

BLAIR

# Quarter Note

Vanderbilt University



Following  
the 'MUSE' page 3

WINTER 2007

# From the *Dean*

Cover photo of Thomas Verrier and Robin Fountain 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 other friends of the School.

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Since its inception in 1964, the Blair School of Music has been dedicated to excellence in teaching, performance and scholarship—all in the service of art music (otherwise known, incompletely, as “classical” music). In light of certain articles lamenting the decline of art music in our society, this may seem to be an unduly limited mission. But I hope you will agree that the articles in this issue of the BLAIR QUARTER NOTE reveal just how varied and exciting our curriculum and activities can be—and how important they are to our students and the society we all inhabit.

“Following the ‘MUSE’” describes the innovative rotation of instrumental ensembles that Professors Robin Fountain and Tom Verrier developed. This system has dramatically developed students’ skills in chamber music, producing more sensitive listening and playing. In this way, students have acquired not only greater technical skill but, more importantly, greater sensitivity to the communicative power of music itself. Of all the changes occurring at the Blair School in recent years, this one has perhaps the greatest importance in changing the quality of our students’ musical experience—both now and throughout the rest of their lives.

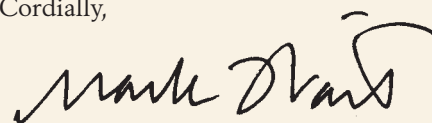
Also, you will read of the great expansion of international study and performance by our students—in Germany, Ireland, Spain, Prague, Uganda and China. These international activities transcend musical experiences—they are often life-changing.

Meanwhile, in Nashville, the Suzuki program at the Blair School continues its tradition of excellence in teaching and performance among young violinists and cellists. Over the years, I have heard from many former students of the Suzuki program. Some of them stayed with music as an avocation or profession; others did not. But all of them said that this early instruction gave their lives meaning and served them well in later years. That is precisely what the Blair School seeks to do with students of all ages.

Finally, the Blair School was saddened to lose a wonderful faculty member and a great musician in August: David Schnauffer. Butch Baldassari’s moving tribute to David goes far toward showing why David was so special to Blair and to our community. His legacy in developing and building Blair’s dulcimer program continues, and it is fitting that just weeks after David passed away, his student, Jeff Hames, won the National Dulcimer Championship, which David himself had won years ago.

I hope you will enjoy reading of the Blair School’s many activities. Meanwhile, my best wishes to you for the new year.

Cordially,



DANIEL DUBOIS

BY MICHELLE JONES

# *Guiding Blair's 'MUSE'*

*Blair's innovative MUSE 101 keeps the music flowing*

*FOR THREE YEARS NOW*, students taking Blair's MUSE 101 Instrumental Ensemble course have played a sort of musical chairs as they take their places in up to four of Vanderbilt's nine performing ensembles—including the premier groups, the Vanderbilt Orchestra and the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony—all in one semester.





DANIEL DUBOIS

“We certainly didn’t follow anyone’s model,” says Thomas Verrier, associate professor and director of wind studies. “Rotation is common, in terms of moving winds around,” but with MUSE 101, Blair takes it one step further, “rotating the groups and the kids.”

In other words, instead of the same players working on, say, symphonic pieces for three weeks, then moving on to chamber music, some of the students segue into a

chamber ensemble while others turn to contemporary music, joining players who’d spent the previous rotation with yet another ensemble. “We have a fantastic school of music, with 54 freshman majors a year,” Verrier says. “We’ll always have

only 70 to 80 wind players. [In the past, we were always] splitting the top 40 between the Wind Symphony and the Orchestra so the top wind players never got to play together.” Deciding the best way to use those musicians led to the current system, and now Verrier calculates that “80 percent of the students are making music with each other at some point during the semester.” This, he says, has contributed to the development of “an esprit de corps between all instruments.”

The 110 to 120 students in the course are assigned to the various ensembles based on their auditions and the demands of each semester. For example, the scheduling and composition of the Fall 2006 MUSE 101 rotations was largely dictated by the Vanderbilt Orchestra’s trip to China (see sidebar below). The goal was to ensure maximum rehearsal time for the 70-piece orchestra, giving the players the opportunity to develop into the most cohesive unit possible.

“The students are getting more varied experience than we were previously able to provide,” Verrier says. “It’s very exciting for students not only to be comfortable with different ensembles, but also with the variety of repertoire.” Verrier’s MUSE 101 colleague, Robin Fountain, professor of conducting and director of the Vanderbilt Orchestra, concurs.

## A Chinese New Year

The Vanderbilt Orchestra ended 2006 and began 2007 as professional musicians. They had a gig that many musicians twice their age never experience—touring China.

“The loudest sound at any time was the sound of the cracking of skulls as minds opened,” said Director Robin Fountain. “The students embraced it to the fullest possible degree, from the food to the culture to everything else.”

The opportunity for the tour came about through Fountain and his previous two tours of China leading the Russian Tomsk Siberian Orchestra. Fountain approached the students and got an overwhelmingly positive response, despite the tour being slated for the two weeks encompassing Christmas and New Year’s.

“We took 11 flights in 13 days,” Fountain said. “We played in six cities, and despite the incredible amount of time traveling and the stress associated with that, the orchestra played very well. The music highlight was a concert in Shanghai. The orchestra had recovered from the traveling by that time and responded to the hall with glorious playing.”

Some time was spent seeing sights such as the Great Wall of China and meeting the Chinese people. “Some of the Blair students found students in Hohhot to play basketball with. They were showing them around their university in Hohhot and exchanging e-mail addresses. It was lovely.”

Students got a true taste of the musician’s life on the China tour, Fountain said. “It’s at once very exciting and yet it really takes it out of you,” he said. “You can’t do it all the time, but if you have the opportunity you should seize it, because it’s a wonderful life.”

—Jim Patterson



MARK MANDOSH

Director Robin Fountain at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

## 10 Years of MA5

“We wanted to reflect the life of musicians, who may not end up in an orchestra, sitting in the same chair, playing under the same conductor,” he says. “People create for themselves a life in music that involves a lot of different activities, freelancing as part of symphonies, playing in smaller ensembles, composing.”

