From the moment he got a small role in Timberlake Wertenbaker's play, *The Love of the Nightingale*, Kyle Brenton was hooked. “I had a part that was one step above a spear carrier,” he laughs, “but I knew from that moment.”

That small part raised the curtain on a whole new world for the then A&S freshman. The following fall, he declared a double major in theatre and English.

Brenton came to Vanderbilt from Evansville, Indiana, without any preconceived ideas about his future. He had chosen the school for the overall strength of its liberal arts program. But it was watching a production of *The Music Cure* by George Bernard Shaw his first week on campus that stirred him to audition for a part in the Vanderbilt University Theatre’s (VUT) first major production of the year.

Terryl Hallquist, associate professor of theatre, codirects the theatre program with her husband, Associate Professor Jon Hallquist. Brenton is one of about 30 students majoring in theatre; fourteen others have chosen it as a minor.

In addition to course work, the department offers four major productions and other one-act plays each year, which can involve up to 100 students from all areas of Vanderbilt, not only theatre majors.

“The directors and designers in the department choose the plays for the season,” Terryl Hallquist says. “They usually select two classic plays and two contemporary works. During the past season, a musical was produced instead of a second classical piece.”

Brenton says the smallness of Vanderbilt’s program is also its chief strength. “The advantage is that you get to do everything…from building sets to acting and directing. At a bigger program like Northwestern, you have to declare your special interest right away and stay with it. Here at Vanderbilt, you can try a wide range of theatrical experiences.”

**Artists-in-residence**

A highlight of the program is the Fred Coe Artist-in-Residence program, which brings outstanding actors and technicians to the campus. Started in the 1980s by Academy Award-winning director and Vanderbilt trustee Delbert Mann, BA’41, the program honors his close friend and mentor, Coe, a Peabody alumnus. A pioneer in the golden age of television, Coe directed and produced outstanding live theatre for the small screen during the 1950s.

Actor Karl Malden served as the first artist-in-residence at Vanderbilt, followed by such distinguished actors as Fiona Shaw and Olympia Dukakis.

For Brenton, Dukakis was a favorite. “We were saturated with three days of outstanding instruction,” he recalls. “She taught about the Greek acting style, and we were able to pick her brain. She was fantastic.”

A May 2000 graduate, Brenton will study at Harvard next year. His focus will be dramaturgy, a relatively new specialty in U.S. theatre. A bit like an artistic coordinator, the dramaturg must be well versed in all aspects of theatre from playwriting and acting to lighting and set design. Brenton is particularly excited that the two-year program includes three months study at the National Theatre of Moscow.

**Ninety years of theatre**

According to Cecil Jones, professor of theatre emeritus, there has been a theatre group at Vanderbilt perhaps as far back as 1910. The first director was hired in 1946, and from 1948 until the early ’70s, the department operated from a prefab theatre on Garland Avenue.

The VUT has been housed in Neely Auditorium since the building was renovated in 1975. Called an ultra-black-box flexible space, the design, by the distinguished German architect Peter Blake, is based on an idea for an ideal off-Broadway theatre.

“It is an exciting space,” says Terryl Hallquist, “because it can be adapted to any configuration, depending on the best relationship between actors and audience for a particular play.”

“For students who are trying to learn how to do theatre,” says Jones, “it offers a range of educational opportunities that you don’t ordinarily find on campuses with only a single theatre space.”

**Curtain going up**

For Kyle Brenton, Vanderbilt’s theatre program has been more than a course of study—it’s like a family. “The best way to know someone is to be in a play with them,” he says, adding, “The people I’ve met here will be my friends for life.”

Once he’s earned his Master of Fine Arts degree, Brenton hopes to get a job behind the footlights somewhere, perhaps as a dramaturg with a repertory company. His dream is to end up working with a professional regional theatre.

For Kyle Brenton, the curtain is about to go up on the next act. And he is eager to get started.

*Judith DeMoss Campbell*
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Gordon Gee, 56, former president of Brown University, will be Vanderbilt's seventh chancellor, effective August 1. Following his unani-

mous appointment by the Vanderbilt Board of Trustees, Gee met informally with members of the Univer-

sity community, including students.

