

BLAIR

# Quarter Note

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY



## A Different Language

Blair's Marianne Ploger teaches aural skills as the foundation for making joyful music [page 3](#)

SPRING 2010

Cover photo of Marianne Ploger by John Russell

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# From the *Dean*



Dean Mark Wait

In October, the faculty of the Blair School of Music approved the first major revision of our core curriculum for music majors since the inception of the collegiate program in 1986. This marks a major milestone in the Blair School's evolution and continuing maturation.

It is really more accurate to say that the curriculum was overhauled rather than revised. When the planning committee that developed the new curriculum was organized in 2005, I asked them to consider not merely what changes we might make to the existing courses, but rather what today's students will need to know—and be able to do—in 2030. In other words, what skills and knowledge will they need when they are at the point in their careers that we, the faculty, are right now?

Over the past four years, the planning committee and the faculty discussed these

questions carefully and thoughtfully. For many of us, meeting the needs of the future meant that we had to distill the most essential features of what we had learned of the past. This can be (and often was) a wrenching exercise, for we were sometimes forced to turn our backs on concepts or repertoire that had been part of us for many years. On the other hand, it was bracing and exciting to learn of global developments and new horizons that have changed the world we inhabit and to develop ways of sharing that with our students.

The planning committee finally decided upon new curricula and approaches in three vital areas: music theory and musicianship (aural skills), music history and ensembles/chamber music. You will read of these changes in future issues of the *Quarter Note*. Meanwhile, this issue describes the new approach we are taking in musicianship under the dynamic leadership of its new director, Marianne Ploger, who joined the faculty in fall 2008.

The skills that Marianne and her associates, Joshua McGuire and David Williams, teach to our students are far-reaching and essential to continued music study and professional success. These outstanding faculty members have brought a thrilling vitality to their classes. Marianne has already captured national attention with her methods and success.

Thanks to Marianne and our other dedicated faculty members, the Blair School is maintaining its exciting trajectory. As readers of the *Quarter Note* know, we have made dramatic progress in recent years, and the new core curriculum for music majors marks a further advance, one in which our faculty, students and friends can take great pride.

Mark Wait, Dean  
Martha Rivers Ingram Dean's Chair

## A Different Language to Learn

By Angela Fox

*Learning aural skills is the foundation for making joyful music*

THESSA WHOCI

Seniors Alyssa Weinberg, Matt Clark and Ben Hart are exploring septuplets in Marianne Ploger's advanced ear training and sight singing class. Referring to Robert Starer's *Rhythmic Training*, they count and clap together, examining rhythm in a basic way.

"Ta! Ta! Ta-ta-ta-ta!" the student trio intones, all the while lightly clapping their hands on their thighs.

"It's important to count while sounding 'ta,'" Ploger says. "Counting and speaking are processed in different parts of the brain."

The students nod, and after several of these exercises, Ploger decides to work on atonal melody and harmony. She asks the students to identify tetrachords as she plays them on the piano. The students listen intently, and it's many more hits than misses as they differentiate between Ionian and Dorian chords.

"I'll respond faster and stop thinking," Alyssa says at one point.

"That's it. Bravo!" Ploger exclaims.

The hour quickly draws to a close and Ploger concludes with a few comments about memory and imagination, referencing cooking, language and psychology.

"We have to practice the imagination, always imagining all possibilities to keep from falling into a groove," Ploger sums up. "The greatest stuff goes into the brain and sticks there. As artists, we have to really develop our memory so we can see the patterns and remember."

These students are studying the fundamentals of what makes music succeed. Septuplets, Ionian and Dorian tetrachords, atonal melody—these terms may mean little to the nonmusician, but those who want to play music well need to be able to hear and identify them easily. Tuning the ear to hear correctly as music is being made is the foundation of good music-making. But musicianship or the acquisition of aural skills is also one of the most misunderstood areas of study in music. Marianne Ploger, senior artist teacher of musicianship and director of Blair's musicianship program, is turning around the assumption that one either has aural skills to master pitch, rhythm and intervals or one doesn't.

"In the past, a high level of musicianship has been associated with natural talent and aptitude," Ploger says. "As a result, a commonly held belief has been that, because natural aptitude and talent are inexplicable, uncontrollable and unteachable, musicianship training has been largely gratuitous—easy for the gifted and nightmarish for the less gifted. Yet I have found that all musicians can learn to recognize and understand what they are hearing in music, at the same speed that they recognize and understand what they hear and read in their native language."

Ploger's approach signals a new direction in teaching musicianship, according to Dean Mark Wait. "The way Marianne teaches musicianship is fundamentally different from the way it has been taught at Blair in the past," Wait says. "Marianne gets students to respond immediately by making aural skills part of the nuts and bolts of their equipment that is ready to go."

Prior to joining the Blair faculty in 2008, Ploger spent years exploring musical perception and communication to discover what enables a musician to master aural skills. An accomplished composer and pianist, Ploger founded and directed the Institute for Musical Perception and taught at the University of Michigan's top-ranked conducting program.



Marianne Ploger's approach to teaching aural skills signals a new direction utilizing recent research on brain neuroplasticity.

"My work parallels research findings of the last few years on the neuroplasticity of the brain, its ability to continue to build new pathways and structures and to learn new tricks long past what is generally considered our primary period of cognitive development," she says. "It's been known for some time that we use very little of our potential mental capacity. My goal is to show my students how to bring more of that capacity to the process and work with musical sound in real time. Not only does this make them far more developed and fluent as musicians, these

skills in perception and trained attention also apply beyond music to any work that requires focus and both analytical and sensory modes."