Through opportunities to perform with a variety of ensembles, Fountain says MUSE 101 students “gain experience being flexible, playing different styles in different-sized groups with or without a conductor.” He believes the wide range of material—from jazz to Bach—helps keep the students from becoming bored, while helping them to become the “musical chameleons” they’ll need to be as professionals. The feedback Fountain has received from former students seems to bear this out, as they write of the confidence with which they face new endeavors after their MUSE 101 odyssey.

Verrier believes the students also profit from what he refers to as the “Montessori vibe,” in that the rotation system not only gives Blair’s best musicians chances to play together, it also allows for integration between players of different levels. “Nothing is a better teacher than sitting next to a great player,” Verrier says, adding that the situation is also beneficial to the stronger players who grow in and through their leadership and mentoring roles.

Three years may not be long enough to establish a widespread reputation, nevertheless word about Blair’s innovative approach is getting out in education circles, and Verrier says he’s pulled out his MUSE 101 diagrams at several conferences and meetings. Posted between Turner Hall and the Instrument Rehearsal Hall, the charts lay out the semester plan, showing the entire rotation schedule as well as each student’s individual ensemble progression. Figuring out where one is supposed to be at any given time might seem daunting at first blush, but Verrier thinks it is good training for the students to have to stay on top of their unique MUSE 101 path.

Verrier says the path to MUSE 101 itself took about three years. Verrier and Fountain began developing the germ of the rotation idea during Verrier’s first year at Blair, working out several versions of the idea over many months. The two men share MUSE 101 duties, with Verrier responsible for the Wind Symphony and the other wind groups, Fountain leading the orchestral groups including the all-string orchestra, and the smaller ensembles divided between the two.

“This semester has worked really well,” Verrier says. “I think we’re getting pretty close, but I hope we’re always evolving.”



Erin Shepherd teaching in Kong Kong at the Alliance Primary School

In 2007, Blair’s teacher education program, referred to as MA5, will celebrate its tenth year and graduate its fifth class of music educators. The program allows students to earn a B.Mus. degree from Blair plus the M.Ed. degree from Peabody College in five years. In the course of their studies, MA5 students also satisfy the requirements for licensure in the state of Tennessee. “It’s a very special program,” says Thomas Verrier, MA5’s coordinator, “one marked by individualism,” he says. “It certainly is not a cookie-cutter program.”

MA5 remains a small program. According to Verrier, there are currently 24 undergraduates, of whom four will begin graduate studies this summer, while two students will complete the M.Ed. portion of the program. “We continue to broaden and enrich the curriculum, which has increased retention in the program,” Verrier says. The MA5 focus is on quality, not quantity. “We don’t need to put out more music teachers,” Verrier says, “we need to put out better music teachers.”

Building on his own international experiences, Verrier is constantly seeking out new exchange opportunities for MA5 students, whether in China, Prague or Spain. He feels these introduce the students to different approaches to teaching music, while helping them discover new sides of themselves.

“One of the great things about Vanderbilt is that it provides the opportunity to find what [the students] want to do, to find their success,” Verrier says. He is especially proud of students like Erin Shepherd, a former pre-med major who, in the fall of her junior year, decided to transfer into the MA5 program. “She’s going to be a most phenomenal teacher,” he says. “She’s going to change people’s lives.”

—Michelle Jones



# THE BLAIR SCHOOL: *Sounds*



An international focus has become a much more integral part of the curriculum at the Blair School. In addition to the winter holiday tour of China (see sidebar, p. 4), a number of Blair students are participating in new study exchanges in Vienna, Austria, and with the Sydney Conservatorium in Australia, both of which began in the fall. In addition, four students from Spain studied at Blair this fall.

“The performance tour in China is part of a rapidly growing international program at the Blair School of Music,” says Dean Mark Wait. “We are committed to a focus on the global musical experience as an essential element of a full university-level education. The premier tour of China is the largest and most elaborate of the performance tours we have organized thus far. It is a natural extension of a collegiate-level student exchange program initiated in the last three years and led by our faculty, who have prodigious links with colleagues abroad through their own concert tours and academic research.

“A recent assessment found that over the last three years, 139 Blair students, including those involved in this year’s China tour (80% of the current student population), have participated in international

experiences, either through Vanderbilt Study Abroad programs or through Blair performance tours.”

Previous exchanges include a tour of Spain by a Blair student wind ensemble, a composer/performer exchange between Blair and the Royal Academy of London as noted in the summer issue of the *QUARTER NOTE*, a series of performance tours to Europe by the pre-college student choral groups, a trip to Germany by the Blair Children’s Cello Choir, and a host of faculty residencies across Europe and China.



The Nashville Boychoir in Germany

Exchanges this year included: **Christian Marshall**, violist, and **David Ackley**, percussionist, studying through the International Education of Students (IES) Vienna program. This semester, students **Jennifer Joy Betzer** (harp), **Daniel Paul Jansen** (euphonium), **Molly Reinker** (violin and piano), and **Aaron Alan Romm** (trumpet) take part in the IES Vienna exchange.

The program through the University of Sydney/Sydney Conservatorium was initiated in the fall with student **Anne Suda** participating. **Benet Braun** (piano) is there this semester.

# Heard 'Round the World

Tom Verrier created a student exchange between the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony and the Musical Society of Denia (Valencia), Spain, which began in the fall, with plans to continue each year. As many as five Valencia music students were selected (through audition by a panel that will always include a representative of Blair School) to spend a week-long residency to study and perform at Blair. Likewise, as many as five Blair students have the opportunity to travel, study and perform each summer in Valencia. This September, the students from Spain included Maria Pilar ("Mapi") Bosque Marin, oboe; Manuel Martínez Minués, clarinet; Sergio Moya Burgos, alto & baritone saxophone; and Joan Vicent Tamarit, tenor saxophone.

Verrier established an exchange last fall with the Hong Kong Band Directors Association and the band of the GuangZhou Foreign Language and Arts University. Each fall, students in the fifth year of the MA5 program now have the option to observe, teach and conduct in Hong Kong and Southern China.

In November Erin Shepherd was the second student to travel there for 10 days to teach at the Alliance Primary School in Kowloon, Hong Kong, and to observe and participate in activities at the GuangZhou Foreign Language and Arts University.

Verrier also visited the International School of Prague in November to look into establishing a MA5 teaching internship there.

