

BLAIR

Quarter Note

Vanderbilt University



**A Complement of
Composers page 12**

SUMMER 2006

From the *Dean*



Cover photo of Blair School composers (from left) Stan Link, Michael Rose, Michael Kurek and Michael Slayton by Daniel DuBois

The BLAIR QUARTER NOTE, the newsletter of the Blair School of Music, is published twice a year in cooperation with the Office of Advancement Communications for alumni, current students and their parents, and other friends of the School.

The BLAIR QUARTER NOTE, Vol. 30, No. 2, Summer 2006
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This issue of the BLAIR QUARTER NOTE features the creation of music—composition itself. The Blair School's faculty includes several outstanding composers of national and international renown. You will find their profiles and the different ways they go about composing music. We also report on an exciting new exchange program between Blair student performers and composers and those at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

In addition, the Blair School has embarked on an important, exciting project of commissioning music from some of the world's leading composers. Perhaps you read about this project in our last issue. In this issue, we provide an update on the composers who have been selected for these works, which will start to appear on our Concert Series in 2008.

Finally, we present a report on the Blair School's outstanding BMI Composer-in-Residence series, which has been an important part of our concert life and educational mission since the first composer came in 1992.

In all these endeavors, the Blair School reaffirms its commitment not merely to the teaching and performance of music, but to its very creation—to the music of the future. I hope you will enjoy reading of these composers and their important work.

Music for the 21st Century

An update on the Blair Commissioning Project

Three new pieces to be created for the Blair School's signature faculty ensembles and two of the three commissions for featured faculty solo performers have now been determined. The ensemble commissions are generously funded by a gift from the James Stephen Turner Family Foundation.

Hungarian composer **György Kurtág** has been chosen to write a string quartet for the Blair String Quartet.



1986, though he continued teaching there until 1993.

He has worked as composer-in-residence with the Berlin Philharmonic, with the Vienna Konzerthaus and in Paris for the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Cité de la Musique and the Festival d'Automne. Kurtág won the prestigious 2006 Grawemeyer Award for his '*...concertante...*'.

Susan Botti, who is on the composition faculty of the University of Michigan, has been commissioned to write three pieces of 20 minutes each, forming one hour-long dramatic arc. These pieces will be for, respectively, (a) violin and piano; (b) violin, piano, and cello; and (c) violin, piano, cello and singer (Botti herself). This is for the Blakemore Trio with the first piece specifically for violinist Carolyn Huebl.

Botti won a coveted Rome Prize and has been in residency at the American Academy in Rome since last September; she also received a 2005 Guggenheim Fellowship. Her newest orchestral work, *Translucence*, premiered in May with the Cleveland Orchestra. Her *EchoTempo* (for soprano, percussion & orchestra), was commissioned and premiered by Maestro Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic (with Ms. Botti and Christopher Lamb as soloists). The European premiere of *EchoTempo* (occurred soon after in the "Music im 21. Jahrhundert" Festival in Saarbrücken, Germany.

Lowell Liebermann has been chosen to write a trio for horn, violin and piano for faculty member Leslie Norton (horn).

Liebermann's compositions have been performed internationally by orchestras such as the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony, the Cincinnati Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony among others. Artists who have performed his works include James Galway, Mstislav Rostropovich, James Levine, Leonard Slatkin, Kenneth Schermerhorn and Joshua Bell.

His Second Piano Concerto was premiered by the National Symphony with Stephen Hough, and his Flute Concerto was commissioned by James Galway and premiered by him with the St. Louis Symphony and Leonard Slatkin. Galway also performed the work with the Metropolitan Orchestra and James Levine at Carnegie Hall.

American **Peter Schickele** will compose a woodwind quintet for the Blair Woodwind Quintet.

Composer, musician, author, satirist—Peter Schickele is internationally recognized as one of the most versatile artists in the field of music. His works number well in excess of 100 for symphony orchestras, choral groups, chamber ensembles, voice, movies and television. His recent premieres include the Concerto for Cello and Orchestra "*In Memoriam F.D.R.*;" the *New Century Suite*, commissioned by the New Century Saxophone Quartet and premiered by them with the North Carolina Symphony; the *New Goldberg Variations* for cello



and piano, performed by Yo Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax; and Symphony No. 1 "*Songlines*," premiered by the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin.

Among his ongoing projects is a weekly, syndicated radio program, *Schickele Mix*, which has been heard nationwide over Public Radio International since January 1992.

A Tale of *Two* Cities



A new exchange program between Blair and the Royal Academy of Music in London requires a leap of faith between student composers and performers

BY LISA A. DUBOIS, PHOTOS BY BEN SKINNER

Michael Alec Rose, associate professor of composition, is creating a short violin piece based upon an artifact at the British Museum—an axe head made of flint that had been found in a London city street next to the skeleton of an elephant. The discovery, made by an archeologist during the 18th century’s “Age of Enlightenment,” was thought to be a weapon used by the Romans when they invaded Britain some 2,000 years ago. During the 20th century, however, archeologists used carbon dating to determine that the artifact was actually several hundred thousand years old. The original scientist was off by, oh...300 millennia or so.

“Part of my pleasure in the artifact is that it was originally misunderstood,” Rose says. “The first person to find it and examine it and try to understand it got it wrong. I love that error.”

Like archeologists, composers and performers are constantly conceding errors while attempting accuracy. They want to bring something new to the process of creating sound, but they also want to get it right.