In traditional sight singing classes, an assignment was given, and students would practice at home, then take a test. "But memorizing or practicing at home so you can take a test isn't sight singing at all," Ploger says. Instead, she works with the students to help them develop tools to create their own "sound imagination."

"Marianne's approach differs from others in that she has managed to articulate

**"The greatest stuff goes into the brain and sticks there. As artists, we have to really develop our memory so we can see the patterns and remember."**

—Marianne Ploger

specific sound markers that anyone can hear inside musical intervals," says Joshua McGuire, senior lecturer in musicianship at Blair, who studied with Ploger at the Conductors Retreat at Medomak in Washington, Maine. "A visual artist begins by knowing the names of the colors, but the typical musician begins without really being able to identify in tempo the intervals in which most Western music is composed. Marianne's methods help bridge this gap and allow people to be more deeply aware of what is happening as they listen and perform."

Through her decades of research, Ploger has observed these specific sound markers in each of the 12 pitches and 11 intervals and has developed techniques to teach others how to instantly recognize these features at the speed of music.

"We can now objectively articulate the sound factors that make up the elements employed in music," she says. "It works much the same as language. As musicians, we learn the vocabulary, consisting of notes, triads, seventh chords, inversions of these, scales, key signatures, rhythms, instruments, rhythmic note values, rhythmic notation, pitch notation in various clefs and so on. But to be fluent, it is not enough to have a passing, halting knowledge of the elements of music. We must be fluent in real time."

Ploger draws an interesting analogy between her approach to musicianship and the evolution of the art of cooking. "In the past, musicianship classes were more like cooking classes in which you were given recipes and told what to do without any real tutelage," she says. "If

you were lucky and had been around a good cook for most of your life, you were more likely to succeed. If you were not so lucky, the results could be unfortunate. Even if you were successful in following a recipe, you would not have learned how to prepare a dish of your own design. Nor would you have learned why some recipes taste so wonderful and why others fail so miserably."

Ploger believes that musicianship classes are moving in a direction that more closely resembles the kitchen science courses now taught at major culinary institutes. "Aspiring chefs now learn food chemistry and how things combine to create specific effects, both in terms of taste and nutrition," Ploger says. "Similarly, Blair's musicianship courses train students

to be able to identify the specific elements employed by composers in the creation of good music of any style or genre."

Ploger's approach is also used in lower-level ear training and sight singing courses taught by colleagues Joshua McGuire and David Williams. "They have found that freshmen are very receptive to this new approach," Ploger says. "Students seem to appreciate the fact that virtually anyone can now learn to hear well. What a good place to start!"

Besides teaching upper-level musicianship courses, Ploger offers annual intensive workshops each spring at Blair for professional musicians and teachers from around the country, including Blair faculty and graduates.

"We have faculty members who have



When teaching upper level musicianship courses, Ploger stresses the similarities between learning sound factors in music and learning language skills.

taken Marianne's intensives and they call them life-changing," Wait says. "Because Blair has a very good undergraduate student body in the formative stages of musicianship, this is a wonderful lab for Marianne. Her intensives give her a national platform for her work. So Blair is an ideal match for her teaching and research. She really is a star in her field, and we are lucky to have her."

Amy Jarman, senior lecturer in voice, took Ploger's intensive workshop last May. "Many years ago, when I was a student, I was taught aural skills with a fixed set of expectations," Jarman says. "You were given a cassette tape to play over and over so you could identify intervals—with the assumption that everyone would do that basically by rote. The most remarkable thing about Marianne is that she acknowledges that individual musicians hear sounds differently and learn in different ways. She's extremely interested in the cognitive process and how the brain works."

Ultimately, Ploger hopes that Blair's musicianship courses will provide students with a strong understanding of how the human mind processes and interprets musical information and how to better use this information to fluently communicate inspiring, edifying and illuminating music to listeners of all types. "In music there can be a disconnect between craft and art," Ploger says. "Playing a musical instrument is a technical craft. Expressing music, by contrast, has been viewed as an art. The alternate view is that expressing music is also a craft. It is the craft of musical communication. The greatest musicians, of course, are highly skilled in both crafts."

In the process of learning a composition, Ploger explains, musicians decode the abstract symbolic code written on the staff into meaningful expression. "Unfortunately, sometimes in the process of learning the right notes and right rhythms, we lose our love of the composition with endless hours of practice

## Professional Engagement

*Mitchell Korn connects musicians and community*

Professionalism in music means different things to different people. For some it is a musician's ability to earn a living through music. For others it's a way of life that means keeping musical skills in top form through rehearsal and performance and a passionate commitment to the art itself. Mitchell Korn argues there's yet another element that defines a professional musician. "Connecting with one's community through performance is part of what makes a musician a professional," says Korn, vice president of education and community engagement at the Nashville Symphony and adjunct professor of music and educational outreach at Blair.

Korn teaches a course at Blair called Music and Community that emphasizes the importance of building a skill set for musicians to perform in various community settings. "Professional musicians today need to know how to talk to different audiences and how to engage each audience from where they [the audience] come from," Korn says. "Working in diverse situations enhances a musician's performance communication skills."

Korn also oversees the Nashville Symphony's Off Stage performance initiative that delivers music to diverse and often underserved communities. As part of the program professional musicians, including Blair faculty, are invited to perform at one of the Off Stage concerts at senior residence centers, hospices and other locations. Korn's



Mitchell Korn

office provides full staff technical support, coordinates the performance schedule and provides training sessions for the musicians to acquaint them with the program and any special requirements at certain venues.

