I had Chris Farley (yeah, for a heart attack—but points are points). But I haven't been able to win it. This year my trump is Bryan Metro, the rock and roller who, my sources tell me, has fallen off the wagon in a big way. Metro canceled two shows in Tokyo last month due to "fatigue." So far, no other pooler has added Metro to their list.

My boyfriend, Craig, thinks I'm a sick puppy. He's just jaded about Hollywood, though. I met him when we both went to network on a pilot. The show was called *La Brea* and was about these ten friends who all worked at a restaurant called—you guessed it—La Brea, and I was to play Katy, the waitress/photographer, and Craig was going to be Blaine, the pool shark/model. Craig had already been cast as Blaine and they brought me in to read opposite him and the scene was one where Blaine asks Katy to take some head shots of him and they end up falling in love. It was sort of romantic, even though the room was full of people, and I was clicking away on an imaginary camera. The audition was my one millionth

in the few months I'd been living in California, and there was a weird sort of connection with me and Craig. He's not my usual type; he's more handsome than the guys I dated back in Phoenix. *I mean he's too handsome.* He's a dead ringer for Christopher Reeve, which he thinks has hurt his career. People look at me and see Superman, he sighs. But it made him perfect for the role of Blaine on *La Brea* and even though I didn't get the part, I moved into his apartment at Highland Gardens, a '50s hotel on the corner of Vine and Outpost someone had converted to apartments. The show wasn't picked up though, so Craig had to go back to his old job doing dinner theater at the Starion, an old morgue turned into a restaurant down on Sunset Boulevard.

Since Craig is the star of the Starion, he was able to get me a job there, too. When it opened in the early '90s the dinner theater was primarily based on the works of Agatha Christie. It was my idea to do celebrity deaths (the restaurant was a morgue, after all). Monday night we do the murder of Lana Turner's mobster boyfriend, Wednesday is the drowning of Natalie Wood, Friday is a medley of automobile deaths: James Dean, Isadora Duncan, and Jayne Mansfield. I suggested adding the murder of Bob Crane and a couple celebrity suicides, but management didn't think the crowd would want snapped necks or bashed brains with their linguine and clam sauce.

Due to an exceptional review in *The Los Angeles Times*, Monday night is packed with guys in suits and their elegantly dressed ladies, everyone giggling nervously as the wait staff attend to filling water glasses and taking dinner orders.

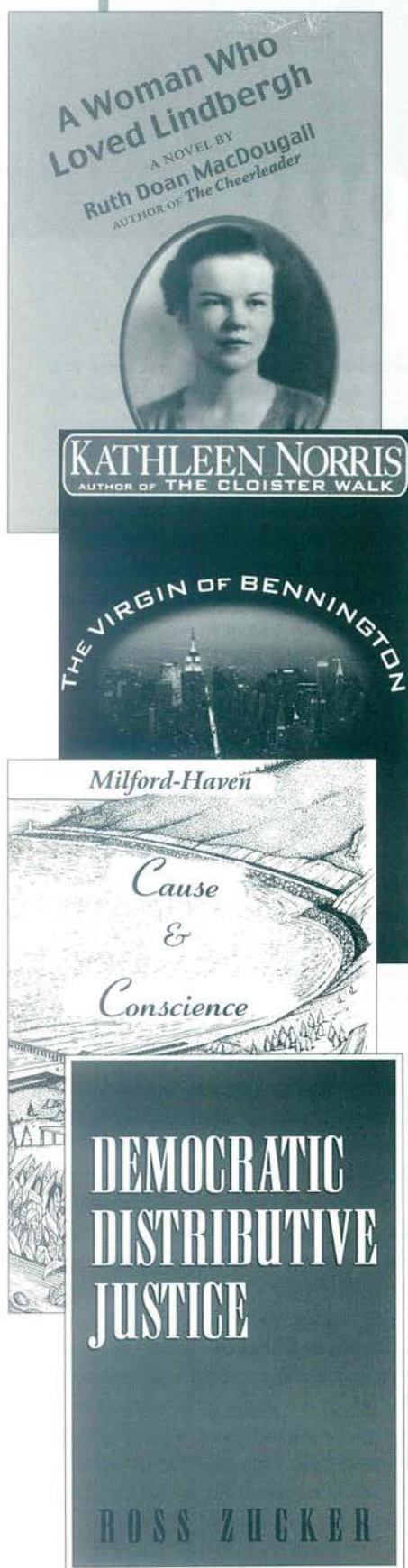
Break a leg, baby, Craig says, kissing me on the mouth.