From this tension has emerged an original approach to teaching music, formulated by Rose’s collaborator, virtuoso violinist Peter Sheppard Skaerved, a research fellow at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Sheppard Skaerved believes that to truly understand a piece of music one must try to assimilate an appreciation of the milieu that produced that work. In other words, what were the pressures of the time, the personal circumstances of the composer, and the instruments on hand that conspired to provide the moment in which a particular concerto emerged?

“The attempt to understand these circumstances can lend enlightenment,” Sheppard Skaerved says, “but...the attempt

can easily cloud understanding. The Arts are ambiguous.... So the attempt at understanding is lent a certain tragic humor by the reality that every musician knows that the listener will have to embark on the same act of creative misunderstanding.”

Two years ago, Blair School of Music hosted Sheppard Skaerved as a visiting professor in a recital of music by George Rochberg, who had been Rose’s mentor. During the visit, the violinist also conducted a series of workshops on collaborations between composers and performers. From that experience emerged a friendship between Sheppard Skaerved and Rose, and the genesis of a plan for a two-week exchange program between students at Blair and the Royal Academy of Music.

Sheppard Skaerved returned to Blair last November to audition students for the exchange program, and selected violinists Preetha Narayanan and David Repking, cellist Micah Claffey and composition and piano student Gary Shields. During spring break of 2006, these four students plus Ben Skinner, BMus’06 in musical arts and English, who served as photographer and documenter, traveled to London where they spent a week composing, performing, jamming, experimenting, talking and creating with four Royal Academy of Music students, all of whom were from various countries in Europe. The following week, the four RAM students spent a similar week in Nashville, in an educational and creative exchange at Blair.

The key to the process was this: they had no specific aim, no end goal in mind. According to Sheppard Skaerved, the conversations veered from very precise and exhaustive explorations of musical color and structure, to politics, ideas and a lot of laughter.

During the course of their week in London, Sheppard

Skaerved handed Blair sophomore Micah Claffey the “Marquis de Coberon,” perhaps the greatest Stradivari cello on the planet, and asked him to play. Rose says, “Micah is still in shock. He said it changed him forever. He said he could feel every person coming through who’d ever played that instrument in all its hundreds of years.”

Oliver Waespi, from Switzerland, majoring in composition and classical guitar at RAM, was profoundly struck by an exercise in which the musicians passed a single note around all the players to make a musical statement. “It was striking to observe that this single note, as soon as it was born, started to lead a very rich musical life, changing constantly its color and weight.... Blues works in quite the same way.... Thus, a musical tale was recounted with a single note, a very fragile note though, with an inner life audible only to those who want to hear it.”

This mixture of improvisation, experimentation and classical performance required a leap of faith by students who’ve been tutored under a more structured process. “I personally am not one for uncertainty, and I think that this made me uncomfortable at first,” wrote David Repking. “At first I was expecting to create something tangible to say that I had done it.... I had to change my expectations to something more abstract.”

In fact, as the students became friends, they found a common ground by hanging out together after hours and playing the blues, a genre that lends itself easily to improvisation and abstraction.

During the pedagogical portion of the exchange program, Sheppard Skaerved observed how the students avoided “free-flowing creativity lapsing into rubbish.”

“The simple answer is to witness the horror of what happens when one does,” he says. “Once creative artists have witnessed the road-crash of non-critical creation, then they will hunger for detail, for precision, so that that freedom can be chained. And I mean, chained. As Stockhausen might have it: ‘Play a note. Any note. But only the right note, in the right place.’”

In other words, this exchange program incorporated a nearly neurotic concentration on the minute details of the past so as to more fully appreciate Bartok and Brahms, as well as unfettered permission for exploration, so that composers Gary Shields and Oliver Waespi could break new ground by bouncing ideas and musical sounds off each other



Gary Shields (left foreground) and Micah Claffey (left) discuss the connection between composing and performing with Nico Faruggia, in London



Blair and RAM students listen to Peter Sheppard Skaerved and Michael Rose in Ingram Hall.

and their fellow performers. “To have a string ensemble in front of a composer is such a luxury,” wrote Shields. “It amazes me that even in a group of ‘learned’ musicians there is still the capacity to be enraptured, impressed and even dumbstruck by ‘sound.’”

That interconnectivity between the creator of the sound and the sound created has spurred Rose to write works specifically for Sheppard Skaerved, who has played Rose’s music in concerts all over the world, including the Balkans, Asia and Mexico.

Rose says, “When I hear how he believes in the living presence—whether it’s Beethoven or Rose—when I hear how he brings it to life, I’m aware of my responsibility to the performer, of how much I have to learn from that performer, of what it means to write for a specific performer and to be inspired by that bond. The connection between composer and performer is the most exciting, productive thing for communicating to an audience.”

And yet, Rose admits, the students were often skeptical of Sheppard Skaerved’s insights, because they thought learning to play a piece well was a big enough burden without also trying to evoke its history and original sound. They argued that so much information became debilitating, rather than helpful to their performance.



Blair’s Michael Rose in action.

“Music always asks too much,” Rose says, smiling. “Always.”

Sheppard Skaerved explains that in the earliest centuries of classical music a close intercommunication between composer, audience and performer was the norm, and only in the last hundred years or so have classical composers operated in solitary confinement, away from their musicians. “Now,” he says, “musicians spend all their lives training to be musical mausoleum keepers, treating Handel, Stravinsky and Schumann as if they were waxworks or mummies. The work that I do with living composers . . . helps my dialogue with the dead ones.” Last year alone, composers dedicated over 50 works to Sheppard Skaerved.

In the event that his novel approach to musical pedagogy catches on, other instructors, performers, composers and professors may also routinely demand that students acquire an intellectual grasp of the history of a work before they play it. If so, perhaps years down the road, as future performers prepare to learn a work by composer Shields or Waespi, they may discover that that particular piece of music was born, oddly enough, out of a cross-Atlantic student exchange program.