Korn believes understanding oneself, as well as one's community, is also essential to the professional life of a musician. "I try to show my students at Blair that what matters to them personally is what the audience really wants to know," he says. "Speaking from the first person is what engages audiences."

—Angela Fox

resulting in performances that, like overworked dough, have turned tough and tasteless," she says. "The trick is to decode complicated scores in a way that brings us to an increasingly rich and textured understanding of the music."

That understanding leads to better musical performances—and performers.

"So many passionate people in music have had terrible experiences with musicianship training and come away feeling they can never really get it," Ploger says. "Many have expressed their feelings of anxiety and frustration to me in private. My job, then, is simply to help musicians to be joyful in making music."

# Blocks Away from Music History

*Music history relayed by current Music City artists brings a personal point of view*

*By Joanne Lamphere Beckham*

It's only a few blocks from the Blair School of Music to Music Row, but they once seemed light years apart. Today, Blair bridges the gap between the popular music world and the academic study of music by bringing the talent and experience of popular musicians into the classroom.

Keyboard/accordionist Jen Gunderman, solo artist/music journalist Peter Cooper, and

Grammy-winning producer Steve Buckingham are music industry professionals who have joined the Blair faculty to teach History of Rock Music, History of Country Music and Music and the Fall of Segregation, respectively. Their students are learning about the lives and music of popular icons like Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles from those who actually knew or

worked with them.

As working artists who write, perform, produce and record music, Cooper, Gunderman and Buckingham give students a firsthand look at what it takes to succeed in one of the toughest businesses around. Because of their Music Row contacts, they are able to bring in other artists, songwriters, musicians and music business professionals to share their expertise with students.



PHOTOS BY JOHN ROSSBELL WITH THANKS TO NINA WRIGHT AT THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM



“So much of the history that I talk about in this class took place within walking distance of Blair. There’ve always been connections.”

—Peter Cooper

### ‘It’s all music’

Clad in red shirt, blue jeans and black boots, Peter Cooper, senior lecturer in music history and literature, offers students a unique personal and professional perspective on country music from its colonial roots to today’s multimillion-dollar global industry.

“So much of the history that I talk about in this class took place within walking distance of Blair,” Cooper says. “There’ve always been connections.”

Several well-known recording artists have attended Vanderbilt, including Dinah Shore, Rosanne Cash, Amy Grant and Francis Craig, who recorded Nashville’s first big-time pop hit and also wrote Vanderbilt’s fight song, “Dynamite.” Many of today’s aspiring musicians and songwriters ply their day jobs in various medical center and university departments at Vanderbilt and others have done so in the past as well.

“I like to tell students stories like the one about Don Schlitz, who wrote ‘The Gambler’ while working in a Vanderbilt computer lab,” Cooper says. The song became a megahit for Kenny Rogers, who won a Grammy for his rendition. “I talk about the musicians as persons as well as historical figures, what they were like that enabled them to do these extraordinary things.”

Cooper’s guests have included country music stars like Vanderbilt parent Kix Brooks of the duo Brooks and Dunn; Dierks Bentley, BA’97; and Joe Nichols.

A multitasking Americana singer/songwriter and respected music journalist, Cooper has had music praised by many, including Kris Kristofferson. Cooper began his career as a middle school teacher in South Carolina and writes for the *Tennessean*, *Esquire* and *Britannica*, among others. He recently released a solo album, *Mission Door*, and

is working on two albums with famed steel guitarist Lloyd Green. He has taught music history at Blair since 2007.

“To me it all feels of a piece,” Cooper says. “Whether I’m on the road playing, writing about it or talking about it, it’s all music.”

### Grounded in pop music

In *History of Rock Music*, Jen Gunderman, senior lecturer in music history and literature, traces the development of rock and roll from the ’50s to the present. Presenting the major artists from each decade, she includes subgenres like rockabilly, rhythm and blues, folk, soul, metal, pop and alternative. Through the use of sound and video clips, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and the Beatles perform once again for a new generation of students.

A classically trained pianist who has played at Avery Hall in New York’s Lincoln Center, Gunderman is also a gifted

“I try to give students a sense of how the music is put together, while focusing on the technological, cultural and economic changes that helped shape the sounds.”

—Jen Gunderman



keyboard/accordionist who records with many different artists, including Cooper. She has played in rock, funk and folk bands, including the Jayhawks and Dag.

“I’ve always loved teaching,” she says. “I try to give students a sense of how the music is put together, while focusing on the technological, cultural and economic changes that helped shape the sounds.”

A Vassar graduate with a master’s degree from the University of Washington, Gunderman joined the Blair faculty in 2004.

“I find that my work outside Vanderbilt continually feeds into the classroom and

### Tearing down the rope

Veteran producer and record executive Steve Buckingham began teaching Music and the Fall of Segregation at Blair last fall. His interest in how music helped to advance the Civil Rights Movement is both personal and professional. As a student at Virginia’s Richmond College during the early ’60s, Buckingham played backup guitar for a number of African American artists, including Percy Sledge, Jackie Wilson and the Drifters.

“We could play with them, but we couldn’t eat together or stay at the same hotels,” he recalls about a system some

before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball. During the ’40s and ’50s, thousands of teenagers became fans of rhythm and blues musicians thanks to radio disc jockeys like Nashville’s John R. and Bill “Hoss” Allen, BA’48. Black musicians also influenced white artists like Elvis, who brought their music to a worldwide audience.