Break a leg, I say back. I put my hand on my stomach to calm the butterflies....

After the show Craig takes me to the Denny's on Hollywood Boulevard for grilled cheese sandwiches, our post-show ritual. I notice some fake blood dried under my fingernails so I give the waitress—Amy, a film student at UCLA—my order and go to the bathroom to wash my hands. The hot water doesn't work. I scrape at the blood with my fingernails and then I see it, up above the automatic hand dryer, scratched into a beige tile: *Bryan Metro is dead.* ■

*This excerpt is reprinted courtesy of Bloomsbury Publishing; We're So Famous will be published in April 2001.*





Architect John Diebboll '78 partners form and fun in his whimsical book of piano designs, *The Art of the Piano* (Godine). Inspired by buildings, legendary performers, music, and even an Australian shepherd, Diebboll's piano plans are at once meticulously drawn and inventively eccentric—for instance, one instrument with flat rectilinear screens and a single window revealing only Glenn Gould's feet. A partner with Michael Graves and Associates in New York, Diebboll has also designed—in addition to the traditional repertoire of museums, theaters, and libraries—the 18th hole of a miniature golf course.

Willia Cather once said, "My writing is best when I stop trying to write and begin to remember." This became the mantra of Ruth Doan MacDougall '61 in creating her tenth, and most recent, coming-of-age novel, *A Woman Who Loved Lindbergh*. The multigenerational story of family bonds is available as an e-book download and CD from Frigate Books ([www.ruthmcdougal.com](http://www.ruthmcdougal.com)). Of the electronic publishing medium, MacDougall says, "It's a completely new experience for me! But as a Bennington graduate, I guess I'll never stop learning."

The latest from *New York Times* bestselling author Kathleen Norris '69 is *The Virgin of Bennington* (Riverhead, April 2001). Arriving at Bennington from the sheltered Hawaiian outposts, Norris was unprepared for the College culture of the '60s, but while on campus discovered a love of poetry. She let that passion carry her to New York City at a time when a new generation of poets shook the establishment. *The Virgin of Bennington* is a memoir of Norris's friendships and encounters with poets Jim Carroll, Denise Levertov, Erica Jong, Stanley Kunitz, and James Wright; it is also a chronicle of her development as a poet and person.

Bob Johnson, former managing editor of the Associated Press, says of the latest book by novelist Mara Purl '73: "The writing is crisp and clean, the dialogue realistic, the scenes well described." *Cause & Conscience* (Haven Press), the newest in Purl's Milford-Haven series—which began as a serialized radio drama on the BBC—builds on the dramas of a small, coastal town where a richly developed cast of characters must cope with personal guilt. Purl is working on the fifth novel in the series, *Nobody's Fault*, and speaking at venues across the country.

Ross Zucker '74 examines social equality and economic justice in *Democratic Distributive Justice* (Cambridge University Press). "I seek to explain how democratic countries with market economies should deal with the problem of high levels of income inequality," says Zucker. "People are more equal than philosophers and citizens ordinarily suppose them to be, and this greater equality among them warrants corresponding limits on income inequality." Integrating economic justice and democratic theory, Zucker calls for a redistribution of property as a means of upholding the tenets of democracy. ■



(continued from page 42)

George Carver '96 has written a series of four pieces for *Pif*, an online literary publication edited by Camille Renshaw '99.

Along with teaching at a community college, Bill Hunt '96 has created and organized the Mad River Poetry Festival, now in its fifth year. He is also poetry editor for the *Charter Oak Review*, which debuts next year, and published a poem in *The Paris Review* last year.

Robin Neidorf '96 has cowritten a book, *e-Merchant: Retail Strategies for e-Commerce*, published by Addison Wesley in March.

Victoria Clausi '96 has a poem forthcoming in the anthology *Roots and Flowers*, edited by Liz Rosenberg '76, to be published by Holt in spring 2001.

Deb Levy '97 recently received an individual grant from the Indiana Arts Commission.

Pamela Bailey Powers '97 was accompanied by harpist Sally Farrow in presenting an evening of Powers's poetry at the Concord Emerson Umbrella Center for The Arts in Concord, MA. A selection of her poetry was also chosen by the Concord Art Association as part of their juried summer exhibit. Powers's journal, *Salon, Inc.*, will present Joseph Featherstone's new book of poems, *Brace's Cow*.

Cynthia Whitman Koenke '97 has just finished editing a cookbook, entitled *Pass The Peace*, for Wild Oats Market, "a Boulder-based, Berkies and tofu and ginseng tea kind of place."