Witness to an Exchange

Ben Skinner, BMus'06, went along to document the new Blair/RAM exchange, but came away with a new understanding of musical partnerships

BEN SKINNER



In the summer of 2005, I assisted Professor Michael Rose with the research underlying the composition of his violin concerto, written for Peter Sheppard Skaerved, research fellow at the Royal Academy of Music, London (RAM). The insights I gleaned from that work—which evolved into a full-scale English senior honors thesis—were thrown into active service when I took part in the exchange program between the Blair School of Music and RAM. Though I am a recent graduate of the Blair School (guitar, musical arts), my purpose during the two weeks, rather than acting as a performer or composer, was to observe and document the exchange, in words and photographs, thereby making use of my second major in English. I was able to witness firsthand the unorthodox yet highly constructive musical environment that was created in this synthesis of performance and composition.

As the performers and composers from both schools became accustomed to the workshops and to each other—with extended techniques, foreign styles and instruments and improvisation being the rule rather than the exception—I was amazed by how much music could be made in such a short time. I could hear the excitement in the composers’ voices as they asked question after question of the performers, seeing and hearing what was possible on their instruments and being able to hear immediately what they were imagining. The performers, too, appeared anxious to take part in the compositional process, making suggestions to improve playability and tone, or simply supplying musical ideas of their own. In a musical world that is normally so competitive, I was excited to hear ideas shared freely for the benefit of all. Watching this, I saw how creative a group of people can be when a free flow of ideas is allowed to occur, when an environment without fear of being wrong or ridiculed is fostered.

That this exchange worked so well within its curricular guidelines is a testament to its success outside of the workshops. Though nothing more than a few hours a day of contact between the exchange musicians was required, an equal if not greater time together was spent outside the music schools, in the cities of London and Nashville, in restaurants and in apartments. Here is where I feel the best exchange took place and where I enjoyed my time most. Though taking photographs left me somewhat aloof during the workshops, I always felt part of the group during our meals and other social times. The conversations begun in the workshops continued, allowing me to take part in them. Ideas continued to be exchanged, though in these settings, topics outside of music were discussed. Being undergraduate students in the United States, we Blair students had much to learn from our graduate, pan-European counterparts, and vice versa. I enjoyed immensely the time I spent and the conversations

that I had with the RAM students as I learned not only about aspects of European culture that were completely foreign to me, but also heard new opinions and gained new perspectives on ideas and concepts with which I was already familiar, both musical and otherwise.

The best part of the Blair/RAM exchange has been the promotion of musical partnerships. Whether they are between performers and composers in the practice room or during a meal together, they seem to be at the core of the best compositions and performances, for it is through these personal relationships that connections among musician, music and audience are best understood and most readily achieved. Though the exact notes played and written during the two weeks of the exchange may be ephemeral, the excitement behind their creation and the possibilities for the future endure.



Participants in the Collaborative Composition in London exchange program (standing, from left): program co-founder Michael Rose, David Repking, Gary Shields and Micah Claffey (from Blair) and Pedro Mereiles, Nico Faruggia and Olivier Waespi (from the Royal Academy of Music, London, or RAM). Seated, from left: Preetha Narayanan (Blair), program co-founder Peter Sheppard Skaerved and Annabelle Berthome (RAM)

The Blair School provides many opportunities for students and faculty to broaden their musical studies by participating in exchange and development programs around the world. In the past year, Blair students and faculty have spent time learning from colleagues in Asia and Europe. *These Include:*

Joy Calico, assistant professor of musicology, who was the Anna Maria Kellen Fellow in residence at the American Academy in Berlin last fall.

Cynthia Cyrus, associate professor of musicology and associate dean, who completed a month of language study and archival and codicological work on a Goethe Institute stipendium in July focusing on manuscripts at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich and at the Cistercian abbey of Seligenthal, a women's convent in Landshut, Germany.

Jim Lovensheimer, assistant professor of musicology, who completed research on post-World War II American music at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., as well as in New York City.

Michael Rose, associate professor of composition, who served as composer-in-residence at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London last October. Subsequently, he and violinist Peter Sheppard Skaerved launched an exchange program between the Blair School and RAM—Collaborative Composition in London.

Thomas Verrier, associate professor and director of wind studies, who conducted bands and orchestras last summer in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China. His work there resulted in Hsin Hsiao-Hung, principal erhu player of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, coming to Blair last October to serve as soloist with the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony.

Blair and BMI: A Partnership



Del Bryant

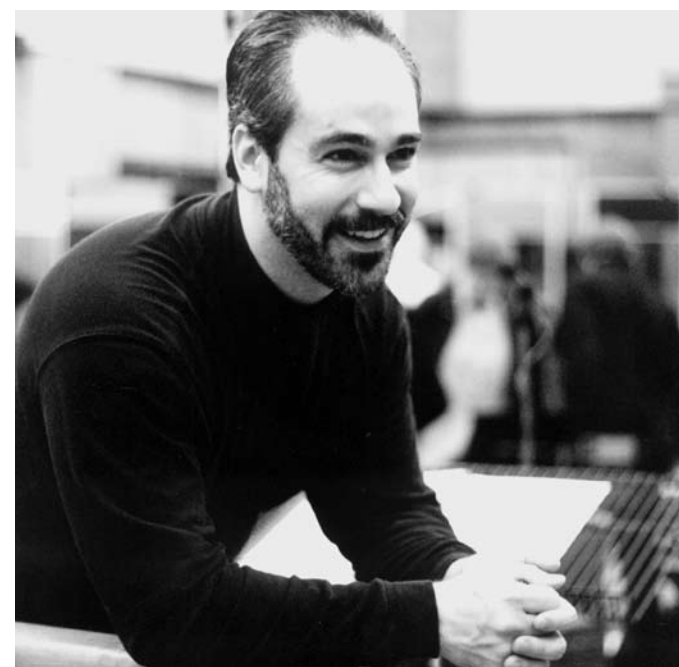
For over 15 years, the Blair School of Music and BMI have evolved a partnership celebrating the creative process in composing and performing. At Blair, this partnership also includes a leadership role on the Blair KeyBoard. In January, Blair welcomed **Del Bryant**, president and CEO of BMI in New York, as its newest KeyBoard member.