Like his colleagues, Buckingham brings his life experiences and music contacts to bear on his subject. During his early career, he played guitar on hundreds of recordings as a studio musician. He served as vice president of A&R (artists



“I love teaching. This is a dream for me. Compared to the record business, it’s a walk in the park.”

—Steve Buckingham

vice versa,” she says. “Students tell me about new bands I haven’t heard, and musicians I work with often end up as guests in my classrooms.”

A typical day might find Gunderman teaching in the morning, working in the studio in the afternoon and performing on stage at night. She recently produced her first CD by Vanderbilt graduate Ben Cameron, BA’08.

“Making music keeps my feet on the ground,” Gunderman says. “A lot of academics writing about pop music haven’t experienced it in a personal, visceral way. I understand what it feels like to play in front of crowds of people, and that emotional experience grounds the way I think about music intellectually and helps me connect students with ideas.”

have called American apartheid. “At concerts, a rope separated the black students from the whites. By the end of the show, the rope was down, and the kids were dancing with each other.”

Buckingham became interested in putting together this course when, several years ago, a student innocently asked if segregation was legal in those days. “It struck me that students won’t know about it if nobody talks about it,” he says.

In the course, Buckingham explains how swing and jazz from the ’30s and ’40s, rock and roll and rhythm & blues in the ’50s, and soul music in the ’60s helped to break down barriers between the races. He notes that clarinetist Benny Goodman hired Teddy Wilson, the first African American to play in a big band, 12 years

and repertoire) and producer for Columbia, Vanguard and Sugar Hill Records for a combined 21 years.

Buckingham has garnered four Grammys, 27 No. 1 singles, 11 platinum and 19 gold albums over the years. Working with artists as varied as Dolly Parton, Sinéad O’Connor, and Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), he produced top 10 singles on 11 different charts from country to pop to jazz. The first record he produced—“I Love the Nightlife” by Alicia Bridges—became a worldwide hit in 1978.

“I love teaching,” he says. “This is a dream for me. Compared to the record business, it’s a walk in the park.”

# Join us for the Spring 2010 Concert Series

A season of uncommon delights continues! As always, most concerts, lectures, guest artist performances, master classes and special events are free and open to all. Complimentary valet parking is provided for many events, and free self-parking in South Garage is available for all concerts listed in the spring calendar. All events are subject to change. Please check the Web site at <http://blair.vanderbilt.edu/concerts-events> for updated event information and a complete calendar.

## Highlights include:

### Piano Faculty Concert

**Friday, March 19, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

The Blair piano faculty teams up to present a larger-than-life program of solo, duo-piano and four-hand works by Barber, Debussy and Schumann.

### Blair Student Showcase

**Saturday, March 27, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Selected by audition, the student performers on this annual program demonstrate their prodigious talents and dedication to their art.

### The Blair String Quartet

**Friday, April 9, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Christian Teal, Cornelia Heard, John Kochanowski, Felix Wang

The quartet presents a program of three important works, one each from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries: *Quartet in C Major, Op. 74, No. 1 (1793)*, by Joseph Haydn; *Quartet in E Flat Major, Op. 127 (1827)*, by Beethoven, and *Quartet No. 13 in B Flat Minor, Op. 138 (1970)*, by Dmitri Shostakovich. These three works exemplify the skill and artistry of Blair's celebrated chamber ensemble in a scintillating recital.

*Sponsored in memory of Wilma Ward*

## SPECIAL CONCERT EVENT

### Blair Percussion VORTEX

**Monday, April 12, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Michael Holland, director, with special guests Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR), Tracy Silverman, Brad "Kali" Bowden, choreographer Kelvin Amburgey with the Shards Dance Project and the Hart String Quartet.

### Special feature

**The 1906 French comic sci-fi film *Les Invisibles!***

Experience early film magic when an invisibility potion is stolen and an alchemist turns people into dancing vegetables! Produced by Pathé Freres and directed by Gaston Velle, accompanied by VORTEX. Plus Silvestre Revueltas' classic *Sensemaya*, music for the ritual killing of a snake, performed and reinterpreted by groove-master Kali, DBR, Tracy Silverman and VORTEX, with an amplified Hart String Quartet.

### Vanderbilt Orchestra

**Wednesday, April 14, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Robin Fountain, conductor

Featuring winners of the 2009 Blair Student Concerto Competition

### The Blair Big Band

**Thursday, April 15, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Billy Adair, director

Vanderbilt's spring student concert

*Co-sponsored by Susan and Frank Genovese and Melissa and Scot Hollmann*

### The Complete 48 Preludes and Fugues: The Well-Tempered Clavier

**Friday, April 16, 8 p.m., Ingram Hall**

Craig Nies, solo piano

Piano master Nies presents the sixth concert in his Bach performance series. The program includes Franz Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor* and Beethoven's brilliant *Eroica Variations, Op. 35*.

*Sponsored by the Martin Foundation*



# From Stage to Stage

**Profile: Alicia Enstrom, BMus'09**

In *As You Like It* William Shakespeare wrote that "all the world's a stage." That expression describes Alicia Enstrom's life perfectly. Enstrom, BMus'09, has performed on the violin all over the world—from the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville to venues in China, Korea and throughout Europe.



Enstrom

Enstrom grew up in Topeka, Kan., in a musical family. Blair appealed to her because of the diversity of the coursework.

"I always had it in my head that I would go [to Blair] because I knew I could get a fantastic classical education as well as learn more about fiddle and jazz," Enstrom says. "I was also very excited about the alternative music scene in Nashville."