An essay by Jim Dameron '97 was cited as a notable essay of 1999 in *Best American Essays*.

Isabel Rose '97 has completed three screenplays, one of which began filming in October.

Jill Hill '97 has been writing and teaching at-risk youth while pursuing certification with the National Association of Poetry Therapists; she recently had a poem in the organization's chapbook.

Mike Rosovsky '98 had stories recently in the *Harvard Review* and *Vermont Literary Review*. He continues to teach writing at Emerson College, and is a fiction editor for *Post Road*.

asha bandeale '99 is finishing a novel that is due to Scribner in October. She's still an editor at *Essence* magazine, and a columnist for *360hiphop.com*.

"The Root," a short-short story by Eden Elieff '99, will appear in *Mid-American Review* this spring.

Kay Harkins '99 is editing a new on-line literary journal, *Susanna: A Literary Journal of Wesleyan Women's Thought*, sponsored by The Wesleyan Center for 21st Century Studies.

Tara Ison '99, who teaches fiction and screenwriting at Antioch University, Goddard College, and Washington University in St. Louis, has work forthcoming in *Tin House*, a City Lights anthology, and *Kenyon Review*.

*Make Me an Angel*, a memoir by Marsha Recknagel '99, will be out from St. Martin's in fall 2001.

Camille Renshaw '99 had two interview essays published in *Gig: Americans Talk about Their Jobs at the Turn of the Century* (Crown, 2000), and published a story at *Word.com*.

Lacy Schutz '99 recently won The Amy Award from Guild Hall in East Hampton. She received an honorarium and gave a reading there with poet Siv Cedering.

Anne Doolittle '99 had a poem accepted by *Many Mountains Moving*; three other poems will appear in an upcoming anthology.

Laura Oliver '99 was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

*The Marlboro Review* will publish a book review by Miriam O'Neal '99.

Elaine Walters McFerron '99 writes that *Modern Haiku* continues to publish her work.

"That's All Right Mama," Marsha Dubrow '00's memoir piece about her mother discovering Elvis in Houston, appeared in *Chrysalis Reader, Volume VII*.

Jenny Factor '00 won the 2000 Astraea Foundation grant in poetry, a \$10,000 award to an emerging lesbian writer. She published two poems in the fall issue of *Epoch* and will have a short prose poem in an upcoming issue of *Verse*.

Lorri Holt '00 opened in the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Dinner with Friends*, at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. You can hear her on the web at getmusic.com in *Absolute Zero* as Icelandic rock music maven, Hvita. She's also teaching a class on creating characters at Voicetrax Studio in Sausalito.

Kathy Nilsson '00 had a book of poems published by Spurwink Press, and also has poems coming out in *5 AM* and *Post Road*.

In November, Amy Weintraub '00 had feature articles in *Poets and Writers*, *Psychology Today*, *Yoga Journal*, *Spirit of Change*, and *Healing Spas and Retreats*. She currently teaches two fiction workshops at the University of Arizona's Writing Works Center.

Andrea Diehl '00 has been testing and editing recipes for the 30th-anniversary publication of *New Diet for a Small Planet*. ■

## NOTES ON CLASS NOTES

Your news—about work, travels, family—is essential to the life of Class Notes, the alumni magazine's most-read section. To send a note, mail it directly to the Publications Office at Bennington, or e-mail it to [alumlett@bennington.edu](mailto:alumlett@bennington.edu). Deadlines for *Bennington* magazine and *NOTES* are: April 15, July 15, October 15, January 15.



## 1930s

The family of **ELDORA VAN BUREN BOEVE '36** wrote that she died peacefully in her sleep on December 25. Mrs. Boeve, 86, was a "Pioneer," and attended graduate classes at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and the College of New Rochelle. She received her Master's from Iona College in 1974, and was a counselor at Concordia College. She was a resident of New Rochelle, NY, and Hamden, CT. Mrs. Boeve was predeceased by her husband, Lucas, and is survived by four sons, Lucas III, Peter, Christopher, and Alfred, as well as nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

## 1940s

**FAITH HALLOCK COLGAN KUHN'S '43** died of congestive heart failure at her home in Blue Hill, ME, on November 30; she was 80. A longtime resident of Dayton, OH, and Palos Verdes, CA, Mrs. Kuhns was a member of the Junior League and the Garden Club of America. She was active in garden groups in Maine and Ohio, as well as in California, where she helped found "Las Candalistas," a group whose garden walks support children and the environment. She married James Edward Kuhn the day before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, in the last large wedding ceremony in Columbus, OH, before the onset of WWII. A generous interest in children prompted the Kuhns to take in orphans and other less fortunate children, treating them as family members and, in some cases, sending them to college. Kuhns is survived by her husband, James, of Blue Hill, ME; her son, Peter; daughters Kristin Kuhns Alexandre and Katherine Kuhns Dimancescu; nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