The Nashville Boychoir at Blair and the Young Men's Chorus, led by Hazel Somerville, traveled to Germany December 27 through January 4 with 22 singers and 10 parents and family members. They sang in Magdeburg, Leipzig and Dresden.

The Blair Children's Concert Choir, also led by Somerville, will travel to Ireland June 4–11 with 26 girls singing. They will sing in Dublin, Limerick and Connemara.

## Students Spend Summer in Uganda



Blair's Greg Barz (left, third row from top), standing next to the Kyabazinga (King) of Busoga, a kingdom within the country of Uganda. Barz served as academic advisor to Vanderbilt students in the Kampala project.

About 20 Vanderbilt University students spent last summer working with health organizations in Uganda as part of that country's response to HIV/AIDS.

Uganda's HIV/AIDS response is viewed as a model in sub-Saharan Africa, and work continues there to help the more than 500,000 people that the Centers for Disease Control estimates are infected with HIV. The students helped in these efforts in the country's capital, Kampala.

The Kampala Project is a partnership among the Vanderbilt Office of Active Citizenship and Service, the School of Medicine's Institute for Global Health, and the Center for Medicine, Health and Society. Greg Barz, associate professor of ethnomusicology at the Blair School, served as the students' academic adviser during the trip.

Students in Kampala worked with nongovernmental organizations to help those infected with and orphaned by HIV/AIDS. They took a preparatory course last spring designed to help them understand cultural differences and the global context of Ugandan issues and development.

"The experiences gained by these students will be invaluable to them and will enhance the university community," says Barz, who has studied the successful role music has played in the fight against AIDS in Uganda for over a decade and is the author of the 2006 book *Singing for Life: HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda*.

For more information visit the Kampala Project Web site at <http://web.mac.com/gregory.barz/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>

—Princine Lewis



# Happy Land added to NEH's "We the People" box set

**H**appy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder, co-produced by Adjunct Associate Professor of Mandolin Butch Baldassari and Professor of Musicology Dale Cockrell, has been added to the National Endowment for the Humanities "We the People" collection.

The CD is the first music collection to be added to a National Endowment for the Humanities collection of works intended to strengthen students' understanding of American history and culture.

This year's "We the People" collection has the theme of "pursuit of happiness" and includes the books *Those Happy Golden Years* by Wilder, *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and other classics of literature. The NEH will distribute the chosen works to 2,000 public, school and military libraries in the United States and overseas.

"This kind of attention from the NEH is humbling," says Cockrell. "Those whose work sits on the 'We the People' bookshelf are the heroes of my youth and of my adulthood. It is beyond an honor to occupy any of the space that they hallow."

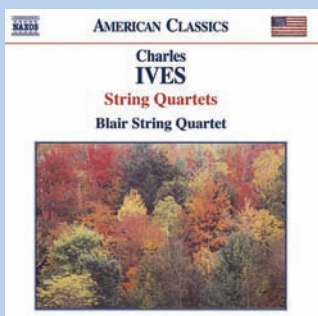
The album of string band music, Stephen Foster classics and hymns and spirituals features song selections from the more than 120 songs that run through the plots of Wilder's eight *Little House* books (published by HarperTrophy) that chronicle pioneer life in 1800s America. Songs including

"Oh! Susanna" and "Barbara Allen" were given lively and contemporary acoustic arrangements meant to reintroduce children and adults to the musical heritage of America.

The album was released on Pa's Fiddle Recordings ([www.pas-fiddle.com](http://www.pas-fiddle.com)). A sequel album, *The Arkansas Traveler: Music from "Little House on the Prairie,"* was released November 14. The new CD debuted with help from National Public Radio, whose member stations aired an hour-long holiday special dedicated to the music of the Pa's Fiddle project.

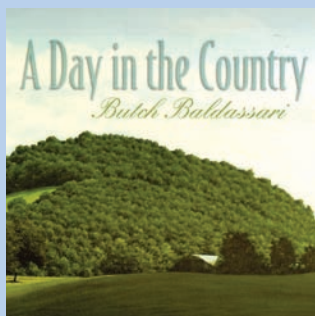


## Recent Releases by Blair Faculty



*IVES: String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2* (Naxos), by the **Blair String Quartet**, featuring Chris Teal, Connie Heard, John Kochanowski and Felix Wang with notes by **Jim Lovensheimer**, assistant professor of musicology.

*A Day in the Country* (Soundart Recordings), by **Butch Baldassari**, adjunct associate professor of mandolin, presents a set of classic-sounding old-time/bluegrass and original tunes, with a stellar cast of Nashville's finest pickers.



*In Amber Shadows: Electro-acoustic Music* (Albany Records), by **Stan Link**, assistant professor of the philosophy and analysis of music, features a wide range of acoustic and computer music all written by Link.



# okshelf; sequel *The Arkansas Traveler* is released



Like *Happy Land*, the CD features an impressive array of musicians. Artists include John Cowan, Andrea Zonn (BMus'93), Alison Brown (Blair adjunct lecturer in banjo), Jeff Black, Riders in the Sky, the Blair String Quartet and Elizabeth Cook.

The gorgeous instrumental "The Devil's Dream" features Baldassari and David Schnauffer, Blair's beloved adjunct professor of dulcimer until his death on Aug. 23. It is Schnauffer's last recording.

In a brief departure from the rootsy sound of the two CDs, *The Arkansas Traveler* offers a bonus cut by Stan Link, assistant professor of the philosophy and analysis of music. "... in the pot" is a take on the children's rhyme "Pease Porridge Hot," featuring three 8-year-old girls clapping and reciting the rhyme combined with everyday sounds, then manipulated by Link with computers.

"'Pease Porridge Hot' turns up in the chapter 'A Scream in the Night,'" Cockrell says. "Is it a song or just a rhyme? What exactly is it? Since it wasn't clear how to do it as a song, I had the idea of doing some field recordings and turning it over to Stan to see what he could do with it.

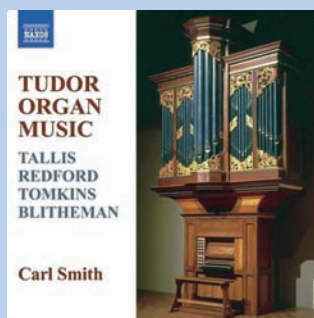
"I'm sure kids will like it, and perhaps it will get parents to open up their ears to music that's a little different."