Bryant, who grew up in the music business and was immersed in the creative process as the son of legendary songwriters and publishers Boudleaux and Felice Bryant (writers of such classics as "Bye, Bye Love," "Wake Up Little Susie," "All I Have To Do Is Dream" and "Rocky Top") has seen the company from every perspective in more than three decades of service at BMI. Perhaps his most important and successful long-term collaboration is that with BMI's

former president and CEO, Frances W. Preston.

The **BMI Composers-in-Residence Series** is the Blair School's public celebration of the partnership between composer and performer. Since the first composer-in-residence came to Blair in November 1992, the series has allowed the school's top-notch faculty and student ensembles the twice-yearly opportunity to work with world-renowned composers during three-day residencies, culminating in a free public performance of the composer's work.

Peter Boyer will serve during the fall semester as BMI composer-in-residence. At the age of 36, he has had his orchestral works performed over 100 times by nearly 50 orchestras. A recording of Boyer's work *Ellis Island: The Dream of America* by the Philharmonia Orchestra (Naxos) received a Grammy nomination this year for best classical contemporary composition. Boyer has also contributed orchestrations to the film scores for *Mission: Impossible III* (Paramount) and *Fantastic Four* (20th Century Fox). His work will be performed by the Vanderbilt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robin Fountain on November 29.



Peter Boyer

Jake Heggie will be at Blair for a three-day residency during the spring semester. The composer of the opera *Dead Man Walking* and the musical scene *At the Statue of Venus* (both with librettos by Terrence McNally), he is the recipient of a 2005 Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2004 Meet-the-Composer Grant. The composer of more than 200 songs as well as concerti, orchestral works and chamber music, his work is championed internationally by singers including Renée Fleming, Audra McDonald, Frederica von Stade and Bryn Terfel. At Blair his work will be performed by Vanderbilt Opera Theatre, directed by Gayle Shay, on March 13.



Jake Heggie

Free for All!

The Blair School announces a “Free For All” Concert Series Season for the upcoming year. No tickets will be required for faculty concerts, and all seats will be open to the public. Plus, through a generous grant from BellSouth, Inc., a new “Global Music Series” featuring Latin American and Spanish guitar stylist David Burgess in September and Darol Anger’s Republic of Strings (featuring Scott Nygaard) in October will be offered for greatly reduced ticket prices. Series highlights for the fall include:



Blair Woodwind Quintet

The Blair Signature Series

September 29

Guitarist John Johns and His “Lady Friends” featuring Amy Jarman, soprano; Jane Kirchner, flute; and Kathryn Plummer, viola

September 30

Music by Blair Faculty Composers, featuring works by Michael Rose, Michael Kurek, Michael Slayton, Stan Link



John Johns



Darol Anger



October 20

“All the Things You Are: A Jerome Kern Celebration” featuring the Blair Voice faculty

November 3

The Blair String Quartet presents works by Mendelssohn, Kurtág and Beethoven

November 13

“Mostly Mozart” concert featuring the Blair Woodwind Quintet



Blair String Quartet

Blair Celebrates Series

October 9

Blair Celebrates Spanish Music

December 1, 2 and 3

Blair Celebrates the Holidays with a series of free concerts featuring Collegium Vocale on Dec. 2

The Blair Nightcap Series

Coffee and desserts provided for each preconcert lobby talk at 8 pm, followed at 9 pm by a 50-minute music program. All concerts and talks are held at Turner Recital Hall.

September 25

“A Century of Shostakovich” features pianist Melissa Rose with a Lobby Talk by Belmont history professor Daniel Schafer.

October 26

“In a Kernel” features pianist Mark Wait performing a program of short pieces selected for their focus and intensity. Lobby talk led by musicologist Stan Link.

November 6

The talented Plummer family asks you to “Czech us Out!” as violist Kathryn Plummer and her twin sister and violinist Carolyn join with niece Erin Hall to perform two selections by Czech masters Martinu and Dvorak. Musicologist Cynthia Cyrus leads the Lobby Talk.

For more information, contact the main office at 322-7651 or visit www.vanderbilt.edu/blair and click on Calendar of Events.

Equal Temperament

Blair composers complement each other
to the benefit of their students and their audience

BY MICHELLE JONES

Michael Kurek, associate professor of composition and chair of the composition/theory department, had two major chamber works performed in April at the Blair School. The program included his **Sonata for Viola and Piano**, performed by violist John Kochanowski and pianist Mark Wait, as well as the official world premiere of the full four-movement **Trio for Violin, Violoncello and Piano**, performed by Carolyn Huebl (violin), Felix Wang (cello) and Melissa Rose (piano). Both works will be recorded on a new CD to be produced by David Frost, winner of the 2004 Grammy Award for classical producer of the year. The Sonata for Viola and Piano was also performed this year by German violist Michael Bergen. Kurek is currently working on **The Letter of Sullivan Balloo** for baritone vocal solo, women's choir, wind ensemble, harp and piano, for premiere during the 2006-07 season.