After her junior year, Enstrom left Blair to go on tour with Barrage—a performance group that's been described as

a cross between Riverdance and Stomp. "Barrage is an alternative fiddle group," she says. "It's choreographed with lots of movement, even high kicks."

For three and a half years, Enstrom traveled the world with Barrage. Along the way she shared the stage with the likes of Jerry Seinfeld, Blue Man Group and Cirque du Soleil. A desire to complete her degree brought her back to Vanderbilt just in time to join a new performance group that Matt Combs, adjunct instructor of fiddle and director of the fiddling program, was creating.

"The group was called the Second Stringers and was comprised of bass, mandolin, guitar and three fiddles," she says. "It was a great experience, and we even got to perform at the Grand Ole Opry."

After graduation, Enstrom sent an audition tape to Cirque du Soleil. A few months later, she was hired to perform at Madison Square Garden in the troupe's holiday show, *Wintuk*. After rehearsing in Montreal, she and the rest of the cast

moved to New York City in early November. The show is about a little boy's journey to find snow.

"I make an appearance on stage for a few numbers," Enstrom says. "My character is a 'person of the north' and the costume and makeup process take almost two hours."

Enstrom describes the Cirque du Soleil music as a mixture of world and pop music. Add those styles to her classical and fiddle repertoire, and it's easy to see why Enstrom is at home playing just about anything.

"When I was younger, I used to think that classical music was more serious and that you could smile more playing alternative styles," she says. "But through my experience at Vanderbilt and at various jobs and festivals, my view of the classical versus alternative world changed. Now I know that whatever style you're playing, you have to figure out a way to have fun with it."

—Cindy Thomsen



# Balancing Act

*Holly Jurca balances high school studies and studies at Blair with precision timing.*

*By Cindy Thomsen*

When she was only 5 years old, Holly Jurca's father sat her at a piano for the first time. Her feet dangled from the bench and her tiny fingers barely reached the keys, but she and the instrument connected. A decade later, Holly is among the upper echelon of pianists her age and already making connections that she believes are vital

for her future.

Holly is a junior at the Nashville School of the Arts, a magnet school within Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. Since 2006, she has also been a pre-college Myra Jackson Blair Honor Scholar at Blair. As an honor scholar, she takes classes at Blair in music theory, music history, accompaniment and chamber music in addition to study

STEVE GREEN

devoted to her instrument. In October, she was one of six finalists in the youth category of the 2009 Seattle International Piano Competition. Between her time at school, her time at Blair and her time practicing, there isn't much time for anything else.

"I usually wake up around 6:30," Holly says. "That's a struggle, because I usually don't go to bed until 12:30 or 1. It's not that the schoolwork is all that hard, it's just the amount of homework I have for each class."

Holly's day at the Nashville School of the Arts begins at 8 a.m. She takes three advanced placement classes—biology, English and American history. Piano and choir round out her class load. Her regular class work ends at 3 p.m., but her day is far from over.

"On Mondays I go straight from school to Blair, where I either have

"Her first priority has been the piano and music and Blair," says Holly's teacher, Roland Schneller, Chancellor's Professor of Piano at Blair. "She does it because she loves it. She has an inner drive that you find in all of the most successful students."

Holly recounts her schedule with a precision you'd expect from an engineer, not an artist. Like all musicians, she excels at keeping time.

"I have millions of clocks," she says, explaining the key to succeeding in both academics and music. "On my computer, my phone, at home, I'm always mindful of the clock. People think that sounds uptight, but it works for me."

As a junior, Holly is also preparing for college auditions. She is considering an impressive collection of the country's finest schools when it comes to studying music—Indiana University at Blooming-

"If I do end up with a career in music, I'd love to just perform. But I'd like to teach as well. Maybe I can be kind of a touring, master class teacher."

—Holly Jurca

rehearsal with my duo partner, or I practice on my own until theory class, which lasts until 5:35 p.m.," she says. "On Tuesday I have an after-school session for my Advanced Placement U.S. History class and then a performance class at Blair. Wednesdays are free, unless I have a rehearsal, and on Thursdays I have two lessons at Blair. Then on Friday, nothing."

Holly's weekends are spent practicing and studying for upcoming tests. For many, a schedule this full would be daunting, but Holly seems to thrive on the constant activity.

ton, Conservatory of Music at Oberlin College, the Peabody Institute of Music at Johns Hopkins University, the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester and the Curtis Institute of Music.

"Connections are a major part of the music world," Holly says. "You need to have lessons with different teachers at different schools. The thought of college auditions is pretty scary, because I'm not exactly sure what happens."

Last summer Holly attended the prestigious Indiana University Piano Academy and received instruction from

## The Myra Jackson Blair Honor Scholarship

Awarded annually by the Blair School of Music to outstanding pre-college students who have been recommended by their teachers and who plan careers in music, the Myra Jackson Blair Honor Scholarship covers academic-year tuition for private instruction and classes in music theory, musicianship and music history and literature. Auditions adjudicated by faculty committees are held each spring. Students must maintain at least a "B" average in each subject, perform in recital and attend at least two faculty concerts each semester. Students take music theory, music history and chamber music in addition to study on their instrument. Pianists are expected to take an accompanying class each semester, and eligible instrumentalists are required to audition for the Nashville Youth Orchestra program. There are currently 39 honor scholars at Blair, and each, like Holly Jurca, is dedicated, talented and passionate about music.

an instructor who plays a large role in determining which students are awarded scholarships at the school.