The recruitment of an avant-garde artist such as Link is part of a broader aim of the *Little House* CDs, to foster collaboration among musicians who rarely work together.

"In this second CD we've gone a bit further toward providing a dialogue space where Nashville Music Row musicians and Vanderbilt Blair School of Music musicians can meet and engage and do something different," says Cockrell. "A little bit of success makes it easier the second time through."

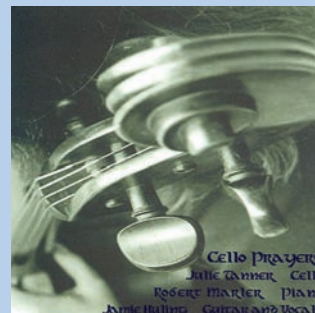
—Jim Patterson

*Edgar Meyer* (Sony Classical), by **Edgar Meyer**, adjunct associate professor of bass, presents the double bass virtuoso and composer performing 14 all-new instrumental pieces he created for himself to perform, on an array of instruments, through multi-track recording.



*Tudor Organ Music* (Naxos), by **Carl Smith**, senior lecturer in music composition and theory, features Tudor-era church music, including works by contributors to the period's organ repertoire, most importantly John Redford, Thomas Tallis and Thomas Tomkins.

*Cello Prayers* by **Julie Tanner**, adjunct artist teacher of cello, presents her solo arrangements of well-known hymns as well as works by Bach, Rachmaninoff, Vaughn Williams and Nashville songwriter Jamie Huling.



R E M E M B E R I N G  
*David*





# Schnauffer

I first started hearing about David Schnauffer, the dulcimer artist and faculty member at Blair who passed away on August 23rd, when he was a member of the band The Cactus Brothers. He and the rest of the group used to “pick the splinters” out of “Fisher’s Hornpipe” and other assorted alt-country tunes. A few years later, after we’d become acquainted, he said that he’d seen me playing with Bill Monroe and the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble at one of the Country Music Foundation’s New Artists Christmas parties—David was a New Artist, we were the hired help.

The first tune we ever sat down together and played was “Wild Rose of the Mountain,” a beautiful, “crooked” old gem from West Virginia. I don’t know why, but for some reason I thought David actually was from West Virginia. He had the look, talked the talk, wore the clothes and had the musical lick—he *was* the living, breathing tradition! So when he told me that he grew up a “surfer” down on the Texas Gulf Coast, I just had to tell him that I used to be a professional ski instructor and had also worked the dice tables in Las Vegas. We laughed long and hard at each other—“so much for past lives.”

By then, we were more about dealing with the here and now and the future. A couple of 50+ year-old dreamers, we were going to make a record, a CD of Appalachian music—just dulcimer and mandolin. Unfortunately, *Appalachian Mandolin and Dulcimer* turned out to be David’s last CD, though not his last recording. Earlier last year he recorded with Linda Ronstadt and Faith Hill, and I recall David commenting on how nice they were to him. Those women were sharp enough to know that they were in the presence of real musical greatness.

David lost his parents when he was a teenager, which got me to wondering about the way he always wanted to play Hank Williams’ “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry.” When he did, time stood still, and people *listened*. He seemed to be lonesome, and kind of all alone in Music City. Zada Law told me that he’d run off two or three girlfriends over the years; I guess David knew what was best for David. At some point The Grand Old Dulcimer Club and the Nashville Dulcimer Quartet became his family, and Zada Law and Sandy Conatser became his closest friends, personal assistants—confidantes in all things David.

One day last fall, David popped in while I was cooking up some red beets—he loved red beets—and brown rice. I served him up a nice-sized bowl, but all he could eat was 2 or 3 bites. That’s when I started to realize how diabetes dominated his health, ravaging his fragile frame for the last 10+ years.

Nashville lost some real music royalty when David Schnauffer left this earth. I wish we’d done more together; maybe I should have listened to him as early as last Christmas Eve, when he was telling me to get cracking on that *Appalachian Christmas* CD that he wanted us to do. Maybe he knew deep down that he just didn’t have much time left.

I miss the hell out of my pal. David Schnauffer won’t be forgotten—not if I can help it.

—Butch Baldassari,  
adjunct associate professor of mandolin

(This piece was originally published in the Oct.–Dec. 2006 issue of *The Nashville Musician*.)



Butch Baldassari, Bobby Taylor and David Schnauffer

## This year’s Appalachian Celebration,

sponsored by Gaylord Opryland, will be a celebration of David Schnauffer’s musical life with friends, collaborators and all sorts of folks who were in various ways connected with David. The concert will take place in Ingram Hall on April 14, 2007, with guest ensembles and soloists—David’s friends, colleagues and students from across the country.



# *Like* Family



Carol Nies, director of the Youth Symphony program, left, and Carol Smith, director of Blair's Suzuki Program



*From the Suzuki Program to the Curb Youth Symphony,  
precollege training at Blair evokes a family-like sense of support*

BY KAMI RICE

While leaves changed colors outside the first floor studio windows, seven-year-old Yara Jolly arrived with her mom and three siblings for her violin lesson. She announced to her teacher that she had a surprise for her.

After Yara played for her, teacher Carol Smith, director of the Suzuki Program, told her what a great surprise the piece was and what a good job she had done, to which Yara smiled broadly.

Making music a family affair, Yara, Gorsha, Viktor and Kristina Jolly are part of Blair's Suzuki program. Kristina studies cello and her siblings study violin. While all children in a family are not always enrolled in the Suzuki program, "very often when one child sees what another is doing, they want to learn, too," says Smith. Parents are required to be part of each lesson, taking careful notes in order to better guide practice sessions at home.

All of this family involvement helps music become a way of life in the home. "It really tightens up relationships in a family because it's something they all share," explains Smith.

Blair's Suzuki Program, founded in 1968 by Sharon Rogers, began when the Suzuki approach was still a relatively young movement. Smith began directing the program in 1997, and there is now a minimum two- to three-year waiting list for students wishing to join the 110 students currently enrolled.