Michael Kurek, Michael Rose, Michael Slayton and Stan Link. Anyone familiar with the Monty Python canon might wonder whether the three Michaels of Blair's Music Composition/Theory Department refer to their colleague Link as "Michael" as well—just to keep things clear. But of course, music is no joke for these four men and they share a disciplined and pragmatic approach to composing despite disparate styles and drawing influences from myriad sources—art, poetry, nature, the sounds of a child.

Michael Slayton, assistant professor of music theory and composition, enjoys writing choral music and pieces for small ensembles; he notes Bartok, Scriabin and Debussy as particular influences in his work. Stan Link, assistant professor of the philosophy and analysis of music, writes haunting electro-acoustic music that combines computer-manipulated sound with passages written for one or two instruments, as well as straight acoustic pieces. Michael Rose, associate professor of composition, has a penchant for orchestral work and music for ballet. Michael Kurek, who has served as chair of the department for the past 12 of his 18 years at Blair, writes orchestral music with the atmospheric quality of film scores.

But where do the pieces start? A lot of the actual "composing" takes place in the composer's subconscious, emerging as themes and phrases waiting to be committed to paper (and, in spite of the convenience afforded by notation software, pencil to paper is still the preferred method of these four). "Some of my best ideas come to me when I'm driving in the car," says Kurek. "I make a point to leave the radio off, and if I'm working on a piece, I'm going through it in the car, or [while] walking from the car to the office." He uses this downtime to sort through the music running through his head. "It's there, kind of torturing me until I get it down on the page," he says.

Though Kurek prefers to write during the early morning in his home studio, he also finds inspiration in Savannah, Georgia. "I'll take a folding chair and just go sit, watch the boats go by and watch the ocean. For some reason that opens up my pores, creatively, a bit more." He says on his first visit there, "music just started coming, kind of involuntarily, and I went back to my car, got a wrapper from a McDonald's hamburger and drew five lines on it and wrote a theme down."

Slayton says he often writes away from paper or piano. "I've written pieces on airplanes, in restaurants," he says. He jots things down in a sketchpad and goes back later to fill in the blanks. "A lot of times things are living in my head. Even if I'm working on other projects, I'm working out some kind of problem or getting some kind of idea...you have to let this thing germinate and take root."

Both Kurek and Slayton impress upon their students the importance of knowing where a piece is going, of having some idea of its structure before starting to work. "You have an outline on which to hang the details as you go," says Kurek. "With 20 minutes to fill, you can't just string together a bunch of melodies, you've got to take one melody and put it through some kind of metamorphosis so that its character transforms and takes you on an emotional journey." As Slayton sees it, "the two hardest measures to write in a piece of music are the first and the last. How do you start a piece? Where does it begin, why are you choosing this note? What medium do you want? What style are you looking for? What mood are you trying to set?... But then also, how do I end this thing that I've created?"

Getting started is never a problem for these four; writer's block is not a part of their lexicon. "I never have trouble starting a piece," says Link. "I don't get writer's block anymore. Now the biggest problem is just finding the amount of time that I need to finish all the ideas that I have." It's a sentiment echoed by his colleagues. "I haven't had [writer's block] in many years," says Kurek. "I have the opposite problem, really, which is a great problem to have—too many ideas and not enough time to write them down. I think if you spend a certain amount of time conceptualizing what it is you want to say before you write it, then it kind of writes itself."

"I get really scared at what I'm doing, and the problems that I've set for myself feel enormous and intractable, but that's not writer's block," explains Rose. "It's more of a confrontation. It's never a sense that the music isn't coming, it's a sense that in order for it to come, I'd better face this problem." Right now, for example, Rose is writing a concerto to be performed by the Nashville Chamber Orchestra



Stan Link, assistant professor of the philosophy and analysis of music, has had numerous performances of his work this year, including **In Ida's Mirror**, for alto flute and computer-generated accompaniment, which premiered at the Third Practice Festival of Contemporary Music in Richmond, Virginia, performed by Carlton Vickers of the Utah Symphony, who will release the piece on CD in early 2007. It was also performed at the North Carolina Computer Music Festival, the Symposium on Art and Technology, in California and Buffalo, New York, and at Bard College. **Shadows in Amber**, a solo compact disk of seven of Link's electro-acoustic pieces will appear this summer on Albany Records. He is currently at work on **In Absentia**, for piano trio and percussion, and **"...and my starry lute bears the black sun..."** for two sopranos, flute, percussion and harp.



DANIEL DUBOIS

Michael Rose, associate professor of composition, has had six major works premiered in 2003-2005: **A Grammar of Hope** (piano quintet), **The Night of the Iguana** (for Nashville Ballet, who reprised the work two seasons later), **Thoroughfare of Light** (piano solo), performed at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, **The Apparition** (Nashville Ballet), **The Pedagogy of Grief** (Third Viola Sonata) and **Three Short Obsessions**, which violinist Peter Sheppard Skaerved performed in Mexico City, London, and other international venues. Rose is currently working on three commissions for 2006-2007: Piano Trio No. 2 for the Carolina Trio, Violin Concerto for Mr. Sheppard Skaerved (a portion of which he has already performed in Nashville, London and Skopje, Macedonia), and **Arguing with God: Concerto for Klezmer and Chamber Orchestra**, for the Nashville Chamber Orchestra.

and a guest klezmer band called Brave Old World. "Three of the four musicians are not classically trained; they improvise...they have an essential model of what they're doing, but it's like jazz in a way," he says. "So, how am I going to write a concerto when I'm not writing a concerto?"