“Over the past few months, I have heard so much. And I have already become a special place,” Gee said. “I have come to believe it,” Gee said. “There is no other university in the country that already does so many things so well, yet has almost limitless possibilities and a solid foundation on which to build for the future. Vanderbilt is blessed with rich traditions and even richer opportunities for learning, for discovery, and for service.”

Addressing his remarks to Vanderbilt alumni, Gee said, “I will respect the traditions of this University. But I will also harness and nurture new traditions and new traditions, and I will take joy in carrying the message of Vanderbilt to you, our al-

umni, and to the world at large, because it is a wonderful message.”

Etore F. Infante, dean of the College of Arts and Science, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Gee’s elec-

tion. “I am delighted with the appointment of Gordon Gee as the new chancellor. He already has become a notable presence on the campus, meeting students and faculty with energy and interest. All of us look forward to his lead-

ership and to working intimately with him. Gee first served as a chief executive officer at the age of 37, when he was elected president of West Virginia University. He became president of the University of Colorado in 1985, and in 1990 moved to Ohio State University.

In 1997 he became president of Brown University.

Reinventing the wheel

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eleven students, a teaching assistant, and Professor John P. Wikswo squeeze into a small Stevenson Center classroom. Wikswo, the A.B. Learned Professor of Living State Physics, begins class as a student makes her way to the hopelessly crowded table and claims enough space to place her plastic box containing Legos.

A functional battery-operated car made from colorful plastic building blocks, a willing-ness to engage in classroom discussions, and the ability to tear down and ... comb ustion engine are all freshman Lindsay Salet and her peers need to make it through Wikswo’s “Practical Physics” class.
“What I would like to think, and I hope, and I pray is that I’ve made a contribution to sustaining the unusual quality of this place, the unusual commitment to real values such as teaching, learning, and civility in preparing young men and women for fruitful and demanding lives...”

Dean Infante: I would like to think that the college is very much the same in some of the same ways. In some of the things that I found most appealing, namely, the nature of Vanderbilt and of the college. It seems to me that our task is, as the world changes, to try to find different and better ways of maintaining that excellence. That’s as far as we have planned. We’ve always been in a hurry all these years. My guess is that is something that I’ve had to postpone attempting them. Now’s the time to try to do them.

Dean Infante: I deeply regret that this has been a much shorter period than I certainly ever thought it would be.

Dean Infante: One of the things of which I’m the most proud is having been associated with such a good place, with such good faculty, and such good students. And hopefully, I’ve served them and the central purpose of the college, which is to learn and to teach, to the best of my ability. I deeply regret that this has been a much shorter period than I certainly ever thought it would be.

Dean Infante: I think we have some more made progress, and I’m hoping that the last period of time that I’m here will bring to fruition the planned changes in the undergraduate curriculum. I’m pleased about appointments that we have made to the faculty. I’m pleased with the plans for the new biology building that is under construction now [please see related article on page 7].

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From college friends to e-commerce partners

Lewis Branscomb first
Branscomb Visiting Professor

Branscomb, second from left, taught an undergraduate College Scholars honors seminar with Jonathan Gilligan, left, research assistant professor in physics and astronomy. A&S students Peter McHenry, second from right, and Jill Johnson participated in the seminar.

A physicist by training, Lewis Branscomb is astra Professor (emeritus) of Public Policy and Corporate Management at Harvard University, former vice president and chief scientist at IBM, and past chairman of the National Science Board.

As part of his duties, Lewis Branscomb, second from left, taught an undergraduate College Scholars honors seminar with Jonathan Gilligan, left, research assistant professor in physics and astronomy. A&S students Peter McHenry, second from right, and Jill Johnson participated in the seminar.

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Friends and colleagues described Polis as a committed teacher, a loyal father of two, and a gifted scientist. The author of numerous books, his research has also appeared in top-tier scientific journals such as Nature and Ecology, as well as in television documentaries and magazines.