Suzuki training reaps life-long benefits, from growth of self-confidence and determination to discipline and concentration. "With many of our older students who've gone on to start their own families, one of the first things they have done is look for a Suzuki teacher," says Smith.

Also called the "mother-tongue" method for the way it mimics language-learning by young children, the Suzuki approach postpones music reading until the child's aural and instrumental skills are well established. Another hallmark of the approach is its commitment to positive learning environments and encouragement.



DANIEL DIBROS

"We're really into motivation here," Smith says. Motivation can be found in group classes, games, playing folk songs and other music that's very appealing to young children, and monthly "play-ins" where students enjoy meeting friends and being surrounded by other children who are learning to play instruments.

"One thing we're constantly trying to do is show the kids what happens next," explains Smith. While in the program, Suzuki students mingle with university students, meeting undergrads majoring in music and students pursuing non-music degrees while taking music lessons, integrating music into their lives. Suzuki students also have the opportunity to audition for performing groups, including the Suzuki Players, the most advanced ensemble.

In October the Suzuki Players were among many local groups performing for the AmSouth Day of Music at the Nashville Symphony's new home, Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Smith says the opportunity was highly motivating for students. "The kids were delighted to be able to get backstage...and to feel that what they were doing was important enough to be featured."

*continued on page 14*

Smith says one of the things the program does best is to “get children really well set-up to work and play, and to be ready for other things.” After getting this good start, some Suzuki students join the orchestras that are also part of the precollege program at Blair. These orchestras include the Curb Youth Symphony, the Nashville Youth Repertory Orchestra, the Nashville Youth Strings Orchestras, the Suzuki Reading Orchestra, and the Nashville Beginning Reading Orchestra.

**C**arol Nies is the director of the Youth Orchestra Program and conductor of the Curb Youth Symphony, the most advanced ensemble in that program. The Curb Youth Symphony is supported by a grant to the Nashville Symphony from the Mike Curb Family Foundation and sponsored jointly by the Blair School of Music and the symphony. This joint sponsorship provides inspiring and innovative benefits for CYS members, including master classes led by Blair faculty and Nashville Symphony members, and has helped expand an already strong youth orchestra program at Blair.

Master classes are held each semester as preparation for concerts. “It’s very exciting because that way [students] get to work with an experienced professional musician who has played the piece many times before,” Nies notes. “They usually walk out on air afterwards.”

The CYS has almost 100 8th-grade through 12th-grade members who hail mostly from Middle Tennessee, with a few members who travel from Alabama and Kentucky to weekly practices at Blair. Students must audition each year, and each year the requirements have increased in difficulty. “It’s a very collegial group, but they know they have to work hard or their seat won’t be there next year,” explains Nies. “There’s a sense of excitement [around the program]. Because the audition

requirements are difficult, the CYS students feel a sense of accomplishment. It is also wonderful to see how the older members really look after the younger members. There’s a great sense of family.”

The CYS performs three to four concerts each season, including an annual Side-by-Side Concert with the Nashville Symphony. Soloists from the CYS also performed at the Symphony’s AmSouth Day of Music and before the Schermerhorn Symphony Center’s opening gala concert. In addition, the CYS has been invited to perform at the American Symphony Orchestra League’s National Convention in June.

In December, says Nies, “for the first time ever, we’re doing a composition for full orchestra written by a student in the group, Christopher Lowry. It’s the opening movement from his First Symphony.” Lowry, a violinist and violist, is a high school senior.

Other marks of the program’s vibrancy are seen in the accomplishments of alumni. “Youth Symphony alumni can be found among the members of the Blair faculty and the Nashville Symphony and have attended the country’s leading conservatories and schools of music,” says Nies. Additionally, alumni sometimes return as assistants. “It’s so valuable because they know exactly what a new member is going through and what kind of help they need,” Nies explains. Nies estimates that about a third of the members of the symphony go on to careers in music performance and education.

“I’m very proud of the achievements of our Youth Symphony members,” says Nies. “They have won competitions, been admitted to the finest music schools, and accomplished great things academically. The grade point average of the orchestra is amazing. These are really hard working, dedicated kids. Each year, we add up all of the college scholarships that our seniors are offered—last year’s total was over \$2 million.”



Director Carol Nies conducts the Curb Youth Symphony during their holiday concert in December, where they premiered a piece written for full orchestra by CYS member Christopher Lowry.



Austin Bauman, BMus'06

# Pedaling for Kids with Cancer

Vanderbilt mascot Mr. Commodore congratulates Austin Bauman, a May graduate of Blair, on the completion of his 5,000-mile bike ride for the Rally Foundation. Tom Reardon, Bauman's partner in the challenge, looks on.



While most of their Vanderbilt classmates set out to start careers or pursue graduate studies, Austin Bauman, BMus'06, and Tom Reardon, BA'06, chose a different path—one that was 5,000 miles long.

Following their graduation in May, Bauman and Reardon embarked on Rally Across America, a 5,000-mile bike ride to raise money for the Rally Foundation, an organization that supports childhood cancer research.

Bauman and Reardon asked individuals to sponsor them a penny per mile with the hope of getting 5,000 sponsors by the end of their journey. "Pedaling for Pennies" became the Rally Across America slogan.

Working with the Rally Foundation and their family and friends, the two identified 29 children across the Eastern United States to be "Rally Kids." In June, they started in Atlanta, riding east toward the Atlantic, turning north when they saw the blue of the ocean. Bauman and Reardon rode up the Atlantic coast from Savannah, Ga., to Scarborough, Me. When they reached Maine, they rode west until they crossed the Mississippi River. In each city, they visited children affected by cancer, often staying with the children's friends and families. Each stop brought a visit to the local pediatric oncology hospital or department.

"It (was) great to take their minds off their sickness, because the kids in the hospitals just want to be treated like kids," Bauman said.

Bauman and Reardon didn't make the journey alone. Friends driving a chase car loaded with supplies, as well as an amateur film company, Veritaz Productions, accompanied them. Veritaz spent the summer filming the trip and will produce a documentary from the footage. The two cyclists kept up with their supporters in various cities through a Web site that included photos of their ups and downs, heartfelt journal entries and a running tally of dollars raised. They cycled through mountain ranges, across rivers and once rode 200 miles in a single day. They cycled through 19 states and visited more than 300 children.