"I was nervous, but I played something that I'm comfortable with," Holly says. "Also, now I'm past the prescreening process for IU. I won't have to send in a tape, I'll just go there to audition."

Even though music is her main focus, Holly is also thinking of studying English or something in the medical field. However, it's hard to imagine that music won't be her life's work.

"If I do end up with a career in music, I'd love to just perform," she says. "But I'd like to teach as well. Maybe I can be a kind of a touring, master-class teacher."

"She's competing in the big leagues, and she hasn't even found what she can do best yet, but that will come," Schneller says. "A pianist has to try everything to find out who they really are."

# tutti

## STUDENTS

Please Note: Class Notes appear only in the printed version of this publication.



VIVA el MAMBO! A Night of Big Band Salsa featuring Lalo Davila, Sylvia Garcia and percussionists John Santos, Dann Sherrill & Marcus Finnie had audience members dancing in Ingram Hall.

STIVE GREEN

## Blair sends faculty, students to American Institute of Musical Studies

**Jonathan Retzlaff**, associate professor of voice, returned for his third summer of teaching on the faculty of the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria, last July and August. **Jennifer McGuire**, voice/opera coach at the Blair School, completed her second summer at AIMS as a staff pianist.

**MacKenzie Florence**, senior soprano from Parkersburg, W.V., participated in the Opera Studio, coached by Nico de Villiers from the London Conservatory. In her weeks at AIMS, she was chosen to sing on master classes with soprano Gabriele Lechner from the Viennese University of Music & Dramatic Arts and soprano Cató Brink from South Africa. She also sang with the AIMS orchestra in the Berühmte Opernhöre concert at the Graz Stefaniensaal and was a soloist on an Operettenabend at the Pfarrsaal of St. Leonhard Kirche.

**Kathryn Heaton**, junior soprano from Houston, participated in the Opera Studio, coached by Darryl Cooper from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She sang on master classes with Peter Brenner and Gabrielle Lechner from the Viennese



Four Blair voice majors and pianist Jennifer McGuire accompanied Professor Retzlaff to AIMS. From left: Preston Orr, Kathryn Heaton, Jonathan Retzlaff, MacKenzie Florence, Victor McMillan and Jennifer McGuire.

University of Music and Dramatic Arts. She also sang on a Viennese Operettenabend and on the American Spirituals Concert.

**Victor McMillan**, senior baritone from Thomsville, Ga., participated in the Lieder Studio, coached by Betty Bullock of Washington National Opera, and studied German poetry with Wolfgang Lockemann of Austria. He sang on a master class with Metropolitan and Vienna State Opera baritone Bo Skovhus, and performed in several

Lieder recitals for the Graz public including the Liederabend "Auf einer Wanderung," for which he sang the title piece by Schubert.

**Preston Orr**, senior baritone from Henderson, Texas, participated in the Opera Studio, coached by Nico de Villiers from the London Conservatory. In his weeks at AIMS, he sang on master classes with soprano Gabriele Lechner from the Viennese University of Music and Dramatic Arts and with Metropolitan Opera baritone Bo Skovhus. He was also chosen to sing with the AIMS Orchestra in their "Eine Reise nach Sevilla" concerts at the Graz Stefaniensaal and

Frohnleiten Hauptplatz, and he also performed in "Tell Me the Truth About Love" at the Stadtmuseum Graz with de Villiers and friends.

**Jennifer McGuire**, opera/voice coach at Blair, was selected as one of the accompanists for the annual AIMS Meistersinger Competition. In addition she played several auditions for European intendants (opera management) and performed on master classes for the European soprano Gabriele Lechner and the American soprano Barbara Bonney.





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FACULTY

**Gregory Barz**, associate professor of musicology (ethnomusicology), conducted field research this summer in Rwanda related to the role of music in the genocide of 1994. In addition, he spent the month of July in Lugano, Switzerland, as a Franklin Fellow in Global Citizenship. In September, Barz conducted a week-long residency in Los Angeles as the 2009 World Music Scholar-in-Residence at Azusa Pacific University.

**Joy Calico**, associate professor of musicology, published research on Schoenberg's reception in postwar West Germany in the *Journal of Musicology*. In September she presented a paper at a conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall at the University of Bath (UK), and in October she was an invited speaker at another conference on the same topic at Northwestern University. She recently joined the editorial board of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. This year she is an American Council of Learned Societies Frederick Burkhardt Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

**Jen Gunderman**, senior lecturer in music history and literature, produced and played keyboards for the debut solo album by **Ben Cameron**, BA'08, which features performances by current and former members of the Dixie Chicks, the Wallflowers, Guster and the Black Crowes. She also co-produced and played keyboards for the new Paul Burch album *Still Your Man*, which has received favorable reviews from the *New York Times*, NPR and others. Recent concert highlights include a show with the Wrights at the Ryman Auditorium and a show at the Station Inn with country and bluegrass legends Lloyd Green and Mike Auldridge. In addition, she led post-film audience discussions at the Belcourt Theater for Vanderbilt's FLiCX program and hosted documentary filmmaker Jeff Alulis (*Let Them Know: The Story of Youth Brigade and BYO Records*) in her History of Rock class.