**NANCY RING FENN '47** died of lung cancer in her Westport, MA, home on December 7; she was 75. After attending Bennington, Mrs. Fenn attended the Longy School of Music to study piano. She accompanied the Lexington (MA) Choral Society and the Masterworks Chorale, taught piano, raised golden retrievers, and was involved with the Westport Council on Aging, the Democratic Town Committee, and the Watershed Alliance. Mrs. Fenn is survived by three sons, Peter, David, and Thomas; a daughter, Anne; a brother, and 10 grandchildren.

**ELOISE MOORE AGGER COLLINS '48**, a Bethesda, MD, psychoanalyst and clinical social worker, died in her home of lung cancer on January 5. She was

73. Born Beatrice Heloise Moore, she was known professionally as Dr. Agger. After graduating from Bennington, she received a master's degree and doctorate, both in social work, from Catholic University. Mrs. Collins sat on the editorial board of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* and was on a task force that created the Clinical Social Work Institute, a doctoral program in Washington, D.C.; she also served on its board of trustees. She was a founder and president of the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social work and a former president of the Philosophical Society of Washington. Her teaching career included work at Catholic University, the University of Maryland, and New York University. Survivors include her second husband, Dr. Robert Collins of Bethesda; four children from her first marriage; four stepchildren; a sister; and 28 grandchildren.

## 1950s

**PRISCILLA RAYMOND LULL '52**, of Brighton, CO, died November 1. She was 70. After attending Bennington, Mrs. Lull studied at the University of Grenoble, France, and received a degree from Red Rocks Community College. She volunteered at Children's and West Penn Hospitals in Pittsburgh, PA. Predeceased by her husband, Phillip Lull, Jr., she is survived by two sisters.

## FACULTY

The College has learned from Elizabeth Anne Hipwell '87 of the death of her mother, **NANCY PARSONS**, on January 5. Mrs. Parson, who taught at Bennington in 1987, was an actress who had her first professional acting jobs in 1976, appearing in the TV show, *Baretta*, and the movie, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*. Her other film credits included roles in the *Porky's* trilogy, *Pennies from Heaven*, and *Steel Magnolias*. She appeared in many television shows, including *Charlie's Angels*, *L.A. Law*, *Star Trek—The Next Generation*, *Night Court*, and *The Pretender*, and in numerous theater productions. Among her honors were the Award of Excellence from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Hugh O'Brien Award for Best Performance, the Natalie Wood Award for Best Actress, and the Family Film Award for Best Actress. Mrs. Parsons is survived by two daughters, two grandchildren, two sisters, and her stepmother. ■





When he sent his regrets for the Pioneer's Weekend last fall, Dr. John Allen Hall added that he had "a few words to say about Alice Greenidge '36, my wife, a Pioneer"—who died a few years ago—"and a few words to say about Bennington." The couple, who were married for more than 50 years, traveled throughout the world because of Dr. Hall's State Department work. He enclosed a picture of his wife "in action," with then-president of Austria, Rudolf Kirschlager, along with these comments: "Question: Is Alice telling the president how to run Austria? My daughter said no—she's telling him how to make a soufflé Grand Marnier!" Dr. Hall added: "A bit of wisdom after a long and happy life: Marry a Bennington girl!"





## THE ADMISSIONS PICTURE

Bennington's first contact with prospective students isn't about telling them everything they ever wanted to know—or didn't—about this College. Instead, we ask prospective students to tell *us* something. And they do: This year, for instance, some 6,000 prospective students took the opportunity to describe themselves, in ways that are quirky, smart, telling, inventive, and amazing.



## **ALUMNI AND FAMILY WEEKEND**

October 12–14, 2001

**M**ark your calendars now for the annual Alumni and Family Weekend. We're planning special events to recognize the 50th and 25th reunions of the Classes of 1951 and 1976, as well as those classes celebrating a special reunion year: 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1996. Come enjoy the beautiful foliage, sit in on classes and workshops, see what's new on campus, and rekindle old friendships.

### **QUESTIONS?**

Interested in helping plan the program  
or an event for your class? Call 1-800-598-2979  
or e-mail [kfinney@bennington.edu](mailto:kfinney@bennington.edu).