The two arrived back in Nashville on Sept. 5 to a welcoming crowd at Vanderbilt. After three months and 5,000 miles of "pedaling for pennies" across the country, the cyclists returned with more than \$116,000. A few supporters literally took them up on the request for pennies. "We've got an army duffel bag in the backseat of the chase car that's got to weigh 300 pounds by now," Bauman said. "But the whole idea is that everyone can give something, and we've really experienced that."

—Caroline Sarros Colley

## PRECOLLEGE AND ADULT

The **Blair Children's Chorus** was featured on *Porgy & Bess*, a new recording for Decca Records released in August. The chorus worked with conductor John Mauceri on the project. They are directed by **Hazel Somerville**.

The **Blair Suzuki Players** performed during the Nashville Symphony Day of Music in October and the entire Suzuki Program performed a holiday program at the Frist Center for Visual Arts in Nashville in December under **Carol Smith** and **Katherine Mansouri**, directors of violins; **Anne Hall Williams**, director of cellos; and **Celeste Halbrook Tuten**, accompanist.

During December 2005, the **Youth Strings Orchestra (YSO)**, **Suzuki Reading Orchestra (SRO)**, and **Beginning Reading Orchestra (BRO)** performed a warm-up concert at The Factory at Franklin and presented their winter concert in Ingram Hall. In February 2006, the BRO participated in Junior High Metro/ASTA Orchestra Festival at McGavock High School. YSO participated in the Senior High Festival. In April, all three groups performed a warm-up concert at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. In May, the three presented their Spring Concert in Ingram Hall. In August, the YSO expanded with another level beginning in the fall semester. All are under the direction of **Celeste Halbrook Tuten**.

**Annie Bender**, violin, and **Mary Grace Bender**, cello, were selected by videotaped audition to perform with the Suzuki Youth Orchestra of the Americas at the National Suzuki Conference held in Minneapolis in May. Annie is a former student of **Katherine Mansouri** and now studies with **Carolyn Huebl**. Mary Grace is a student of **Anne Hall Williams**.

The following cello students of **Anne Hall Williams**, participated in national Suzuki Institutes in June: **Zara Corzine**, **George Douglas**, and **Adelaide Morphet** attended the Colorado Suzuki Institute at Beaver Creek, Colo.; **Caroline**, **David** and **Mary Grace Bender** studied at the Ottawa (Kan.) Suzuki Institute; **Clara Marsden**, **Nadja** and **Raphael McKerley-Geier** and **Wesley Tseng** attended the Atlanta Suzuki Institute.

Violists **Andrew Braddock**, **Christopher Lowry**, **Roberto Papi** and **Dean Whiteside**, all students of **Kathryn Plummer**, performed in a master class given by violist Jennifer Stumm.

**Linnaea Brophy**, violin student of **Carolyn Huebl**, won the Alabama Symphony Competition and will solo with the Alabama Symphony this Spring. She was the national winner of the MTNA 2006 Solo Competition in the Junior Division. This past summer, she returned to the Perlman Program, where she had private lessons with Itzhak Perlman. She joined the program again in December for the winter session in Florida.

**Thomas Chesnut**, student of **G.R. Davis**, who plays tuba in the Curb Youth Symphony and is a Myra Jackson Blair Scholarship student, attended Interlochen Arts Camp on scholarship this past summer.

**Abi Coffer**, flute student of **Norma Rogers**, won the High School Soloist Competition and Best Performance of a Newly Commissioned Work at the National Flute Convention. Additionally, she was awarded the Geoffrey Gilbert Scholarship.

**Philip Cynn** won the Eunice Hoffmeister String Competition in Alabama last February. He is a cello student of **Felix Wang**.

**Jeff Hames**, dulcimer student of **David Schnauffer**, won the National Dulcimer Championship in Winfield, Kan., in September.

**Elissa Jennings**, piano student of **Jama Reagan**, won the 11th grade division for the Young Artist Achievement Awards competition in May and was first runner-up at the TMTA State Convention for 11th grade in June.

**Henna Jurea** and **Derek Shyr**, piano students of **Roland Schneller**, performed with the Nashville Symphony in October.

Three Blair students were chosen to submit tapes to the national round in the junior division of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) competition: **Ju Young Lee**, cello student of **Felix Wang**; **Christopher Lowry**, viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**; and **Linnaea Brophy**, violin student of **Carolyn Huebl**.

**Ju-Young Lee**, cello student of **Felix Wang**, has advanced through the Tennessee round of the ASTA string competition into the national semifinals. He placed third in the southern region of the Music Teacher's National Association solo competition last spring.

**Christopher Lowry**, viola student of **Kathryn Plummer**, won the concerto competition at the Eastern Music Festival in July, the first violist to win the competition in over 10 years. Christopher also wrote a composition for the Curb Youth Symphony that was performed in December.

**Sam Quiggins**, cello student of **Felix Wang**, won the Curb Youth Symphony concerto competition last year and appeared with the CYS in December.

**Shannon Stewart**, trumpet student of **Allan Cox**, made first chair trumpet in the Tennessee Mid-State Jazz Band, second chair trumpet in the Tennessee All-State Band, and first chair trumpet in the Band of America in Indianapolis last spring. He continues to perform as first chair trumpet in the Curb Youth Symphony.

In July, **Kayla Thiemann** and **Schlyer Peterson**, students of **Celeste Halbrook Tuten**, presented their Suzuki Book I





recitals. In September, the **Petersons** (**Wyatt, Schyler, Piper** and **Haley**) presented a program at the Guesthouse Inn and Suites for the 2006 Reunion of the 754th Field Artillery Battalion.

#### UNDERGRADUATES

**Jennifer Betzer** performed with the Hot Springs Music Festival in Hot Springs, Ark., in June. In July and August, **Gina Bombola** performed with the Rome Festival Orchestra and **Paula Bressman** attended the Aspen Music Festival performing with the Festival Orchestra and the Concert Orchestra. **Frances Cobb** and **Jasmin Jawad** attended the Sewanee Summer Music Festival where Jasmin was a concerto winner and performed with the Festival Orchestra. All are harp students of **Marian Schaffer**.

**Will Fisher**, senior trumpet student of **Allan Cox**, received a scholarship to the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, where he frequently played principal trumpet in the Symphony Orchestra.