**Jared Hauser**, assistant professor of



Vanderbilt's African Drum and Dance Ensemble with Kwame Ahima, director

oboe, had his second solo CD, *Operatic Oboe*, released by Blue Griffin Records in September. He was soloist with the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony last January; conducted master classes and performances at Louisiana State University, the Interlochen Arts Academy and SUNY Fredonia School of Music; was performer and guest panelist at the Nashville Double Reed Festival in April and recently received a Blue Griffin Recording Matching Grant and a Vanderbilt Research Scholar Grant. He, his wife, Laura, and big brother, Evan, welcomed Seth Aaron Hauser on September 19.

**Connie Heard**, Valere Blair Potter Professor of Violin, travelled to Wilmington, Del., last May to judge the annual scholarship competition and presented a master class at the Wilmington Music School. She performed on chamber music concerts in Aspen last summer with pianists Simon Trpceski and Rita Sloan, as well as violinists David Perry, Naoko Tanaka and Laurie Carney, violist Stephen Wyrzynski and cellist Andrew Schulman. She taught private lessons, coached chamber music and held a weekly public studio class while there. **The Blair String Quartet**, of which she is a member with **Chris Teal**, **John Kochanowski** and **Felix Wang**, performed two concerts in Memphis in October, at the University of Memphis and for the Memphis Chamber Music Society.

**Carolyn Huebl**, assistant professor of violin, spent the summer teaching and playing chamber music at the Brevard Music Center.

**John Johns**, associate professor of guitar, performed solo recitals in October and November at the Laura Turner Concert Hall at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center for the Nashville Symphony's OnStage Series, the Lincoln County Arts Council Series in Fayetteville, Tenn., and at Indiana University-Purdue University in Columbus, Ind.

**Karen Ann Krieger**, associate professor of piano and piano pedagogy, gave a presentation in September to W. O. Smith Nashville Community Music School volunteer music teachers on designing lessons to fit the individual needs of students. It was the first installment of the W. O. Smith Master Teacher Series being offered this year. She also gave a workshop on basics to artistry to the Chattanooga Area Music Teachers in October.

**Michael Kurek**, associate professor of composition, had his music featured in September concerts by the Florida State University Orchestra in Tallahassee. Various excerpts from his forthcoming ballet *Macbeth* were featured in the concert hall in October by the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony with the Blair Women's Choir and with chore-

ography by the Nashville Ballet in their November concerts.

**Douglas Lee**, professor of musicology, emeritus, last May published the third volume of keyboard concertos by C.P.E. Bach. This third volume in a series of works for the *C.P.E. Bach: Complete Works* project, is jointly sponsored by the Packard Humanities Institute, Harvard University, the International Bach-Archiv in Leipzig and the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. In June, he completed and submitted for publication an extended encyclopedia article on Sidney Lanier. The work was commissioned by Oxford University Press for inclusion in the forthcoming second edition of the New Grove Dictionary of American Music.

**Carol Nies**, adjunct senior artist teacher of conducting, served as the guest conductor of the 2009 Rome Festival Opera and Rome Festival Orchestra, with performances in June and July.

**Kathryn Plummer**, professor of viola, was invited to participate in the Heifetz International Music Institute pedagogy fellowship program. Funded by the Surdna Foundation, the fellowship provided a two-week, all expenses-paid residency at the institute's summer program in Wolfeboro, N.H. As one of only six fellowship recipients worldwide, she spent two weeks in July observing lessons, master classes, communication training classes and concerts.

**Jonathan Retzlaff**, associate professor of voice, presented a recital in Monroe, Ga., sponsored by the Monroe County Music Guild. Darryl Cooper, opera coach at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, accompanied Retzlaff. See sidebar on page 15 for more.

**Melissa Rose**, associate professor of piano, has just completed a recording/arranging project with violist Monisa Angell. *Eleven Songs* by Enrique Granados, originally for voice and piano, is newly arranged for viola and piano. **Roger Wiesmeyer**, adjunct associate professor of oboe, is also featured on English horn in one of the songs. The printed music and sound recording are available at [www.monisaangell.com](http://www.monisaangell.com).

**Helena Simonett**, adjunct assistant professor of music history and literature, presented a paper on the "Cosmology, Narrativity, and Meaning in Mayo-Yoreme Rituals" at the Society for American Music conference in Denver.

In June, Simonett was invited to the Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland,

to speak on "Wind Bands in Cross-Cultural Perspective." In July, she participated in the weeklong Tepoztlán Summer Institute for Transnational History of the Americas in Morelos, Mexico. In September, she read a paper at the Inter-University Program for Latino Research conference in Chicago and participated in a workshop on music and performance at the U.S.-Mexico border entitled "Transnational Encounters." During the summer semester, she also spent several weeks in northwestern Mexico to continue her ethnography of indigenous ceremonial music. An article in Spanish language has appeared in a book published by the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Mexico City.

**Carl Smith**, senior lecturer in composition and music theory, who has set to music more than 40 of Michelangelo Buonarroti's poems and letters, has been studying intensively the many variations in the artist's signature in what seems to be the first study ever done of them. His research has taken him to several libraries and collections, most significantly to the Archivi Buonarroti in Florence last summer. As perhaps the single most prominent Renaissance artist, Michelangelo was always much concerned about his professional, social and personal status, and his signature tells more than a little about each of those. Smith has already given several public presentations on his work, the results of which will be published by Marco Serra-Tarantola Editore in Brescia in 2010.

**Carol Smith**, senior artist teacher of violin, was a clinician and teacher trainer at the Suzuki Music Columbus Summer Institute held at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, last June. With **Maureen Riley**, she was co-director of the Blair Summer String Camp for Suzuki violin and cello students held at Blair last June. She also served as a clinician at the Ithaca College Suzuki Institute in New York for two weeks last July.