"Sometimes I prefer parameters, but not always," says Slayton, who at the moment is relishing the freedom of a recent commission for a piano concerto, which has neither length or style guidelines. Still, he likes having the deadline and sense of purpose a commission provides.

Obviously when a piece is commissioned for a particular performer, there are subtle influences on the composition (an instrument's timbre, the performer's tone) even if specific parameters are not given. Yet, this connection doesn't necessarily result in a collaboration between composer and performer as there might be between choreographer and dancer. Nor do composers share and discuss their works-in-progress the way writers often do. "That's not such a part of the culture," explains Link. He says that sharing files of developing pieces is not even commonly done among his fellow computer music composers.

However, it is something these four professors do with their students. "All the composition majors meet with us on Thursday afternoons," explains Slayton. "We rotate holding the forum, and we talk about the composition process and what they're working on and what we're working on. It's good for them to get a glimpse into each of our worlds, because we're all coming to this a little bit differently."

It is clear that for Kurek, Link, Rose and Slayton, working in close proximity to and belonging to a fraternity of other composers also has a positive influence on their working lives. "It's a home base for a composer, which is a very important thing," Kurek says, "because you have a community in which to work as a composer. Whatever happens outside that community happens organically and grows out of that."



DANIEL DUBOIS

Michael Slayton, assistant professor of music theory, is currently completing the **Sonate Droyssig**, a solo work for pianist Ulrich Urban, professor of piano at the Hochschule fur Musik, 'Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy' in Leipzig, Germany. He is also working on a book project concerning the music of composer Elizabeth Austin. Last November he was composer-in-residence at Conservatoire Royale de Bruxelles, Belgium, where his **Fantasy and Fugue for Two Pianos and Percussion Instruments** was performed. His **Through Stone Door** for piano trio was performed at the Festival International Albert Roussel in France, and **Zwei Gedichte** for oboe, violoncello and piano, was performed in Germany, Boston and Hartford, Conn. His **The Crescent and the Cross** was composed for the Nashville Ballet's Emergence Project, choreographed by Abdel Salaam, and it premiered in November 2004.

Other faculty composers *of note*



David Childs

David Childs, assistant professor of choral studies and director of the Vanderbilt Symphonic Choir, has composed and published over 25 songs and choral arrangements with Santa Barbara Publishing, Alliance Music, Colla Voce Music and J.W. Pepper. He is one of the most performed choral composers in high schools and middle schools in the United States. Most recently, his "**Fuji**" was premiered by St. Mary's International School, Tokyo, at the Central American Choral Directors' Association Conference, and "**O Sacrum Convivium**" was premiered by the Oregon State University Men's Chorus. His "**The Messenger**" for the Oregon State University Singers was published earlier this year. He has recently received a commission from the Choral Arts Ensemble, Minnesota.



Edgar Meyer

Edgar Meyer, adjunct associate professor of bass, is known both as a performer and an innovative composer who has recorded and performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Mark O'Connor, Bela Fleck, Mark Marshall and Sam Bush, among others. For his latest release, **Edgar Meyer** on the Sony Classical label, he not only composed all 14 tracks, but also played all the instruments for a CD that weaves together classical, jazz and bluegrass threads. Previous works include a violin concerto written for violinist Hilary Hahn, which was premiered and recorded by Ms. Hahn with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. He has also performed with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa, featuring the premiere of his **Double Concerto for Bass and Cello** with Yo-Yo Ma, and most recently, he premiered his **Concerto for Banjo and Double Bass** with co-composer Bela Fleck and the Nashville Symphony.

Carl Smith, senior lecturer in music composition and theory, premiered his piece **Fire and Ice: Michelangelo the Writer** at Blair in March, 2004. A masque for five singers, narrator, cello, and harpsichord, it reveals the life of Michelangelo in his own words, based on translations from his letters and poems. Other recent works by Smith include three pieces for unaccompanied choir. Two were commissioned by Emory University in Atlanta: "**Come, My Light**," text by Dimitri of Rostov; and "**Piero Saw Him Living**," text by Carol Stevens. **The Lavender Fields; Renata's Requiem** is a requiem for unaccompanied choir in five movements set on poems by Czeslaw Milosz and was commissioned by Washington University in St. Louis.



Deanna Walker

Sarah Page Summar, lecturer in aural studies, last November premiered her work **At Night, By Train** for string quartet with Blair students Preetha Narayanan, Ellen McSweeney, Andrew Braddock and Micah Claffey. Recently, she has been commissioned to write a woodwind trio for the Gemini Ensemble of Chicago.

Deanna Walker, adjunct artist teacher of piano and director of the songwriting program, will have her **Trio for Flute, Saxophone and Piano** performed at the Blair School next January with herself as pianist and faculty colleagues Jane Kirchner, flute, and Frank Kirchner, saxophone. Next March, her **Epilogue for Two Pianos** will be played during the piano faculty recital. Her **Family Plot in Four Scenes** for soprano and piano was chosen for performance at the CMS International Conference in Costa Rica in 2003.

PRECOLLEGE

Blair precollege string students, led by **Kirsten Cassel**, adjunct artist teacher of cello, began monthly performances on stage at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in March with the students performing solos, duos or in other ensembles.

Three of the Blair children's choruses toured this summer under the leadership of **Hazel Somerville**. **Concert Choir** (junior and senior high school girls) sang in Anchorage and surrounding areas in Alaska, June 6-12. **Choristers** sang in Savannah, May 26-29, and the **Nashville Boychoir at Blair** sang for the American Guild of Organists in Lexington, May 19-21.