**Ben Hart**, violin student of **Chris Teal**, was winner of the Tennessee collegiate division competition of the American String Teachers Association competition and submitted a tape to the national round.

Senior violinist **Ellen McSweeney** and junior violinist **Sophia Arriaga** played in the western premier of Ned Rorem's opera, *Our Town*, at the Aspen Music Festival last summer, conducted by Maestro David Zinman. Junior violinist **Jennifer Estrin**'s quartet was chosen to perform in the Aspen Chapel as part of

the Aspen Music Festival's student chamber music series last summer. All are students of **Connie Heard**.

**Aaron Romm**, junior trumpet student of **Allan Cox**, attended a summer chamber music festival in Spain and performed in a brass quintet of American graduate and undergraduate students.

#### ALUMNI

#### PRECOLLEGE

**Phillip Yang**, former student of **Kathryn Plummer**, is a freshman at Yale this year.

#### UNDERGRADUATE

**John Concklin**, BMus'06, is studying conducting at the Yale School of Music. He is a former student of **Kathryn Plummer**.

**Joanna Felder**, BMus'06, is a scholarship student of James Buswell at the New England Conservatory, pursuing a Master of Music in violin performance. Joanna traveled to China in August at the invitation of Kathy Winkler, professor of violin at Rice University. Joanna is a former student of **Connie Heard**.

**Chris Mann**, BMus'04, played New York City's CB's Gallery @ CBGBs in July and Sin-e in August. His song "Tremble" was featured in the independent film *The Love of the Game* as seen in the 2006 Los Angeles and Chicago Film Festivals. He is a former student of **Jonathan Retzlaff**.



Shu-Zheng Yang (left) and his wife Yi-Yi recently provided six custom-made violas for a class proposed by Kathryn Plummer, associate professor of viola.

**Daniel Roumain**, BMus'93, recently toured Australia, doing nine shows in four cities in 18 days. The U.S. premiere of Sonata for Violin and Turntables by Roumain and DJ Scientific is yet to be announced, but the duo made an appearance in January in Vancouver. Roumain made an exclusive solo appearance at The Knitting Factory on his birthday, December 11, performing his *Hip-Hop Studies and Etudes* on piano and violin. In September, Vermont Youth Orchestra presented the world premiere of his *Voodoo Violin Concerto No. 1* with Roumain on solo violin. Lark Quartet released a new CD *Klap Ur Handz* on

## A New Tax-Saving Opportunity

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For more information, please contact Virginia Payne at (615) 322-7678.



# Reunion Breakfast



STEVE GREEN



STEVE GREEN

Last fall's Reunion Breakfast, held Oct. 21, brought many familiar faces back to the Blair School. Above left: Douglas Lee, professor emeritus, welcomes Lauren Miller Utter, BMus'90. Above right: Olivia Carter Mather, BS'96, husband Jason Mather, BE'95, and their baby enjoy the Reunion Breakfast. Olivia, a music minor and research assistant to Associate Dean Cynthia Cyrus while at Blair, recently finished a PhD in musicology at UCLA.

Endeavor Records in October which is titled after one of the movements from Roumain's newly commissioned string quartet, *Parks*, named after Rosa Parks. *Pulsing* is the title of Roumain's latest CD release. He is a former student of **Chris Teal** and **Michael Rose**.

**Christina Thompson**, BMus'06, recently became membership coordinator for the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras and is responsible for activities related to member and family communications, scheduling, billing and volunteerism. She also administers the scholarship program, acts as private lesson teacher liaison, and as general Web master. She is a former student of **Carolyn Huebl**.

Soprano **Kiley Swicegood Watson**, BMus'00, was awarded second place in the prestigious Savannah Music Festival's 2006 American Traditions Competition. She recently relocated with her husband and daughters to the Atlanta area from New York City. She is a former student of **Amy Jarman**.

## FACULTY

The **Blair String Quartet** recently performed in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky and Memphis. Their spring '06 concert at

the Blair School saw them undertake the complete string quartets of Béla Bartók, in two consecutive weekends. In November, the quartet gave a concert and several master classes at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. Members are **Chris Teal**, **Connie Heard**, **John Kochanowski** and **Felix Wang**.

The **Blakemore Trio** recently performed in Phoenix, Ariz.; Boise, Idaho; and Crossville, Tenn. They have commissioned a work in collaboration with the Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville, by Taiwanese composer Shueh-Shuan Liu. The work will be for trio and dance, depicting the origin of the Chinese cultural tradition of dragon boat racing. It will premiere in April in Ingram Hall. Members are **Amy Dorfman**, piano; **Carolyn Huebl**, violin; and **Felix Wang**, cello.

**Billy Adair**, adjunct associate professor of jazz studies, produced, composed and arranged a series of national TV spots for Pioneer in August. One of the featured vocalists was **Sarah Williams**, BMus'06.

**Gregory Barz**, associate professor of ethnomusicology, gave the keynote address this fall at the annual meeting of the South African Society of Research in Music and was elected to serve on the executive committee. While touring South Africa, he gave invited lectures at the University of the

Free State (Bloemfontein), University of Pretoria, University of Venda, Rhodes University, University of Witwatersrand, University Kwa Zulu Natal and the University of Cape Town.

**David Childs**, assistant professor of choral studies, had his composition 'O Magnum Mysterium' featured on the album *Spirit of the Land*, a CD recorded by the New Zealand Voices. The disc won Best Classical Album at the New Zealand Music Awards in October. In May, a new work by Childs was premiered by the Choral Arts Ensemble and The Singers-Minnesota Choral Artists, two of Minnesota's finest adult choirs, in Rochester, Minn. Childs and **Carolyn Huebl** were recently featured as Carell Artists-in-Residence at Harpeth Hall School in Nashville. Recent and upcoming engagements include: honor choir director of Region 27 of the Texas All State Festival; guest composer and conductor at Delta State University, Miss.; and conductor of Collegium Vocale at the Rhodes College Early Music Conference in Memphis.