**Celeste Halbrook Tuten**, senior artist teacher of Suzuki violin, was one of the accompanists for group classes at the Middle Tennessee Suzuki Association's annual fall workshop at St. Cecilia Academy in late September.

**Thomas Verrier**, associate professor of wind studies, has been asked to serve as a pedagogical consultant for the Sistema Nacional de Educación Musical (SiNEM) of the Republic of Costa Rica. He has initiated several exciting partnerships between the Blair School and the Costa Rican government's Ministry of Culture. These activities will include a series of instructional seminars in San Jose and an artist residency with SiNEM for Blair performance faculty. He hosted a training workshop for SiNEM instructors at the Blair School in January.

**Deanna Walker**, adjunct artist teacher of piano, and songwriter Rick Beresford have four songs on the upcoming *Sweethearts of the Rodeo* CD and live DVD, scheduled for release in February.

**Agnes Wan-Patterson**, adjunct artist teacher of piano, played two solo piano recitals in November on the "ProjectArt" series at the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics and at First United Methodist Church of Iowa City. In January, she presented "Common Technical and Physical Issues with Elementary and Intermediate Piano Students: Causes and Solutions" at the Chattanooga Music Teachers Association monthly meeting and recorded solo piano performances

at Nashville Public Radio for broadcast. In February, she gave a solo piano recital on the Lunchtime Classics series at Louisville Fine Arts Radio Station for live broadcast, and in March, she gives a piano master class and solo piano recital at the Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts.

**Felix Wang**, associate professor of cello, spent the summer teaching and performing at the Brevard Music Festival in North Carolina. Highlights included opening the festival with the cello solo to Rossini's *William Tell* overture, performing Mendelssohn's *String Quintet, No. 2, Op. 87* with Cleveland Orchestra Concertmaster William Preucil on first violin, and serving as principal cellist of the Brevard Music Center Orchestra under Keith Lockhart.

## MTNA Winners

The following pre-college and undergraduate students won awards at the Music Teachers National Association state auditions in November at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn. Winners of the state competition move on to the division level, which includes eight states. **Marie-Mitsou Akimoto** won the Junior Strings division at the MTNA Southern Regional Competition held at Samford University in January. She will advance to the MTNA National Competition. **George Meyer** won honorable mention in Senior Strings division at the MTNA Southern Regional Competition.



Undergraduate winners at the MTNA state collegiate competition in November include (from left) Caroline Hart, Ben Hart, Emily Nelson, Valerie Hsu, Shona Goldberg-Leopold, Johna Smith, Tommy Crespo, Tiffany Tieu, Lindsey Reymore and Amanda Tallent.

### Junior Strings (11-14 years old)

**Marie-Mitsou Akimoto**, violin, winner  
(Christian Teal, teacher)

**Mary Grace Bender**, cello, alternate  
(Felix Wang, teacher)

### Senior Piano (15-18 years old)

**Christina Ramsey**, honorable mention  
(Roland Schneller, teacher)

### Senior Strings (15-18 years old)

**George Meyer**, violin, winner  
(Carolyn Huebl, teacher)

**Jacob Schafer**, violin, alternate  
(Christian Teal, teacher)

### Young Artist Strings (collegiate)

**Chris Lowry**, viola, winner  
(Kathryn Plummer, teacher)

**Tiffany Tieu**, violin, alternate  
(Carolyn Huebl, teacher)

**Johna Smith**, violin, honorable mention  
(Connie Heard, teacher)

### Chamber Music (collegiate)

**Magnolia String Quartet** (Ben Hart, Caroline Hart, Chris Lowry and Emily Nelson), alternate  
(Christian Teal, teacher)

**Vanderbilt Woodwind Quintet** (Shari Jefferson, Lindsey Reymore, Thomas Crespo, Shona Goldberg-Leopold, Amanda Tallant) with Valerie Hsu, pianist, honorable mention  
(Jared Hauser, teacher)

## STAFF

**Holling Smith-Borne**, director of the Anne Potter Wilson Music Library, had a paper on Blair's digital collection of East African recordings nominated for the best of chapter award for the southeast chapter of the Music Library Association. It was one of two papers selected to be presented at the national meeting of the

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## Pianist and conductor Fleisher visits Blair

**F**ebruary marked an important visit by pianist and conductor Leon Fleisher, Kennedy Center honoree and undisputed dean of American musicians. Fleisher's well-documented life story exemplifies both artistic genius and strength of will. After building a career as one of the world's foremost pianists in the 1950s and early 1960s, he was stricken by a neurological affliction known as focal dystonia, which left two fingers on his right hand immobile. He spent the next 30 years pursuing a dual career as conductor and teacher, while learning to play the extensive repertoire for piano left hand. After the discovery of new experimental medical treatments, he regained some mobility in his right hand and has returned to playing

piano with both hands. His story was told in the 2006 Oscar-nominated documentary film *Two Hands* after his 2004 recording of the same name. This 18-minute film was introduced by Mark Wait at its screening as Blair's Music on Film series offering in January.

Mr. Fleisher and his wife, pianist Katherine Jacobson Fleisher, performed in Ingram Hall on February 6 as the Fleisher Duo—a monumental performance event for the entire Vanderbilt and Nashville community. As part of his Blair residency, he conducted and performed a Mozart piano concerto with the Vanderbilt University Orchestra on February 7 and participated in an open rehearsal of the Brahms Piano Quintet with the Blair String Quartet on February 9.



The Fleisher Duo