Parker Ramsey, principal harpist with the Curb Youth Symphony directed by **Carol Nies**, won the 2005-2006 MTNA National Composition Competition, Junior Division, for his composition *Gaudeamus: Choral Celebrations for Christmastide*, for three-part treble choir and harp. The piece was performed for the MTNA Convention in Austin, Texas, by the Texas Choral Consort with Parker performing on harp.

UNDERGRADUATES

Two Blair School students were honored with recognition from the Fulbright Program for study abroad. They are: **Preetha Narayanan**, a senior violin performance major from Memphis, who will study Indian Carnatic violin in Madras, India. **Christina Thompson**, a senior violin musical arts major from Pleasant Prairie, Wis., was named a Fulbright alternate to serve as an English language teaching assistant in Germany.

tuitti

Carl Smith, senior lecturer in music composition and theory, recently finished recording a CD for Naxos records consisting entirely of "Tudor" organ music, the first recording devoted entirely to this genre. The bulk of this type of music is preserved in *The Mulliner Book*, compiled in early to mid-16th century England by Thomas Mulliner. Without precedent in keyboard literature, the music is composed in a sophisticated style far more complex than any being used on the continent at the time—or for generations to come. Around the middle of the 16th century the style disappeared, and some of its compositional devices did not show up again until the 20th century.

Two organs, both designed and built (structurally and tonally) in the manner of 16th and 17th century northern European instruments, were used for the recording. One, in Nashville, is in the small chapel at First Lutheran Church; the other at Southern Adventist University, in Collegedale, Tennessee, near Chattanooga. Recording in downtown Nashville in a chapel on a street corner, just off Broadway and less than a block from the Greyhound bus station, presented its share of frustrations. Recording sessions began late at night when traffic was less, but twelve takes of one short piece were needed due to the intrusions of a bus, an ambulance, a train, a garbage truck and a helicopter.

The engineer for the project was **Kevin Edlin**, technical assistant, who has worked on a number of the Nashville Symphony recordings with Naxos. **Cynthia Cyrus**, associate dean and associate professor of musicology, was helpful in resolving some of the many notational issues and will contribute liner notes for the CD.



Blair had four student winners in the 2006 N.A.T.S. Regional Competitions: **Cameron Rau**, 2nd Place Senior Men; **Glen Thomas Rideout**, 1st Place Junior Men; **Regan Lackey**, 3rd Place Junior Women; **Jena Carpenter**, 3rd Place Freshmen Women

Blair vocal students who attended and represented the school included **Tierney Bamrick**, **Adrianna Bond**, **Adam Diekhoff**, **Justin Emmert**, **Kerri Glennon**, **Kaitlyn Greer**, **Abraham Hanson**, **Andrew Levine**, **Jessica Morris**, **Amy O'Brien**, **Madeleine O'Donnell**, **Bryan Ortega**, **Amanda Pogach**, **Leigh Remy**, **Alex Reuter** and **Eric Smith**.



Nathan Brown and Regan Lackey perform the Act II finale from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*.

ALUMNI

PRECOLLEGE

Grace Huang received her D.M.A. in piano performance from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in March 2005. In 2004-2005 she was an adjunct faculty member at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minn., where she taught applied and class piano and performed as a member of the faculty piano trio. She is currently serving a one-year appointment as assistant professor and class piano coordinator at the University of Georgia in Athens. A former student of **Roland Schneller** and **Craig Nies**, she received her B.Mus. degree in 1999.

FACULTY

Three Blair School faculty were recently awarded tenure at Vanderbilt: **Jonathan Retzlaff**, associate professor of voice; **Thomas Verrier**, associate professor of wind studies; and **Felix Wang**, who not only won tenure, but also was promoted to associate professor of cello. Other promotions included **Melissa Rose**, now associate professor of piano.

Joy Calico, assistant professor of musicology, attended the Annual Conference on Politics, Criticism and the Arts, hosted by the Vanderbilt Philosophy Department in April, where she gave a response to one of the lectures.

Allan Cox, professor of trumpet, and his wife, **Hildegard**, presented three trumpet and organ concerts in Nebraska last October. In November, they performed in Louisville and in Nashville as part of the Bud Herseth trumpet seminar. Adolf "Bud" Herseth, principal trumpet, emeritus, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, was artist-in-residence at Blair in November, presenting lectures, clinics, and solo and orchestral master classes.

Jim Foglesong, adjunct professor of music business, was named to the Honorary Board of Managers for Eastman School of Music as one of the founding members of the new board. The Honorary Board's purpose is to advise and counsel the school's dean, senior administrators and board of managers. Foglesong, an alumnus of Eastman, joins fellow Eastman graduates **Marian McPartland**, **Mitch Miller** and **Renee Fleming** among others as members of the Honorary Board.

Jen Gunderman, adjunct senior lecturer in music history and literature, welcomed two special guest lecturers to her History of Rock Music class this semester. Visit-

Joe Rea Phillips, senior artist teacher of guitar and founder of the Vanderbilt Kung Fu Club, traveled in March to the Chen Village in China's Henan Province with his mentor, Chinese Boxing Institute International president **James Cravens**, and a select group of U.S. instructors, to study with **Chen Xiaowang**, a 19th-generation grandmaster of Tai Chi Chuan. For Chinese martial artists, who denote skill level by how closely one aligns with a grandmaster, this is considered a great honor. "It's a little like a pilgrimage," Phillips said.

Phillips practices Chinese boxing arts, such as Tai Chi Chuan, Pa Kua Chang and others, with the strict goals of self-defense and health in mind. "Chinese boxing means that you train in the art of reading, controlling and projecting energy or chi—that vital force," said Phillips who has trained in Tai Chi Chuan for 20 years.