**Allan Cox**, professor of trumpet, presented a trumpet and organ Lenten recital with his wife Hildegard Holland Cox at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, Tenn. In March, he and **Lawrence Borden**, associate professor of trombone, toured with Sonus Brass playing concerts in Virginia and South Carolina. He toured Japan in June before attending the International Trumpet Guild Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, and was one of two nominees for vice-president/president-elect of ITG. While in Japan, he performed with the Fukuoka Technical College Band at the Fukuoka Prefecture Band Festival. He also presented master classes and short recitals with his wife at Fukuoka Institute, Kyoto Conservatory of Music, Kagoshima Girls School, for the Bridgestone Tire Company Band, and the Japan Army Band in Tokyo. Cox returned to the Sewanee Summer Music Festival after a four-year absence to teach and perform for two weeks in July. In October he performed in Taiwan with the Taipei Symphony Winds and presented a master class and short recital. He also presented a

master class and served as adjudicator of the college brass competitions at the Mississippi Music Teachers Association State Convention in Oxford, Miss.

**Robin Fountain**, professor of conducting, is the new music director and conductor of the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra for the Twin Cities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. Fountain marked the beginning of his tenure at the SMSO Independence Day celebration concert at Shadowland Pavilion in Silver Beach County Park in St. Joseph. He recently resigned his position as music director and conductor of the Williamsport, Pa., Symphony, where he served for the past 15 years.

**Jen Gunderman**, adjunct senior lecturer in music history and literature, spent much of last summer on the road with the band Last Train Home. Highlights from the tour included shows at Gruene Hall, the oldest dance hall in Texas; Strathmore Music Center (DC area), opening for Marty Stuart and the Fabulous Superlatives; the Florida Music Festival; World Cafe Live (Pa.); the Bluemont Concert Series (Va.); and other music festivals throughout the U.S. She also played at the Americana Music Association Conference, the Americana Folk Festival and the Cannery Row Revival. This fall guest speakers in



DANIEL DUBOIS

Kirk Whalum conducted a master class on November 15 at Blair and joined the Nashville Jazz Orchestra in Ingram Hall on November 17.

her classes included Pete Finney (Dixie Chicks), Steve Gorman (Black Crowes) and Jo Jo Hermann (Widespread Panic).

**Connie Heard**, associate professor of violin, taught at the Aspen Music Festival for nine weeks last summer and performed on a number of faculty chamber music concerts, including the opening concert of the festival with pianist Vladimir Feltsman. She was invited for the second year to give a violin master class in Irvine, California, in January.

**Carolyn Huebl**, assistant professor of violin, presented masterclasses at Arizona State University and Boise State University. Along with **Felix Wang** and **Melissa Rose**, she gave the world premiere of **Michael Kurek's** Piano Trio at the Blair School. In the fall she was soloist with the Vanderbilt Orchestra, and also with the Greeley Philharmonic in Colorado. In December, she rejoined her former orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, for a series of concerts in Pittsburgh and at Carnegie Hall.

**John Johns**, associate professor of guitar, performed recitals in the fall at the University of Alabama, Martin Methodist College, Covenant Baptist Church in Nashville, and the First Presbyterian Church Fall Recital Series, Columbia, Tenn. In addition to presenting "John Johns and His Lady Friends" on the Blair Signature Series, with **Amy Jarman**, **Jane Kirchner** and **Kathryn Plummer**, he took part in "Blair Celebrates Spanish Music." He also presented a solo recital last July in Cape Cod, Mass.

**Karen Ann Kreiger**, assistant professor of piano and piano pedagogy, gave a workshop on "How to Teach Composition" to the Indiana Music Teacher's Association in October. She accompanied the St. James Episcopal Choir on organ and accordion across northern Italy this past summer.

**Craig Nies**, associate professor of piano, joined the piano faculty at the Brevard Music Center during its 70th anniversary season last summer. He performed solo and ensemble works on three concerts and taught both precollege and college students, one of whom won the \$3,000 first prize in the annual piano solo competition. He will return to Brevard in the summer of 2007.

**Jama Reagan**, adjunct artist teacher of piano, traveled to Spain last October to make the premiere recording of Ricardo Villa's *Grand Fantasia* for solo piano and wind ensemble. The CD was recently released in Valencia, Spain. This recording was a result of the work's premiere in the Spring of 2005 by the **Vanderbilt Wind Ensemble**, with guest conductor Frank DeVuyst.

**Marian Shaffer**, adjunct professor of harp, performed for the International Ballet Festival in Jackson, Miss., in June. She performed and taught 11 harp students at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival in Sewanee, Tenn., last summer. In November she traveled to Alaska to perform with the Anchorage Opera.

**Carol Smith**, senior artist teacher of violin, served as clinician at Ithaca Suzuki Institute, Ithaca College, Ithaca, N.Y., in July; and as clinician and teacher trainer for Hartt Suzuki Institute, University of Hartford, Hartford, Conn., in August.

**Celeste Halbhook Tuten**, artist teacher of Suzuki violin, was guest conductor of the Beginning Reading Orchestra at Quad State Music Festival at Murray State University in October 2005.

**Felix Wang**, associate professor of cello, continues to serve as co-principal cellist of the Iris Chamber Orchestra, under the direction of Michael Stern. Recently, he presented solo and chamber music masterclasses at Florida State University, Arizona State University and Boise State University. Last spring, he and fellow faculty members **Melissa Rose** and **Carolyn Huebl** performed the world premiere of **Michael Kurek's** Piano Trio. In November, he performed in Phoenix with faculty members of Arizona State University. Felix, wife **Carolyn Huebl**, and daughter Nora welcomed Adam Xi-Ying Wang to their family in late May.



# Tune in to "Live from Blair" podcasts

**M**iss the last Blair String Quartet concert in early November? Now, you can see the concert by podcast available through the Vanderbilt VUCast service at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news/blair>.

"Live from Blair" debuted officially in September with John Johns' concert from September 29. Since then, podcasts from the Celebration of Spanish Music in October and the Blair String Quartet concert from November have been added, with more to be added soon. In addition, listeners can download video of the October 28, 2005 concert honoring the establishment of the Martha Rivers Ingram Dean's chair at the Blair School of Music, and its first recipient, Mark Wait; the gift of an Amati violin to the Blair School by Enid and Dr. Martin Katahn; and selections from the CD *Live from Blair* (©2004, Blair School of Music) that were recorded live in Ingram and Turner Halls.



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