Lucia Turner Outlaw, chair of the Department of Biologic- cal and Developmental Sciences at Vanderbilt, has been named director of the African American studies program at Vanderbilt, effective at the beginning of the fall 2000 semester. He has also been named a professor of philosophy.

Robert Birkby

Professor Outlaw to lead
African American studies program

Ludia Turner Outlaw Jr., the T. Wistar Brown Professor of Political Science, has been named director of the African American studies program at Vanderbilt, effective at the beginning of the fall 2000 semester. He has also been named a professor of philosophy.

Robert Birkby

Professor Birkby retiring after 37 years

Come July 1, Robert Birkby will add the word emeritus to his title, professor of political science. The word connotes “honor,” which fits Professor Birkby well according to his admirers among former students and faculty.

During his 37 years at Vanderbilt, Birkby has become famous for remembering the names of his students, where they sat in his classes, and even the fact that they were on time or regularly came late to class.

“I made a real effort to learn their names,” he says, adding that he’d consult the Commodore yearbook or, in the case of freshmen, the News-Sentinel.

He notes that today’s students seem “better-prepared” than their parents’ generation, and that women students “are more willing to speak up in class rather than defer- ing to the men.”

Birkby has won many awards for teaching and service to the University over the years. He has served as chair of the political science department and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

But he is most proud of his years of service on the A&S Faculty Council and his work during the mid-1980s on a committee to strengthen the Honor Council.

Even though he’s retiring, Birkby will not be a stranger to campus, as he plans to teach two courses next year.

One thing will change, however: He’ll no longer be a full-time member of the “Standing Committee for the Betterment of the University,” a tongue-in-cheek title for an informal group of faculty and administrators who meet every morning at 7 a.m. over coffee at Rand.

Scott Sears, BS’92, and Tim Duggan, BA’91, were members of Polis’ research team.

They hacked into the Telalink system and offered to help out as an intern. It wasn’t long before Collie became chief technical officer and designed Telalink’s network and server infrastructure.

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Lucia Turner Outlaw, chair of the Department of Biological and Developmental Sciences at Vanderbilt, has been named director of the African American studies program at Vanderbilt, effective at the beginning of the fall 2000 semester. She has also been named a professor of philosophy.

“Professor Outlaw has made distinctive contributions to American, African, African American, and continental philosophy,” says Ettore Infante, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “Vanderbilt will benefit from his scholarly and educational contributions in these fields, and by his administrative and intellectual leadership of our African American studies program.”

Construction has begun on the new $195-million Biological Sciences Building, part of the University’s $2.5 billion capital construction plan known as The Plan for Excellence. A joint venture between the College of Arts and Sciences and the Medical Center, it is scheduled for completion in 2002. The building will be located between the Stevenson Science Center, Med- dicine, and Cajander North, and the School of Nursing. It will house research laboratories, state-of-the-art teaching facilities for undergraduates, and state-of-the-art, multi-media auditorium, which will be an outstanding teaching facility as well as a state-of-the-art research facility.

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More than 175 alumni, parents, and other friends returned to campus in February to savor the college first-hand as part of Arts & Science Day. Participants joined students in their regular classes and attended special educational events planned just for them on film, the brain, and the Brazilian rain forest. They also heard about the admissions process from Bill Shain, dean of undergraduate admissions; listened to a panel of undergraduates talk about their A&S experience; and enjoyed a medley of Broadway songs and dances by the Original Cast.

“It was a delightful occasion,” says Paul Manners, BA’42, of Atlanta. “I was very pleased to have a part in it. It’s always inspiring to see the students and hear them talk about some of the same things that we spoke of long ago.”

Manners attended A&S Day with his son, Neal Manners, BA’71, and granddaughter, Meredith Marie Manners, who will be a freshman in the fall.

Members of the Original Cast entertained guests as a dinner celebrating Arts and Science Day. (Lower Left) Jerome Christensen, professor of English, used film clips to illustrate how Hollywood studios influence the content of the movies they produce.

Students receiving scholarships were special guests at the A&S dinner. Eleanor Bloch Small, BA’41, above, chats with rising junior David Lisenby, recipient of the Eugene H. Vaughan Jr. Scholarship.