He has learned to utilize chi in other disciplines. Each fall, he teaches a semester-long course called "Tai Chi for Musicians" that helps students and faculty combat performance-related injuries and overuse syndrome.

Upon his return, Phillips shared the experience with his students. "The Kung Fu Club is truly a service—one of those areas as a faculty member that I take a lot of pride in. It's been my good fortune to be involved with it for the last 16 years."

— Kara Furlong

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ing in March was **Garry Tallent**, bassist in Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band since 1971 and an active recording session player and producer. In April, **Reeves Gabrels**, best known for playing guitar for many years with David Bowie, visited the class. Active as a producer and songwriter, he has also worked with artists such as the Rolling

Stones, Public Enemy, Nine Inch Nails and the Cure and has composed soundtracks for PBS, film and video games.

Karen Ann Krieger, assistant professor of piano and piano pedagogy, was shown in a taped piece playing piano for **Gavin Tabone**, BMus'96, and his Palm School Choir from Austin, Texas, when the choir was featured live on the *Today Show* in April.

Michael Kurek, associate professor of composition, was selected by the Panhellenic Council and ten sororities at Vanderbilt as "best Blair educator at Vanderbilt" for the fall 2005 semester.

Douglas Lee, professor of musicology, emeritus, has edited the first volume of a seven-volume compilation of the concertos of C.P.E. Bach. *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: Sei concerti per il cembalo concertato*, published in fall 2005, is a collaboration of the Packard Humanities Institute in cooperation with the Bach Archiv Leipzig, the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig and Harvard University. The compilation of concertos is the first in a planned 80-volume series on the complete works of C.P.E. Bach. Lee began work on the compilation in 1985.

Melanie Lowe, assistant professor of music history and literature, presented a lecture at the Marcus W. Orr Center for the



Visitors enjoyed the opening reception for the Betty Freeman photography exhibit in February.

New Music Library Director Announced

Holling Smith-Borne has accepted the position of director of the Anne Potter Wilson Music Library. He will begin work on August 1.

Smith-Borne is currently coordinator of the music library at DePauw University, where he has developed and managed that library since 1997. Prior to that, he was the Music and Fine Arts Librarian at Butler University for 5 years. He has a B.M. (piano performance) from Bowling Green State University, and a Masters of Information and Library Science with a specialization in music librarianship from the University of Michigan.

Humanities at the University of Memphis. She also read a paper at the annual meeting of American Musicological Society's South-Central Chapter at Western Kentucky University.

Thomas Verrier, associate professor and director of wind ensembles, coordinated hosting of the Southern Division conference of the College Band Directors National Association in February. More than fourteen high school and collegiate ensembles from across the Southeast participated in the conference. The Blair Wind Ensembles' performance featured works by visiting BMI Composer-in-Residence Michael Daugherty, who also conducted a clinic on connecting with repertoire.

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Singer/Songwriter Raul Malo, former lead singer of The Mavericks, wowed the audience at Ingram Hall in February as he sang Sinatra classics with the Nashville Jazz Orchestra.

2006 Commencement Honors and Awards

Founder's Medal: **Dan Schwartz**

Alma Mater Vocalist: **Erin Kemp**

Student Marshals: **Joanna Felder, Abigail Mace**

Banner Bearer: **Preetha Narayanan**

Sigma Alpha Iota (SAI) College Honor Award: **Christina Thompson**

SAI Scholastic Award: **Amy Cutright**

Alpha Lambda Delta Senior Certificates: **Jinwoo Back, Bonnie Brown, Dawson Gray, Crystal Jennings, Jennifer McNeil, David Repking, Dan Schwartz**

The MTNA Student Achievement Recognition Award: **Catherine Nelson**

Martin Williams Award for most outstanding paper: **Andrew Hard and Bethany Jo Whelan**

The Richard C. Cooper Award for campus-wide leadership in music: **Lisa Bryington and Meredith Schweitzer**

L. Howard "Zeke" Nicar Award for most outstanding woodwind or brass student: **Jennifer Bennett and Rosemary Rutledge**

The Robin Dickerson Award to an outstanding voice major, for excellence in performance and scholarship: **Adrianna Bond**

Delene Laubenheim McClure Memorial Prize to a voice major for excellence in opera performance: **Nathan Brown**

Blair Composition Competition Prize: **Ben May**

The Sue Brewer Award for excellence in guitar or composition/theory: **Andrew Dunbar and Jennifer McNeil**

The Jean Keller Heard Prize for excellence in strings: **John Concklin and Joanna Felder**



Crystal Jennings, BMus in musical arts, graduated *magna cum laude* on May 12.

The Elliot and Ailsa Newman Prize to a clarinet student for excellence in performance: **Peter Cain**

The Confroy-Lijoi Jazz Award for excellence in jazz performance: **Jon Lijoi**

The S. S. and I. M. F. Marsden Award in Musical Scholarship for the most outstanding major paper: '05 Arts & Science alumnus **John Dick**

The David Rabin Prize for excellence in musical performance: **Preetha Narayanan**

The Margaret Branscomb Prize to the freshman who best exemplifies the spirit and standards of the Blair School: **Kathryn Moreadith**

The Presser Scholarship to a junior excelling in both performance and scholarship: **Peter Cain**



Founder's Medalist Dan Schwartz with Dean Mark Wait



NEIL BRAKE

Vanderbilt Opera Theatre's spring production, Lyric Opera Scenes, included the Act I finale from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with, from left, Regan Lackey, Patrick McMurrey, Jena Carpenter and Justin Emmert.

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